

Tutoring ESL Students: Everything You Need to Know

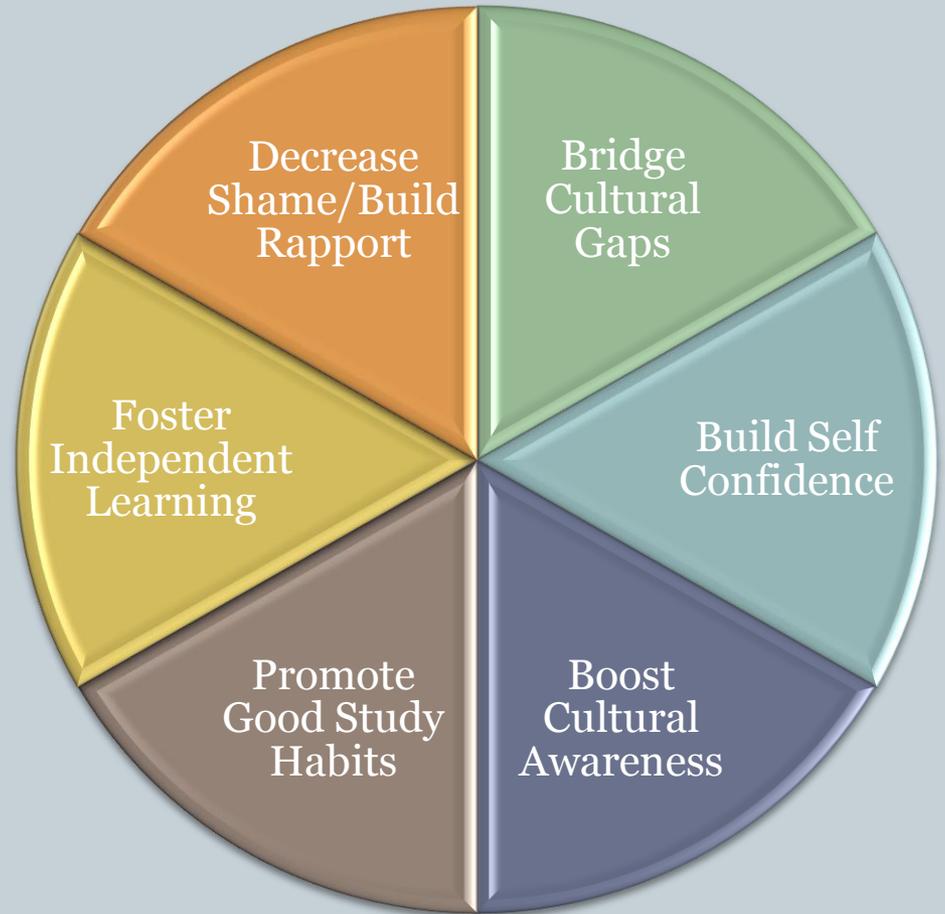


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Working with ESL Students in ANY Subject



- It is likely that you will encounter ESL students seeking assistance in subjects other than writing, so you should always keep in mind these six aspects of the relationship between tutor and tutee.



Bridging Cultural Gaps



- Be aware of cultural differences that exist.
 - In some cultures, seeking help is often seen as a weakness.
- Appreciate the student's values.
 - You may not agree with another student's values, but you *must* respect those values.
- Promote academic tolerance.
 - Many ESL students shy away from blatantly expressing their own opinions for fear of condemnation, so promoting acceptance of opinions in an academic setting may be necessary.
 - ✦ Example: If a student is writing an argumentative paper on a controversial topic, reassure him/her that expressing his/her opinions as facts is not seen as offensive in our academic communities because it is viewed as a form of *persuasion*.

Building Students' Confidence



- Many students have low self-confidence that is often apparent in their hesitancy to offer answers when they are uncertain of the material.
- For ESL students, hesitancy can come from an uncertainty in how to express themselves in English, so simply exercising patience with them will build their self-confidence.
- To build confidence in your students, here are a few tips to keep in mind:
 - Don't only comment on what students do wrong; be sure to emphasize what they do *right*.
 - When offering criticism, do your best to sandwich it between praise.
 - Reflect on how students have improved over time.
 - Offer encouraging but probing interjections like “Oh yeah, that makes sense. I understand. What else?”

Boosting Social Awareness



- For many ESL students, culture shock can sometimes impinge on their academic lives.
- If you can help students overcome this shock and boost their social awareness, students will be able to adapt more quickly.
- Tips for boosting social awareness:
 - Encourage students to participate in on-campus activities, events, and clubs.
 - During a session, do not be afraid to discuss relevant cultural topics with the students.
 - ✦ Example: If you are tutoring in American government, perhaps discussing the government system of the student's native country will help in a comparative analysis.

