

The Basic Skills Student and English Composition

(...or having to go the extra mile!)

Tutor Training Session: 10/02/09
(1:30-2:15)

Presenter: Dr. Sumita Lall

What do you already know about...

... the **role of the tutor** in the **learning process**?

- “showing” or modeling** versus “telling” or lecturing (gather, analyze, create, act)
- “sharing” or effective communication** (transferring ownership of knowledge, skills, and study behaviors to the tutee: “If I can do it, so can you.”)
- increasing **motivation** (“active” versus “passive” learning)


The heightened role of the tutor in the learning process for basic skills students

Anything you already do effectively, you must do even better when working with a basic skills student. Why?

Basic skills students are **motivationally challenged** and need assistance in improving "attitudes toward learning, self-concept, autonomy, ability to seek help, and a host of other influences having nothing to do with students' intellect or academic skill" (Boylan and Saxon 7). (page 2 of your Handbook)

What can you tell about a student who says the following words when he/she sits down to work with you?

"I've always hated English. I read the textbook but I'm still having trouble understanding the reading."

- may have been "remediated" before (called "high risk")*
- may have been told he/she was an ESL student (despite fluency with the spoken language)
- may have been assigned "busy work" through high school (reading comprehension answers that no one graded... perhaps given suspicious 😊 )
- no one ever explained to him/her the process of reading (in need of a Reading course)
- may have always been a non-reader (or someone who grew up in a household that did not read)
- may be having difficulty remembering what is read (in need of a study skills course or module in reading)

What can you tell about a student who says the following words when he/she sits down to work with you?

" I know the material. I just find it boring!"

- may have problems with attention (unable to focus)
- may have poor listening and note-taking skills (which impact his/her classroom experience)
- may be trying to hide his/her inability to demonstrate comprehension of content (anxiety)
- may have done poorly in English in the past but was never offered effective feedback, so errors may have become fossilized over time (are now hard to see or correct)
- may recognize concepts from past lessons (in high school, for e.g. "thesis statements") but may have never applied these concepts in action (writing)

Who is the Gen 1.5 student?

The following excerpt provides some background on the experience of a vernacular speaker from an immigrant group based on what one professor at a university encountered in her developmental English class:

. . . Bobby . . . speaks Chicano English, a version he learned growing up in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood. Both of Bobby's parents emigrated from Mexico as teens. The whole family speaks mainly English now, but they maintain their Spanish by communicating with relatives in Mexico . . .

Bobby's speech carries the rhythms and intonation of his cultural heritage. Though his accent may share some of the same features as the accent of a Spanish speaker learning English, **Bobby is a native speaker of English and has a native speaker's intuitive sense of what's grammatical in his home language.** Even so . . . he's **not much of a reader and writer--either in English or Spanish.** As a result, when he writes formal English, his **essays sound very oral, and he pays little attention to punctuation.** Bobby is struggling not only in my class, but in others, as well, because he hates to read his textbooks. He does fine in classes in which the tests cover the lecture material, but in classes where the reading material is different from the lecture material, he fails. He forms a study group for each of his classes so he can listen to his group mates talk about the material and learn it orally, but his strategy doesn't work well enough to get him through the academic babel. **He's on probation and may have to leave the university at the end of the semester.** (Julie Hagemann 75)

From Part 3 ("Workbook: Preparation for Discussing Your Roles") of your Handbook.

Who is a Gen 1.5 student?

Gen 1.5 is a provisional term that allows us to target the literacy needs of students who **speak** a second language at home and experience the following unique challenges:

- **cultural** challenges (immigrants or children of; the need for acculturation to academic expectations); **coordination with counseling and student services (tutoring, S.I., IDS, LRC in general)**
- **linguistic** challenges (limited or no literacy in a first language and undeveloped oral and written systems in a first language; the need for reinforcement of standard reading and writing versus “social” or “conversational” English); **coordination with EAC and ESL**
- **study skills** challenges (time management because of jobs and family) **coordination with students services and other disciplines ... the need for more CTE-linked coursework and contextual learning** (RW across the curriculum)

Background

The “high risk” student:

“. . . researchers conceptualize the high-risk college student as one whose academic background (**academic preparation**), prior performance (**low high school** or first-semester college GPA), or **personal characteristics** may contribute to academic failure or early withdrawal from college (Choy, 2002; Yeh, 2002). . . **Personal characteristics** are identified here as those things that place the student in a population (e.g., **first-generation students or students with low socioeconomic status**) without a long or necessarily successful history in higher education” (Jane Elizabeth Pizzolato *Developing Self-Authorship* NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2003, 44.6 p. 799).

Three Fatal “**P**s”

Perfectionism

Procrastination

Paralysis

How to Avoid the Fatal “**P**s”

Prewriting → **Writing** → **Revision**

replaces

Perfectionism → **P**rocrastination → **P**aralysis

What do these words mean?

Prewriting = imperfect scribble



Writing = a working draft

Revision = to see “with new eyes”



Perfectionism → **P**rocrastination → **P**aralysis
(fear of failing) → (fear of work) → (fear of teacher)

