



INCLUSIVE TEACHING

SUPPORTING ESL STUDENTS AT OCAD

**ONTARIO
COLLEGE
OF ART &
DESIGN**

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INTRODUCTION



We hope that the content of this booklet will help you as an educator to continue to create a supportive, enriching classroom, studio, and workshop environment for ESL and non-ESL students alike. Like many instructors, you may be concerned that you need to be an ESL specialist or have some formalized ESL training to adequately address the learning needs of ESL students. You may be relieved to realize that this is not necessarily the case, and that there are many simple ways that you can make your curriculum delivery and feedback even more useful to your ESL students. In fact, you will likely find that many of the techniques contained in this booklet will not only prove helpful to ESL students, but will also help you craft and deliver an inclusive curriculum that will be meaningful to students from a variety of backgrounds with a variety of learning styles and needs.

Within this booklet we will address the most pressing questions raised by our colleagues: how to fairly grade and give feedback on ESL papers; how to help students who are struggling with comprehension in lecture, seminar, and discussion; how to encourage better participation from ESL students. Through first hand accounts from students and faculty alike and through topics such as who our ESL students are, how inclusive teaching helps enrich the educational experience for all students, and the importance of internationalizing

our curriculum, this booklet will also aid your overall understanding of the ESL student experience. For those of you who yourselves have a language other than English as your native tongue, or who were educated outside Canada, we hope that what you find here will ring true to some of your own experiences.

Cultural diversity is a key value in OCAD's Strategic Plan. It is our hope that you will continue to see your ESL students as resources in the development and delivery of a rich, inclusive curriculum that caters to the diversity of our student population. The issues touched on in this booklet are complex ones and in many cases we know we have barely scratched the surface. We hope though that you will be able to take away from it some practical suggestions and that the issues raised here will spark interesting and challenging discussion. You can find the material contained in this booklet online in the faculty area of the OCAD website. We encourage you to bring to us your questions, comments, challenges, and success stories so that we might continue to add to our materials.

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STUDENT STORY



A confident moment for me was the interview when I wanted to get into OCAD. I presented my work and that was my first presentation in

Canada. It seems that went pretty well and I got accepted. So that gave me a lot of confidence. I did a piece on Chinese calligraphy and I told them the different stories and the background behind the calligraphy and when I presented each piece I told them why I was doing this and how it was related to historical events and they were very interested. One of the professors said, “I’ve never had a presentation like that before.” I surprised them.

Zheng Yun Lu, *Integrated Media*

RESOURCES

A number of online resources for further reading are mentioned throughout this booklet. For links to these materials, visit our page in the faculty section of the OCAD website.

UNIVERSAL INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Universal Instructional Design (UID) is a powerful approach to teaching. It draws on a diversity of teaching methods to meet the needs of learners from diverse backgrounds and with a range of learning styles. The idea is that if we remove barriers to learning for certain students, such as those with non-standard learning styles, our teaching will become more effective and accessible for all. The idea grew out of the concept of “Universal Design” of products and buildings.

Many of the principles of UID can be applied to teaching ESL students. And many of the techniques suggested here for supporting ESL students will benefit other students in your class with diverse learning styles. To learn more about UID, visit the website of the University of Guelph at www.tss.uoguelph.ca/uid/.



FACULTY STORY



When I arrived in the UK in 1997, my academic English improved much faster than my casual English since I did not hang out with my fellow students in a pub

much but rather spent long hours a day eagerly reading the critical texts with thick English-English or English-Korean dictionaries. I had a priority to fully explore and enjoy the advantages of academic freedom, the critical inquiry, and liberal atmosphere that the new place offered me that I could never imagine back in Korea.

Being a non-native speaker of English and finally making a career in the English speaking world was not an easy journey but was worth the challenge considering the lessons I have learned. Knowing more than one culture and one language gives you the advantage of a “double-eye” that allows you to be able to converse in cross-cultural perspectives from your own experience of exploring the differences. You can become better equipped to learn the ethical, pragmatic, and constructive ways of building an intellectual community around you beyond particularist prejudices and biases. Being a figure of difference can make you see the issues of otherness and tolerance more sensitively; this has a wider implication in the equitable community building that our and other communities in the world are currently trying to tackle.

At the same time I encountered a structural discrimination I had to overcome at the heart of reputable, multicultural,

progressive, and liberal Goldsmiths College where I studied towards my MA and PhD and also worked since 1998. (And it may exist even in our (un)consciousness here today.) The head administrator discouraged me from applying to the PhD scholarship (given to only two PhD students in the department) because I was an “international student” and reminded me that it had never been given to a non-British student.

If it was not for the whole-hearted support from two professors in the department who knew and valued my academic performance and contribution to the intellectual dynamic of the department, I could never have benefited from the scholarship. This was followed by my first teaching assignment in the English speaking world in Goldsmiths’ Art History MA programme, which again would have never happened if it was not for their trust and support in my potential. An enlightening and spirited comment during a conversation came from Professor Howard Caygill, who is a Kantian philosopher, English-German, and so-to-speak “white-male” academic and who became my PhD supervisor. He said “not only you, we are all post-colonial.” This presented me a cosmopolitan spirit with such an acute historical consciousness that continues to inspire me today.

Hard work, trusting oneself, being open, not being discouraged by prejudices, enjoying the process rather than the result, are some important lessons I want to share with all future educators of cosmopolitanism.

Soyang Park, *Liberal Studies*

KNOWING OUR STUDENTS



ESL STUDENTS AT OCAD

In this booklet, you will meet a number of OCAD ESL students. ESL students at OCAD come from such a diversity of backgrounds that it is hard to say anything general about their experience or needs. ESL students at OCAD may have just recently arrived from their home country or may have been in school in Canada for several years. They may be learning English as a second language or as a fifth. They may have had years of rigorous English grammar classes or may have picked up the language primarily by ear. They may be straight out of high school or may have multiple degrees. They may be away from home for the first time or may be world travellers. The stories on the next page introduce you to a small sample of the kinds of life experience ESL students at OCAD bring with them.

It's difficult even to put a number to how many ESL students there are at OCAD because speaking English as a Second Language can be defined in so many ways. Only some ESL students at OCAD are international students studying here on student visas. Most are landed immigrants or Canadian citizens. Around 28% of our students mark on their application form that they have a language other than English as a "mother tongue." Some of these students though may have learned English as children and may be completely fluent. Conversely, some who learned English "second" but in early childhood may now consider it a mother tongue.

A better question to ask, perhaps, is how many students at OCAD require special language support. We can get a rough estimate of this from the number of first-year students who opt into the ESL sections of OCAD's first-year composition course: about 9%. These are students who are working actively on improving their language skills. Some ESL students opt into other courses, so the percentage of students needing specialized language support is likely somewhat higher.

As you get to know your students, here are some questions you might consider:

How long has the student been in Canada? Some international students may have arrived directly from their home country. They may be experiencing culture shock and may be completely unfamiliar with the conventions and expectations of a North American classroom. Other students may sound like non-native speakers, but may have been here for many years and be well oriented to the North American school system.

What kind of school has the student attended? ESL students who have done some high school in Canada may have some of the same preparation and expectations as other Canadian high school students. Some, however, have been to private language schools in Toronto. These schools offer an Ontario high school diploma, but cater to students from a particular country. Students who have gone



to these schools often have been here for some years but may have remained quite isolated within their home culture and may have limited experience interacting with native speakers socially.

How has the student learned English?

Students who have recently arrived from countries where the first language is not English often have had years of grammar and writing classes, but may have difficulty applying this knowledge in a “live” English speaking environment. On the other hand, students who have spent several years in a Canadian high school have usually picked up the language primarily by ear. They may

sound quite fluent but still be facing challenges with their written grammar or formal written style.

Is the student planning to stay in Canada after graduation? Students who are planning to stay in Canada and those planning to return to their home country will bring different motivations to their learning.

ESL students at OCAD are, above all, students – and bring to their studies the same range of challenges, ambivalences, and hopes as other students. Our challenge is to get to know them.

