Classroom Experience of English Language Learners

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Goal of Presentation

To better understand and support English Language Learners in your classroom

Overview

- Who is an English Language Learner?
- What are Proficiency & Fluency?
- What might you notice in your classroom?
- What can you do to help?
- What other resources are available?
Who is an English Language Learner?

Maybe an international student (but not Canadians, unless they’re Québécois)

Maybe a student born in the US (Puertorriqueños, or children of immigrant parents)

English is not the primary language learned as a child and used in day-to-day life
Proficiency & Fluency

What level of English is required for university course work?

Generally:
• Proficiency: knowing enough of something to use it
• Fluency: knowing enough of something to use it easily

Native English speakers have different levels of mastery or fluency

Proficiency is NOT Mastery
Fluency is NOT effortless

What level of English is required for university course work?

Rules to learning English
1. their our know rules

this makes me feel so uncomfortable
This required level of proficiency is fairly standardized throughout US universities.

Specifically:
- Many different measures of English skills
  - Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR): bands of competency
    - Beginner: A1, A2
    - Intermediate: B1, B2
    - Advanced: C1, C2
- JCC: high B1
- Fredonia: high B2
- Cornell: low C1
What this level of English can look like in your classroom:

Taking time to retrieve words → Circumlocution → Hesitancy to verbally contribute

**Paradox of Perception:**

We often associate poor spelling, grammar, or pronunciation with lower intelligence (not being well read), to avoid sounding stupid (as mistakes are inevitable), some students avoid engaging. Students who take the risk to engage run the risk of being judged, as those who avoid engagement can also been seen as lacking interest or effort.
I was an ESL student at SUNY Fredonia. When I first came here, I felt so welcomed by teachers and staff. As an ESL student, it was challenging to learn English language and college level courses at the same time. The teachers and staff provided support whenever I needed and it gave me motivation to reach my goals. I think it is important understand ESL students' needs and create welcomed environment for them. Especially, when students are so far away from their home.

(I may have made some grammatical mistakes here. Still improving my English everyday in my life, because English is my second language)

-Misiduola Mahemuti, MA TESOL
SUNY Fredonia 2018, home languages: Chinese and Uyghur
aloeveragel

I remember in my Arabic class we were going over the alphabet and the teacher was like there’s no ‘P’ etc and this white girl was like wait what but my names Paige and my teacher was like lol then we’d pronounce it as beige and she was so offended I’m crying thinking about it

Structural and Physical Challenges

Persistent grammatical “mistakes” or mispronunciation due to concepts their native language lacks:

- Korean: no R or TH sound, central vowels, or diphthongs
- Arabic: no P or V sound
- Japanese: only 5 vowels sounds (English has 20), no L or TH sound, no articles or plural
- Chinese: no TH sound, tense, plural, or conditional
Accents within English, dialects, idioms, colloquialisms, phrasal verbs, and figurative language, further complicate comprehension.
# Examples of non literal English

## Every day Idioms
- up in the air
- touch base
- under the weather
- piece of cake
- call it a day
- hang on
- out of hand

## Phrasal verbs
- break up, break out, break down, break in
- bring up, bring over
- give up, give in
- back up, back off
- come down to, come down with
- fill in, fill up, fill out
- (there are over 10k phrasal verbs in English)

## Colloquialisms
- take a rain check
- screw up
- bumbled out
- no biggie
- couch potato
- pig out
- out of the gate
- rat race
- off the bat
- over the top

## Figurative Language
- blocking off time (in a calendar)
- fit as a fiddle
- stepping stone
- melting pot
- time is money
- cast a wide net
- something that is dizzying or makes your head spin
- opportunity knocks
- Oral communication is fluent in daily interpersonal communication, but it is difficult to use for academic communication or writing.
- Some ESL students can read fast, but listen and speak slowly, they need extra time to translate and combine words in their mind.
- Please assign groups instead of letting students choose freely, and try to divide ESL students into different groups.
- Please allow them to read, take notes, and do written assignments with the help of translation tools, such as translation apps, electronic dictionaries, or their home languages. Notes or assignments can be arranged, translated into English and submitted after class.

-Jun Meng, MA TESOL 2020, home language Chinese
Reminder: English Language Learners may have some unique perspectives to add to classroom discussions, but they may not be comfortable being called out based on these differences. Make sure to establish a rapport before making assumptions.

Avoid

- Putting students on the spot about their culture, or language backgrounds
  - "You are from ____, what do you think about ____?"
- Making assumptions about their language background or ability
  - A Hispanic name does not necessarily indicate fluency in Spanish

Engage

- In active listening/reading (listening vs hearing)
- Students who are hesitant to participate in low pressure ways: emails are a great way to establish a comfortable rapport with ELLs. Having the time to consider and write a response is less stressful than having a face-to-face conversation

Ways to be inclusive

Be Conscious of

- The language you use
- Pacing
- Your own assumptions or biases
Other resources on campus

- Starfish advising Flag for English Language support
- Skills classes (Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, Grammar) via ESL & International Pathway
- Some sections of Fredonia Foundations designed for ELLs
- International Student Services offers a robust events program open to all students

ENGLISH DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A STRUGGLE

Courses taught by experienced Fredonia instructors
Enroll in 5, 10, 15, or 20 hours per week
Available Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters

Contact pathway@fredonia.edu for current semester schedule and cost

ACADEMIC ENGLISH SUPPORT AT FREDONIA

The ESL & International Pathway Program at Fredonia offers non-credit courses to support English Language Learners. Current Fredonia students can enroll in skills courses like Speaking & Listening, Writing, Reading, and Grammar, all of which are focused on achieving academic success in Fredonia degree courses.
Thank you!

For questions, requests and anything else we can help you with, please email us at pathway@fredonia.edu