

TEACHING TIPS: SUPPORT MULTILINGUAL WRITERS



PEDAGOGIC REFLECTION

- *Think back on your own early experiences as an academic writer. What do you remember about this experience and how you felt?*
- *Now imagine you are from a different linguistic and cultural background from the dominant community. What are some of the cultural, linguistic, or practical challenges you might face in writing assignments at a U.S. university? How is the use of sources/citation of sources managed in your disciplinary context?*
- *When students enter your classroom, what do you assume they already know or are able to do when it comes to writing? What might they be unfamiliar with? What genres are key to your course or discipline? How can you support students as they encounter these genres for the first time?*



TOP TEN TEACHING TIPS

1. Familiarize yourself with intercultural approaches to communication and writing (intercultural rhetoric). Don't assume that international students know the preferences and conventions of academic English writing or that our rhetorical style is inherently logical. **International students come from equally strong writing (and cultural) traditions**, so be careful not to devalue this aspect of their backgrounds.

2. Some international students enter U.S. universities only familiar with a five-paragraph TOEFL essay and need support in building genre and rhetorical awareness. **Help students understand the genres** they are being asked to consume or produce in your class, considering purpose, audience, interaction with sources, rhetorical structure, and language use expectations.
3. Think about the needs and experiences of international students when you design assignments. Consider expanding options for writing topics to **include non-U.S. perspectives** and be sure to **provide explicit instruction** about topic and assignment expectations and evaluation criteria. It may be a good idea to ask students to “re-write” each assignment prompt for you in their own words or map their strategy for completing the assignment. Also, be aware of the wording you use in assignment prompts, which can inadvertently be biased (linguistically or culturally) against international students who speak English as a second or additional language.
4. Emphasize writing as a process and **break down major writing tasks into manageable steps** with guidance and feedback along the way. Templates, the analysis of model texts, planning or organizational frameworks, and multiple drafts with feedback and revision are very useful for second language writers.
5. **Make transparent your expectations for source use** and provide explicit guidance in working with and citing sources, for example:
 - a. Identifying and evaluating sources
 - b. Assessing rhetorical situations
 - c. Strategic, critical, and efficient reading processes (e.g., reading frameworks)
 - d. Targeting what to “use” for writing and situating one’s ideas in conversation with other sources to develop a writerly voice
 - e. Understanding academic integrity and adhering to citation conventions
6. Be aware that it takes most second language writers **much longer to complete any task**. Even relatively informal writing tasks, such as Discussion Board posts, may be taken very seriously.
7. What you perceive to be simplistic language choices are often the result of vocabulary limitations. Many second language writers agonize over single words and phrases. Teach students to **notice language use in context** when reading texts in your class and then put this language to use in their own writing.

8. When offering feedback on writing, prioritize comments that reflect the assignment’s rhetorical and content expectations. If you have concerns about sentence-level writing, try to **set up a realistic feedback arrangement**. For example, focus on 2-3 patterned grammar errors or identify errors in a couple of paragraphs but not the entire paper. Second language writers may also struggle to interpret feedback comments. Pay attention to the vocabulary choices and use of **idiomatic expressions in your comments**, as well as advice that is indirect or may be difficult to interpret.
9. In terms of evaluation, the general best practice in the field of second language writing is a tolerance for **“writing with an accent”** rather than a punitive approach to sentence-level errors. Errors that interfere with comprehensibility should be focused on more than those that do not. Also remember that errors that native English-speaking students can catch easily by proofreading may be missed by second language writers. Don’t assume that remaining errors mean they have not put effort into editing or proofreading.
10. Consider allowing second language writers an **“extra” draft** or an extra conference opportunity, or partner international student writers with supportive classmates for **peer review**. Encourage students to take advantage of the [GW Writing Center](#) and to establish regular appointments with a peer consultant with whom they feel comfortable.

