

Working with Multilingual Learners: A Presentation for Teaching Librarians

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This presentation is adapted from “Working with Multilingual Learners” (Namubiru & Rossell)



Today, we will...

1. Review challenges that multilingual students face while in the American academic context
2. Discuss strategies and tips to support these students, particularly when it comes to increasing student engagement and addressing information literacy

Introduce yourself and share your response to the following question:

- Of all the lessons/activities/workshops you teach or facilitate in your work, which one is your favorite and why?
- Think about the 'ideal' classroom session. What makes it ideal? In other words, how is the classroom set up? What do you see the students doing to contribute to the class? What do you see yourself doing?

- engaged students; less talking from us; natural lighting
- classroom is conducive to lecture and seminar;
- engaged students; asking questions that are “thoughtful” not just clarifying
- engagement / participation; lively; curiosity from students
- classroom with moveable tables; ditto everything else
- engaged faculty; talking before the classroom even begins; explaining why the resources we provide are important in their assignments;
- students help each other; ask questions; make comments

A little bit about me...

- Come from an English-speaking country that has 51 tribes (each with their own language/dialect)
- Didn't pick up Swahili even though I lived in Kenya for 4 years!
- Studied in an international context since high school
- My experience doesn't represent other multilingual speakers.

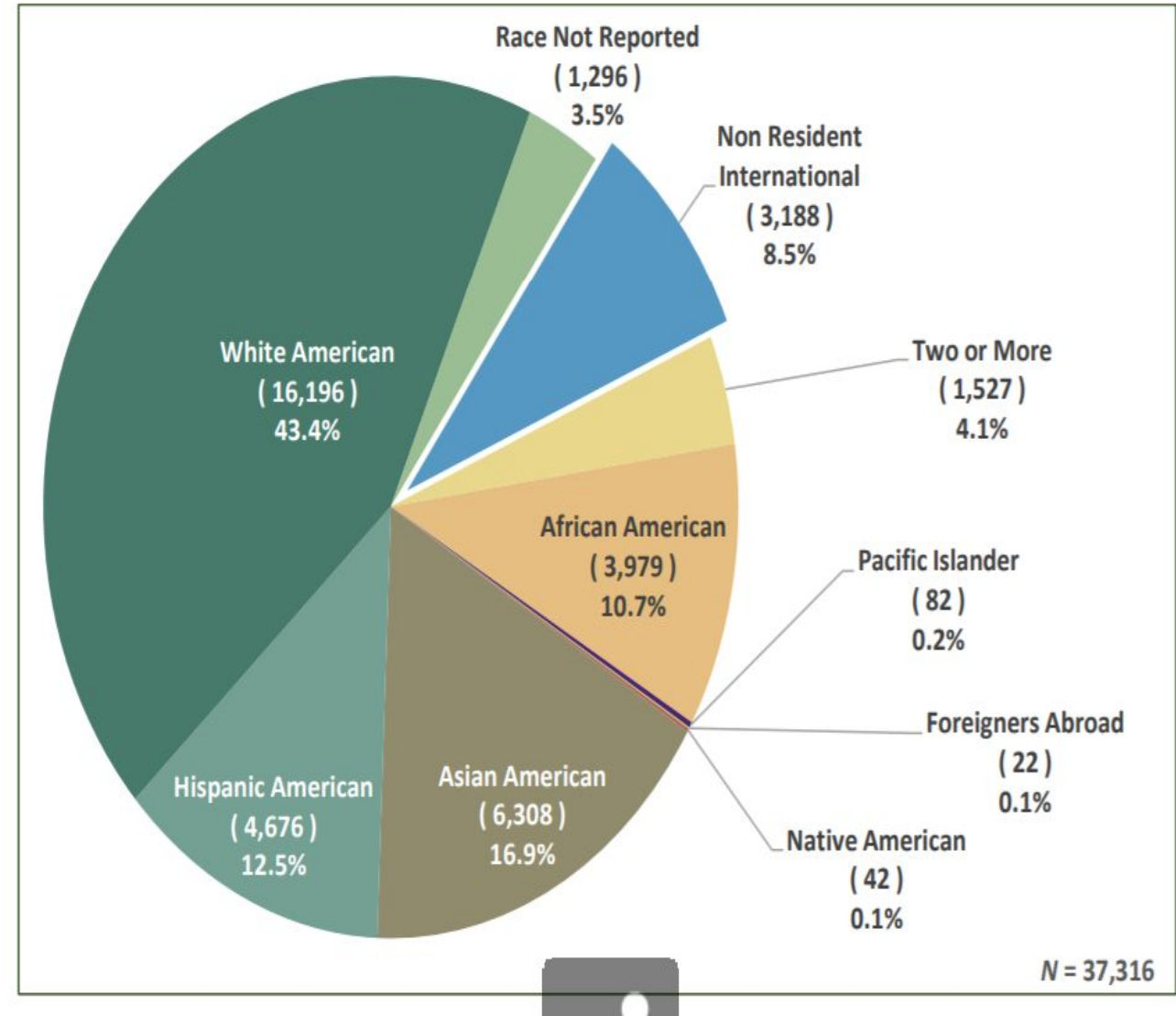
**Multilingual students speak more than one language.
But what else do we know about them?**

- English might be their first/home language.
- They might be international, but this doesn't mean they speak English as a Second language.
- They can be Generation 1.5 students. (Harklau & Siegal, 2009).
- They have diverse cultural and educational backgrounds.



Mason's Racial/Ethnic Context

According to the OIPS, as of Fall 2018, Mason's international students made up just 8% of the student population.