Promoting Good Study Habits



- Many students struggle with HOW to study more than understanding the subject matter.
- Help transform the way students approach studying.
 - Studying SHOULD NOT be a one-time cram session before a test or a last minute effort in understanding the material.
 - Studying SHOULD be habitual and frequent.
 - ✦ Good Study Habits
 - Study groups with classmates
 - Take notes during class lectures
 - Actively participate in discussions
 - Practice reading and writing informally
 - Make an outline *before* you start writing
 - Make flash cards for terms, dates, and formulas
 - Come up with real-life examples to apply concepts

Fostering Independent Learning



- To minimize a student's dependency on tutoring, encouragement, reassurance, and boundary setting go a LONG way.
 - Encourage students to attempt problems on their own before seeking your help.
 - Constantly reassure students of their competencies and be sure that any criticism you offer is *constructive*.
 - Set boundaries with students that prevent them from clinging to your help.
 - ✦ Limit time of sessions.
 - ✦ Cut back on number of sessions as you see improvement.

Decreasing Shame by Building Rapport



- Because some ESL students may be ashamed that they must ask for help, it is important to make the tutoring environment as comfortable as possible.
- Building rapport with the student will help you achieve a positive tutoring atmosphere.
- Steps to build rapport
 - Respect the student
 - Maintain a sense of humor
 - Speak positively
 - Admit when you aren't sure
 - Remember names

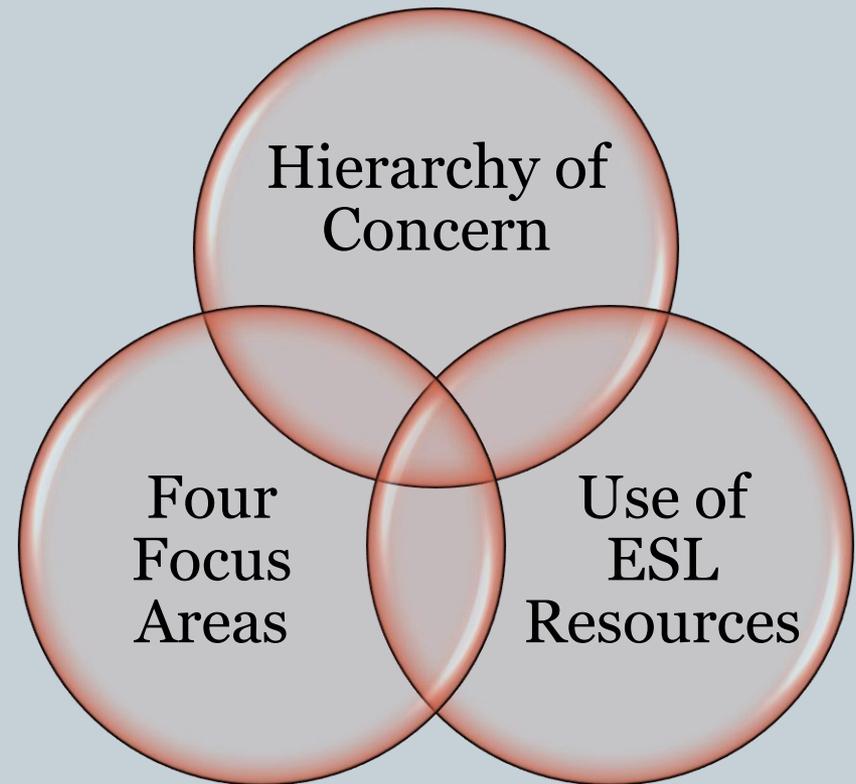
ESL Writers



- Many ESL students struggle the most in their writing, so it is imperative that writing tutors understand the nuances of those difficulties in order to be effective in assisting them.
 - The problems that ESL students face in writing generally stem from an unfamiliarity with argumentation techniques, language style, grammar, and syntax.
 - These problems are further confused for ESL students because English functions in two contexts: the written and the spoken.
- Because difficulties exist on multiple levels for ESL writers, it is the tutor's job to use strategies that will address as many problem areas as possible.

