



In our faculty conversation, we will look at some key strategies for supporting all facets of learning support for our multilingual students. In addition to considering strategies for responding to student writing, we'll discuss options for supporting students as they improve their in-class speaking and listening skills as well as broader strategies to support cross-cultural learning.

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My Opening Idea or Definitions

Provide a 50-150 word opening statement with your understanding of the most interesting or important aspects of this topic (to you and your teaching).

Though sometimes I feel like a walking thesaurus, our goal in the classroom is always to promote student understanding of the material. I am aware, however, that my class size of eighteen or fewer students makes such targeted teaching a luxury that not all professors can afford when they lecture in large rooms full of students. George Mason professors do have the opportunity – the charge – to think through what methods they might employ to engage multilingual learners and connect them closely with the class discussions, assignments, readings and other coursework. The answer will be different for each professor, depending on the goal of the class and the subject at hand. That differentiation is why it is crucial to explore a myriad of avenues by which we might reach students and increase understanding. Every professor at the university will have to think through the demands of his or her individual class and choose the strategy that most aligns with the goals of the course in order to promote student success. The conversation of methods and engagement regarding multilingual learners is crucial to the success of the university in the twenty-first century.

What Have I Tried?

Summarize 3-4 approaches, emphases, scenarios, or assignments, each briefly explained (50-100 words each) so that participants can envision your past and/or current teaching experiences, whether successful or still evolving.

- I use peer review in my classroom as a speaking/listening activity, not just reading/writing. Students read their essays aloud to each other without the benefit of the listener reading along. They must give feedback orally as well. The one drawback is the myriad of paper topics in my class sometimes creates confusion if they are not familiar with each other's field of study.
- Practice practice practice. There is no substitute. If teachers want students to make presentations in class for a grade, then they might provide both impromptu and planned opportunities for speaking and receiving feedback. We often model the behaviors and methods we expect.
- With the multi-cultural population that I teach, transparency feels crucial. With almost every assignment I give, I tell them why I am giving it and what outcome is expected. We actively discuss how one assignment or lesson leads to another and how they build toward our ultimate goal, which in this case is a poster colloquium at the end of the semester.

What Am I Exploring? What Am I Interested In?

Provide a list of 3-4 questions, activities, or options that you have been considering as you continue to adapt your teaching approaches to support multilingual learners.

- In our department we talk *ad nauseam* about Google Translate. Some of us feel it impedes understanding. Some professors feel it allow students a "way in" to the material.
- Specifically in our department we are working on students' English skills, in all four domains (reading, writing, speaking, listening) so we constantly ask ourselves about demanding that students speak English in the classroom. If students have a goal of complete understanding and they ask a classmate a question in their first language, a discussion of a concept might ensue. Encouraging discussion of a concept in any language is in the professor's best interest for complete comprehension. But does it preclude advancement of English skills?
- Grammar correction in specifically written work is another sticky wicket. If the ideas and structure are present and clear, then perhaps grammar, as a second-order concern, might not matter. Only when error impedes meaning is it worrisome. We do not generally correct error in essays of any length unless a clear pattern is present.

What are some Best Practices, Tips, or Resources I'd Like to Share with Other Faculty?

If you could recommend a list of 3 core values, teaching tips, and/or resources (articles, books, and links) that faculty across disciplines could find helpful to support multilingual learners, what would your list include?

- Purdue University's Online Writing Lab has an academic free-use handbook for teaching multi-lingual writers that is comprehensive:
[https://owl.purdue.edu/writinglab/faculty/documents/Writing Lab ESL Faculty Guide 2017.pdf](https://owl.purdue.edu/writinglab/faculty/documents/Writing_Lab_ESL_Faculty_Guide_2017.pdf)
- Asking for feedback from the learners and taking it into consideration is an easy way to make multi-lingual learners feel both accepted and valued. Sometimes they have excellent suggestions, including recording lectures for later repeated listening, on how to help them with little to no extra effort on the part of the professor!
- Planning ahead is always helpful to multilingual students because then they know the expectations and can plan their schedules accordingly if they need some extra time to do the readings or re-listen to lectures.



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