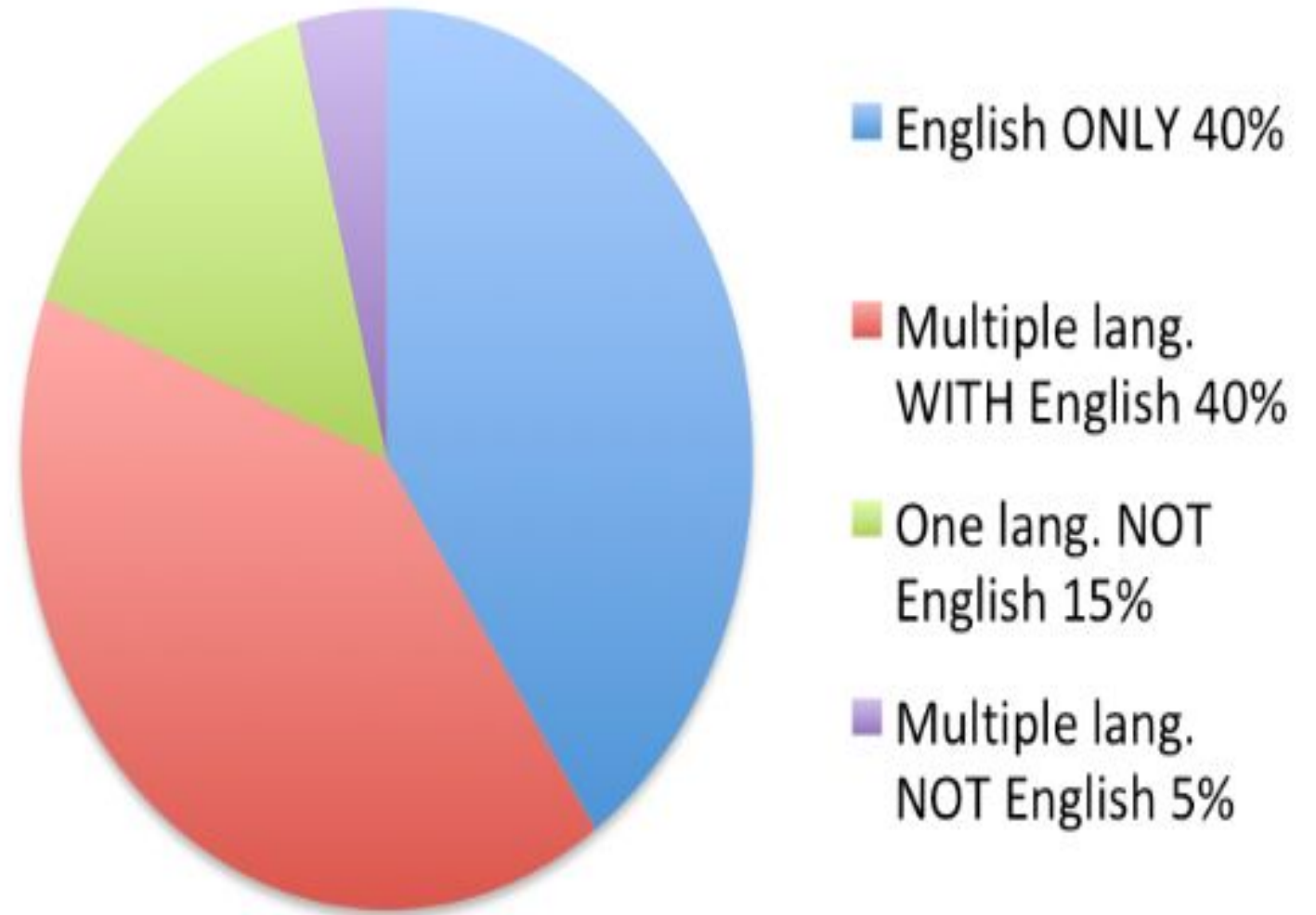


For further reading:

“International students in the context of campus diversity, Fall 2018” ([OIPS 2018 International Students and Scholars Data Report](#))

“Which of the following best describes the language environment in which you grew up?”

At Mason, many of our students describe themselves as multilingual students.



ENGLISH 302 Spring 2018 Data; N = 657;
60% of students in the class described themselves as multilingual.

Mason is working to support multilingual students.

Mason's Strategic Goal #8:
Create an inclusive and diverse
community that reflects the
diversity of the National Capital
Region

Multilingual Students Academic
Success Committee



**Mason's Launch of the The
ACE-Internalization Lab**

Point of Contact: Anna Habib
Associate Director of
Composition for Multilingual
Learners
English Department

**Stearns Center for Teaching &
Learning: Website Resources for
Faculty and Teaching Staff
Working with Multilingual
Learners**

This is all good news!

Working at Mason means working/learning with multilingual learners who:

- bring a variety of unique perspectives and experiences to enrich our class conversations and lessons.
- challenge our students to consider how other cultures function
- create a campus that is similar to the typical workplace

However, like other students, multilingual learners require an inclusive and culturally aware classroom that helps them grow and learn confidently.

Here are two of the most common challenges that researchers find facing multilingual (international) students.

Developing English language proficiency

- comprehension → engagement

Understanding American academic norms

- research & crediting of ideas
- student engagement

For further reading:

De Araujo, A.A. “Adjustment issues of international students enrolled in American colleges and universities: A Review of literature” *Higher Education Studies*, 1 (1), 2-8.

Challenge: Understanding American academic norms (doing research/crediting ideas)

For each challenge, I will share what research shows us about this and then provide 5 strategies and tips to keep in mind.

Here are a few scholars looking at information literacy of multilingual (international) students

- Robillard, A. (2006). Young scholars affecting composition: A challenge to disciplinary citation practices. *College English*. 68(3), 253-271.
- Vardi, I. (2012). Developing students' referencing skills: a matter of plagiarism, punishment and morality, or of learning to write critically? *Higher Education Research & Development*. 31 (6), 921-930.
- Zawacki, T., Habib, A., Hajabbasi, E. Antram, A., & Das, A. (2007). Valuing written accent: International voices in the U.S. academy. Retrieved from <https://writtenaccents.gmu.edu/research-findings/critical-thinking/>

Some multilingual students are not as familiar with research as an expectation.

[...]First of all, I was not taught how to do research or how to write research papers until the last year of college. Before that, I wrote for completing my assignments, by squeezing my head and recording whatever on my mind. Naively, it never occurred to me that I should do a review of what other people had written on the same or similar topics before writing my own.