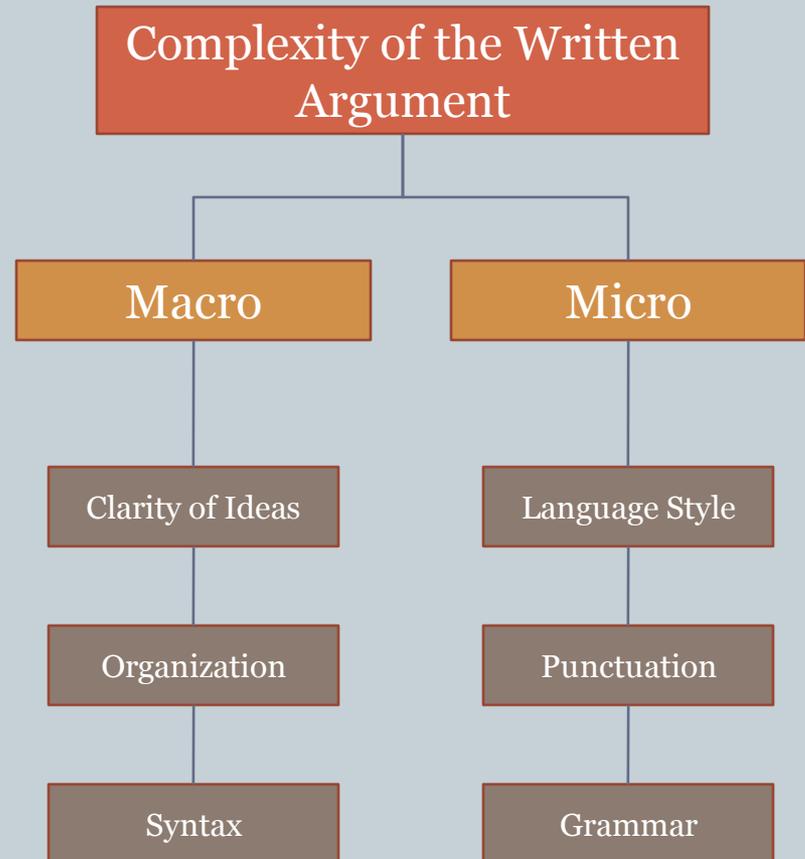
Tutoring Strategies for ESL Writers

- There are three essential strategies that a tutor should use when tutoring an ESL writer.
- These strategies provide a road map for the tutor to succeed in addressing the various problems that surface in ESL writing.



The Hierarchy of Concern

- Because ESL students have problems with multiple dimensions of English writing, tutors must set priorities when in a tutoring session.
 - Working from macro to micro level concerns has several benefits for tutor and tutee.
 - ✦ Maximizes learning potential
 - ✦ Makes the most of limited time
 - ✦ Minimizes frustration
 - ✦ Provides structure to a session



Macro Vs. Micro



Macro Level Problems

- Common macro level errors:
 - Disordered paragraphs
 - No transitions between ideas
 - Unclear thesis statement
 - Vague introductions and conclusions
 - Lack of focus seen in digressions
 - Confused word order in sentences

Micro Level Problems

- Common micro level errors:
 - Disordered modifiers
 - Inappropriate verb tense
 - Inaccurate verb formations
 - Ambiguous prepositions
 - Subject/verb disagreement
 - Confusion of count and non-count nouns
 - Missing definite and indefinite articles

Macro & Micro Level Errors in ESL Writing

• Macro

- The underlined sentences are supporting details and should be in a following paragraph.
- Sentence in red should be moved up to provide cohesiveness.
- The last sentence, as the thesis, should be a definitive statement.

• Micro

- Missing article in the first sentence.
- Problem with subject/verb agreement in line 3.

Fast Food In America

Drive on any highway in America, and you'll find (a) fast food restaurant at any exit. Most pantries in the houses that line America's streets is(are) full of instant dinners. According to Jim West's article on Kraft's website, only one-third of Americans still cook meals from scratch. They now spend thirty minutes per meal compared to ninety minutes per meal in the 1960s. In his book *Fast Food Nation*, Eric Timms explains that nearly a quarter of Americans eat fast food daily. For most households, it is easier and more convenient to go out to eat than it is to cook dinner. There has been a rise in the frequency that families eat out. **The fact that fast food restaurants everywhere are thriving seems to implies that Americans eat out a lot.** The rise in how often Americans eat out ~~may be~~ is a result of busy lifestyles.

Four Areas of Focus



- These four focus areas are aimed at mastering the two dimensions of English.
 - Written English
 - ✦ This dimension of English has prescriptive rules that must be learned.
 - ✦ There is a standard of writing that exists in academia.
 - Spoken English
 - ✦ Many aspects of spoken English are fluid and dynamic.
 - ✦ Unlike writing, there is no single explicit or clear-cut standard of speaking.

Written English



Reading

- Learning the written form of English is largely accomplished simply through exposure to other people's writing.
- What to read:
 - Newspapers
 - Magazines
 - Journal Articles (important for learning the practices of academic writing)
 - Books

Writing

- Writing allows students to apply what they learn from reading by mimicking style.
- What to write:
 - Daily journal
 - Essays
 - Class notes
 - Emails (formal letters)

Spoken English

Listening

- Listening helps ESL students understand the nuances of idiomatic phrases, euphemisms, and regionalisms.
- What to listen to:
 - Movies (with captions)
 - Music
 - Conversations
 - Lectures

Speaking

- Speaking allows students to apply those nuances they observe through listening.
- **PRACTICE** → **PERFECT**
 - Communicate on a regular basis in English
 - Instant messenger
 - Contribute to class discussions

ESL Resources



- Use ESL resources during a consultation to help provide structure and direction to your session.

