

Teaching Multilingual/ESOL Learners

You may want to recommend to your international students who are English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) that they take English 103 (Fall), 104 (Spring), or 105 (F & S). These courses have been created to help international students, whose first language is not English, develop their writing and speaking skills in English.

Grading: For your students whose first language is not English, you might want to consider giving a paper two grades—one for content and one for grammar—and then allowing the student to re-write the paper, working on grammar alone. Having the chance to write an extra draft gives ESOL students the opportunity to develop their ideas better in English and to work on their grammar skills.

Formatting: Some international students will not be familiar with how American college essays are formatted at the paragraph level and at the essay level. At their home university it may be acceptable to write essays where paragraphs are a page long and where the essay's main point is implied in the last paragraph. When assigning an essay, you may need to explain that you want the main point established in the introduction and that the essay should be divided into short paragraphs, each dealing with one idea that is developed within the paragraph, with a clear conclusion at the end. Again, allowing a student to rewrite the paper, working on format alone, will help her when it comes to writing the next paper, although learning how to format an American college essay takes some practice and comes with time.

First Person Narratives: In many cultures it is seen as inappropriate to use "I" in an academic essay. If you wish your students to write in the first person and/or to use personal experience in their papers, you may want to take the time to point this out when assigning the essay. You may also want to consider explaining why you are assigning an essay written in the first person and/or why you wish students to describe their own experience as supporting evidence in the paper.

Citations: It is common in some cultures to paraphrase the work of others without citing the original source. Intellectual property, e.g. any copyrighted material, is seen as common property. As with grammar issues, allowing the student to revise the essay by adding citations would give the student a chance to work on ways to cite. The website [HYPERLINK "http://www.owl.purdue.edu" www.owl.purdue.edu](http://www.owl.purdue.edu) has examples of how to cite many types of sources.

Contact Susan Johnson at johnsons@mtholyoke.edu if you have questions.