-Ying

For further reading:

Zawacki, T., Habib, A., Hajabbasi, E. Antram, A., & Das, A. (2007). Valuing written accent: International voices in the U.S. academy. Retrieved from <https://writtenaccents.gmu.edu/research-findings/critical-thinking/>

Others know about this expectation though they might not prioritize them in the same way as the American academic context does.

[...] in Spain, we don't have a specific word for [plagiarism] like here, but it is more expressed that one should never copy papers from other sources, and never ask someone else to write it. But it is not as emphasized or stressed as here. And the consequences if you plagiarize are not as harsh as here. There you may fail the course if you plagiarize, but here you may get expelled from school and have it on your record.
-Ignacio

For further reading:

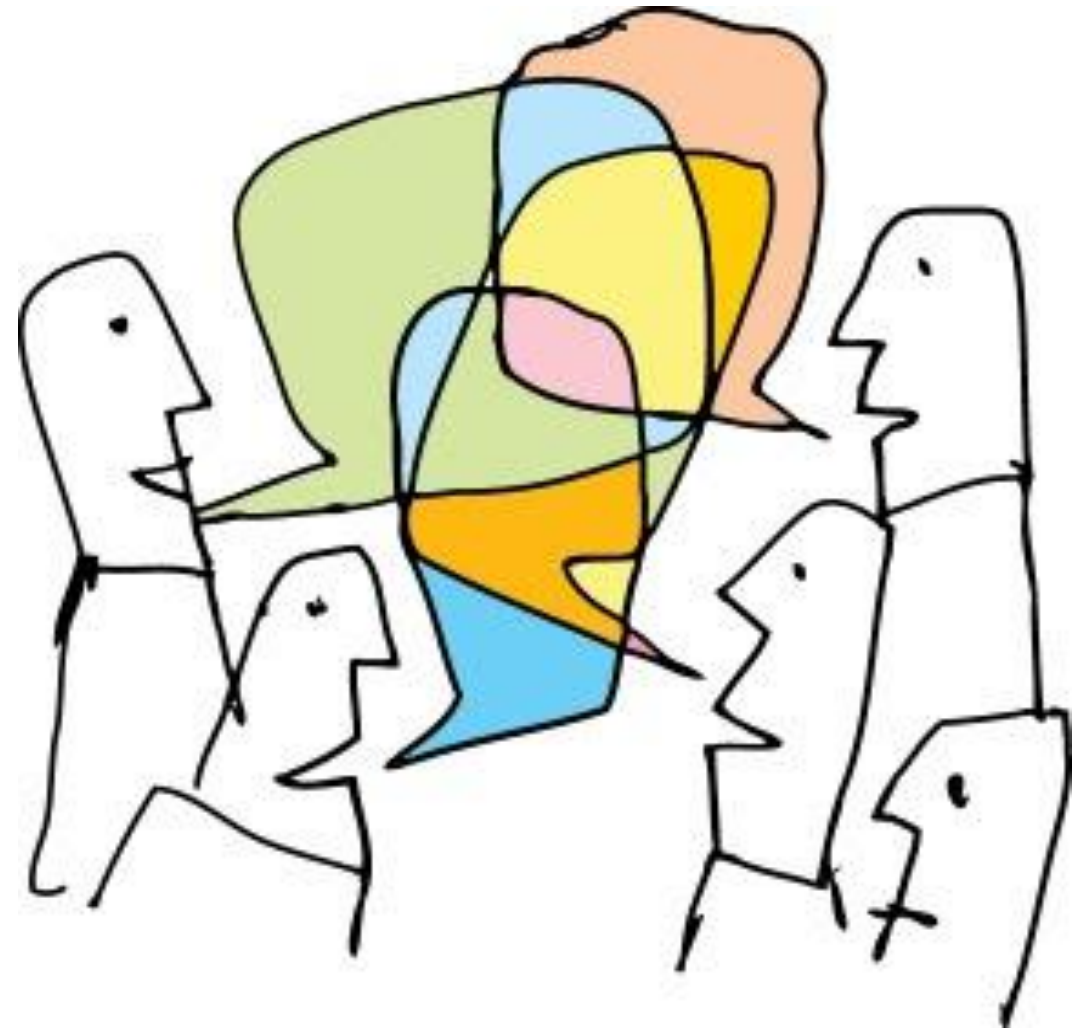
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In teaching research and information literacy, we are assuming **underlying values** that our students might not share. We have to first explain those values.