FAQ

How are ESL students admitted to OCAD?

ESL students must meet the same academic requirements as all OCAD students. In addition, any student who does not speak English as a first language and who has studied in an English language school for less than four years must write a standardized English proficiency test. An unavoidable problem with setting such a cut-off is that there will inevitably be students who have been here longer who still face language challenges. However, four years is the cut-off generally agreed to by Canadian universities.

A list of acceptable tests is specified on our website including the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and other similar tests. These tests evaluate language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing in ways that try to approximate the kinds of tasks students will have to complete in university. This type of standardized testing, however, is far from foolproof. Test scores are not strong predictors of academic success – no controlled test can truly reproduce real world tasks in a real context. And so many factors other than language skills contribute to academic success, including motivation, maturity, dedication, and adaptability. Short of “trial by fire” when students actually hit the OCAD curriculum, test scores are the best evaluative tool we currently have.

ENGLISH AS ANOTHER LANGUAGE

At OCAD, we refer to students who are not native speakers of English as English as a Second Language (ESL) students. We use the term because it's readily recognized by both faculty and students. However, it is a deeply problematic term: it ignores the complexity of the linguistic background of our students. Many speak English not as a second language, but as a third or fourth or even fifth language. In addition, many of our students spoke another first language at home but learned English as soon as they started school. These "English as a Second Language" speakers are for all intents and purposes "native speakers."

The term ESL sometimes also carries some stigma for students who entered the Canadian school system at some point during childhood and were streamed into years of ESL classes.

Some terms you might encounter elsewhere attempt to address these problems:

- English as Another Language learners (EAL)
- Multilingual Learners
- Students of English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL)
- English Language Learners (ELL)
- L2 Learners

STUDENT STORIES



I'm a student in the Material Art and Design Program. My focus in MAAD is jewellery and metal work. Since I come from South America – like the weather, we're very warm

and caring people – I'm pretty friendly and I like to communicate and it has helped me to meet new people in Canada. Before arriving to Canada I knew a bit of German, which I totally forgot. I came to Canada and I was in school for a time until Grade 8 and then I did all my high school in Chile because we went back to Chile, and

then all my university studies have been here in Canada. When I came to Canada as a kid I had no knowledge of English apart from the numbers and "door" and "window" and "hello"... the basic words. I had to build a portfolio once I came back to Canada, so before applying to OCAD I had to do a Fine Arts Fundamental program at Centennial College.

Priscila Diaz,
Material Art and Design

I'm going into Graphic Design in second year. I was born into a super-big family. There are eight kids and six adults and my grandparents and we



all live together in the same household. Sixteen people and we live together for almost twenty years. I learned to share even

when I am not in the house... like when I get to school. I came to Toronto three years ago. I went to high school here for Grade 11 and Grade 12. Actually I was in Australia for two and a half years. I was switching schools all the time. I was in Taiwan at first and when I was in grade seven my Dad had to work in China so all the family moved to China. Then after that they decided to go back to Taiwan, but I didn't want to go back to study because I felt that I was quite behind compared with other students. So I decided to go to Australia to study language by myself for two and a half years. We came here because my Dad has to work here now.

Sammy Kuo, *Graphic Design*

I'm in my second year in Sculpture/ Installation. I'm from Colombia so I speak Spanish and I've been in Canada for four or five years. I used to live in Florida. I lived there for seven years



so I finished high school over there. And that's where I learned English. I worked as an artist's assistant and learned a lot from them. But

I didn't practice my English there because it was a Latino place... I learned a lot of Cuban and Argentinian. I worked with an Argentinian artist. I used to live in Montreal and I moved here to start a new life. In Colombia I wanted to be a theatre actress.

Magda Salamanca, *Sculpture and Installation*



I'm from Japan. I've been studying at OCAD for two and a half years and now I am a third year student in Jewellery. I studied English since I

was a junior high school student until college, so almost eight years I studied, but I never had a chance to speak English as a daily experience. So after I graduated college I went to English conversation school, but it was like a hobby, once or twice a week. It was helpful... that's why I could make my portfolio in English and I could have my interview because I could speak a little English. I used to have my own business. I designed jewellery, mainly beads-assembled jewellery and also I got material from overseas and I distributed to my assistants and I contacted with my clients' shops... business was very good. I started with only two assistants, but when I was really busy in 2003 I had six assistants. It was very intensive. I wanted a change... that's why I came here.

Setsuko Sanagawa, *Material Art and Design*

SUPPORTING YOUR STUDENTS' LANGUAGE LEARNING



For most of us, learning a second language as an adult is an uphill battle. It has its moments of exhilaration when you find yourself communicating fluently but also has many moments of frustration, helplessness, and even humiliation. ESL students at university are grappling not just with their course content and with all the challenges students normally face, but also with a significant additional drag on their mental energy. Even students who have been in Canada for a number of years and who are fluent in a conversational context will find that using English in an academic context makes new demands.

Language learning is rarely a nice, smooth incline – advanced learners often hit a plateau where language learning is stalled or even seems to backslide temporarily. This is likely to happen to your students at some point. So lack of apparent progress does not necessarily mean lack of effort. Learning can be slow and the result, even after years of practice, is rarely perfection. For most of us who live, work, or study in our second language, fluency does come with time. But vocabulary building is always a work in progress and perfection in grammar and pronunciation are rare. Most of the ESL students in your classes, even as their fluency improves, will continue to make small grammatical errors in their writing (such as dropping articles – “the” and “a”). These can be viewed as the written equivalent of a spoken accent.



These small errors don't necessarily mean they are not equipped for the working world. Like the very many second language speakers in academia and other fields in Canada, they may simply need to have someone look over their written work.

Becoming fluent in a second language is often compared to learning a musical instrument. It is a skill that is acquired rather than explicitly learned.¹ For a fluent speaker, native or non-native, the vast majority of rules we use to produce utterances in our language are unconscious. They are typically acquired through use, rather than in a second language classroom. Most ESL students have had years of ESL grammar and writing classes. What most need is to practice using the language in meaningful ways.

Some language can be picked up by passive exposure, but the biggest leaps come when the learner is engaged in active communication. It also happens best when the level of language is just beyond the learner's comfort zone – so they have to stretch for it – but not completely beyond their grasp. You can help create these conditions in your class by engaging ESL students in your class (see “The Participatory Classroom”). You can

¹ A key work arguing for this distinction is: Krashen, Stephen D. *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon, 1981.



also bring the class within their grasp by making your lecture and course material more accessible (see “Designing Accessible Lectures”).

As you get to know your students, you may have opportunities to give them advice on what they can do to improve their English outside of class. Here are some suggestions you can make:

Get rid of bilingual translating dictionaries. Words in different languages rarely “map” one-to-one, and translating dictionaries typically give little information on actual word usage—hence the rather odd word choice you may see in your students’ writing. Instead they should be encouraged to use an English only dictionary. There are special advanced learner dictionaries (the library or the Writing & Learning Centre can recommend one) that give information on usage, connotations, and level of formality.

Keep a journal of new vocabulary. This can include the students’ own examples, helping them bring new words into their active vocabulary. They can also be illustrated.

Increase passive exposure to the language. Encourage students to just leave the radio or television on – this can lead to some learning through osmosis.

Find low pressure ways to use the language actively. They should be encouraged to find some activity they enjoy where they are communicating with native speakers but the emphasis isn’t on language learning. This could be a club or campus group, a sports team, or simply an English language “buddy.” They can also practice their written English in low pressure online forums such as chat groups and wikis.

Increase interaction with native speakers. One good way is to include native speakers in their team for course projects.

Read for pleasure. Students should be encouraged to find something enjoyable and accessible to read a little from each day – for example a popular magazine.

FAQ

How long does it take to learn a second language?

