

Addressing the Writing Needs of Deaf Students at Different English Proficiency Levels

Strategies used at NTID for teaching writing at
lower and higher English proficiency levels.

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A little bit about me

- CODA (hearing Child of Deaf Adults) from Washington, DC, home of Gallaudet University, the first college for deaf students
- Native User of Sign Language
- Degrees in English from State University of New York
- Have worked at NTID, first technological college for deaf students, over 20 years—interpreting, note-taking, captioning, tutoring, teaching

Developmental English Courses at NTID

AAS Degree Program: Reading and Writing Strands

- Reading I Writing I (or Integrated Reading/Writing 1&2)
- Reading II Writing II (Fundamental)
- Reading III Writing III (Intermediate)
- Reading IV Writing IV (Bridging)
- Written Communication I (Advanced)
- Written Communication II (Advanced II)

NTID Writing Course Placement

Students' proficiency level and placement into a writing course are determined by their score on the NTID Writing Test, which is taken during orientation week. Students are asked to describe their first impressions about NTID.

- Below 40 Academic Writing I
- 40-49 Academic Writing II
- 50-59 Academic Writing III
- 60-67 Academic Writing IV
- 68 and above Satisfies NTID Writing Requirement

NTID Writing Placement Test– Categories and Samples

1. **Organization** (*essay could be outlined by reader, topic stated clearly, transitional markers and clear paragraphing*)
2. **Content** (*addresses topic, shows quality of ideas, supporting examples, unity of thought*)
3. **Language** (*grammar, mechanics, clarity of reference, complexity of sentence structure*)
4. **Vocabulary** (*word choice “sophistication,” use of figurative and idiomatic expressions*)

Rating Scale for each category:

[Writing samples](#)

1-5 *Very Poor*

16-20 *Good*

6-10 *Poor*

21-25 *Excellent*

11-15 *Fair*

Total score determines placement

Writing II and Writing IV Course Descriptions

WRITING II

Students learn how to use personal experience and resource materials to develop and organize their thoughts on various topics. Students organize and develop paragraphs and brief compositions of various discourse forms, with particular emphasis on narration, description and process. They also learn how to revise and edit their writing.

WRITING IV

Students gather information from various sources, plan, draft, revise, and edit longer essays (of at least 500 words) of various discourse types, with particular emphasis on description and exemplification. They learn how to organize and develop their texts for various topics, purposes, and audiences. Students revise, edit, and present texts according to conventional standards.

Strategies for teaching students at lower and higher proficiency levels

Utilize display-sharing technology to enhance the teaching-learning experience

- a. Smart Classroom
- b. Laptop Projection



Department of Liberal Studies

"Smart Classroom"

- Ten PC laptops
- Networked for display sharing, using "SynchronEyes" software
- Projection device
- Visualizer
- Wired for Internet
- Laser printer



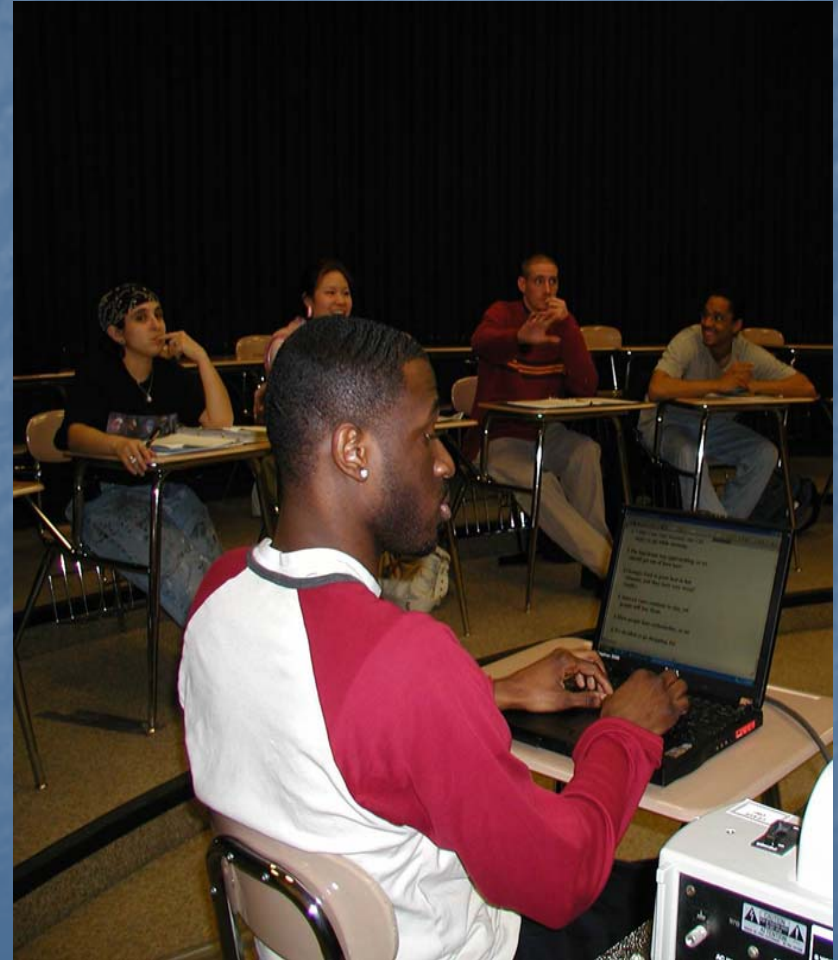
Smart Classroom Dynamics

Students
using
networked
computers
for display
sharing



Laptop Use in Traditional Classrooms

Some smart classroom techniques can be used in traditional classrooms by adding a laptop computer and projection device