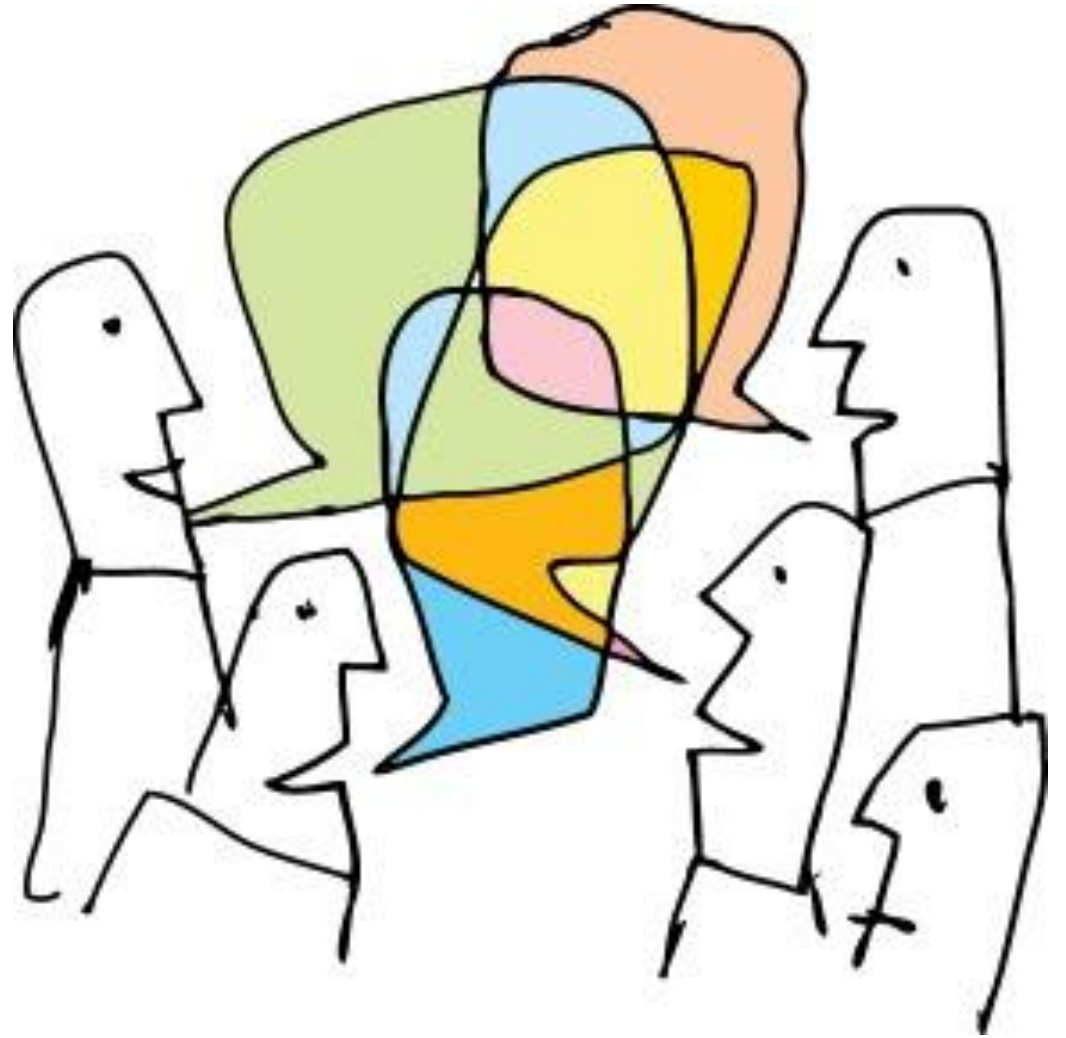
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Encourage students to share their experiences/thoughts/expectations about research and using libraries.



Students need to know the **WHY**
behind American academic
norms and practices.



Here's a class activity you might adapt.

Functions for the Reader	Functions for the Cited Author	Functions for the Citing Author
provides access to source material	gives them credit	supports/proves an idea/thesis
establishes relationships among texts	Identifies and legitimates contributions to the field	clarifies or defines a concept
	Calls attention to the work of a little-known or up-and-coming scholar	challenges or contends with an idea
	suggests author's feelings of debt and ownership	clarifies or demonstrates your exigence or the gap in the research
	shows respect for cited work	demonstrates your knowledge of the conversations/provides more perspective
	affirms individual property	extends the current ideas about a concept

For Further Reading:

- Robillard, A. (2006). Young scholars affecting composition: A challenge to disciplinary citation practices. *College English*. 68(3), 253-271.

Here's a class activity you might adapt.

Benefits of a Book	Benefits of a Primary Study	Benefits of a Popular Article
exploring the beginning or foundational theories of an issue		

**Write key vocabulary /
concepts on the board.
And define them!**

Database vs Journal

Journal vs Article

Reference vs Citation

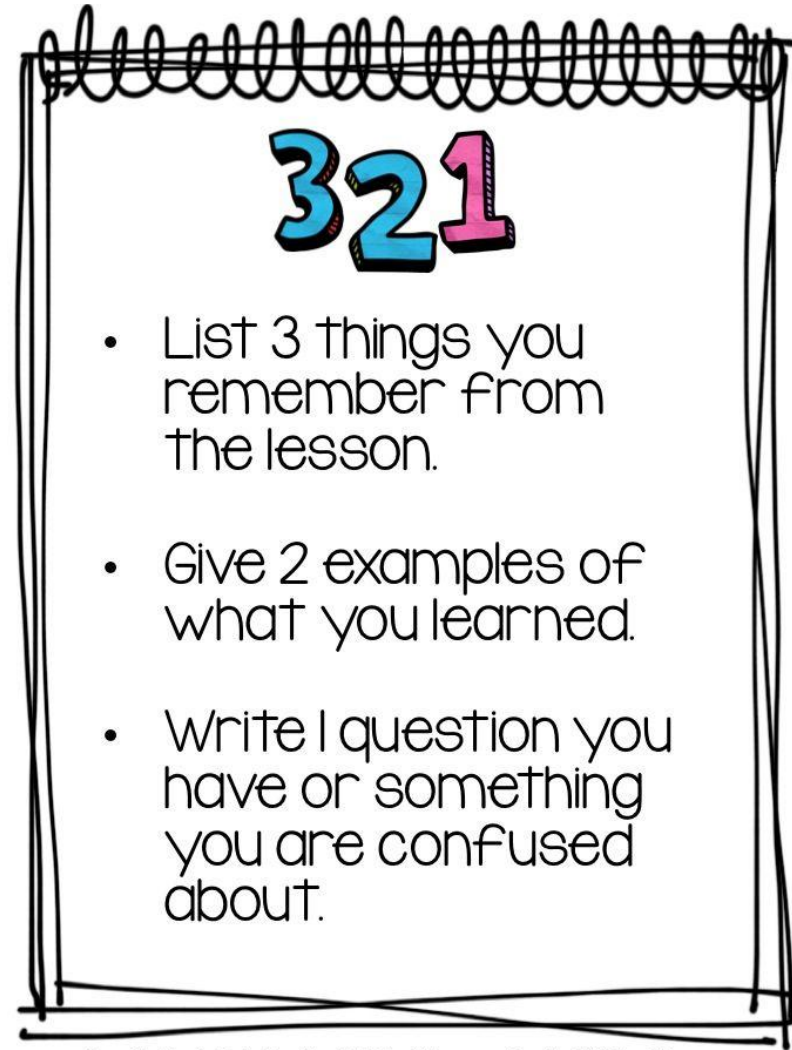
Visually representing the relationships between these words - Journal, Article, Database - can help students **appreciate the ecology of research.**

Take a moment to draw a picture you might use to illustrate how the these things are connected: journal, database, article.