How long it takes to learn a language depends to some extent on the learner but also to a large extent on the context in which the language is being learned and used. Jim Cummins, a researcher in Second Language Acquisition at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, makes a distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (the language our students need to converse in the halls) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (the language they need to keep up with their classes). Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency requires an ability to understand specialized vocabulary and complex grammatical structures, and to understand written texts that are stripped of all the interpersonal cues that help us understand spoken language. His work suggests that an immigrant student typically requires five to seven years to acquire this level of language proficiency. This implies that even an immigrant student who has spent several years in a Canadian high school will still be in the process of acquiring the skills and fluency they need for their university studies.¹

¹ See Cummins, J. "Age on Arrival and Immigrant Second Language Learning in Canada: A Reassessment." *Applied Linguistics*, 2, 132-149, 1981.



FACULTY STORIES

In my first-year Design Process class, I ask students to present their project ideas verbally. I had one student whose first language wasn't English who was so nervous. She was reading her description but even the reading was hard to understand. I stopped the presentation and asked her to present in Korean. I asked one of the students to translate. She all of a sudden became extremely confident, poetic, competent. She really nailed that assignment.

Bruce Hinds, *Design*



I have worked with many ESL students and students with particular learning challenges. One thing I learned is that the payoffs are rarely immediate and often come in

unexpected ways and from unexpected students. I had one student who was struggling with English in first year. She had to take her first-year courses twice in order to move on to second year, and even then only marginally. A couple of years later I encountered the same student in her third year. Her writing had become much stronger, her ideas clearer and more eloquently represented. It was as if she was a completely different student. I do not take any of the credit for this transformation, but what it made me realize is that what we do for students in first-year is critical. And throughout their studies, ESL students need teachers who do not give up on them, who encourage them, challenge them and do

whatever they can to make their education an invaluable experience.

Lori Riva, *Liberal Studies*

STUDENT STORY



I remember a moment I became more comfortable speaking English. It was last semester in jewellery critique. Usually I don't have confidence. That's

why it's like a vicious cycle... I'm not confident and that's why my voice and tone is very small and nobody can listen to me and people are uncomfortable and so I am uncomfortable too. It's a very vicious cycle. On that day I felt like giving up improving my English. So I think, "It's okay... I'm from a different country, English is not my first language. It's okay to speak weirdly." And so on that day I could speak confidently, clearly, and with a loud voice. I felt it was very good and people could understand what I said. At the moment I felt very comfortable speaking in English.

Setsuko Sanagawa,
Material Art and Design

NAVIGATING A NEW ACADEMIC CULTURE



For many students educated elsewhere, studying at university in Canada means adapting not only to Canadian culture in general but to the specific academic culture of the North American university.

The inquisitive, experimental and active classroom behaviour encouraged here is not necessarily part of the learner's experience in many parts of the world. In many countries, classrooms are very formal places: students are expected to speak only when called on, asking questions in class may be regarded as a sign of insufficient diligence, and asking questions or chatting with the professor outside of class may be felt to be impertinent or socially inappropriate. In some academic cultures students are expected to show deference to teachers by speaking softly and averting their eyes. For students used to this kind of classroom, OCAD's academic environment may give the impression that we don't take our teaching and learning seriously. Students from many academic cultures may be completely unfamiliar with class discussion as a form of learning. They may expect to learn from their instructor, not their peers, and be confused that, in their view, the teacher is "not teaching"!

In many cultures, teaching is highly directive. Its goal is to train students in the ideas and practices of the masters, whether in philosophy or drawing. Engagement may look very different

for students from academic cultures outside of North America. An engaged student in many academic cultures is one who takes careful verbatim notes in class, and who masters readings line by line, even committing them to memory. In assignments, students may be expected to show this mastery of the received knowledge, not to demonstrate individual or original thinking. For an undergraduate to think he or she could add something to centuries of wisdom may be considered extreme hubris. And in some cultures, expressing disagreement with the status quo, both inside and outside the academic world, can be frowned on or even dangerous. For some of our students our expectation of what we term "originality" and "critical thinking" can, at first, be deeply disorienting.

It may be helpful to think of our own expectations and conventions at OCAD not as simply "Western" vs. "non-Western," but as very specifically 21st century Canadian. After all, the classrooms Europeans and North Americans studied in just a few generations ago were much more directive and hierarchical than our own at OCAD. (They still are in many parts of Europe.) It's also important to keep in mind that North American notions of critical thinking constitute only one, culturally-specific approach to gaining knowledge and understanding. Students from cultures that value close study of wisdom accu-



mulated over centuries may see seeking out “timeless” truths as the more valid route to intellectual insight (see work by Helen Fox described on page 20).

Here are a few things you can do to help students from other academic cultures navigate the academic culture at OCAD:

Make expectations explicit.

Discuss attendance and other classroom behaviour and protocol. Let students know how you expect them to approach readings.

Give students a variety of ways to participate. For suggestions, see “The Participatory Classroom.”

Let students know that asking questions is expected. Tell students that asking questions in class is the norm at OCAD. Reassure them that uncertainty is fine and experimentation is essential.

Encourage students to seek additional learning support. Let students know that at OCAD we consider making use of office hours and using services such as the Writing & Learning Centre a sign of a diligent student, not a weak one.

Make space for dialogue about the expression of ideas and opinions. Look for opportunities in class or in small group discussion to explicitly

discuss your expectations around the expression of opinions, and disagreement with you or with course texts and other materials. Explain to students the purpose of class discussion in the context of your course. Give students an opportunity in a safe environment to discuss their own experience and expectations.

Try to retain some relativity in your discussion of cultural differences.

Talk with your students about differences in expectations rather than better or worse approaches to education. As illustrated in the student story on the next page, students from other academic cultures will not necessarily see our own approach as better pedagogy.

STUDENT STORY



I spent two years in a Chinese university so I know pretty well the difference between Canadian and Chinese universities. When I first got here in OCAD

I found teachers don't teach you a lot of things, they will only give you assignments and you go and study on your own. In China, it's a different style. Teachers and professors will push you, they will tell you what to do and even what to think. For most of the time maybe they were right. But here, everything's free, they let you think freely, they let you study on your own. You have to push yourself, so that took me quite some time to adapt to. You're always on your own, you have to talk to your friends or classmates or professors. You have to think more to bring up more questions to ask them, so they can answer you, so that you can learn.

In China it's different. I was learning Drawing and Painting in China and there was a specific style that was very popular among academic schools. Everyone was almost always drawing very similar styles. If you had something different they would say "Do you actually know how to draw?" I understand the purpose of that kind of teaching because they really train your eye, train your mind, train your ability to draw almost as real as possible and to understand things very clearly. For educational purposes it's

a very good style, but if you are doing your own work, or creating your style, having only that one style and your mind is not open, that's an obstacle to creating your own self. It's like a double-bladed sword, it has good points and bad points.

Here, the difference is you're all open, but you won't have a clear standard when you're still growing, when you're still trying to develop your own style, so you can get lost very easily.

Max Lin, *Environmental Design*

RESOURCES

Writing instructor Helen Fox offers a rich description of some of the cultural differences in approaches to learning, and particularly academic writing in: Fox, Helen. *Listening to the World: Cultural Issues in Academic Writing*. National Council of Teachers of English, 1994. Her book is available online at www-personal.umich.edu/~hfox/listening.pdf. [Note unusual URL www-]

For a good general discussion of the culturally-based expectations of post-secondary education that students educated outside North America bring with them, see the booklet entitled *Recognizing and Addressing Cultural Variation in the Classroom*, prepared by the Intercultural Communication Center at Carnegie Mellon. Available at: www.cmu.edu/teaching/resources/PublicationsArchives/



THE PARTICIPATORY CLASSROOM



OCAD classes, both Liberal Studies and studio, place a high demand on students to participate actively. ESL students are often particularly reluctant to speak up without encouragement. They can be held back by inexperience with the kind of interactive participatory classroom we favour at OCAD. They can also be held back by language barriers and the extra time it takes a non-native speaker to process information and formulate a response. Even for students with strong comprehension skills, following a class discussion with multiple voices and colloquial language can be a challenge. Or they may simply be shy to use their imperfect English in front of their classmates. Studio critiques pose special challenges. Giving feedback that is critical but diplomatic requires subtle linguistic tools and some non-native speakers may choose silence rather than risk offending. And in some academic cultures, criticism of one's peers is strongly discouraged.

