

# Faculty Resource Kit for Teaching Non-Native English Speakers in Native-Dominant Classrooms

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## **Introductory Note:**

This kit has been assembled as a resource for you, as the number of non-native speakers in higher education continues to grow. The kit includes background information on who non-native speakers are as well as the basics of language acquisition. It offers ideas about how to address grammatical errors in written English, and how to get your non-native speakers more involved in class discussion. Finally, it provides two forms that you can copy and hand out on the first day of class. The first form gathers information on language use, and the second lists local resources to help students develop their English proficiency.

The kit is new as of the fall of 2003, and is the direct descendant of a Davis Foundation Grant awarded to the Academic Support Centers from all of the Colleges of the Fenway last fall. We welcome any suggestions you might have for including additional materials or information in future versions. I hope you find it interesting and useful.

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# Who They Are

Generally, you can think of non-native speakers (NNS) as belonging to two groups: international and domestic students.

## **International Students**

Simmons has about 120 international students, almost evenly divided between graduate and undergraduate programs. While our biggest group is from Japan, over 20 nations are represented. International students are required to submit TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores that meet certain standards set by each degree program. Because they have studied English extensively, international students often have strong reading skills and excellent grammar knowledge. Oral fluency and listening skills may be weaker if they have not been exposed to a good deal of spoken English, and some students may struggle with longer writing assignments for two reasons. First, students may have a hard time grasping unfamiliar US academic conventions and expectations. Second, it's likely that at the undergrad level, past writing practice was not structured around paper-length assignments. On the other hand, you may find that your international students have studied for some time in the US and are well versed in US academic culture.

## **Domestic Students**

Domestic NNS are US citizens, permanent residents, recent immigrants and refugees whose first language or home language is not primarily English. These students range from English dominant, to highly fluent bilinguals, to dominant in another language, covering every variation in between. More often than not, these students have completed a majority if not their entire high school education in US schools. Graduate students often hold an undergrad degree from a US institution. Some students have had all of their education in the US. Some were born here. Unless these students self-identify as non-native English speakers or have ESL classes on their transcripts, the admissions office has no way to know if they are NNS in order to request or require a TOEFL score. Nor, in many cases, should they demand TOEFL scores. As a result, most schools find it virtually impossible to keep an accurate count of how many domestic NNS students they have.

## **At Simmons**

At Simmons, we do know that in the fall of 2002, 13% (48 students) of the first-year undergraduate class self-identified as NNS. This number includes international students. As an institution, we estimate a total NNS population of around 10%, or about 360 students. As a nationwide trend, we know that the number of students taking the SAT who self-identify as NNS has been rising steadily over the past 10 years, while the number of international students has remained steady. The population of domestic NNS, then, is growing.

## Putting It in Perspective

- **It can take several years of practice and exposure to reach a high level of fluency in a second language.** Some students may never reach a native-like level, yet still do very well academically and professionally.
- **Language acquisition is an uneven process.** Highly proficient writing does not automatically imply equally proficient speaking and listening. Likewise, excellent speakers are not always strong writers. Whichever skills get the most practice develop furthest, and the environment in which English is acquired determines this.
- **Language learning tends to plateau.** When students reach a level of proficiency sufficient for their current needs, motivation to increase skills and knowledge declines. A huge jump in the required level of proficiency occurs when students come to college or graduate school. It may take some time for students to catch up to the new, higher demands. In the course of a semester, you may well not see evidence of substantial improvement.
- **It is not true that if you don't learn a language by your teenage years that you will never be competent in it.** It's just that the expectations for adults are significantly higher than for children, and they are especially high for adults at the college level. Language mastery at this level takes years of dedicated practice. The "critical period" hypothesis only seems to apply to oral accent, in which there does seem to be some permanent imprinting.
- **Articles and prepositions are among the last grammar items mastered for most NNS.** Articles rules are complex and the exceptions and idioms are many, while there are no rules for using prepositions at all. You just have to memorize them. Try not to be overly troubled by these errors.
- **It is normal for even advanced NNS to struggle with grammar.** Some common problems are subject/verb agreement, collective nouns (information are/is), and derivational morphemes (using to consider, considerably, considered and considerate all properly). Even when students know the rules and can recite them to you, getting the words right every time is not a simple task.

# The Roots of Error

*Tom Scovel. Learning New Languages: A Guide to Second Language Acquisition. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 2001. 43-64.*

Fifty years ago, researchers pretty much accepted that most errors in a second language (L2) came from **interference** from the first language (L1). In other words, students continue to draw on the structures and patterns of L1 even when they don't work or exist in L2. So, for instance, a student whose native language doesn't use articles can be expected to drop or misuse them in English. This is termed **negative transference**. Of course, this process can also work in students' favor when L1 and L2 have similar structures, which is called **positive transference**.

Today, linguists still believe that interference from L1 profoundly shapes pronunciation in L2, but are far, far less likely to attribute written and spoken grammatical errors to negative transference. Several other explanations for error have emerged.

A good number of errors are simply **mistakes in performance**. L2 students know the rules, know instantly how to correct these errors when they are pointed out, but simply perform them wrong, both in speaking and writing. If you've ever spoken an L2, you know precisely how this happens and feels. It is natural in the process of language learning, no matter how frustrating.

Errors that come from an incomplete understanding of the L2 really are "goofs in competence." For instance, forming the third person singular (the committee listens) by adding a final -s is a system unique to English. When speakers of other languages fail to do this (the committee listen), they are not making an error of negative transference because they are not drawing on the rules of L1 to come up with this verb form. Rather, they are failing to follow the rules of English properly. Linguists call this incompletely mastered English the learner's **interlanguage**, and argue that mistakes that emerge from it are the result of **intraference**: trouble within English, not between English and another language.

**Intraference** is often closely followed by **overgeneralization**, in which once students learn a pattern in the L2, they apply it to all situations regardless of exceptions. This produces errors like, "he had tooken my place already."

Finally, **avoidance** of structures in L2 that don't exist in L1 also forces students to produce constructions native speakers would be unlikely to use. For instance, in English it is possible to use the present participle (embarrassing) as a deverbed adjective (I am an embarrassing violinist). This is not possible in Spanish, and may drive a native Spanish speaker to contort an English sentence in unusual ways in order to get at the same idea.

The important thing to remember is that errors in L2 writing are evidence neither of general language incompetence nor lack of attention/motivation. L2 speakers do not make these errors in their L1, and by virtue of pursuing higher education in L2, they have already proven themselves to be highly capable, motivated language learners.

# The Complexity of Language Learning

From *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems*. Eds. Michael Swan and Bernard Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Try not to underestimate the complexity of mastering the fine details of writing in a second language. It is an enormously challenging task. As a general rule, most people are much more willing to forgive, overlook or ignore spoken error in an effort to understand the main idea of what is being said. But in writing, the same easily bypassed mistake of a dropped article (a, an, the) or faulty subject/verb agreement construction can become a major distraction and irritant. Our standards for correctness in writing are simply higher. Also, written English for academic purposes tends to be far more complex in its sentence structures than spoken English, creating even more possibilities for error.

