

Strategies for Presenting Content-Heavy Material to Multilingual Students

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Today's Presentation + Workshop

- Who are multilingual students? (Two main profiles: “eye learners” and “ear learners”)
- Four general principles for working with multilingual students → SLUG
- Applying these principles in practice: listening-to-read, reading-to-speak, speaking/listening to write
- Reflect on other applications in your subject areas
- **Share with the group!**

Part One

WHO ARE MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS?

Who are multilingual students?

Two main groups: Reid (2006) described them as “eye learners” and “ear learners.”

- Reid, J. (2006). “Eye” learners and “ear” learners: Identifying the language needs of international student and US resident writers. In P. K. Matsuda, M. Cox, J. Jordan & C. Ortmeier-Hooper (Eds.), *Second-language writing in the composition classroom: A critical sourcebook* (pp. 76-88). Boston: Bedford St. Martin's.

Eye learners are international students with privilege, typically from Asia. They are associated with the model minority.

While they may be recent arrivals who are not that fluent in spoken English, they have a good education in their first languages. They use **reading** and **translation** as main strategies to acquire English until they feel confident enough to speak.

That is why they are called “eye learners.”

Who are multilingual students?

Ear learners are students who grew up in the U.S. (born there or arrived young). Their families speak the heritage language at home.

Ear learners are *conversationally fluent in English* because they grew up in the U.S.; some may not even speak their heritage language that well.

However, they are often behind academically and are challenged by academic language for various reasons: socioeconomic status, the fact that their schools never provided bilingual support, etc.

When they write, they transcribe things as one would say them, not as how one would spell/write them. That is why they are called “ear learners.”

Strategies for teaching academic content to eye and ear learners (this is not about multiple intelligences; it's about the language repertoires we have because of our upbringing)

EYE LEARNERS

(INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS)

Encourage two-way translation from the first language (L1), because there's a good chance that students know the content in L1

Capitalize on students' study skills!

Note-taking can be a scaffold for preparing to participate in discussions.

A lot of oral information may be missed, so provide visual aids and write things down on the board.

EAR LEARNERS

(RESIDENT MULTILINGUALS)

How do you teach monolingual native English speakers who are not academically inclined? Talk about the academic text in everyday language. Make it accessible and fun using pop culture references.

What resident multilingual "ear learners" need is the teacher to do the same, but ***bilingually***.

Part Two

FOUR GENERAL STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS

SLUG

Discussions have **Structure**

The **Language** points are explicit

Cultural references are **Unblocked**

Graphic organizers

(to take home & study)



Part Three

APPLYING THESE PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

LISTENING-TO-READ, READING-TO-SPEAK, READING/SPEAKING-TO-WRITE

1. Listening-to-read

- Always allow class time to *preview* and *debrief* readings.
- Preview (i) important technical terms, and (ii) background knowledge that only specialists might know
- **Eye learners** may have less difficulty with reading than is commonly assumed; what they have trouble with is the oral lectures and discussions that clarify and interpret the reading (Henebry, Lo, & Macaro, 2012).
 - When explaining readings in class, talk in a normal way, but **give definitions and examples of difficult words** and **avoid/explain idioms**. Anticipate and concisely fill in gaps in students' background or cultural knowledge.
- **Ear learners** benefit when readings are discussed in class using **non-academic** or **vernacular** language, perhaps using pop culture analogies, though these strategies may be inaccessible to foreign students (Duff, 2002).

2. Reading-to-speak

- Students read to prepare for class discussions, but be cautious with group JIGSAWS, which can discourage accountability.
- Instead of that week's group presenting the reading to the class, consider having each member of the group facilitate a discussion among 3-5 classmates.
- State what is required of facilitators: encourage quieter students to speak, elicit and build on connections people make between the readings and their own experiences, correct misinterpretations of readings through guiding questions...
- Explicit learning contract:
 - (1) Assign a **manageable** amount of reading; **preview** and **unblock** vocabulary.
 - (2) Ask students to **start readings early**, so if they need to look up a lot of words, they will still get it done on time. Suggest taking notes on readings to use in class discussions and to help with writing assignments.

3. Reading/Speaking-to-write

Reading-to-write: Make explicit connections between readings and assignments.

- As students read, explicitly tell them **what kinds of notes and graphic organizers** (based on readings) will lead directly into the exams and papers they'll be writing.
- E.g., Take detailed notes on an introductory textbook chapter (heading by heading)... but for readings around your final paper, fill in a graphic organizer

Speaking-to-write: Group writing projects lead to development of vital skills.

- Attention to form, and negotiation regarding form (e.g., what word is appropriate, what grammar is correct) is practiced much, much more in **graded group writing projects** (Rouhshad, Wigglesworth, & Storch, 2016; Williams, 2012).
 - Without this kind of practice, students improve writing fluency but not writing accuracy or writing pragmatics (Knoch, Rouhshad, Oon, & Storch, 2015).

Summary

Listening-to-read: Prepare students to do readings (“previewing”). Define **key terms** in accessible language, and provide **any background information known by specialists** that is necessary for students to understand the reading.

Reading-to-speak: Lay down expectations for facilitators and for the class.

- Facilitators: Interweave the readings’ content with classmates’ comments.
- Students need lots of time (because of dictionary work) to do readings and (perhaps) take notes to prepare for discussion.

Reading/speaking-to-write: Intentional note-taking and writing in groups offer important learning experiences.

Make students accountable to themselves and others, while providing lots of support through explicit and sustained guidance.

References

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Part Four

DISCUSSIONS HAVE
STRUCTURE

LANGUAGE POINTS ARE
EXPLICIT

CULTURAL REFERENCES ARE
UNBLOCKED

GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS
(TO TAKE HOME & STUDY)

CAN YOU THINK OF OTHER STRATEGIES (LISTENING-TO-READ, READING-TO-SPEAK, READING/SPEAKING-TO-WRITE) THAT COULD WORK FOR EYE OR EAR LEARNERS, OR BOTH, IN YOUR CLASSES?