As an instructor, you can help build confidence by supporting and encouraging cultural difference in the classroom, by actively encouraging students to share their experiences and ideas, and by ensuring that they are listened to by others. You can also advocate for active participation by including a variety of activities such as individual, pair, and small group work. Additional language support such as vocabulary sheets can give students the tools they

need to participate more actively. And making your class as “multimodal” as possible by including written, verbal, and visual material will give second language students as many opportunities as possible to grasp the material and enter the discussion. All of these approaches benefit the broader student population as well.

Here are some concrete tips to embolden all students to open up and participate:

Make your expectations explicit.

Discuss explicitly the kind of participation you expect. Make suggestions on conduct in class discussions – on how you expect students to intervene and to respond to each other. In studio, talk about what you mean by “critique;” explain that offering a critique of a work does not mean simply saying that it is “good” or “bad.” Model the kind of comments you expect in critique and discuss the way they address the project goals. Offer examples of how critique language can be critical while still diplomatic and respectful.

Help students build vocabulary needed for participation.

Ask students to keep a journal of concepts, terms, or works that resonate with them; encourage them to write small blurbs each week on these items. Hand out lists of key vocabulary to the class before a discussion exercise, or engage the



class in brainstorming or other “warm-up” activities to activate vocabulary before starting discussions. In studio, offer lists of practical, medium-specific vocabulary that would be useful during critiques.

Give students stepping stones to participation. Encourage students to prepare discussion questions or responses to readings (in the form of notes) prior to class. Formulating their thoughts ahead of time may help empower some students in class discussion. In studio, encourage students to discuss their work with friends and classmates before critique and give them a chance to rehearse their remarks in pairs before the full class critique.

Support students in giving individual responses. Don’t be afraid to call on students individually. Many students educated in other cultures are unused to volunteering responses, but will feel empowered to do so when called upon. When calling on a student, allow ample time to formulate an answer (several seconds) and avoid peppering with follow up questions while thinking. Discourage classmates from interrupting with their own responses. In critique, call on students who don’t volunteer remarks.

Give students a variety of ways and opportunities to contribute.

Give ESL students an opportunity to answer open-ended questions, not just yes/no questions. They may be more able to do this after listening to the responses by other classmates. Organize formal presentations periodically. Some students benefit from a more structured opportunity to voice their ideas.

Vary groups for group activities.

You may want to let students work with their friends on occasion (even if this means ESL students seeking each other out) but at least some of the time, mix groups up. You might do this randomly (e.g., by numbering people off) at times or at other times try to group students deliberately so that ESL students will have a supportive, patient native speaker in their group.

FAQ

Should I encourage ESL students to work with native speakers on group projects?

Encouraging ESL students to do this will certainly help their language learning. However, whether you decide to push students in this direction should depend on your general policy on group work. If you generally let students form their own groups and work with those they feel most comfortable with, ESL students should have this same opportunity. However, if you assign groups with an aim to putting together students with a variety of strengths, you might want to consider language background as one factor. You may want to group two ESL students with a couple native speakers so they don't feel too isolated. And you might want to select native speakers who you think are likely to be patient and supportive.

How do I assign participation marks to quiet students?

If you base your participation marks solely on students volunteering verbal responses, most ESL students will be disadvantaged. Give students other ways to contribute verbally, by calling on them directly or by organizing brief presentations. Look as well for other signs that they are engaged. For example, are they taking notes or giving other visual cues that they are absorbing the material? Look also for ways to elicit participation in writing, for example, by asking them to hand in questions they have prepared for each class.



FACULTY STORY



My own moment of insight came in a discussion about ideology. The topic of “gun culture” came up in class. Students from different cultures weighed in on

the varying degrees of tolerance of firearms in their countries. For the first time, I could see the students relating the material directly to their own backgrounds and experience. This was a key moment for me; it became clear that in making the material personal, I could open up another avenue of understanding for ESL students.

Liberal Studies

STUDENT STORIES



One teacher really helped me feel confident participating in class. It was after three weeks – the teacher actually pointed at me “What’s your name?” “OK

Sammy, can you talk about the importance of the water tap?” I had no clue what he was talking about, so I said... because he really wanted us to talk about the material and how you touch and interact with the material...I said “That’s a water tap so I know for sure that water’s going to come out from there.”

He didn’t laugh at me, he didn’t do what I don’t like (what many English speakers do) skip your point or they want to make it better. He said “That’s a good point, but I want you to say more specifically.” He didn’t say, “OK let’s go to the next person.” He was being very encouraging. I found that’s very helpful. In that class now, I feel more confident.

Graphic Design



There are a lot of courses where it’s a matter of group work or discussions so we’re not just there listening. We also have to bring up our

opinions, or we have to teach the class, or we get a topic and we have to deliver the information. The moment when I did this and I received some feedback where people were engaging my material – that was the key for me. That I was being understood and there’s the interaction between the other person and me... I’m getting my ideas across...they’re acknowledging and asking questions and engaging with the material, like a dialogue.

Material Art and Design

THE INTERNATIONAL CLASSROOM



OCAD's Internationalization Plan identifies a need to introduce "an international, intercultural or global dimension into course content and materials and into teaching and learning methods"(2009). Increasingly, OCAD faculty are working to include international content in their curriculum, by including material about "non-Western" artists and designers, art and design movements, and social movements and theories. This international content helps students from diverse backgrounds to feel their experience is valued and that they are an integral part of the class, but just as importantly, it enriches learning for all students and faculty.

With our very diverse classrooms, you can often draw on your students themselves as a resource, by encouraging them to contribute knowledge from their own cultures. The faculty stories on this page give examples of the rich results this kind of assignment can yield. At the same time there is a balance to be struck between encouraging students to draw on their own experiences for their assignments and making them feel that they are expected, exclusively, to contribute something from their "home country," to serve as "cultural ambassadors." As the student story on this page points out, some students who are new to Canada may be particularly interested in researching Canadian topics. It's also important, of course, for students to feel that international content is an integral part of the course and not simply a token curiosity.

STUDENT STORY



Personally, I would wish that instructors get rid of their Eurocentric mind and focus on other parts of the world because it's very important now especially in Canada

– it's a multicultural society. But with a lot of professors, their knowledge is only based on European history or European art history. Even those talking about film history mostly focus on the American industry and French New Wave. Professors, mostly when I talk about Asian philosophies or Asian history they have no idea – mostly they will only say they appreciate it, but not really spend time on it. They like it, because that's what they expect, they wish someone can do a different piece. Because I'm Chinese they're expecting to see something different from me. Because of my appearance they're not expecting I'll do a lot of Western art style. They wish to see something about your city or your country. At the beginning I did a lot of that in first year and second year and then later, I started changing my topic based on Canadian society.

Zheng Yun Lu, *Integrated Media*



FACULTY STORIES



A few years ago I taught a course called Images and Practices of Technology. Students from many programs in the university registered in the class.

This mix – with industrial design, advertising, integrated media, drawing and painting, and photography students engaging in a common dialogue – created a rich and discursive atmosphere. One of the colloquia focused on “Technology Through a Post-colonial Lens.” An assignment intended to expand this topic required students to research and present technological innovations prior to 1500 CE. This parameter dissuaded students from relying on the Renaissance and its attendant scientific advancements. What occurred was something I had not anticipated. Students who do not necessarily see themselves reflected in the curriculum presented inventions from their own cultures. The presentations made the point that many of the technologies we presume to be Western in origin are not. Also, ESL students were able to feel comfortable with their presentations, since they were contributing

new knowledge to the class. This project enlightened all of us in attendance to our own assumptions regarding Western technological progress and the problems with history texts that are not inclusive.