Provide the activity instructions as a handout and let students work at their own pace. Circulate to answer questions.



**Use check-in activities
at the beginning, middle,
or end of class session
(e.g. 3-2-1)**



Challenge: English Language Proficiency & Fluency

For this challenge, I will share what research shows us and then provide 8 strategies and tips to keep in mind.

Here are a few scholars looking at English language development and fluency among multilingual students.

- Haan, J. & Mallett, K. (2015). English language literacy and the prediction of academic success in and beyond the pathway program. In P. Thomas & P. Takayoshi (eds.) *Literacy in practice: Writing in private, public, and working lives*. Routledge.
- Phillip, T. (2014). Developing resources for success: A case of a multilingual graduate writer. In T. Zawacki & M. Cox (Eds.), *WAC and second language writers: Research towards linguistically and culturally inclusive programs and practices*. pp. 69- 92. Fort Collins, CO: The WAC Clearinghouse.
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Mason's multilingual students have shared what they think about their language proficiency.

It all comes down to vocabulary; it's not your thought because I feel that now, every person who goes to school who does even a bit of schooling is blessed with some thought or another in his or her chosen field, but it's the expression...You have to know which word to use to express your thought.

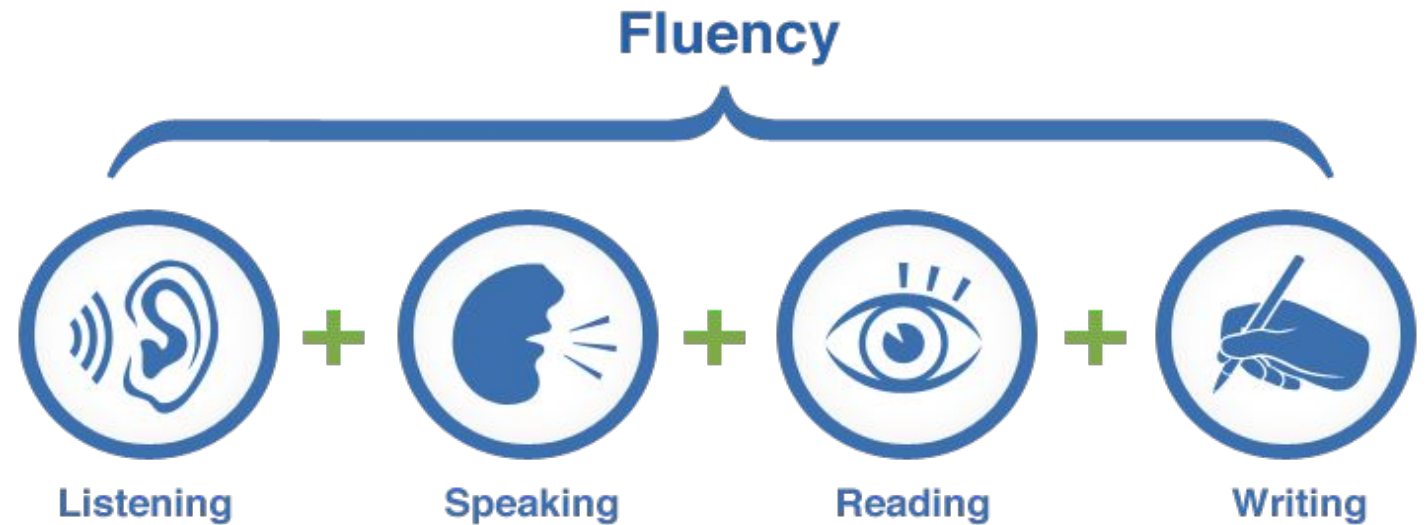
-Sri

For further reading:

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Comprehension affects engagement.

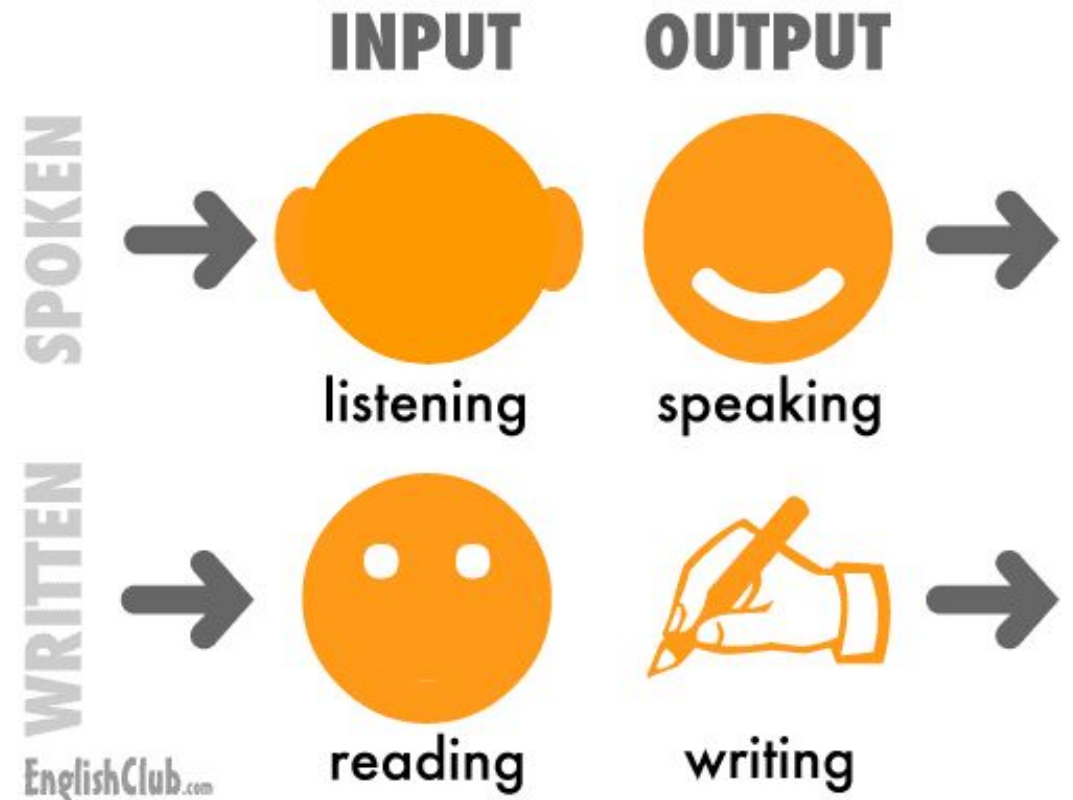
Comprehension increases with fluency & vocabulary.



