

Student Referral Best Practices

Connect multilingual students with resources to support English language development and academic success



UNIVERSITY
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Rationale

For multilingual students, studying in a second language is an opportunity to acquire discipline-specific as well as English language skills, both of which require time and support to develop. It's important for students to hear from faculty and advisers that time invested in improving English language skills supports overall academic success. It's normal and beneficial to seek support.

What signs indicate a student needs English language support?

It's important to differentiate between students who would benefit from English as a second language (ESL) support and students who may exhibit an "accent" in speaking or writing.

Signs of emerging language proficiency

- major language errors interfere with meaning
 - building blocks of the sentence - subjects and/or verbs - are missing
 - verb tense errors affect clarity
 - Lack of or misuse of precise vocabulary
- writing in strings of unconnected sentences vs. paragraphs
- unclear connections between ideas
- translation of ideas from native language
- misuse of sources or evidence of plagiarism

[Example writing from a student who would benefit from additional English support.](#)

Signs of "accent" in writing

- minor language errors don't interfere with meaning
 - articles
 - prepositions
 - awkward word choice
- unclear organization due to new or unfamiliar writing genres
- difficulty with new citation styles and formatting

[Example writing from a student who exhibits an "accent" in English.](#)

How can you talk to students about their language development?

- **Acknowledge the difficulty of learning a second language.** Share your own experiences learning a second language or learning the disciplinary language of your field.
- **Ask questions to find out about their experience learning English.** *What is most challenging about learning English for you? What resources do you use? How do you get help? Have you taken and English as a second language class?*
- **Point out the specific language areas that cause confusion or miscommunication.** Sometimes students internalize general feedback to mean that all aspects of their language need work, when in reality only one part needs work.
- **Emphasize students' language strengths when talking about areas for improvement.** *You have strong fluency in English, but writing an email to a potential employer requires a more formal style.*
- **Normalize language learning.** Improving English skills is not remedial but a normal part of academic development. Students will continue to improve skills throughout their academic careers.



Best practices for making referrals for language support

- **Destigmatize English language resources.** Resources are additional learning tools designed for ALL students to use and benefit from. Familiarize yourself with the English language resources on campus:
 - **Minnesota English Language Program Credit Classes**
 - **Student English Language Support**
- **Dedicate class time to talk about a wide variety of campus resources.** Consider asking groups of students to discuss their experience with resources such as the Center for Writing, SMART Learning Commons, and the Libraries as students are likely to listen more to their peers than their instructors and advisors. Remind students of resources as assignments are introduced in class.
- **Connect students with resources for long-term development.** Students may have unrealistic expectations of how a resource can help. Do they think a single consultation with the writing center will help them perfect their 15 page paper? Help students understand the benefits of using resources on a regular basis as opposed to once before a major assignment deadline.
- **Coach students on how to use resources.** How do you make an appointment? What should you bring to the appointment? Are there walk in hours?
- **Follow up.** It's important to check back with students about the help they received. Will they use the resource again?

Example writing from a student who would benefit from additional English Language Support

Brent Staples article is very interesting because there is the same phenomenon in China. In the background part, the first mentioned thing is the number of students likely to cheat or plagiarize is increasing. Then, there are many reasons which caused this phenomenon and some approach to deal with this problem.

In Staples's essay, I firmly agree that "It's a question of whether we can preserve the methods through which education at its best teaches people to think critically and originally." (p. 19). And more importantly is that the way many youngsters use plagiarism are different from the generations before them. They always write essay just like a collage and use the idea from the Internet rather than use original sentences. (p. 19) But according to Staples, "This habit of mind is already pervasive in the culture and will be difficult to roll back. But parents, teachers, and policy makers need to understand that this is not just a matter of personal style or generational expression" which is really far-sighted.

This essay remind me of the study in China. Many parents always hope their kids become an outstanding man which give them too much pressure. So kids always shame on having a low grades, that maybe a reason for cheating. When I was a high school student, many of my classmate choose cheat to get a good grades temporarily. But when it comes to college entrance examination, they can't catch the level they show up in the school.

Example of an "accent" in English writing

In "cutting and pasting", Brent Staples suggests the prevalence of plagiarism due to several reasons including new technologies, declining personal morality and the pressures many student feels in early 21 century. He points out that in recent years, academic institutions and college teachers try their best to avoid cheating and plagiarism in campus. Staples also describes that the negative effect on cheating and plagiarism is not just a personal and generational style, but if we can keep the habit of mind that we think critically and originally. (P19) And I totally agree with Staples' idea.

Plagiarism is also a common phenomenon in China in recent years. And it can render us lose the ability of thinking ourselves if we often copy idea and essay from other people or Internet. For example, in my high school, I often copied homework such as math and physics from harder-working classmates and pasted the articles from Internet to complete the assignments. As a result, I found I can't think independently and I don't have the consciousness of originality in the end. So it has negative influence on our long-term study. As Staple said, "This habit of mind is already pervasive in the culture and will be difficult to roll back." (P19)

In addition, David Pritchard says: "The big sleeping dog here is not the moral issue. The problem is that kids don't learn if they don't do the work." (P18) And I don't agree with this assertive idea in the passage. In my opinion, plagiarism is not just a matter of poor knowledge learning. It's a question of dishonest attitude towards matter of principle. Because I think that the aim of education is not just conveying knowledge and skills. More importantly, it's the cultivation of moral qualities, which forms our values in our lives.

In a word, plagiarism and cheating have negative effect on college students. Not only the influence on the deficiency of knowledge, but the habit of mind and the cultivation of the moral qualities as well.