Caroline Langill, *Liberal Studies*



In our [MAAD] Thesis class we encourage students to look at their own history and research that background. This year we have several

students who are looking at their childhood and the particularity of that place. From farming in China in a very rural, old farming set up, to being a child in a Chinese school and focusing on the red ties that all the children wore as part of the school uniform throughout China, to living in the very dense city of Hong Kong and growing up in a high rise. Each of these aspects is further researched in their Thesis Review Statement.

Beth Alber, *Design*

DIVERSITY IN THE STUDIO/CLASSROOM:

A Message from Jane Ngobia,
Director, Diversity and Equity Initiatives

In the recent past, universities have become more accessible to more than the “traditional mainstream students.” As a result, a common debate revolves around how best to enroll, educate, retain, and graduate students from historically underrepresented groups. At the same time universities are striving to diversify the student body to produce graduates who will have mutual understanding and respect for different cultures and who can live and work in a global environment.

Data from Statistics Canada show that immigration is growing exponentially, and Ontario and Toronto in particular will receive a majority of the new immigrants. By 2017, 51% of the total population in Toronto will be “visible minority.” Considering these facts, OCAD will welcome more and more diverse students in classrooms and studios. Research tells us that the unfortunate reality is once they are on campus, many students from underrepresented groups report that they are treated as outsiders and they describe having encountered subtle forms of bias. Students talk about discrimination in not being acknowledged or in small everyday slights in which they perceive that their value and perspective is not appreciated or respected.

Our challenge is to make every individual student’s experience in our class/studio at OCAD a positive one and to ensure that diverse voices are heard. We can do this first by recognizing any biases or stereotypes we may have ourselves absorbed, by being sensitive to terminology, names, gestures and jokes, and by rectifying any language patterns or case examples that exclude or demean any group(s). It’s important also to introduce discussions of diversity in our studios and classrooms to get a sense of how students feel about the inclusivity of the climate we have created.

But beyond these efforts at self-reflection and vigilance, we can engage in deliberate efforts to transform our teaching and learning, to embrace diversity, to see the classroom as a microcosm of the wider world, and to situate the acceptance of diversity as integral to the achievement of academic excellence. As teachers we can engage diverse student voices as a learning resource in class discussions, multicultural group work, students as guest speakers, and students as cultural resources. By empowering students to share their experiences and art we enrich each other’s imagination and learning experiences.



THE MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOM



A classroom that makes room for students' experiences can also make room for their first languages. Such a classroom may be one where students feel comfortable working together on coursework in their own language. For the most part, the focus of OCAD classes is on mastery of content, not language practice, and for ESL students, discussion in their own language may at times be the best way to solidify their learning. But students' first languages can be more than just a way to communicate with each other. Encouraging multilingual students to draw on their first language for their creative work can lead to fascinating, multilayered work (as in the examples on these pages).

FACULTY STORY



In 2006, there were four students in the Integrated Media Thesis class who made work in film and video that ran “against the grain” of English.

Maxine Bergevin decided not to translate the poetic French text of her audio

installation, and instead wrote a parallel text in English which appeared on a screen positioned as a sheet of paper in a typewriter.

An anglophone had to take a running start to speak the title of Josée Lapierre's video *J'viens pas du Québec ok?* about growing up francophone in Timmins, Ontario, and the elisions, erosions and complications of the unique, and disappearing French culture of northern Ontario. She resorted to subtitles at some points but refused them at others. Both of these students and their works took the issues of translation very deeply into consideration.

Yi-Ting and Lin-Yao each made films; though they were quite different in their styles, approaches, and intentions. (By coincidence, both have roots in Taiwan.) The spoken language in their films was Chinese, because although they made their work within an English-only environment, the primary audience of address for their films was not an English speaking audience. They used English subtitles.

In the making of a student film, faculty often read several drafts of a script. This process was complex for Lin-Yao who wrote in Chinese (Mandarin). She would then have her script translated into English (by a friend, or friend of a friend). I would give feedback on that



draft, and she would take notes in Chinese. When we were dealing with more subtle issues of meaning and cinematic language she resorted to taping me so that she could think about the comments later. We fussed over the subtitles, deciding together what one would say in certain circumstances. Interestingly Lin-Yao's film had a fantastic plot about two women who become trapped in the same body and have to negotiate each others' lives.

Yi-Ting's film was quite different in approach, though the process was again one of collaborating through an unseen translator. Her piece was initially called *My Mother* – but the Thesis class collectively retitled it: *Media, Memories, My Mother and Me*. Her difficulties were of the limits of self-expression, and of the loss of sound and nuance in the language of her mother(s) tongue.

Johanna Householder, Art

STUDENT STORY



We did a fabulous project when our instructor taught us typography in the first semester. He assigned us to do a long copy ad. But if our first language was not English we

could use our own language to do the ad. I was stunned to have a professor who had the courage to propose this assignment in a typography class.

It was frustrating in a way to come up with a long body copy that tells a convincing story; and in a way it was more frustrating to write it in my own language (Chinese) and have my professor understand it. If I were to choose to write in my own language, then I also had to bring a certain foreign culture to describe my client (Dove) to non Chinese-speaking Canadians. On the other hand, it was a good opportunity to bring my culture to the class. And if writing it in a foreign language could make my ad stand out from all the other ones, why not? In the end I wrote my story in Chinese with English translation on the ad. That was an alternative method to wrap up this long copy ad.

I was thankful that he created this assignment because he showed his interest in other countries and tried to bring it to the class to create a true “multicultural” class environment when half of the class was made up of international students. That means so much to ESL students because that means Canadians actually appreciate our culture and our existence in Canadian society.

Miranda Chung, Advertising

DESIGNING ACCESSIBLE LECTURES



Lecture classes can be challenging for ESL students because they require extended concentration, often without any opportunity to regroup mentally. In addition, taking written notes while listening can be very taxing for second language speakers. Fortunately, many techniques that make lectures more accessible for ESL students are helpful for native speakers with a range of learning styles. The key is to give students a hook, a way to grab onto the material as it goes by, whether that's by providing an image, or simply a pause for reflection.¹ These techniques may slow down your lecture slightly but will greatly increase the chances that students are able to actually grasp and retain the material. Here are some suggestions:

Provide an explicit structure for your lecture. Display or hand out a written outline of the main points in your lecture for students to refer to. Consider posting this in advance so students come into the lecture already oriented to what they are going to hear. Providing this structure gives students something to “hang onto” as they are listening, increasing their ability to assimilate the new information and make connections between ideas. Refer back to the outline as you lecture.

Provide key information in writing. Reinforce information delivered verbally with selective written materials. In addition to a lecture outline, consider handing out or posting key terms so that students can look them up before the lecture. Or include

them directly in the course syllabus. As you lecture, be sure to display key terms and names or write them on the board. Names in particular are hard for second language speakers (as well as many other students) to write down as they come up, even if they are spelled out verbally. Seeing these names correctly spelled allows students to look them up afterwards.

Make use of visuals. Images, of course, abound in OCAD lectures. Consider also using charts and maps, anything that visually reinforces the material students are hearing verbally.

Make opportunities for active processing. Give students breaks from listening and a chance to process what they've heard. For example, consider stopping periodically and asking students to summarize key points. They can do this in pairs first so everyone has a chance to participate.

Provide key cultural information. Provide very basic information about cultural landmarks that come up in your lectures, explaining their cultural significance and relevance to the material. Everything from the Vatican to John F. Kennedy can be less familiar to ESL students than students who have grown up in North America. You may be surprised how many students

¹ Some information in this article was inspired by: Wlodkowski, Raymond and Margery Ginsberg, *Diversity and Motivation: Culturally Responsive Teaching*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1995.



raised in Canada will also benefit from these explanations.

Reinforce information. Look for ways to slow down and reinforce information, such as by rephrasing key information in multiple ways, including concrete examples and anecdotes, and summarizing key points periodically. Refer students to relevant parts of the readings. Consider pausing at key points in film or video clips to reiterate key points or to quickly check comprehension.