Just to give you a glimpse of what non-native speakers are up against when they write academic papers, below is a chart comparing English article rules to the rules for article usage in a few other languages.

English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singular countable nouns <u>take</u> an article Ex. <i>the</i> purpose, <i>a</i> thesis statement, <i>an</i> intention</li> <li>• Singular uncountable nouns <u>do not take</u> an article (cannot say one, two, three informations) Ex. information, rice, deer</li> <li>• Singular uncountable nouns <u>do take</u> an article if they are made specific Ex. <i>the</i> rice in the blue bowl Ex. <i>the</i> information I requested</li> <li>• Plural general nouns <u>take</u> an article if they are made specific Ex. padded chairs are more comfortable (any, all padded chairs) Ex. <i>the</i> padded chairs in my office are comfortable (specific chairs)</li> </ul>
German, Spanish, Catalan, Italian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many plural, general nouns take an article Ex. “<i>The</i> human beings are strange animals.”</li> <li>• Indefinite articles are not used with jobs Ex. “My sister is doctor”</li> <li>• Indefinite articles are often not used after “with, without, and as” Ex. “I am telling you this as friend, not as boss.”</li> </ul>
French, Spanish and Catalan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definite articles are used before possessive pronouns Ex. “This is <i>the</i> mine and that is <i>the</i> hers.”</li> </ul>
Portuguese, Greek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definite articles are used with proper nouns Ex. “She speaks <i>the</i> French very well.” Ex. “<i>The</i> Peter is my friend”</li> </ul>
Russian, Polish, Chinese, Thai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No articles at all – so learning when to use them, and how to distinguish between definite (the) and indefinite (a, an, some) articles is often problematic</li> </ul>

Japanese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many nouns that refer to people <u>take</u> a suffix (rather than an article) depending on the degree of respect required</li> <li>• But, people-referring nouns in a clearly plural context <u>do not take</u> a suffix, nor do nouns not referring to people</li> <li>• Japanese does not distinguish between countable and uncountable nouns</li> </ul>
Arabic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No indefinite article at all</li> <li>• The definite article is a prefix (al-). Like English, it's used to refer back to previously mentioned indefinite nouns. Ex. "Can I have cookie?" "You can have <i>the</i> last cookie in jar."</li> <li>• It is also used with certain set phrases where English omits it Ex. at the sunset, for the breakfast, on the Monday, in the India, to the Yemen</li> <li>• The definite article is used differently with possessives Ex. English – the teacher's car Ex. Arabic – car the teacher</li> </ul>

# Language and Identity for Domestic NNS

*Yuet-Sim D. Chiang and Mary Schmida. "Language Identity and Language Ownership: Linguistic Conflicts of First Year University Writing Students." Generation 1.5 Meets College Composition: Issues in the Teaching of Writing to US Educated Learners of ESL. Eds. Linda Harklau, Kay M. Losey, Meryl Seigal. Mahweh, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999.*

Chiang and Schmida did a study at UC Berkeley in 1995-6 that challenges the categories of ESL/native speaker. From 20 Asian-American students who are the US born children of immigrant parents, they collected a written survey on language and literacy, a taped interview of 1-2.5 hours, and a portfolio of first year writings. Before the study began, all 20 students had failed a 3-hour prompted essay exam that measures writing proficiency in English, and were placed in first year writing classes with other students, native speakers and NNS, who had also failed. All 20 students elected not to take an ESL section of the course, a choice that was open to them.

The study highlights the conflicts that arise between the linguistic identity the students profess, and their actual ability to read, write and speak their heritage language:

- 60% self-identified as non-native speakers
- 40% identified as native speakers, even though 12% actually learned another language at home first
- 91% self-identified as bilingual, even though only 37% reported they spoke both their heritage language and English at home
- 50% reported they spoke their heritage language at home.

Chiang and Schmida found that for these students the term "bilingual" did not mean an ability to speak, read or write in the heritage language as well as English, but rather was a term to describe deep and powerful cultural affiliation with the heritage culture despite English dominance. Saying they are bilingual "allows them to name their allegiance to their ethnic identity without impeding their linguistic ability in English." In fact, the majority could not read or write in their heritage language, and reported using broken or mixed versions of English/the heritage language in speaking.

Yet despite the primacy of English in their lives – they reported they think mostly in English, read and write only in English, speak mostly in English, were educated (and excelled) entirely in English, and deliberately chose not to take an ESL writing section – these students do not easily claim a "native speaker" identity, either. Native speakers are culturally "the Americans," or "they," or "them."

In the end they are not quite "mainstream English speakers, ESL speakers, or bilingual speakers" in the way surveys and researchers mean those terms when they use them. Chiang and Schmida call on all of us to challenge the labels and to listen carefully when we ask students whether or not English is their native language.

# The Reach of Culture in Writing

Helen Fox. *Listening to the World: Cultural Issues in Academic Writing*. Urbana: NCTE, 1994.

Fox’s central argument is that western and non-western (or world majority) cultures have produced radically different spoken and written communication patterns and tendencies, and that all too often international students are assumed to be “poor analytical writers” when in fact they are simply writing from a different set of expectations, priorities, preferences and values. Fox argues that academics in the US are often impatient with their world majority students’ writing because “multiculturalism has been limited for the most part to theoretical understanding . . . knowledge about difference rather than a real feeling for what it is to make sense of the world and communicate it in totally different ways” (x).

She advocates neither completely changing the expectations, codes and practices of western academic discourse, nor of requiring world majority students to conform 100% to the western model. She instead suggests trying for a middle ground that suits the professional needs of the student. Those needs would be different for a student planning to work in the US, and for a student planning to return home to work.

Below is a table detailing the different communication tendencies in western and world-majority cultures that Fox has found in her several years of teaching writing to these students at both the graduate and undergraduate levels in the UMASS system and at the University of Michigan.

Western Academic Discourse	World Majority Discourse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear, step-by-step, transparently logical progression of ideas</li> <li>• critically examining a variety of ideas and opinions</li> <li>• Creating an original interpretation that explicitly and directly shows the writer’s point of view</li> <li>• Using reference materials to add evidence and authority to a writer’s argument</li> <li>• Attributing ideas to individual authors with meticulous care</li> <li>• Speaking with a voice of authority, making judgments and recommendations and coming to specific, reasoned conclusions</li> <li>• Valuing literal meanings and precise definitions, and explicit statements of cause and effect</li> <li>• Writing sparsely and directly, without embellishments or digressions</li> <li>• Beginning each paragraph or section with a general analytical statement and following with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being subtle</li> <li>• Dropping hints rather than speaking directly about a sensitive subject</li> <li>• Telling stories to make a point</li> <li>• Using frequent, effective demonstrations without explicit commentary on what is being shown and why</li> <li>• Learning by listening, watching, and by absorbing from a master rather than by explicit questioning</li> <li>• Communicating indirectly and holistically</li> <li>• Valuing wisdom of the past</li> <li>• Downplaying the individual in favor of the group</li> <li>• Respecting the intelligence and sophistication of the audience by letting them do their own analysis, draw their own conclusions, and read the inferences of the writer</li> <li>• At novice and undergraduate levels, preferring a demonstrated mastery of information and detail rather than a preference for open criticism and</li> </ul>

<p>pertinent examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making overt connections between sentences and paragraphs</li> <li>• Finding words that show exact relationships between ideas</li> <li>• Noting small differences in authors' personalities, styles and "takes" on an intellectual problem</li> <li>• Valuing separateness over harmony and quick, new solutions over lengthy, mature reflection</li> </ul>	<p>critique</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building social harmony</li> </ul>
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US academic writing can seem to world majority students "aggressive, redundant, boring and rude," while to US academics, the writing of world majority students can seem "obscure, digressive, overly descriptive or disturbingly unoriginal" (126).

