

Faculty Focus

Volume 2, Issue 3: March 21, 2005

Registered for [The Teaching Professor Conference](#) yet? If not, register right away, because space is filling up! The theme this year is *Teaching and Learning: Growth, Resilience, and Change*. You don't want to miss it!

Ginny Haight, editor

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Teaching International Students: Supporting, Listening, and Speaking

By Soonhyang Kim, Ohio State University

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Several important issues and classroom management strategies related to listening and speaking skills can make the classroom experience a positive one for international students. Most of the pedagogical suggestions below could be applied to all students, not only to those from different countries. At the same time, however, there are difficulties and needs unique to non-native English speakers. Domestic students may express concerns similar to those of international students, but the reasons behind those concerns are different. For instance, according to English-as-a-Second-Language faculty member Diane Belcher, “domestic students may choose not to participate in class discussion because of being introverted, uninterested in the subject matter, or unprepared for that day’s lesson. International students, on the other hand, may be silent for any of those reasons too, or for other quite different reasons having to do with linguistic proficiency, cultural conventions, or educational background.”

Research findings and pedagogical suggestions discussed in this article focus on three listening and speaking problem areas for international students: (a) difficulties in note-taking and comprehension, (b) a lack of second-language confidence, and (c) unfamiliarity with the U.S. academic classroom discourse patterns and expectations.

Note-taking and listening comprehension

Some researchers have documented that because international students don't understand the language, they experience difficulty taking notes. This inability to comprehend may also contribute to their silence during class discussions.

Pedagogical suggestions:

- Speak clearly and at a reasonable pace.
- Avoid inaccessible vocabulary, culture-specific words, or slang.
- Make the good use of non-verbal communication strategies (e.g., gesture and eye contact).
- Encourage students to audiotape the class, if they think it might help their comprehension.
- Encourage students to copy or borrow notes from peers and discuss the notes with peers.
- Write key terms on the board and ask comprehension-check questions.
- Invite students to ask questions if there is anything they do not understand.
- Use visual aids to enhance students' comprehension.
- Provide an outline or key terms on handouts, the blackboard, and/or overhead projector transparencies.
- Post main points or any visuals used in class on the Web, or send via e-mail either to all students or upon request.
- Use legible handwriting on the board. Cursive script may be difficult to decipher.
- Encourage students to talk with you informally or during office hours so that they become familiar with your dialect

To read the research findings and pedagogical suggestions for: (b) a lack of second-language confidence, and (c) unfamiliarity with the U.S. academic classroom discourse patterns and expectations, sign up for your free [three-month trial to *The Teaching Professor* newsletter](#). Once you have enrolled, log in to the April issue, and can read the rest of this article.

Book Offer

[Ten Trends in Higher Education](#)

by Marguerite J. Dennis, Suffolk University, Vice President, Enrollment and International Programs

Discover ten future higher education trends and see the road ahead for you and your institution. Embrace what certainly will be our constant companion in the years to come – CHANGE.

This monograph is not meant to be a definitive treatise on all of the changes likely to affect the marketing, admission, enrollment, financing and retention of college and university students in the next decade. This monograph is written from the perspective of a higher education administrator whose job is to effectively and efficiently enroll a qualified student body and help those enrolled reach their educational goals.

To order this 66-page book for only \$49.95 visit <http://www.magnapubs.com/catalog/publications/597276-1.html> or call 1-800-433-0499.

Are On-Site Courses as Effective as Online?

By Dale Fowler, instructional designer at the Center for Distributed Learning at Indiana Wesleyan University

Despite the fact that online learning is a pretty well-established learning modality, there are those who continue to discuss and debate whether online is “equivalent” to on site. There are thousands of “no significant difference” studies. For those of us who have been online for some time, the issue is settled. We no longer entertain the question. It is a moot point with us. In fact, a recent experience of simultaneously teaching online and onsite has me asking quite the opposite question: Are on-site courses as effective as online?

Perhaps it is time to change the discussion. Having become acclimated to facilitating online, I find myself declining on-site courses. As I reflect upon my tendency to do so, I realize that it is a matter of efficiency. From my vantage point at this time, on-site courses are less *efficient* for me compared to online. Nevertheless, this term I accepted one and have had occasion to reflect upon the experience.

In preparing to teach on site, I found myself spending time making photocopies rather than designing learning activities, the equivalent of on-site prepping for the class. At the outset, in trying to present PowerPoint slides, I discovered the room was not equipped for such an approach. In addition, as the class sessions took place, there was this phenomenon called *student absences*. These were disruptive to the continuous flow of the course as students were at different places in their understanding of material. This is problematic in courses where

the material is linked and builds toward a comprehensive understanding, such as accounting.

When students submitted assignments, I found myself toting disorganized stacks of material rather than viewing them through an electronic grade book. I always know where the papers are and haven't lost any with the electronic grade book.

In anticipation of giving tests, I found myself wandering the halls looking for a Scantron machine. If these inefficiencies of on-site course management are the case for me, I began to wonder about the efficiency of the course from the student perspective. Moreover, as I realized the drain the inefficiency of the on-site course had on my personal efficacy in the classroom, I then began to wonder if it had the same impact on the students. I wondered if the course is as *effective* for them as my online students.