STUDENT STORY



For Liberal Studies, I really hope professors can post lectures on My Courses. Because some names are not English, maybe French, some-

times they're spelling it but it's very fast and you can't really write it down, and that's your only chance to take notes. For me, I am an ESL student. English is already a second language... After you put a French name or those courses with French artists or paintings you really can't write it down, and then I don't know how to spell them.

Qiao Zhang, *Integrated Media*

FAQ

Should I allow ESL students to record lectures?

Absolutely. This isn't an "easy way out" for students. The student who records the lecture is likely doing more work, not less – they will very likely be listening to it several times over. Having the recording may mean the student can really concentrate on following the lecture without trying to take notes at the same time. Or that they can highlight in their notes points that they didn't quite catch and listen again for them afterwards.



SUPPORTING ESL STUDENT WRITERS

Writing in a second or other language at the university level is one of the biggest challenges many ESL students face. Some students find the process extremely frustrating, as they consider themselves to be competent, confident, and articulate writers in their first language, but find they haven't the vocabulary or the command of complex grammatical structures to translate their ideas into English.

Language itself is not the only issue that makes writing in English particularly challenging for ESL writers. Writers from other academic cultures often need to adjust to a whole new idea of what makes an essay and how to structure an argument. For example, in some traditions, the thesis appears at the end of an essay after, and only after, the argument supporting it has been fully developed. In others, the standard essay may require artful digressions from the topic. Many written traditions favour a much more indirect style than North American academic writing. In these, spelling out cause and effect too explicitly can be considered condescending to the reader – the writer's job is to carefully lay out the facts, leaving the reader to “connect the dots.” In some written traditions, the skillful writer weaves in the words of authorities in ways that would be considered plagiarism at OCAD (see “ESL Writers and Plagiarism”). And as one final example, the culture of writing in many countries favours the display

of sophisticated language and poetic embellishment, even in academic writing. To these writers, North American writing may seem drab or even childish. Writers from any of these traditions can come across as untrained writers when writing for their courses at OCAD. It is useful to keep in mind that what appears to be an inappropriate written voice or essay structure may have been the result of the student's careful training in another tradition.

With a little extra guidance, over time many students are able to write clear, compelling papers and reports on a variety of topics for classes in diverse fields. Below are several suggestions that will help you set your students up for success in their written assignments. With the time limitations that all faculty are faced with, you may not be able to integrate all these suggestions into your classes. But any that you can adopt will pay off in better quality writing from all your students, native and non-native speakers alike.

Break down assignments. Be sure to provide clear, detailed assignment sheets with obvious deliverables and requirements. Take some time to go through the assignment sheet with students. Rephrase any language that is overly specialized, technical, or colloquial. Give students the opportunity to ask questions about the assignment either in class or during office hours.



Some students may want to speak with you immediately after class if they were too shy to ask questions during the class itself.

Encourage students to adopt a simple, direct style. Let them know that you value clarity of expression over eloquence and sophisticated vocabulary. This will alleviate a lot of pressure on ESL students, and will prevent students from overusing the thesaurus.

Emphasize “process” rather than “product” writing. Build a topic approval, proposal, or draft stage into the assignment so you can give students early feedback. Consider using a guided peer-editing session to help students revise their first drafts. Some professors at OCAD have also allowed students to resubmit final papers once they have received feedback: only some students will take advantage of this opportunity to elevate their grade on a paper – usually those students that will get the most out of your feedback and the revision process itself. You might also encourage your students to bring their proposals or rough drafts to the Writing & Learning Centre for a one-on-one tutoring session.

Incorporate low-stakes writing assignments into your course. In addition to the main written assignments for the course, consider includ-

ing “low-stakes” assignments: quick take-home or in-class assignments for little or no marks. These might include reading responses or index cards where students summarize key concepts from the lecture in one or two sentences. These assignments offer students low-pressure opportunities to practice critical thinking skills and exercise their “writing muscle.”

Provide models. Students will find it helpful to see models of strong writing to give them an idea of what they are working toward. This is particularly helpful in answering questions about structure, voice, and proper use of sources. Think about collecting these models from previous years. If you are concerned that students will mimic the models too closely, offer them examples with a range of styles and structures and draw attention to the diversity of approach and voice.

Use explicit rubrics. It is helpful for students to see, in writing, your grading criteria. One option is to have students come up with the rubric as a class, based on each assignment. This will encourage students to really think about and anticipate the qualities that you’ll be looking for in their papers. Whether you come up with the rubric, or have the class design it as an activity, make sure this rubric is widely available (posted on My Courses or handed out with the assignment sheet).

FAQ

How can I help ESL students keep on top of their readings?

Many ESL students struggle with the amount of reading assigned in their courses. Some come from educational cultures where they were expected to master readings line by line. Working in a second language, they may feel the need to look up every fifth word in the dictionary so they don't miss anything. It is also very difficult to skim an article or scan for key information in a second language. And for students from other cultures, many of the readings assigned at OCAD are rife with unfamiliar cultural references and assumptions.

Telling students explicitly what to look for in a reading – why you are assigning a particular chapter or article – provides much-needed direction for the student who is spending hours pouring over the week's reading assignment. Some explanation of the context the article was written in, its purpose and intended audience, and the cultural assumptions it makes can be helpful. You might also come up with pre-reading questions to help direct the students' attention to essential material. An in-class discussion of readings can also help students to develop a practical approach to their reading assignments.



FACULTY STORY



I've recently taught an ESL section of the Essay and the Argument. When I planned the course, I decided to embed regular, low-stakes,

writing assignments for the students into the curriculum (e.g., in-class writing and submissions of drafts for review). I thought that the low-stakes writing would get my students used to “thinking on paper” and provide a context for them to take risks as communicators in English.

I think the low-stakes writing achieved what I wanted it to – at least for some students in the class. The surprise was how useful this authentic writing was for me in my teaching.

For example, for one assignment, a student turned in a paper that was very well structured overall and right down to the sentence level. I'd spent a fair amount of time guiding my class on essay, paragraph, and sentence structure, so this particular student had been paying attention! But every sentence had two or more words that just didn't quite fit.

I knew, from the student's in-class writing and drafts, that this was not how he normally wrote. So I talked to him about the paper he turned in and I learned that he had relied on an electronic, Korean-Canadian dictionary to write this paper – more so than for his other papers. I encouraged

him to write in his own voice, even if it wasn't perfect. We talked about why it was better for him to use an English-English dictionary. And then he went away to revise and resubmit. I think it would have been harder to start this conversation with my student if I didn't already have a strong sense of what he really was as a writer in my class.

Low-stakes writing benefited me at other times in the class as well. With two other students who had submitted drafts of their essays, I was able to assess with confidence when they weren't using their own voices. And then I was able to talk to them about why the choices they had made, in writing, represented plagiarism at OCAD. Those two students turned in authentic writing for their final drafts.

Christina Halliday, *Liberal Studies*

RESOURCE

For ideas for low-stakes writing assignments, see the tipsheet on this topic from University of Waterloo under “Assessing and Evaluating Student Work” at http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/teaching_resources

GRADING AND GIVING FEEDBACK ON ESL WRITING

When grading papers and assignments, it is important for instructors to see feedback and evaluation as an opportunity for learning. Our suggestions encourage you to try to see past the inevitable grammatical errors to the content being communicated. Even if a paper contains numerous grammatical errors, it is still essential that we honour student writing as a form of communication, and respond to it as such. You can give helpful feedback on ESL writing without any specialized ESL training. By engaging with the student about the content of their paper and by showing them where, as a reader, you get lost, you encourage them to stretch and perfect their language skills.

In addition to the feedback you give ESL students yourself, you can encourage them to work with a tutor at the Writing & Learning Centre (WLC). Tutors help students to both develop their ideas and improve their written style and grammar – see the article on “Support for ESL Students at the Writing & Learning Centre” for information on what students can expect from the WLC.