## Written Error

The first time you are faced with the developing writing of an intermediate level NNS student, it's normal to feel a little overwhelmed. The errors can be extensive (14-15 per page or more) and so varied that you don't know where to start marking. The student is likely struggling with everything from sentence fragments, to poor word choice, to punctuating quotations, to articles and prepositions, to verb tenses. Some sentences may be so unclear you can't even begin to guess what the student might have been trying to say. You might feel like throwing your hands up and not marking any of it, or you might feel like unless you write in the correct grammar and usage for every error, you are being an irresponsible writing instructor.

You don't have to resort to either extreme. You can take a middle road that will help the student develop English proficiency, and at the same time keep you from spending literally an hour marking one paper. Remember that realistically, in the course of one semester you may not see vast improvement. Language learning takes time and academic writing is particularly demanding. But you can contribute to the student's developing English skills with strategic feedback.

Finally, while any paper by a NNS student is likely to take somewhat more marking time than a paper by a native speaker, try not to sacrifice feedback on content and organization in order to cover more grammar. NNS speakers need that content feedback as much as native speakers.

# Strategic Feedback for Writing

Dana Ferris. *Treatment of Error in Second Language Writing*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

Although some researchers believe that marking student errors stifles higher-order writing development and rarely leads to improved grammar knowledge or better self-editing on the student's part, Dana Ferris is a firm believer in "well constructed error feedback." She's done several studies since 1995 validating the use of focused, strategic error marking and offers the following advice:

Mark patterns of error rather than every single error, as marking everything can overwhelm the student and exhaust the teacher.

Do your best to distinguish between errors and stylistic differences, and focus your efforts on the actual errors.

- Error: *There are a lot of problems such like family, tradition . . . such as or like, not both*
- Style Difference: *It shows that culture, custom, and language identify our identity. Clumsy, but there isn't a mistake here. Move on.*

When to use Direct and Indirect Correction:

- Direct correction means writing in the correct form, word, or construction. Beginning English learners are often completely or almost entirely unable to figure out how to correct their errors, even when the error is circled by the teacher. Direct correction here is needed.
- Indirect correction means underlining or circling errors without further comment. More advanced learners benefit from indirect correction in most cases because it requires students to analyze their own work more carefully. Ferris's research shows that students can easily self-correct 75% of circled errors. The other 25% they can't self-correct are often "untreatable" errors for which there is not a clear, convenient rule to refer to. Untreatable errors might be "word choice, word form or unidiomatic sentence structure." In these cases, direct feedback can be helpful.
- Coding or labeling the types of errors isn't worth your time. All too often, students either don't have the grammar vocabulary or knowledge to make sense of grammar labels, or they, like native speakers, rely far more on what sounds right when making corrections, rather than referring back to grammar texts/rules. Label only if it's a grammar point you've covered in class.

Try one of these three methods to decide which errors get priority in terms of your marking time:

- Global errors confuse meaning. *The tension was at its pick. Local errors do not. Last summer I go to visit my grandmother in L.A.* Only mark the global errors.
- Frequent errors. Read the paper through before marking, then make a second pass, marking 2-4 repeated mistakes. Comment on these repeated errors at the end.
- Errors that have already been discussed in class. If you've talked about fragments and run-ons, consistent verb tenses and punctuating quotations, only mark errors in these areas.

Recent research suggests that students can and will benefit from content and grammar feedback on the same draft. You don't have to choose.

If you don't give students a chance to revise their writing, research has shown it is likely they will ignore your grammar feedback. If you can, build revision into your assignments. If you can't, let students know you will be looking for improved grammar from one paper to the next and have kept a few notes on each student's patterns of error.

If a student has written an unclear or fuzzy sentence with multiple errors, don't spend time attempting to reformulate the sentence yourself or second guessing the writer's intent, or even circling every error. Underline or circle the whole sentence and write in the margin, "Unclear meaning, can you rewrite this sentence?"

#### Tips to Avoid Burnout

- Don't feel obliged to give grammar feedback on every paper students write.
- Understand that the point of giving grammar feedback is not for students to eliminate all errors, but to encourage "gradual and consistent improvement in accuracy over time."
- Make most of your feedback indirect, at the point of the mistake (not just in a summary at the end), and uncoded/unlabeled.
- As the semester wears on, mark less and demand that students take more and more responsibility for their own editing.

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## **NOTE:**

**In the next section are four one-page samples of NNS student writing, each demonstrating a different method of marking error. The students, first-years at the time they wrote the papers, all gave permission to use their work anonymously for teaching and training purposes.**

## Sample 1: Mark All Errors

*Although not recommended by Ferris, this strategy can be useful and fast if a fairly advanced student is making a handful of errors per page.*

Race was and still is a big issue in **the** American society; whether it is mentioned or **not we** (Black/African American, White, Latino, Indian or Asian) all deal with racial issues **sometimes** in our lives. The truth is that some might **deal** or experience it more than others. For example, **A** young boy born into an Asian and Black family living in a strictly Asian or Black community might face more racial issues, such as racism and what his true identity is, than a Latino girl going to school in ( )predominantly white area. All face different racial issues in society depending on various things such as: the location one might live in, one's background, as well as **their** culture, and most important of all **their** own individuality.

When I speak of racial issues, I mean being caught in **between** a racial conflict. Whether it be finding your identity, living in a community where you might not fit in because of your race, or just simply dealing with racism on both sides (**fragment**).

## Sample 2: Mark Only Global Errors

*I've found this most useful with students who tend to struggle less with grammar per se, and more with word choice, word form and making meaning clear.*

Amy Tan is ashamed of her mom's English, I, unlike she, am ashamed of my English and my Khmer. I believe like Amy believes that my imperfect English and Khmer express my imperfect thoughts (13). I don't want to feel that way, but to me it is a weakness. It is something I strive to be good at. **It is a struggle to find a part of an identity in which I don't own, but at the same time I own it, but it is not mine (whole sentence unclear, rewrite).** I know English, but I don't know it well enough to say that I'm secure with it, and the same goes with Khmer.

It is frustrated to be ashamed of who you are. It is **furious** to walk with insecurity and not believing in yourself. And it is horrible to know that you know two languages, but you are great in neither of them.

Unfortunately, I am not **lick** Amy Tan. I am not rebellious in nature and I don't enjoy the challenge of **disapproving** assumptions made about me. Unlike Amy, I wouldn't ever want to become an English major. I wouldn't dream of writing non-fiction as a freelancer and wouldn't **hone** to ever pursue English as a career (15). However, I am silent. I choose to trust in silence believing that it is the safest thing for me. It saves me embarrassment and the humiliation. One the other hand, I can't do anything with Khmer. I don't even know how to write, let alone work with it.

