Helping English Language Learners (ELLs) overcome language barriers in the university classroom

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Taking the time to predict the content of a lecture enables students to better understand, retain and recall information

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Providing explicit structure for a lecture enables students to follow content and process information

1. Who are ELLs?

2. What challenges do they face?

3. What strategies can educators use to help them?

Students are better able to process content when they PREVIEW vocabulary

- English Language Learners (ELLs)
- Basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS)
- Cognitive Academic language proficiency (CALP)
- patch-writing
- vocabulary
- strategies

ELLs are a diverse population of learners
(Roessingh & Doulgas 2012)

English is a second /subsequent/additional language

- International students (different ages on arrival)
- 1st generation immigrants or

  Canadian-born children of immigrants
      (*Generation 1.5* (Harklau, 1993)

"…their (ELLs) progress and achievement is fraught with challenges…[which] represents a loss of educational capital for Canada…" (Roessingh & Douglas 2012)

ELLs face academic challenges in all skill areas: listening/ speaking/reading/ writing

- Lack of knowledge of academic literacy practices of the discipline

- Limited experience with text-based writing

- Inadequate reading/ writing/ listening / speaking strategies

- Lack of confidence in their academic skills

- Limited vocabulary in all skill areas

(Roessingh & Douglas , 2012; Wette, 2010; Shi, 2004)

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What can educators do to help ELLs succeed?

Listening Comprehension is challenging for ELLs

- make a **title** for your lectures

- have students **predict** what they think the content of the lecture will include.

- **preview** the vocabulary – include both written list and pronunciation – (sound file on D2L) (try quizlet)

- be aware of and try to avoid cultural bias

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Use explicit cues in your delivery to help students predict content and recognize key terminology and concepts

- cues to introduction, organization and conclusion

- explicit indication of key concepts and terms
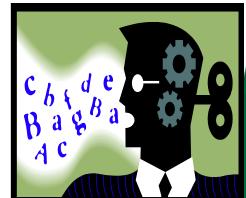
- connect lecture to content on PPT

- if possible, preview content for next lecture

Speaking / participating in class is challenging for ELLs

- give ELLs time to formulate their ideas

- ask questions that move from simple
  to complex concepts

- incorporate small group activities into your classes and tutorials

- encourage ELLs to make use of office hours (at least one appointment each semester)

Basic Interpersonal Communications Skills (BICS)

Reading dense academic text is challenging for ELLs

- have students read less but more targeted (Abasi & Akbari, 2008)
- preview vocabulary/ keywords

- encourage pre-reading prediction

- provide targeted questions

- have assignments with a heavy reading load later in the semester

- encourage vocabulary building -strong **Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency** (CALP) is key to reading/writing proficiency (Roessingh & Douglas , 2012)

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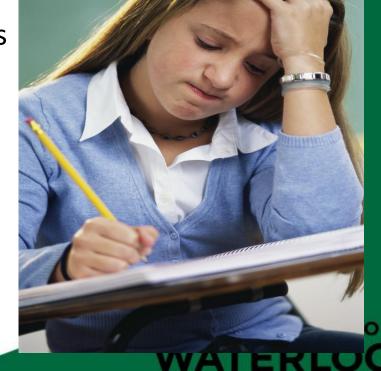ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

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Writing is challenging for many ELLs

- explicitly identify the target audience and audience expectations

- provide student examples/ rubrics

- provide in-process feedback (formative)

Original text

The craft of hurricane forecasting advanced rapidly **in the sixties and early seventies, thanks to fast computers and new atmospheric modeling techniques.** Now **there is a lull in the progress**, strangely parallel to the lull in the storm cycle. The National Hurricane Warning Center shoots for a **24-hour warning period**, with 12 daylight hours for evacuation. At that remove, it **can usually predict landfall within 100 miles either way.** Longer lead times mean **much larger landfall error**, and that is counterproductive. He who misses his predictions cries wolf.

(From "Our Barrier Islands," by William H. MacLeish, Smithsonian, Sept. 1980, p. 54.)