For further reading:

Haan, J. & Mallett, K. (2015). English Language Literacy and the Prediction of Academic Success in and beyond the Pathway Program. In P. Thomas & P. Takayoshi (eds.) *Literacy in Practice: Writing in Private, Public, and Working Lives*. Routledge.

If we support our multilingual students with their linguistic **input**, they will increase their comprehension.



For further reading:

Haan, J. & Mallett, K. (2015). English Language Literacy and the Prediction of Academic Success in and beyond the Pathway Program. In P. Thomas & P. Takayoshi (eds.) *Literacy in Practice: Writing in Private, Public, and Working Lives*. Routledge.

**What do you do to ensure that all students understand the lesson?
Let's hear some of your strategies/tips.**

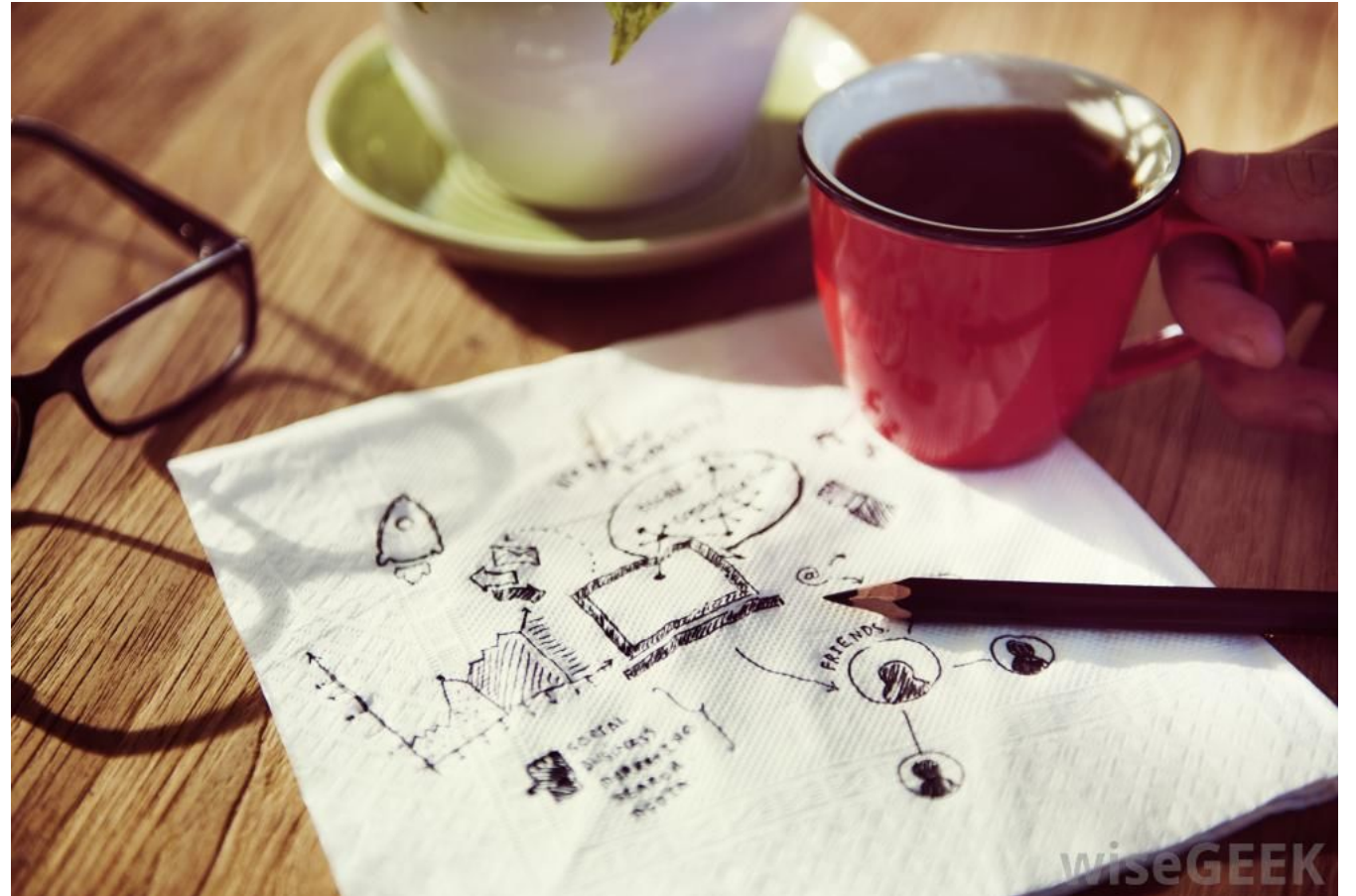
**Send students a
preview of the
lesson if possible**



**Write key vocabulary /
concepts on the board.**



Make generous use of
visuals and
illustrations.



Provide a listening guide
that students can follow as
you present.



Give precise instructions,
one instruction at a time.



Translate / **rephrase**
idiomatic language.

