



Strategies for Teaching International Students Series

PART 1: Promoting Academic Success for International Students

More and more international students from across the globe are coming to the US, attracted by the high-quality education offered at many US universities (Turner, 2015). In the 2016-2017 academic year, about 14% of the total enrollment at UC Davis were international students (Budget and Institutional Analysis, 2017), with the university accepting over 60% of its international applicants for 2017-2018 (UC Institutional Research and Academic Planning, 2017). International students contribute greatly to the diversity of our campus' population and enrich our classroom environments with their unique perspectives. They contribute to the academic excellence of our institution and bring a wealth of unique and diverse knowledge and experience that are valuable in the classroom (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). By valuing and encouraging their contributions, instructors can play an important role in supporting international students in their classroom communities. This resource series will offer a number of specific strategies and suggestions for supporting international students in the classroom.

Communicative, linguistic, and academic challenges international students may face

International students face a variety of challenges as learners in the US, including difficulties adjusting to a new culture and campus life (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015), social isolation (Gareis, 2012; Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015), and stress learning complex topics in another language. Additionally, according to Dawn Takaoglu, director of International and Academic English at UC Davis, international students who first attend a 2-year community college before transferring to a 4-year university experience a variety of challenges that differ uniquely from their peers who followed a more traditional path (personal communication, 2017). Here are a few common challenges international students face, as well as suggestions for how to support these students in the classroom:

Challenges	Explanations	Teaching Suggestions
<i>May be proficient in some modalities of English, but not others.</i>	Multilingual students may differ in their proficiencies with English, or with certain modalities of English (i.e., writing, reading, listening, or speaking). For more on this, please see our series on “Strategies for Teaching Multilingual Learners.”	Employ a variety of modes when lecturing, and when designing activities. For example, Freedman (n.d.) notes that all students, not just multilingual ones, can benefit from the inclusion of visuals (e.g., PowerPoints, Prezis, writing key concepts on the board, etc.) with your lecture. International students may also struggle with completing course readings, so it may be helpful to discuss effective reading strategies in your class.
<i>May experience a high amount of cognitive load.</i>	Multilingual international students may experience a high amount of cognitive load as they attempt to learn complex content in your class in a language they are still in the process of acquiring.	Sweller (2017) suggests being explicit in your instruction and discussion of key concepts in class, instead of expecting students to induce the information themselves from readings. For additional suggestions on teaching to reduce cognitive load, see Crosby (2015) .
<i>May overestimate their level of preparation, both academically and linguistically</i>	International students, particularly those who transfer, may overestimate their level of preparation, both academically and linguistically. Like their domestic peers, they may not be accustomed to the rigor of an institution like UC Davis, and they therefore may	Try to be clear and transparent in your syllabus and course materials about your expectations for students and the academic demands of your class; this can help students prepare in advance for the more rigorous aspects of your course. See Part 3 of this resource for more on what



	<p>not be prepared for the speed of the quarter system. Additionally, they may be slow to seek help because they are accustomed to systems and faculty that reach out to them when they are at risk and direct them to services (Takaoglu, personal communication, 2017).</p>	<p>instructors can do to support international students.</p> <hr/> <p>Assist students with time management by breaking up longer assignments into multiple due dates and reminding students frequently of these and other deadlines. You can also encourage students to form study groups, and have your TA's organize study sessions before major exams.</p>
<p><i>May feel uncomfortable participating in class discussions or activities</i></p>	<p>Glass (2012) found that intergroup dialogue contributed positively to international students' perceptions of campus climate. However, international students, especially multilingual learners who struggle with their speaking and listening skills in English, or those who come from cultures that don't encourage discussion in class, may feel uncomfortable or anxious about speaking during class discussions. Some of the anxiety surrounding speaking in class may be alleviated by first having students discuss in smaller groups. Three effective methods for equitable class discussions can be found to the right.</p>	<p>Employ think, pair, share activities, which will give multilingual students time to think through their response in writing first. If you notice a quieter student beginning to step up their verbal participation, be sure to send them an encouraging message privately by email, Canvas message, or in the hall after class.</p> <hr/> <p>Have students get into groups of 2-6 people and ask them to select one person to report their ideas to the class. This gives everyone a chance to participate without feeling pressured to speak to the whole class.</p> <hr/> <p>Employ a "round-robin" discussion structure, in which students speak in turns going around the circle. This gives each student a designated time to speak, which may relieve some of the anxiety for students who experience difficulty while speaking in groups.</p>
<p><i>May submit writing with consistent grammar or syntax errors, or lack knowledge of US writing conventions.</i></p>	<p>Writing from multilingual international students often displays consistent errors or patterns of error (particularly with articles and/or prepositions) that can distract from the writing's content, and in some cases, its intelligibility. These discrepancies are typical of foreign-language acquisition. International students may also have inconsistent knowledge of US writing conventions, especially regarding citation and plagiarism.</p>	<p>Before grading the paper, consider the impact these errors have on the student's ability to communicate their ideas and content. Freedman (n.d.) suggests allowing students to complete rough drafts for peer review, or to show you in office hours. Also, establish clear guidelines for plagiarism in your syllabus, and discuss this with your students. For more suggestions, see the Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs, as well as our "Addressing Plagiarism Series."</p>

Adapted from: CTE, n.d.; Freedman, n.d., Purdue Libraries, n.d.; Sato, 2015; UMCLRT, n.d.; & UWCTL, n.d.

Additional Resources

- [The International & Academic English Program](#)
- [The Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs](#)
- [Services for International Students and Scholars](#)
- [Writing Assistance Services, SASC](#)



Please also refer to our “[Strategies for Teaching Multilingual Learners Series](#)” for more suggestions and strategies specifically regarding international students from non-English speaking countries.

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