I know I need to be like Tan. I need to be rebellious, embarrassed, humiliated, and **talked**. It is hard. It is a struggle of denying myself, despite the humiliation, and dealing with it.

### Sample 3: Mark Only Patterns of Error

*Excellent for the paper that would otherwise overwhelm you with frequent and wide-ranging errors. Here I chose to focus on 1) sloppy typos, and 2) verb errors.*

I strongly believe that United States is unrestricted on meritocracy. Different from all others countries in the world, America gives each person a right to have dreams and achieve its. As legally residents in America, if a **pesom work** hard she can **earns** a level of improved status that she **desired**. As a first generation American, myself have **experienced** with meritocracy. Living in America, I have **change** to go to school, go to college that I want to. Meritocracy is wide opened in this country, it's valid to everybody.

I came from a country where 3/4 of the population are uneducated. There people work hard just to find a daily meal, and pay off the debt for the fore-generation. **Ifa** person **born** poor, there is no other way but **jsut** to be poor for the rest of his/her life. They don't have checking or banking account, but they only have a piggy bank to save money for the next day meals if they can't go to work. If they **got** sick, medications they **used** are the herbals that live on their backyard. After spending a summer there, I feel so lucky that we **had** immigrated to America.

Living in United States, I **dound** myself working hard toward my goals. **Meritpcracy** gave to the rights to get my high school diploma, and go to college . . . .

## Sample 4: Mark Only Errors Covered Previously in Class

*Especially good for handling common issues you're likely to cover in class. Here, I'd covered various punctuation errors and marked only those.*

I feel disappointed that they do not speak English perfect, but that is something I cannot blame them for; they are not native speakers of **English, they** were not born here. I do not feel ashamed of them; I just wish they spoke better English. Tan uses a perfect example in her essay of her friends' reactions to her mother's English that I can relate to: "some of my friends tell me they understand 50 percent of what my mother says. Some say the understand 80 to 90 percent. Some say they understand none of it, as if she were speaking pure **Chinese.**" (12) My friends, people I know, or even people my parents **know say** the same thing about my parents; they say that they either do not understand them or they have to pay close attention to understand what my parents are trying to say. Some of the time they would turn over to me and ask if they were speaking in English or would just ask me to translate what my parents would be saying. I truly think this is a normal thing in Asian families; most Asian kids here now are the first generation in America; therefore, their parents know little English. Most Asian families have dealt with this problem; after the first generation in America most of the families would not have this problem anymore. The kids would have learned enough English for it to be more of a native language than broken.

One other thing I agree with Tan about is that there is no other way to describe the language other than "broken" or "limited"; their way of speaking is not "broken" nor **"limited"**, they just cannot speak it as clear and as well as natives can.

It has always bothered me that I can think of no way to describe it other than "broken," as if it were damaged and needed to be fixed, as if it lacked a certain wholeness and soundness. I've heard other terms used, "limited English," for example. But they seem just as bad, as if everything is limited, including people's perceptions of the limited English speaker. (13)

This shows us that in everyone's vocabulary there is not a word for the accented way they talk, but "broken" and **"limited English"**. I don't think this is the right approach; there should be another word for it rather than calling it "broken" or **"limited"**.

# Grading NNS Writing

Grading the writing of developing NNS students can be a sticky issue. On the one hand, instructors seek to be fair in their grading policies by holding all students in the class to the same standard. On other hand, fluent, grammatically correct, written English for many NNS students is an unreachable, unrealistic, and impossible goal in a way it is not for most native speaking students.

When it comes time to grade, some instructors choose to simply overlook more grammar errors in NNS writing, some lessen the impact grammar has on the grades of NNS students, and some hold all students to a single, native-speaking standard. The first two options can leave instructors feeling vaguely guilty about giving “special treatment,” and the last can feel unduly harsh.

The following suggestions for grading will give you alternative approaches. In each case, the standards can be universally applied to native and non-native speakers, *and* NNS students have the same opportunity as native speakers to earn a good grammar grade in your course.

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## Grading Grammar Once a Semester

Assess the first paper for 3-4 consistent errors. When the paper is handed back, include with it a contract that says a certain percentage of the final grade will depend on how well the student avoids producing those errors on the final paper. Ask the student to agree to the contract by signing it. If you want, you can give both mid-term and final contracts, allowing you to target 6-8 error patterns each semester.

On the first paper, grade only the content and circle every error you find. Count the total circles or the circles per page, and write that number on the paper. Do not base any part of the grade on grammar. Tell the student that if she can reduce the number by half or two-thirds by the end of the term, she will be rewarded. On each paper she hands in, grade the content, and circle and count the errors so she can see her progress. At the end of the term:

- set aside a certain percentage of the final course grade for grammar, determining the grammar grade according to how successfully she reduced her errors on the final paper
- if she meets a certain reduction rate (say 75% fewer errors per page), weight her lowest paper grade  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the other paper grades
- if she meets a certain reduction rate, drop her lowest grade on a smaller assignment

## Grading Grammar on Every Paper

- Limit the impact grammar errors can have on any paper to 10% or less of the paper’s final grade.
- Agree to delay grading the paper by 2-3 days if the student visits the writing center specifically for grammar work. The writing center can verify attendance to writing sessions if the student requests it. Simply spending an hour at the center

working on grammar will not automatically mean a 100% error free paper (tutors don't correct for students), but will mean significantly reduced error.

- Agree to delay grading the paper by 2-3 days if the student meets with you to go over grammar issues.

# Involving Students in Discussion

When non-native speakers are integrated into classrooms with a majority of native speakers, one common development is for them to be quieter or less likely to volunteer their thoughts orally. They worry about getting the grammar right, about an accent that might make them harder to understand, about not having the right words to describe exactly what they mean, as well as sharing similar worries to native speaking students: sounding smart, trusting they understood the reading correctly, not offending classmates. Discussion situations in which the instructor asks the class at large a general question like, “what did you think of the reading?” can be especially intimidating.

If you’re concerned that your NNS students might be silent, or you happen to grade on class participation and you want to make sure NNS students have a fair chance to join in, you might consider trying some of the following discussion techniques. These techniques will also work with native speakers who are shy or who find whole-class discussions a hard format to express themselves in.

## General Principles for Encouraging Good Discussion

- Don’t spotlight shy students by calling on them out of the blue, give them a chance to rehearse (jot down ideas/discuss answer with a neighbor) before speaking.
- When you ask a question, give the whole class adequate time to formulate an answer by not calling on anyone right away. Resist those first few hands that pop up.
- Give students time to prepare by telling them what will be discussed in class at the next meeting, then make a habit of actually discussing that material.
- Don’t grade them down for non-participation in discussions that ramble off topic or flare out of control emotionally.