IDIOMS ABOUT THINKING AND LEARNING

**Have your wits
about you**



Be able to
think quickly
and make
sensible
decisions

Know what's what

Know the important
facts about a situation



**Not have a leg to
stand on**

Not have any
way of proving
that you are
right about
something



**Slow on the
uptake**

Taking a very
long time to
understand or
realize
something



Round the bend

Crazy; insane

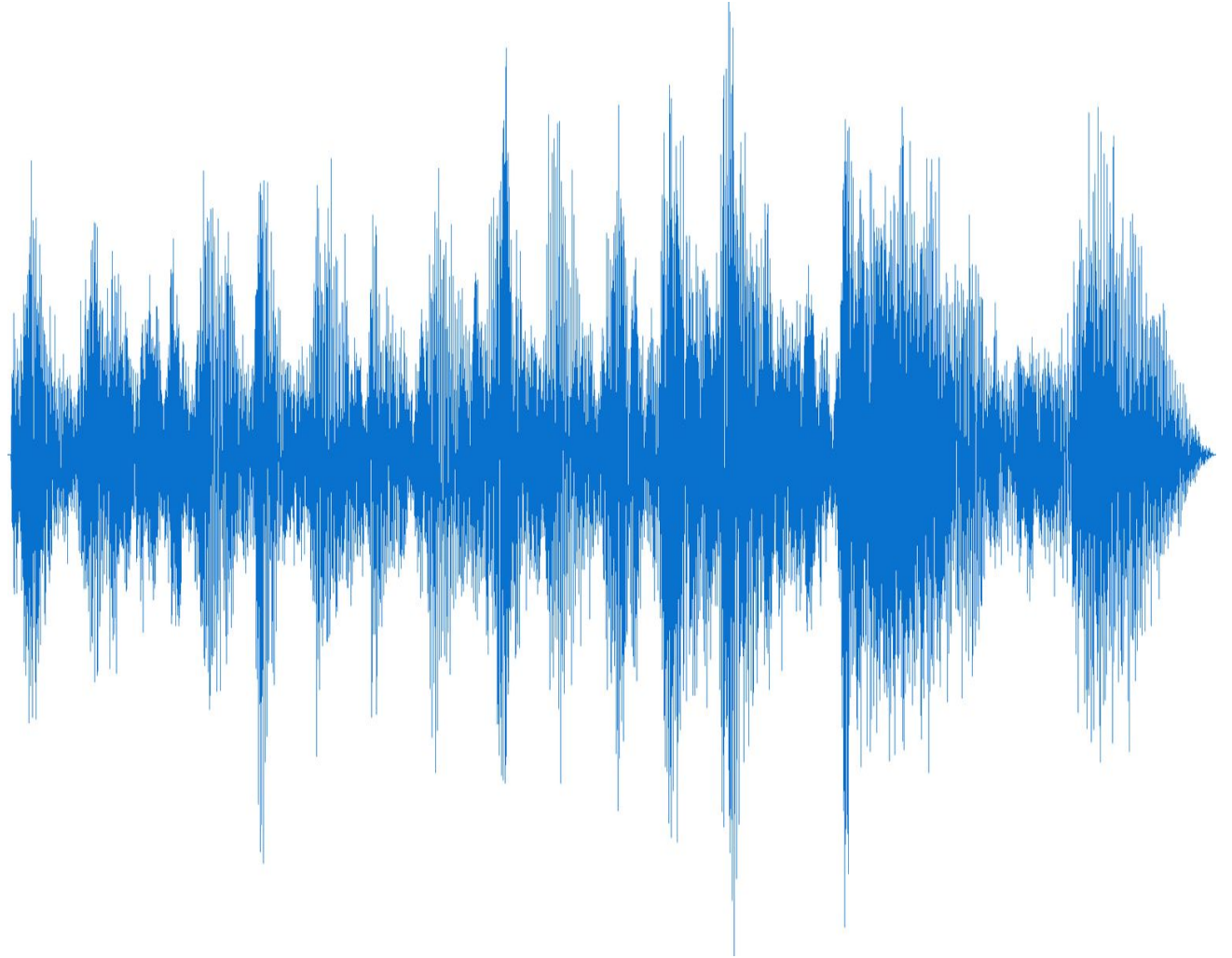


Split hairs

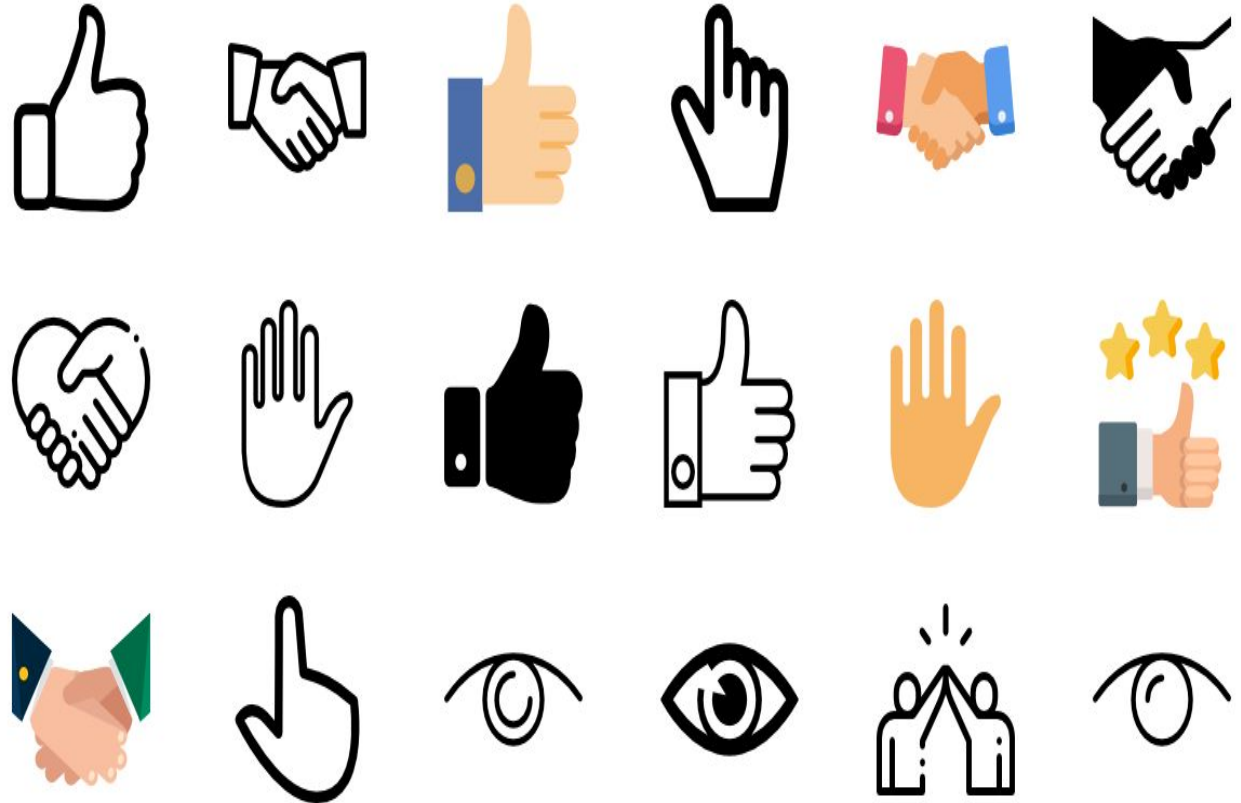
Argue or worry about
very small details



Use a **moderate pace** of speech with plenty of **vocal variety**.



Encourage students to
use non-verbal
communication.



Gestures icons



Remember, comprehension affects engagement. But engagement is also affected by our students' experiences and expectations regarding the classroom.

Challenge: Understanding American classroom/academic norms (student engagement)

For each challenge, I will share what research shows us about this and then provide 5 strategies and tips to keep in mind.

Here are a few scholars looking at the challenges facing multilingual (international) students as they adapt to an American education system.

- De Araujo, A.A. "Adjustment issues of international students enrolled in American colleges and universities: A Review of literature" *Higher Education Studies*, 1 (1), 2-8.
- Trice, A. G. (2004). Mixing it up: International graduate students' social interactions with American students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45, (6), 671 - 687.
- Zawacki, T., Habib, A., Hajabbasi, E. Antram, A., & Das, A. (2007). Valuing written accent: International voices in the U.S. academy. Retrieved from <https://writtenaccents.gmu.edu/research-findings/critical-thinking/>

Yes, some cultures still use teacher-centered approaches, but things are changing.

“We can say **the classes [in Thailand] are teacher-centered** because when we walk into the classroom, we expect that today the teacher will tell us. **We just listen**, just like the lecture, to the teacher, to what they want to tell...it’s like we were trained not to be active in the classroom, so not much discussion...**But nowadays there is change. They try to have the children-centered class, have the children speak up to show us the idea. This is what the American system does, right?”**

-Somkuan

For further reading:

Zawacki, T., Habib, A., Hajabbasi, E. Antram, A., & Das, A. (2007). Valuing written accent: International voices in the U.S. academy. Retrieved from <https://writtenaccents.gmu.edu/research-findings/critical-thinking/>

The tone (formal or informal) of the classroom can influence students' level of comfort.

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“Here it is more informal. In like an academic setting, it is always informal. I mean you can make it formal, but generally you don’t. In Russia, it is really strict, for instance, like “you;” in Russian, they have a way of addressing their teachers; there is an informal “you” in English and there is not really a formal term. Russian is formal. English is very informal language, and I think that is why it is easier to learn. And that changes a lot of things; that is just the one thing that I noticed from the beginning and that was a culture shock. Because I didn’t think you could ever talk to your teachers like that.”