There will be times when it is difficult to see past language limitations in your students’ work, when difficulties with language obscure communication to such an extent that you feel a student cannot succeed in your class. This may be a time when you need to talk with the student and encourage him or

her to take time for more concentrated language study. In addition to working with tutors at the WLC, this might include enrolling in credit ESL programs at OCAD (see “Resources for ESL and International Students at OCAD”) or in ESL programs outside OCAD. For general advice you can give on language learning, see “Supporting Your Students’ Language Learning.”

Here are tips for providing helpful feedback on ESL papers:

Provide feedback from an “active” reader. Always respond to content, not just grammar. ESL students often feel as though their language errors have eclipsed their ideas, and this can lead to a sense of frustration or not feeling heard. Try first reading the paper once through without circling, correcting, or annotating a single grammatical error and responding solely to the content and ideas. Add a short note at the end of the paper. Here, give feedback on strengths as well as areas for improvement, discussing the ideas presented and the overall structure of the argument. It’s also helpful to raise provocative questions for the student to consider. You might also give a few concrete suggestions for improvements or areas to work on in the next assignment.

Minimize grammar markup.

Most students will benefit minimally, if at all, from a grammatical markup of



their entire paper. Passively looking over corrected errors rarely leads to new learning. In the absence of explicit grammatical instruction, it is difficult for most students to deduce grammatical rules from a series of corrections and apply them in new contexts. And the impact of all that red ink can be devastating. Instead, consider marking up only one paragraph for grammatical errors to give the student a sense of the number and kind of errors he or she is making. Beyond the one paragraph marked for language errors, only mark up passages where the clarity is directly affected. If possible, try to explain what it is about that passage that is unclear. This will help keep the student's focus on improving clarity, rather than aiming for perfection. Remember that grammatical errors are only a percentage of the mark in essays written by native speakers, so don't deduct more for non-native errors than you would for native ones.

Make time to meet with students during office hours. If you're having trouble making sense of the content of a student's paper, consider going over a page or two in individual meetings during office hours. This kind of one-on-one interview is often most valuable to the student, particularly when the student is having trouble understanding written feedback.

STUDENT STORIES



Almost every instructor would try and correct my mistakes... I appreciate that paragraph my instructors write at the end – they tell me what they feel about my paper and they tell me how I can improve. That helps me more than correcting my words or choice of words.

, *Environmental Design*



It's helpful for me when instructors highlight the part that they didn't understand well and they explain to me how I can make it better, so next time they can understand what I am saying. They always do notes. I'm learning... that's why you go to school. Even English speakers can have the same problems I have in grammar and organizing and paragraphs... so I don't feel bad at all.

, *Sculpture/Installation*

RESPONDING AS AN “ACTIVE READER”

Here is a sample of how a note on a student paper might focus on content while still giving feedback on structure and grammar.

(Written by Catherine Black, Liberal Studies)

This essay gets so much better as you get deeper into your analysis. The start of this essay is a little awkward because of some issues with “tone”: your references to your experience and your feelings are a little bit overwhelming – it makes me focus on you, the writer, rather than the subject, the painting. I also think you could have written a clear thesis statement instead of the statement of intent that appears at the bottom of your introductory paragraph. Remember that your introduction is like a map and you are providing your reader with a clear idea of what follows and where you are going. (Be specific. State your thesis.) As I read your essay it became clear to me that you do have a thesis, and a good one! I find that

there are many moments of very strong analysis in this essay as you discuss the oppressive colours, the energy, the weight of the scene. You paint a very ominous picture with your description, and your vocabulary is generally very accurate and strong. Your very vivid, descriptive paragraph about 911 did seem out of place, however. The content actually seemed more appropriate as an introduction—a way to lead to your thesis. I think your major challenges are with tone (knowing how much ‘distance’ you should have from your reader and your subject and also the way you “talk” to your reader—whether it should be casual or formal). There are also some problems with grammatical errors like article use. These are easy enough to correct, but will take some practice and attention. Finally, I feel your conclusion falls short of being a reflection of the very good analysis you offer in the body of your essay. Remember that it is an important part of your essay—it’s your last impression!



ESL WRITERS AND PLAGIARISM



ESL students at OCAD who plagiarize often do so for the some of the same reasons other students do. The conventions of citing appropriately in North American academic writing are complex, with many gray areas. What is considered common knowledge in a particular context? How close can a paraphrase be to the original without being considered plagiarism? At what point does a discussion with a friend about a piece of writing become too close a collaboration? Few students come out of high school, wherever they were educated, prepared to use sources well in university writing. Most will require a fair bit of coaching on this during their time at university. On the other hand, there are OCAD students who put a low priority on their written work at OCAD and are simply trying to avoid the work required to turn out a written paper. Or who simply get pressed for time and panic. Some turn to copying or buying papers. When you suspect this type of plagiarism, it is appropriate to follow the procedures in place in your Faculty.

There are, however, a couple of sources of plagiarism that are specific to the experience of ESL students: one has its source in cultural differences in writing practice, and the other in pressure students feel to turn out perfect English writing.

It is important to know that in some academic cultures, the words of re-

spected authoritative authors do not need to be cited. In fact, a fluent writer is often expected to show their mastery of the material by weaving in words from “the masters.” The educated reader is expected to recognize the source. For writers from these writing traditions, re-writing the words of an authority “in their own words,” as we ask them to do, may be considered deeply inappropriate. In writing by students from these traditions, you will commonly see that the student has woven into a paper passages that are clearly not his or her own, copied perhaps from a website or even from the course reading. Very often, this is done with no intention to deceive.

Another difference between the North American tradition and some other academic cultures is our emphasis on ownership, not only of original research, but of words themselves. For example, if we include some readily available background information on an artist, such as date of birth, we don’t normally need to cite it – it is considered common knowledge. However, if we take this information verbatim from a website, suddenly it is plagiarism. Even though there is nothing original about the information itself, the writer owns the precise phrasing of the passage. This is a bizarre concept to writers from many cultures – after all, how can one “own” the words of a language? Our very culturally specific views of intellectual property take learning. Differences in views of ownership of

language and written expression can also influence how students collaborate with others on their work, with some ESL students feeling it is quite natural to rely on friends with stronger language skills to write portions of their paper based on their ideas or research. Writers from other cultures may not draw such clear lines between their own words and those of others. This area can be particularly confusing for students in OCAD classes where close collaboration on group projects is often encouraged.

Another common reason that some ESL students plagiarize is that they feel compelled to turn in grammatically perfect writing – in fact, they are often told by faculty that this is expected. Or they may simply feel embarrassed to hand in

work that they know is full of errors. To meet this expectation, students may hire editors, or they may decide to write in their own language and have it translated. Some hired editors do much more than correct grammar – they may rewrite whole passages to make them sound “better.” The result may leave little that is the student’s own.

Here are some suggestions for helping students from other academic cultures avoid plagiarism:

Where you have a concern, meet with the student one-on-one. If you see writing from an ESL student that is peppered with passages that are clearly in a different voice, it is worth a one-on-one conversation. The student may readily tell you which passages are their own and which are not. You can help them understand that in learning to write in English they are learning a whole new set of conventions on how to deal with sources in their writing. You might suggest that they work with a tutor at the Writing & Learning Centre to learn how to paraphrase and incorporate written sources in their work. You might also offer them the opportunity to rewrite their work.

Let students know that the conventions you expect them to follow are culturally specific. It’s important to impress on students how seriously plagiarism is viewed at OCAD; it’s also important to acknowledge that the conventions we follow are culturally specific and need to be learned. Lectures about morality and what we term “intellectual integrity” may be ignored by students who don’t see what they do as cheating or stealing.

FAQ

How can I design assignments to deter plagiarism?

Some strategies to discourage plagiarism may improve the work you receive from all your students. Aim to create assignments that require synthesis of material and application of concepts to new examples. Build process into your assignments so that you have an opportunity to see and comment on early drafts or research questions.