# Effective Small Group Discussions

Ur, Penny. *Discussions That Work: Task-Centered Fluency Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Ur emphasizes that a discussion that involves everyone requires:

- Small groups so everyone has a chance to talk
- Group roles: A facilitator in each group whose job it is to make sure everyone talks and to prevent too much digression. A note-taker who writes down what was concluded or contributed. A reporter who will summarize results to the whole class
- A clear and defined topic to discuss
- A reason or purpose to talk: “talk about  $x$  in order to achieve  $y$ ” (11)
- Feedback from the whole class and from the professor about how well  $y$  was achieved: this can take the form of a group discussion that follows, or the professor responding to what the group came up with, or a combination of both

Following is an example of a discussion that was revised to fulfill all her objectives:

A student was told she had to design a discussion idea that would be of interest to teenagers. She decided on over-possessive mothers (she had an  $x$  – a topic), went home and wrote up a dialog among a group of kids, and brought it in. The class did talk some, because the topic was concrete and specific and they could identify with individual characters – but it quickly petered out, some students were silent, and all quickly looked to the teacher for the next step (there was no  $y$ , or purpose to the discussion).

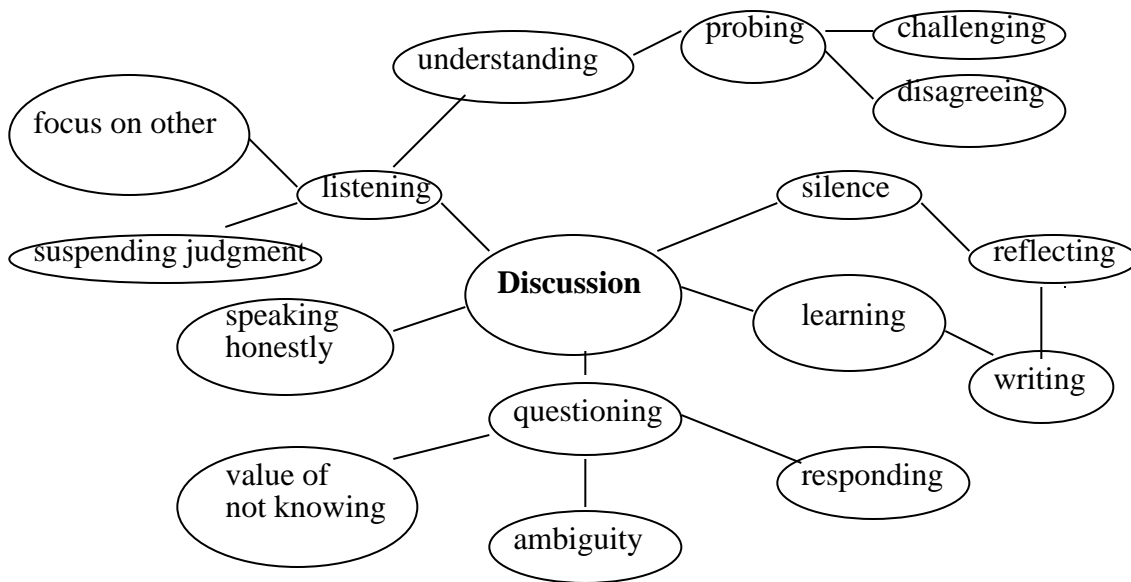
To improve this exercise, the student went home and wrote two letters to Dear Abby: one from a daughter about her over-possessive mother, one from a mother about her rebellious daughter. The class was divided into two groups, one given the daughter’s letter, and one given the mother’s letter. Facilitator, writer and reporter roles were assigned. Both groups were told to take on the role of Dear Abby and respond to the letter. First they had to talk out an answer, and then they had to write a letter (discussion in order to achieve a certain end). When the letters were written, they were read aloud and then a whole class discussion followed in which all evaluated and discussed the effectiveness of the letters and the issues brought up along the way. Specific topic, purpose, small groups, defined roles, and feedback were all present.

# Effective Whole-Class Discussions

Anderson, Marti. "Looking at How Discussions Work." *New Ways in Teacher Education*. Eds. Donald Freeman, Steve Cornwell. Alexandria, VA: TESOL, 1993. 1-5.

Anderson's exercise takes place on four occasions over the course of the semester in order to raise students' awareness of the dynamics of group discussions and their own patterns and preferences for participating in discussion.

**Step 1:** On the first day of class, the teacher puts a web diagram up on the board that illustrates the connections between the various elements of group discussion. She starts with the word "discussion" and extends the web from there.



As she draws, the students are encouraged to ask questions about what she means by certain terms and why she included certain things. Once her map is up, students spend 10-15 minutes writing about what they need to focus on individually to be good participants. Some find listening hard, others hate to suspend judgment; others never contribute their thoughts. After individual reflection, students come up to the board and write their names next to the bubbles they wrote most about and everyone as a class notices habits and patterns and has a chance to talk about them. The diagram with student names is kept up during class time for the rest of the course.

**Step 2:** After a week or so, the class has a second discussion about the diagram. For homework, each student has been given a page-sized version to comment on or change. Students can add things, cross others out, maybe even draw a whole new diagram to reflect two things: what they have observed actually happening in discussion so far, and what they feel is ideally most important in good discussion. They share their new diagrams in small groups, noticing similarities and differences, and then come back as a larger group for further discussion.

**Step 3:** A little past the halfway point of the class, students do another diagram exercise. Students go back to their own diagrams and mark any changes to what they thought in the second or third week of classes was most important to them in a group discussion. As a group, the class discusses why each student made the changes she/he did.

**Step 4:** In the last few days of the course, the class returns to the original whole-class diagram. For homework, they have written reflectively about how they experienced class discussion that semester, and what they learned about group discussion in general.

# Radio Reading

*Tumposky, Nancy R. "Radio Reading for Teacher Educators." New Ways in Teacher Education. Eds. Donald Freeman, Steve Cornwell. Alexandria, VA: TESOL, 1993. 180-182.*

This exercise works beautifully with a relatively small section of text, no more than 4-6 pages total (pages don't have to be consecutive and can be edited or abridged for length). It works best with readings that "invite multiple interpretations" (182).

1. Break the class into 4-5 groups, one text section or page per group.
2. Set a time limit for the activity so groups have a productive deadline (maybe 20 minutes).
3. All the members read the text section and then talk over both what the writer has said, and what they think about it.
4. Groups choose one person who will read aloud, and the others in the group are responsible for generating 4 questions: 2 factual, 2 interpretive.
5. The class comes back together as a group.
6. One group at a time reads their text aloud, and then the questioners ask the class to answer their four questions about the text. Each group tends to take 10-15 minutes.
7. While the groups present, the teacher takes notes on the questions and responses she wants to come back to.
8. Once the groups have finished, the teacher leads a discussion as a whole, expanding on, questioning, and challenging what the students generated.

# Designated Readers

Murphy, John M. "Facilitating Seminar Discussions with a 'Designated Reader'." *New Ways in Teacher Education*. Eds. Donald Freeman, Steve Cornwell. Alexandria, VA: TESOL, 1993. 105-107.

This exercise intends that in each class, a different student has a chance to significantly contribute to class discussion while others participate on a smaller level by responding to him or her. It's excellent practice for getting students to look closely at what a writer has actually said, in detail, and a great warm up for when students have to accurately summarize and paraphrase writers in their papers.