(Example by Anne Fullerton

Chemical Engineering Librarian)

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No – it's Plagiarized Unacceptable Paraphrasing.
Why? Duplicates original sentence structure. Several phrases stolen word for word.

Hurricane forecasting made rapid progress **in the 60s and 70s due to fast computers and new atmospheric techniques**, but **there is now a lull in the progress**. The Warning Center tries **for a 24-hour warning period,** including 12 hours of daylight. That close to the storm's arrival, the Warning Center **can usually predict landfall within 100 miles either way.** If lead times are longer, there will be **a much larger error,** which will be counter-productive (MacLeish 54).

The academic community is pressed to consider an alternative view of text borrowing

"Patchwriting…is an essential phase in which writers pass en route to a stage at which their own voices can emerge. As a developmental stage, rather than a form of deliberate deception, patchwriting deserves a pedagogical, rather than a punitive, response" (Pecorari, 2003, p. 320).

The academic community is pressed to consider an alternative view of text borrowing

"If novice writers do not intend to deceive, they should neither be punished nor labeled plagiarists, but educated, through example, explanation, and a great deal of practice" (Li & Casanave, 2012, p. 178).
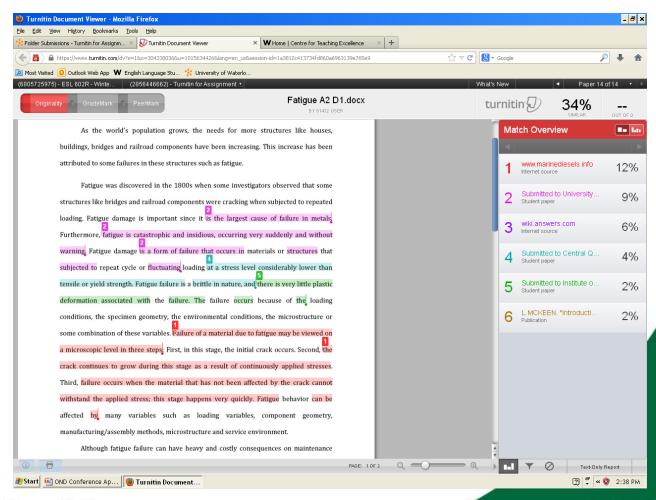
Strategies for addressing textual borrowing

- be aware of the complexities and challenges of text-based writing

- provide samples of appropriate and inappropriate paraphrasing

- educate through explanation, example and practice (Li & Casanave, 2012)

- refer students to subject guide librarians, and other campus support services
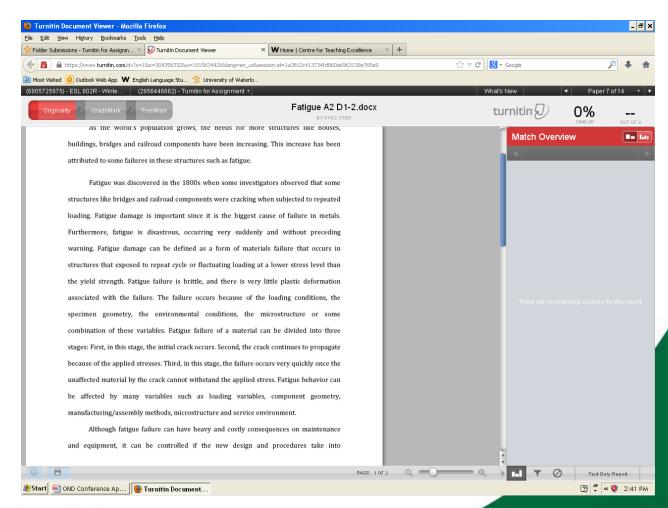
- Use *Turnitin* as a learning tool

Use Turnitin as a learning tool

Using Turnitin as a learning tool

Recap main points presented to reinforce key concepts and allow students to fill in gaps of missing information

- ELLs
- Challenges they face
- Strategies you can implement in your class

It is everyone's responsibility to help students overcome their barriers to success

We welcome your comments and questions!

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