Academically, I have 20 years of experience teaching the subject with six different institutions. But how does this compare with the fact that the vast majority of these sections are taught by adjunct instructors who have likely not studied curriculum design and who take on the course for additional income? According to the students, many of the adjuncts tend to stray from the syllabus, whereas online the students are all completing the same learning activities regardless of the facilitator in our system.

The above is an excerpt from the newsletter *On-Line Classroom*. This newsletter provides practical advice and examples of proven, research-based pedagogical techniques to help instructors and course developers create and teach outstanding online courses. Subscribe today at http://www.magnapubs.com/subscribe/magnapubs_oc.html or call 1-800-433-0499.

*****Audio Conference Announcement*****

A valuable, often overlooked component of a learner-centered institution is undergraduate research. Undergraduate research can provide one of the most compelling activities to help students learn about a subject in depth. When students are engaged in a project with a faculty member a number of other benefits accrue including enhanced communication skills, increased number of

laboratory skills, and the ability to work as a member of a team, in addition to gaining deep knowledge about one area of science.

Join Ike Shibley in [Learning Beyond the Classroom Walls: Undergraduate Research as Means to Facilitate Deep Learning](#), an interactive audio conference. Shibley will review the pertinent literature related to learner-centered teaching and discuss some of the definitions of undergraduate research. A number of recent studies will be discussed that deal with the benefits of undergraduate research as well as some of the hurdles that can impede progress.

DATE: April 20, 2005

TIME: 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM (Eastern)

REGISTRATION FEE: \$189 (add \$10 after April 13 2005)

Register today at <http://www.magnapubs.com/calendar/31.html> or call 1-800-433-0499.

Rethinking Teaching Assignments: Should Senior Faculty Teach More Introductory Courses?

After years of service and moving up through the faculty ranks, senior faculty members often feel they have earned the privilege of concentrating their teaching efforts on upper-division courses, leaving the introductory courses to younger faculty members. It seems fair enough: If you stick around long enough, you will be able to teach the courses you enjoy most. But is it the best arrangement for students?

Tom C. Roberts, assistant dean for recruitment and leadership development in the College of Engineering at Kansas State University, says that perhaps senior faculty members should teach more introductory courses because the generational differences between the current young faculty members and first-year students are greater than those between the senior faculty members and first-year students. (Yes, you read this correctly.)

Roberts bases this assertion on generations theory, particularly the work of Strauss and Howe, which proposes a 90-year cycle in which societal changes affect the general characteristics of each generation. The theory proposes a succession of four types of generations, each of which lasts 17 to 23 years: idealist, reactive, civic, and adaptive.

The current idealist generation (indulged as children, come of age as narcissistic young crusaders, cultivate principle as moralistic mid-lifers, and emerge as wise elders) is the Baby-Boom generation (people born between 1943 and 1960). Boomers went to college in the '60s and '70s and generally sought an approach to learning that gave them the freedom to problem solve in a less restrictive manner than what their professors offered.

Generation X, the current reactive generation (grow up under-protected, alienated young adults, mellow into pragmatic mid-life leaders) take a random approach to problem solving and are more skeptical than Boomers.

The Millennials, the current civic generation (grow up protected, come of age as heroic young team workers, demonstrate hubris as energetic mid-lifers, and emerge as powerful elders), are generally more sequential thinkers. They grew up with a lot more structure than Xers and generally need more guidance in their classes.

“When you’ve got Boomers and Xers who wanted freedom and didn’t want all that control suddenly teaching students who need more control, this starts to set up conflict within the classroom which is almost the reverse of the kind of conflict we had in the '60s and '70s,” Roberts says.

The Boomers’ more formal approach to teaching (relative to Xers) and experience teaching a variety of students might make them better suited to teaching Millennials, Roberts says. Having senior faculty members (Boomers) teach introductory courses and junior faculty members (Xers) teach capstone courses could help Millennials more readily adapt to a new learning environment and also help develop Xers as teachers more quickly “by giving them the opportunity to learn some things they didn’t pick up because of their random approach to learning,” Roberts says. “It creates a better pipeline of educating students and reducing some of the conflict, but also more rapid development of all faculty -- using the Boomers’ strengths with the younger students and helping the Xers become broader.”

Convincing faculty that reversing teaching assignments is in the best interest of the department can be difficult, and department chairs and heads should not force such a change, Roberts says. The department needs to carefully consider the issue, and, in some cases, members need to be convinced. Roberts and his colleague, John O. Mingle, have worked with departments on this issue for the past four years in a variety of venues, using a three-step process:

- Educate the faculty members about generational differences. “We get some defensive behavior, but when we have the right mix of people and a good facilitator, we can turn that into some very thoughtful discussion,” Roberts says.

- Relate the generational differences to the teaching that occurs in the department's courses.
- Look at the curriculum and student development throughout the curriculum in light of the findings in the first two steps. This may involve changing teaching assignments or the timing in which certain things are taught.

Because generations theory deals in general characteristics of generation, it is important to remember that people do not fit neatly into categories. "You have to be careful about putting people in boxes, but the trends are there. They are very distinctive over time and over the general social context. But as always, we have to pay attention to individual students. That never goes away, but our general approach might change," Roberts says.

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The above article first appeared in *Academic Leader*, a newsletter that includes news of successful programs concerning faculty development, roles and rewards, performance reviews, program/departmental assessment, curriculum, and governance on campuses nationwide. To subscribe to Academic Leader visit http://www.magnapubs.com/subscribe/magnapubs_al.html or call 1-800-433-0499.