1. The designated reader for the course has carefully read the assigned piece, and prepared an outline that explains the central points and themes. She gives each student a copy of her outline at the beginning of class.
2. She gives the class about 10 minutes to read her outline, and then have a short conversation with a neighbor to review the reading and discuss responses to it.
3. The reader then calls the room back to attention, and goes over her outline point by point. As she talks, the other students are free to interrupt her to ask questions or bring in their own comments and examples – occasionally the teacher may do the same to clarify some confusion.
4. At the end, the teacher can take over the discussion to amplify what the students have brought up, to point out parts of the reading that may have been overlooked, or to challenge student ideas.
  - Everyone is responsible for reading ahead of time, but the designated reader leads the discussion.
  - The reader should withhold her own interpretive or critical comments until the discussion is over. After that, she is free to comment more analytically. The other students should feel free to be critical and interpretive from the start, but it is the designated reader's job to represent the views of the author until her presentation period has ended.

# Final Project Mini-Conference/Poster Session

*Janet Chumley, MATESL Program, Simmons College*

Often at the end of a semester, teachers structure several days in which students present their *final papers or final projects* to the whole class. Some students always run over time and crunch the others' time, and watching the clock can be a real burden when 5 people have to present in a 90-minute class. Also, by the fourth presentation, the audience is often information overloaded, stiff, and tired. To break up this pattern, set up a mini-conference or poster session.

Ideally, you need at least 16 people for this to work well, since you need 13 or 14 for audience members.

1. For a 90-minute class, 3 presentation periods of 15-20 minutes are set.
2. Each day 4-5 people will present.
3. Station each presenter in a different corner of the classroom, and set up a small audience of seats.
4. In the first 25-minute block, all of the presenters give their 15-20 minute talk at once to a small group of students. The talk is followed by 5-10 minutes of discussion time.
5. Audiences self-select the presentations they want to attend. Each student will only hear 3 of the 4 or 5 presentations that day, and if the seats at one talk fill up, students move to their second choice.
6. At the end of 25 minutes, students have 5 minutes to get up, stretch, and move to the next talk.
7. Presenters then give the same talk again in the next 25-minute block, but to a new audience.
8. The process is repeated one more time to finish the class.
  - Presenters get lots of practice speaking and three different sets of questions from the audience.
  - Presenters don't have to stress about speaking to the whole group at once. Presentations are longer and more in depth.
  - Audiences don't overload because they only hear three presentations, and they get to move around between presentations.
  - The only challenge is for the teacher to hear enough of each presentation, since she will have to move around the classroom a lot to catch a piece of all 4 or 5. Or, the teacher can schedule only as many presentations as she can see completely in one class period.

## 20 Minutes, 20 Comments

*Renee Bergland, English Department, Simmons College*

At the end of a discussion in which the class has been fairly quiet for whatever reason, it can be interesting to have each student in the class say something about the days' topic or reading for one minute. If you have 18 students, you need 18 minutes. Everyone needs to talk for just one minute, and then it is the next person's turn. It can take the pressure off completely silent students if you give them the option to say, "I pass," but they have to say at least that.

## Fishbowl Discussion

*Doug Perry, English Department*

At the beginning of the discussion, have each student write one question or comment about the days' topic or reading, and then collect them all on a desktop (fishbowl) to mix them up. Students should sit in a circle if the room permits.

1. The first person reaches into the fishbowl and reads the question or comment she pulls up.
2. The person to the reader's right must answer the question or respond to the comment, and then the rest of the students can join in if they have something to add.
3. The fishbowl moves from person to person until everyone has had to answer/respond once.
4. If the responder for whatever reason prefers not to answer, she can pass and anyone in the room can respond. But she still has to read the next question.

## Linking Round Robin

*Dawn Mendoza, Academic Support, Simmons College*

1. Have the students sit in a circle.
2. Choose one person at random, and give her a few minutes to formulate a response to the day's reading or topic.
3. She can say anything she wants to: why she liked or didn't like the reading, what she found confusing or surprising about it, what other ideas/books/movies/people/information it reminded her of. It's her choice. She should be able to talk for 1-2 minutes.
4. When she is done talking, the person to her right must make a comment that in some way *overtly links* to the first student's idea. The responder can say:
  - I disagree with your idea because . . .
  - Your idea makes a lot of sense to me because . . .
  - Your comment reminds me of a similar situation I know about in which . . .
  - Maybe because you went to a public school and I went to a private school our perspectives are different, but in private school . . . . (contrast perspectives)
  - I hadn't noticed what you just pointed out because my attention was drawn to . . . . instead. But now you've made me think about . . . .
  - I think you made a good a point, but I'd like to take it even further by saying . . . . (matter of degree).
5. If a student gets stuck and doesn't know how to make a link when it is her turn, she can get up and trade seats with a person who is ahead of her. The person she chooses must come take her seat and take a shot at making a link.

6. If no one seems to be able to make a link, the professor can be a temporary bridge between students and make a linking comment.

# Team Statements

*The following exercises (team statements through value lines) are from: Kagan, Spencer. Cooperative Learning. San Juan Capistrano, CA: Kagan Cooperative Learning, 1992.*

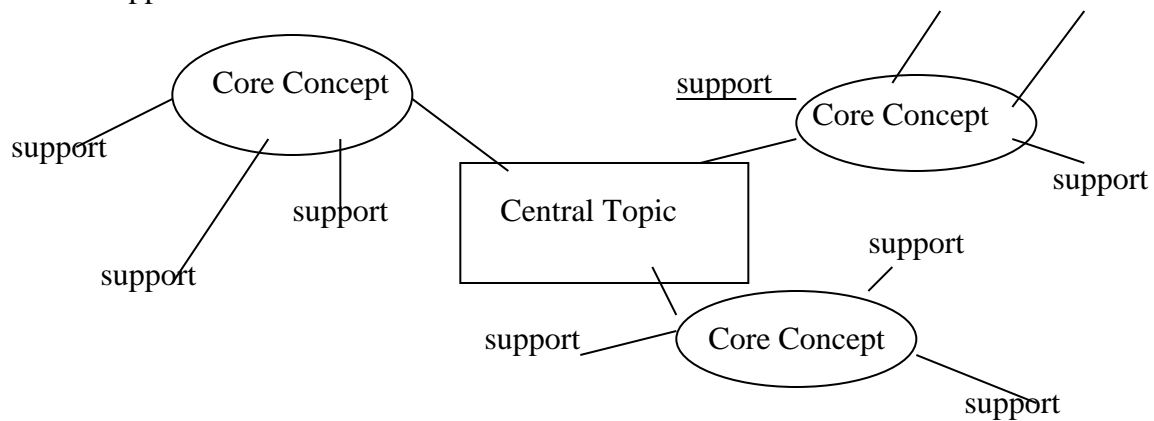
This exercise gives students practice reaching consensus and synthesizing multiple ideas.