For more detailed suggestions see this handout from the University of Toronto: www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagiarism.html.

Encourage students to visit the Writing & Learning Centre early in the research process.

Many students fall into plagiarism early in the research process by simply copying long passages from their readings into their notes. A meeting with a Writing & Learning Centre tutor can help a student develop strong research questions, read critically, and take effective notes so that they are able to establish a dialogue with their sources in their final writing.

Tell students explicitly that you do not expect perfect English.

To ease the pressure for perfect English, emphasize that you want to see their own work in their own words, even if it is imperfect. Let them know that if they do have a friend edit their work, they are responsible for ensuring that the thinking and content remains their own. They should also work closely with their editor so the writing remains in their voice. In other words, if they sit down with you with the final draft they should be able to explain why they have chosen particular wording in particular places. If they want to make sure their ideas are clearly expressed without running the risk of an editor rewriting their work, their best bet is to work with a tutor at the Writing & Learning Centre.

RESOURCES

For further reading on ESL writers and plagiarism, see:

Pennycook, Alastair. "Borrowing Others' Words: Text, Ownership, Memory, and Plagiarism." *TESOL Quarterly* 30.2 (1996): 201-230.

Currie, Pat. "Staying out of Trouble: Apparent Plagiarism and Academic Survival." *Journal of Second Language Writing* 7.1 (1998): 1-18.

Both articles are included in a reader prepared by the Writing & Learning Centre: *Critical Reflections for Educators on Intellectual Property, Originality, and Use of Sources* (2006). Available at the Writing & Learning Centre or the Dorothy H. Hoover Library.



SUPPORT FOR ESL STUDENTS AT THE WRITING AND LEARNING CENTRE



The Writing & Learning Centre tutor is a kind of quiet collaborator with the OCAD course instructor. And tutors are of course collaborators with students, working on whatever challenges they bring, through dialogue, coaching, and conversation. In the case of ESL students, the work involves help with grammar, but it involves much more. As with all students, WLC tutors work with ESL students to develop and clarify their ideas and to find their written “voice.” WLC tutors also help with understanding assignments, and with reading, research, and study skills. They help orient ESL students to the academic culture of North America in general, and of OCAD in particular.

WLC tutors are trained in the discourses that are pertinent to an art and design institution. Some have advanced degrees, others are current upper-level OCAD students themselves. While tutors cannot replace course instructors, they can help students to master key concepts and difficult readings. To understand what an assignment is asking of them, some cultural decoding is often required. Students also frequently need an explanation of the form and style of the academic essay in North America (see “Supporting ESL Student Writers”). Tutors can also help students formulate clear research questions and note-taking strategies, which can help avert plagiarism.

WLC tutors work with ESL students on grammar in a couple of ways. One approach is to focus on passages where meaning is obscured. For many students, articulating their idea verbally can help them articulate it more clearly in writing. In another approach, tutors help the student identify one recurrent pattern of errors in their writing and coach them on self-editing skills. Students who want to work more intensively on grammar can sign up for a “Tutoring Mini-Series” with a specialized ESL tutor (see opposite).

Tutoring at the WLC is oriented towards the student’s acquisition of skills, not just the perfection of a single paper. For this reason, tutors do not simply edit papers for students. Research shows that watching someone else circle and correct their errors rarely leads ESL learners to any long-term improvement in grammar skills. Instead, tutors work with students to gradually develop skills they can use independently.

While grammar is one possible focus of a WLC appointment, or part of an appointment, student and tutor together may agree to devote the appointment to higher level concerns such as essay structure, development of the thesis, or integration of research sources.

Because of the time and effort involved in developing second language skills, the process is aided by regular, sup-



portive monitoring. This is likely where the tutor is most effective. Single appointments can be useful, of course – for example, to clear up a specific citation issue, or to overcome writer’s block. But much of the most fruitful student-tutor interaction occurs within a relationship built up over some time, from a few weeks to months – even years. Many students make the WLC a part of their routine, scheduling a regular weekly appointment with the same tutor over the course of a term or an academic year.

Overall, WLC tutors attempt to help ESL students to overcome the idea of English as a mere school subject. Tutors strive to communicate a sense of the different registers of the language, the sense of slang and idioms, and to gain a feel for nuance and subtlety. They encourage ESL students to engage with the English language as a living medium for thought, exploration, and creation.

The WLC offers two types of tutoring services geared specifically to ESL students:

General ESL tutoring: ESL students book appointments as needed to work on a particular assignment or general writing or learning concerns. They can request a specialized ESL tutor, though one may not always be available. All WLC tutors have some training in working with ESL students. Students can

choose to work with the same tutor on an ongoing basis.

Tutoring Mini-Series: To work more intensively on vocabulary or grammar, ESL students can sign up for a series of four appointments with a specialized ESL tutor. This is an opportunity to work specifically on language rather than an upcoming assignment. In the Vocabulary Building for Writing mini-series, the tutor helps students build vocabulary through active reading, advanced dictionary research, and creation of a personal dictionary. In the Editing for Grammar mini-series, tutors help students identify their most common error types and learn self-editing techniques.

RESOURCE

The Writing & Learning Centre has a wealth of handouts online that you can direct students to, on everything from the writing process, to using sources, to grammar and style. There is also a special page of resources for ESL students, including online grammar handouts, and listening and vocabulary practice. Access the Writing & Learning Centre website under the Student area of the OCAD web site at <http://www.ocad.ca/students/wlc.htm>

FAQ

What change can I expect in a student's paper after they've visited the Writing & Learning Centre?

The improvement you see after a single visit to the WLC will depend on what the tutor and student have decided to work on together. It may be in research, structure, or clarity of expression. It will be limited of course by the time the tutor and student have had together and by the work the student has done after the session – no miracles, unfortunately. Consistent changes in grammar and writing style will come only after concerted work by the student over an extended period of time.



RESOURCES FOR ESL STUDENTS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT OCAD

Writing & Learning Centre

Offers general tutoring for ESL students and four-session Tutoring Mini-Series (See description page 45). To make an appointment, students can contact the WLC at x 229 or wlc@ocad.ca. The WLC also has a wealth of handouts on writing and learning skills at: www.ocad.ca/students/wlc.htm (click on “Handouts”). Specialized resources for ESL learners including grammar exercises that can be completed online are available at www.ocad.ca/students/wlc.htm (click on “ESL Resources”).

Dorothy H. Hoover Library

Offers grammar handbooks with exercises ESL students can work on and correct on their own. For vocabulary building, the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, a “learners” dictionary recommended by the Writing & Learning Centre, with accompanying CD-ROM is also available. Also, a beautiful Firefly Visual Dictionary is available in the quick reference section. Ask library staff for assistance in locating ESL resources.

Diversity & Equity Initiatives Office

Works with members of the OCAD community to promote a respectful, inclusive work and learning environment. Students are invited to meet with our Director, Diversity & Equity Initiatives, to confidentially discuss their ideas, comments, or concerns about diversity, equity and inclusion at OCAD. Contact diversity@ocad.ca.

International Student Services Office (ISSO)

Offers individual and group support, and services and referrals for international students (as well as for incoming/outgoing exchange students) pertaining to immigration, health, employment, and cultural adaptation. International student activities and opportunities include fall orientation, peer mentoring, and ISSO student advisory group. Contact international@ocad.ca.

ESL Credit Programs

OCAD offers two excellent credit programs for ESL students. English for Art & Design (EAD) is a five-week intensive immersion program for incoming ESL students. It includes a credit studio course and a non-credit class in Visual Studies. The program helps ESL students build the vocabulary, the spoken fluency, and the academic skills they will need to study at OCAD. EAD is also available on a non-credit basis for returning students who want to improve their English. Information online at www.ocad.ca/ead.

English Language Pathway is a full-year program for ESL students in first-year Design. Students take five of their required first-year Design and Liberal Studies courses in an ESL-only section. They receive extra help with language and academic skills and also benefit from belonging to a year-long learning community. Information online at www.ocad.ca/pathway.