Grammar
Handbooks

Tutoring
Handbooks

Online Writing Labs

ESL
Interactive
Websites

ESL Tutor
Training
Websites

There are numerous materials available for both ESL tutors and ESL students.

- ✦ ESL tutoring handbooks and ESL tutor training websites are helpful for the tutor.
- ✦ Interactive websites, Online Writing Labs with handouts, and grammar handbooks are useful for an ESL writer.

ESL Resources: Handbooks



- **Grammar Handbooks**

- *The St. Martin's Handbook*
- *Problem/Solution: A Reference for ESL Writers*
 - ✦ By Patricia Byrd & Beverly Benson
- *Grammar Troublespots: An Editing Guide for Students*
 - ✦ By Ann Raimes
- *Extra Help for ESL Writers*
 - ✦ By Marcy Carbajal Van Horn

- **Tutoring Handbooks**

- *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors*
 - ✦ By Shanti Bruce & Ben Rafoth
- *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*
 - ✦ By Leigh Ryan & Lisa Zimerelli

ESL Resources: Websites



- **ESL Interactive Websites**
 - ESL Teacher's Board: www.eslteachersboard.com
 - ESL Party Land: www.eslpartyland.com
 - Activities for ESL Students: www.a4esl.org
 - English Club: www.englishclub.com/grammar
- **ESL Tutor Training Websites**
 - Lynchburg College: www.lynchburg.edu/x2377.xml
 - ✦ Tutoring ESL Students: The Ins & Outs
 - Yale University: www.yale.edu/bass/students/esl/index.html
 - ✦ The ESL Writer

ESL Resources: Writing Centers



- Purdue OWL
 - owl.english.purdue.edu
- Texas A&M University
 - writingcenter.tamu.edu
- George Mason University
 - writingcenter.gmu.edu
- Bowling Green State University
 - www.bgsu.edu/offices/acen/writingcntr
- University of South Carolina Aiken
 - www.usca.edu/writingroom
- University of North Carolina Chapel Hill
 - www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts

The ESL Consultation: Beginning A Session



- To begin a session, you should *always* introduce yourself and get to know the student.
- Explain the dynamic of tutoring, including any expectations that the tutoring program has of the student.
 - Tutorial Agreements
 - Time limit for sessions
 - Academic honesty
- Begin any documentation that is required for the tutoring center like session summaries or student sign-in.

The ESL Consultation: Talk Before Text



- These probing questions will allow you to determine what the focus of the tutoring session should be.
 - This interactive discussion will force the student to verbalize the ideas in his/her head in an organized manner.
 - The conversation also incorporates two of the four focus areas: listening and speaking.
- Discuss the assignment
 - ✦ What does the professor require?
 - ✦ Are the instructions clear?
 - Talk about the student's response to the assignment
 - ✦ What did he/she choose to write about?
 - ✦ How does that topic fulfill the assignment's expectations?
 - Ask about the writing process
 - ✦ Where are you at in your process?
 - ✦ What do you plan to do next?

The ESL Consultation: Review the Paper



- In this stage of a session, get the ESL student to read his/her paper to you instead of reading silently.
 - This helps the student recognize errors and improves proof-reading skills.
- Remember to work from macro level to micro level when pointing out problem areas.
- Use any resources that may reinforce the concepts that you are discussing during the consultation.
- Be sure that you are being constructive.
 - Respond to the paper as an uninformed reader.
 - Act as a fresh set of eyes for the student.
 - Use grammatical terms when offering explanations.

The ESL Consultation: Ending A Session



- Be sure that the student understands the concepts you have gone over.
 - Get the student to tell you what he/she learned from the session.
- Assign enhancement activities to the student that will continue to build on what you went over during the session.
 - If grammar is a concern in an area like subject/verb agreement, online handouts can be very beneficial.
 - If working on drafting an essay, get the student to go on to the next step in the writing process.
- Encourage the student to go talk to the professor about his/her writing process as well.
 - Most professors welcome inquiry about assignments.
 - This is especially important if there is confusion about the nature of the assignment.
- Complete necessary documentation and set up a time/date for the next session, if needed.

Resources



- Van Horn, Marcy Carbajal. *Extra Help for ESL Writers*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2007.
- “Bridging Cultural Gaps.” Lynchburg University Website.
- “Tutoring ESL Students.” Lynchburg University Website.
- “ESL Writers.” Yale's Writing Center Website.
- Staben, Jennifer and Kathryn Dempsey Nordhaus. “Looking at the Whole Text.” *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors*. Shanti Bruce and Ben Rafoth.
- Vicki Collins, ESL Professor, University of South Carolina Aiken.