1. Students are put in groups of no more than four
2. The teacher announces an incomplete statement relating to the day's topic.  
Examples would be: The Gulf War resulted in . . . . , or Adolescent behavior can be unpredictable because . . . . , or Differences in social class are most apparent when . . .
3. Students talk over how to complete the statement with one other person in the group
4. Students then complete their individual sentences, with no talking or comments
5. Each group member reads her statement, with no comments from the others
6. Team members talk about each statement individually, and also about basic assumptions or core values common to all
7. Teams create a single team statement that represents a consensus of all members' opinions, and then write it on the board for the whole class to read (no voting allowed when writing the team statement).
8. Teams talk about how their statement fits/doesn't fit with others on the board, also about whether the team statement is better than any individual statement.
9. The class as a whole discusses the various statements, team and individual (11:5).

# Team Word Webbing

This exercise is great for brainstorming ideas as well as for recording the dynamics of how information is shared in the group.

1. Group students in teams of 4 or 5 around a poster sized piece of paper
2. Give each student a different colored marker, and have the team create a key (Green = Shelly) at the top of the page
3. The teacher gives a prompt to get the teams started. Ex. “Your eventual paper assignment will be to show how Piaget’s theory of development actually showed up in the behavior of the children you observed in the film. So write “Piaget’s Theory” in the center of your paper and draw a box around it”
4. A box goes around the central topic
5. Ovals go around core concepts
6. Supporting elements branch from core concept ovals  
support



7. Set a time limit for the activity: 15 – 20 minutes maybe
8. Students are encouraged to talk to each other as they add to the web, explaining what they mean and how they see the connections between ideas
9. The colors will create a record of how well students are able to build on and add to one another’s ideas. Some students will only add supporting elements; other students will only add core concept ovals. Some students may dominate and others hold back. Sometimes a completely blue or red corner of the paper will show a student who tends to prefer working in isolation
10. Stop the activity and ask the group to look over and discuss the group dynamic revealed in the pattern of colors in their word web
11. Have each team put their paper on the wall and bring the class back together as a whole to discuss first the ideas generated by the exercise, and then the group dynamics that emerged (11:15)

# Rotating Review

This exercise can be used for a variety of purposes. Here Kagan uses it to help students review at the end of a unit. I've used a similar technique when students are trying to develop good topics for research papers, but I give each individual their own page instead of having students work in teams. You could also post discussion questions for a reading and use the same format.

1. Group students in teams of 4 or 5
2. Post chart paper in several places in the classroom and write at the top of the page the topic or item the students will be tested on
3. Each team has their own color marker and they stand in front of each sheet for 2-3 minutes, writing down everything they know about the topic
4. The teams then rotate to a new sheet of paper, spend a minute or so reading what the previous team wrote, then write down anything they can think of that the first team overlooked
5. If a team disagrees with previous information, they put a question mark in their color next to the questionable information
6. The whole group comes back together and the teacher leads them in going over each sheet of chart paper one by one, discussing any disagreements or contradictory information, adding new ideas (12:6)

## One Stray, Three Stay

Appropriate for unlimited numbers of teams of four people, and for multiple questions or problems.

This exercise gives students practice at reporting back to the team what other groups are working on. For each question or problem, teams send out one reporter to observe what goes on in another group, while the rest stay and work on the problem. At the end of the time limit, the reporter comes back and explains what she heard/saw and the team has a chance to amend or rethink their work. For the next question or problem, a different team member becomes the reporter and observes a team the first reporter didn't (12:6).

## Three Stray, One Stay

Appropriate for teams of four people, and for one problem or question.

Once the question is answered or the problem solved, four rounds of info sharing begin. Since it is a product to be shared, three members of the team rotate to the table of the next team while one student stays back to explain the product to the visiting team. Teammates take turns being the one left behind to explain their work to the visitors. In this exercise, any amendments or improvements are held off until each person on the team has been the explainer once, and a part of the visiting group three times (12:6).

# Talking Chips

This exercise helps draw everyone into the conversation and become more aware of the dynamics of how ideas are shared in a group. All variations can be done within small groups or as a whole class.

## Variation 1. Basic Chips

1. Each student is given one or two bingo chips
2. If the student wants to talk, she has to throw her bingo chip in the middle of the circle
3. Once she has spent her chips, she cannot say anything else until everyone else in the room has spent their chips as well
4. When all the chips have been used, they are retrieved and the cycle starts over
  - A limit of 1-2 minutes is set on each speaking turn
  - There is a timekeeper
  - Students can answer “yes/no” to a question without spending a chip (13:1)

## Variation 2. Color-Coded Chips

1. Each student is give different colored chips, 7 or 10 of them
2. The discussion begins and the one rule is that if you want to talk, you have to spend a chip
3. There is no limit or requirement for how many chips you can spend
4. At the end of 5 minutes, stop the discussion and have the groups look at the color distribution of the spent chips, and discuss who talked and who didn't and why
5. Begin the discussions again now that students' awareness of group dynamics has been raised
6. When the discussion time is over, have the students check to see if any of their original patterns have changed
  - A limit of 1-2 minutes is set on each speaking turn
  - There is a timekeeper
  - Students can answer “yes/no” to a questions without spending a chip (13:2)

## Variation 3. Paraphrase Chips

1. Each student is given one chip
2. The discussion begins and each student must first accurately paraphrase what the previous speaker said before making their own comment
3. If they fail to accurately paraphrase, they must spend their chip
4. Once the chip is spent, the student can no longer make a comment until everyone's chips are spent (13:2)

# Making Group Decisions

**Voting** is the worst way for a team to make a decision because there are winners and losers and the losers are less committed to the decision.

**Consensus Seeking** is valuable, but often time consuming. If time is limited and a group decision is required, try Spend-a-Buck.

**Spend-a-Buck** means that all team members have four quarters or ten dimes to spend on a decision. Because there are always multiple choices, each student must spend their money on more than one choice. How they distribute the buck is up to them, but they have to acknowledge more than one desirable decision. The decision with the most \$\$ is the final decision. Unlike voting, this does not produce clear winners and losers (13:5).

# Team Value Lines

This exercise requires that all students take a position on a controversial issue and then explain their reasoning to the class.

1. Group students in teams or do as a whole class exercise
2. The teacher provides a value statement like: Educators should receive merit pay based on student performance
3. A line is drawn with “agree” written on one end, and “disagree” on the other
4. After having a minute or two to think, students simultaneously put a mark somewhere on the line indicating their level of agreement or disagreement
5. Students discuss with each other why they put their mark where they did

## Optional steps

- After the discussion, students have a chance to move their mark and explain why.
- Students try to find an acceptable compromise by stating the underlying principles and values that inform their agreement or disagreement. Sometimes quite opposite solutions have very similar values at their core and a mutually agreeable conclusion can be reached (13:7)

## Variation 1: Stand on the Line

Instead of doing this exercise on the blackboard or on many individual sheets of paper, this exercise can be done with a literal line down the center of the classroom on which students must physically position themselves. Either all students should position themselves before anyone is allowed to comment or explain, or one student at a time should position herself and explain – depending on the dynamic the teacher wants to create.

## Variation 2: Radical Opposites

Instead of agree/disagree continuum lines, radical, opposing opinions can be used. Two students volunteer to role-play the two most extreme opinions on a given controversy. All other classmates position themselves between the radical poles based on their real opinions.