-Efrata

What activity or strategy do you use/have experimented with to get more student engagement in your class?

Know your students' preferred names (and don't assume they all have nicknames).



Start by asking basic content-related questions that students can answer using their notes. It builds confidence.



Beware of face. Use small groups to help students save face and comfortably share their questions/thoughts.



Think
about the question



Pair
with your partner



Share
your ideas with
others

Don't be afraid of **silence**
and strategically use
pauses to allow for
processing.



Set expectations at the beginning. Explain how your class will look like and what students can expect regarding participation.



Reflection:

- Go back to the responses you shared regarding your favorite lesson/activity to teach and your ideal classroom. Based on what you have heard about multilingual learners and the strategies to support them, what is one thing you might change/add/remove in your favorite lesson/activity or the ideal classroom?

References

- De Araujo, A.A. "Adjustment issues of international students enrolled in American colleges and universities: A Review of literature" *Higher Education Studies*, 1 (1), 2-8.
- Haan, J. & Mallett, K. (2015). English Language Literacy and the Prediction of Academic Success in and beyond the Pathway Program. In P. Thomas & P. Takayoshi (eds.) *Literacy in Practice: Writing in Private, Public, and Working Lives*. Routledge.
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- <https://www.fluentu.com/blog/english/how-to-think-in-english/>
- <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/supporting-esl-students-mainstream-classroom/>
- The ESL / ELL Teacher's Survival Guide: Ready...(Paperback) by Larry Ferlazzo, Katie Hull Sypnieski
- <https://owlcation.com/academia/5-Easy-Strategies-to-Help-English-Language-Learners-Succeed-in-Your-Classroom>
- <https://www.edutopia.org/discussion/9-tips-support-english-language-learners>
- "International students in the context of campus diversity, Fall 2018". *OIPS 2018 International Students and Scholars Data Report*. Retrieved from <https://oips.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/International-Students-and-Scholars-Data-Report-2018.pdf>
- Phillip, T. (2014). **Developing resources for success: A case of a multilingual graduate writer**. In T. Zawacki & M. Cox (Eds.), *WAC and second language writers: Research towards linguistically and culturally inclusive programs and practices*. pp. 69- 92. Fort Collins, CO: The WAC Clearinghouse.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2012). Sense of belonging and graduate students. In T. L. Strayhorn (Author), *College students' sense of belonging* (pp. 90–104). New York: Routledge.
- Trice, A. G. (2004). Mixing it up: International graduate students' social interactions with American students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45, (6), 671 - 687.
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