

Teaching Multilingual and International Students: Strategies, Resources, and Advice for Faculty

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Results from a Pilot Survey: 35 Multilingual and/or International Students On Participating in UC Berkeley Classes (Responses categorized post-survey)

As a multilingual/bilingual and/or international student, what makes you able to participate fully in a class?

Instructor's Approach:

- Instructor's patience—encouraging us to be brave
- Emphasis on our improvement vs. a single expectation of verbal participation for everyone
- Emphasis on the process without penalties for being wrong
- Interest and respect for our point of view
- Encouragement to learn
- Appreciation for class diversity
- Being graded on participation

Class Environment and Collaboration:

- Collaboration with peers relieves tension and stress
- Group learning and discussion
- Active participation by all group members
- Teamwork & supportive colleagues
- Friendly people who don't care how we speak English
- Comfort in the class environment
- Smaller classes and smaller study groups
- Introduction of international students the first week of class—a welcome by the instructor or a chance for everyone in the class to go around and introduce themselves
- An accepting and equal environment where it is OK to be who you are

Student Motivation:

- Interest in the topic
- Having knowledge about a specific topic
- Being able to ask questions, speak what is on our minds, make our voices heard, compare our own voices with others
- Time to adapt

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What makes it difficult for you to participate fully in class?

Language Factors

- Lack of fluency and having to attend to every word
- Not understanding expressions or words, including technical language
- Quick speech
- Accents of colleagues
- Fear of not being understood
- Not sure of the proper moment to say something
- Not understanding the discussion or jokes

Knowledge/Interest Level

- Cultural references that aren't explained; allusions to American traditions
- Lack of interest in the topic
- Fear that response is incorrect

Approach of Instructor, Institutional Factors, & Peer Influence

- Large classes
- Inexperience with American style of teaching; from countries where we aren't encouraged to participate
- Not used to getting feedback from instructors or meeting with them; doubt about own ability
- Feeling that instructors or students don't care about us
- Fear of being judged by native English speakers
- Lack of understanding by faculty member
- When instructors don't explain why we are doing something wrong or not understanding
- Instructors using only PowerPoint rather than different ways to present the material
- Not giving full explanations despite knowing that some of us come from other countries
- When instructions are not written on board in case we miss words or the context
- Bell curves that make people unwilling to collaborate because of competition