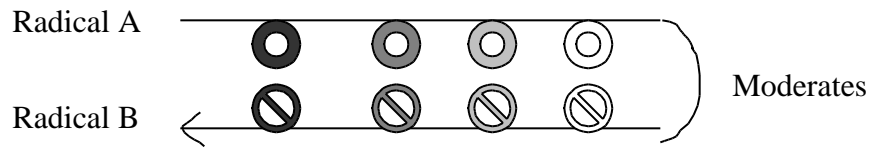
## Variation 3: Role-Play Lines

All of the students are given a specific role-playing identity in relation to a controversial problem. For example, if the controversy is affirmative action, two students role play the most extreme positions they can articulately reason through, and the other students are assigned identities like admissions counselor, supreme court justice, college president, white alum, alum of color, white parent, parent of color, white student who was accepted, white student who was denied admission, student of color who was accepted, student of color who was denied, etc. The students are given a few minutes to think about what the values and interests are of their particular role, and then they must position themselves on the line and explain why.

## Variation 4: Folded Value Lines

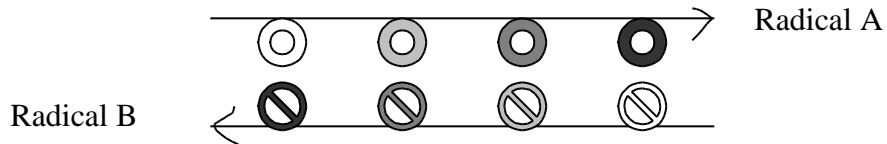
Once students have explained their positions, the line is folded so that the most radically opposing classmates are paired together. The pairs at this point could offer as many

counter-arguments as possible, or simply try to accurately paraphrase the other's position (13:8).



Variation 5: Split Value Lines

In this configuration, the most radical opinions are matched with the most moderate. Perhaps discussion will moderate the radical, or radicalize the moderate (13:8).



# Language/Communication Information Sheet

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Concentration/Major: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Circle One: First-Year    Sophomore    Junior    Senior    Graduate Student

First language(s) you learned to speak at home	
Language(s) you speak at home now	
Main language(s) of education <i>before</i> college	(fill out next two boxes, please)
Kindergarten-8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	
High School (9 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> grade)	
Language(s) you have studied in school:	(fill out next three boxes, please)
Beginner	
Intermediate	
Advanced	
What language are you most comfortable writing in?	
What language are you most comfortable speaking in?	
What language are you most comfortable reading in?	
Do you tend to be quiet or talkative in class discussions?	
Do you feel relatively comfortable giving class presentations in English?	

Other comments about language use:

## English Language Resources

### Writing/Grammar

Burns Writing and Peer Tutoring Center

Academic Support Center  
Simmons College  
P314 One Palace Road  
[www.simmons.edu/students/support/asc/esol.html](http://www.simmons.edu/students/support/asc/esol.html)

617-521-2474 for an appt.

Both graduate student and undergraduate student tutors are available. All tutors work with non-native English speakers, but you may request the ESL specialist, Alex Miller.

### **Public Speaking**

Boston Toastmasters  
Boston University  
College of Arts and Sciences, RM CA-S225  
Boston, MA 02115

Meetings: 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday each month, 6:15pm

[www.geocities.com/Bostontostmasters/](http://www.geocities.com/Bostontostmasters/)

First meeting free

Membership fees of \$27 every 6 months, with a \$60 initial sign-up for books/materials

### **American English Pronunciation**

Burns Writing and Peer Tutoring Center

Alex Miller, GSLIS graduate student who holds an MA in Teaching English as a Second Language, is available for pronunciation work this fall (2003) and spring (2004).

Call 617-521-2474 for an appointment

### **Conversation Practice**

Boston Public Library  
Literacy Services  
Central Library, Concourse Level  
Copley Square

[www.bpl.org/research/literacy.htm](http://www.bpl.org/research/literacy.htm)

all services free

conversation groups

referrals to literacy programs

books, tapes, reference materials

Dudley Literacy Center

65 Warren Street

Roxbury, MA 02119

[www.bpl.org/branches/dudleylrc.htm](http://www.bpl.org/branches/dudleylrc.htm)

all services free

conversation groups

conversation book clubs

books, tapes, reference materials

### **Websites**

- Dave's ESL Café [www.eslcafe.com](http://www.eslcafe.com)
- Excellent index of ESL websites/materials [www.comenius.com](http://www.comenius.com)
- Useful handouts/grammar exercises [www.englishclub.net/handouts/index.htm](http://www.englishclub.net/handouts/index.htm)
- On-line reference books, vocab, grammar, handouts [www.englishpage.com](http://www.englishpage.com)
- ESL games, songs, chat, books [www.nanana.com/esl.html](http://www.nanana.com/esl.html)
- ESL exercises and tests [www.forumeducation.net](http://www.forumeducation.net) (fee for use)
- Self-study grammar quizzes [www.itesl.org/quizzes](http://www.itesl.org/quizzes)
- Quizzes and evaluation [www.englishlearner.com/tests/test/html](http://www.englishlearner.com/tests/test/html)
- Variety of materials [www.freeenglish.com](http://www.freeenglish.com)

## Software

For self-directed study, the following software is available in the Simmons Language Lab (C311)

- Pronunciation in American English – helps students with whole-sentence rhythm, intonation and pauses. (currently available)
- Pronunciation Power – helps students work on individual consonant and vowel sounds, and consonant clusters like “tr,” “cl,” “thr” (*will be available mid-fall 2003*)
- Focus on Grammar – explains grammar rules and offers a variety of exercises, games and quizzes to test learning (*will be available mid-fall 2003*)

## Useful Reference Books

Practical English Usage by Michael Swan

You can look grammar and usage items up alphabetically rather than having to know the grammar terms. For instance, if you want to know how to use “not” and “not only,” you look under “n.” Exhaustive amounts of useful, practical information. ~ \$18.00 for new paperback on amazon.com, Simmons Library also owns a copy.

Basic College Grammar for Writing Competency by Arthur Whimbey, Myra Linden and Brad Frieswyk  
Great textbook for reviewing both basic and advanced sentence grammar. You can review pronoun usage as well as that-clauses, subordinate clauses, participles and gerunds. Lots of exercises for you to practice with. Wonderful step-by-step explanations. ~ \$30.00 for new paperback on amazon.com

Learner English: a teacher’s guide to interference and other problems Eds. Michael Swan and Bernard Smith

Intended for ESL teachers, but invaluable for students as well, this book lays out the major grammatical and pronunciation differences between English and over 20 other languages. It can help you understand and correct the kinds of errors you are likely to make based on the patterns of your native language. ~ \$22.00 for new paperback on amazon.com

Longman Language Activator

Unusual and incredibly useful dictionary. When you look up a word, you get all of its meanings and usage patterns defined carefully, sample sentences using the word, synonyms, and common idioms or phrases that include the word. Virtually eliminates the need for a thesaurus/dictionary combo. ~ \$25.00 for new paperback on amazon.com

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