Strategies for teaching students at lower and higher proficiency levels

Ensure that teachers are fluent in sign language, with good receptive skills

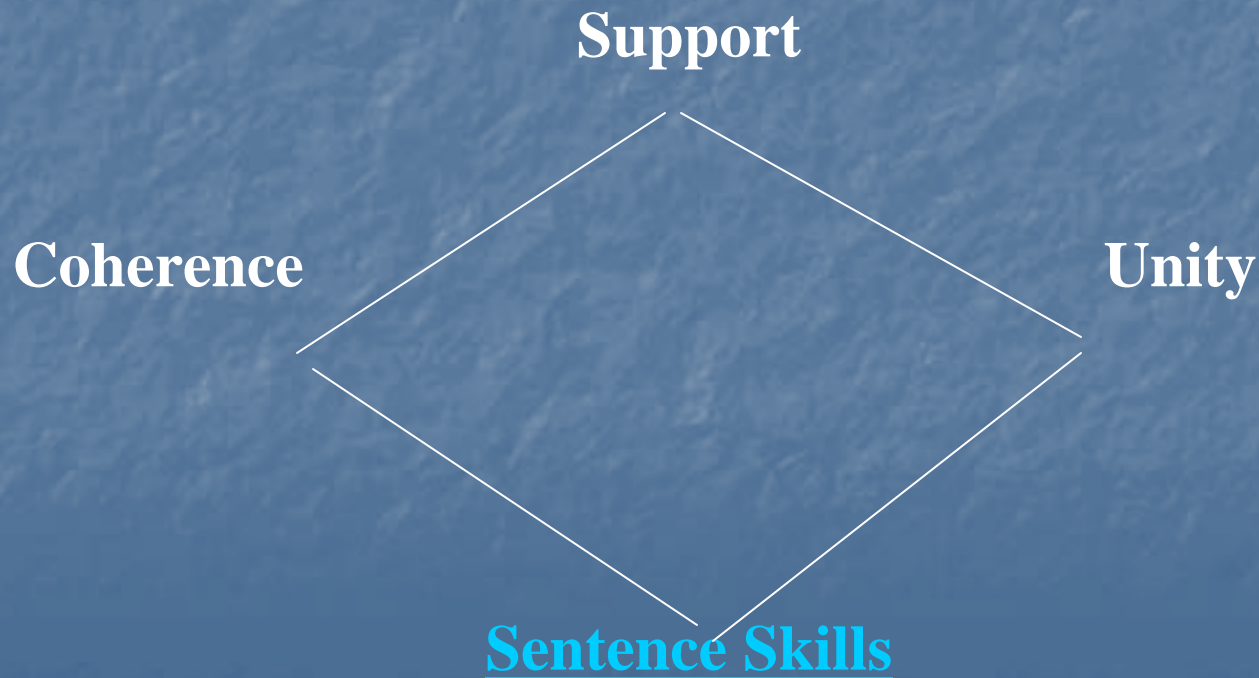
NTID English instructors have high Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) ratings and a strong understanding of Deaf culture.

SLPI Rating Range:

- Superior
- Advanced
- Intermediate
- Survival
- Novice

Strategies for teaching students at lower and higher proficiency levels

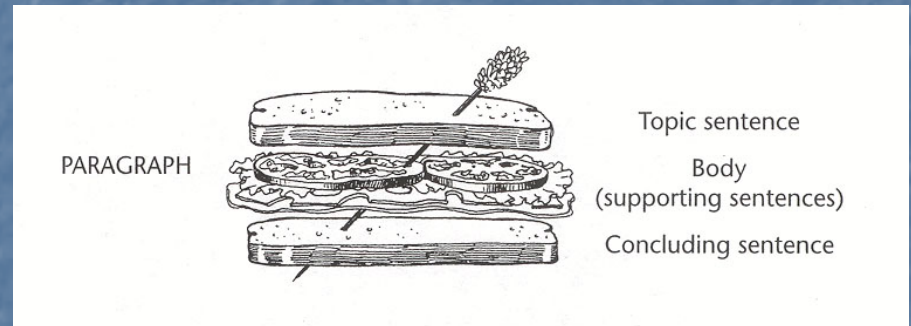
Emphasize writing terminology....
The "Four Bases"



Strategies for Teaching Writing to Lower Proficiency Students

Assign writing at the paragraph level

“Food for thought!”
Emphasize the
“paragraph as
sandwich” model as a
way of emphasizing
three of the bases:
unity, support, and
coherence



Strategies for Teaching Writing to Lower Proficiency Students

Emphasize outlining as a fundamental part of the writing process

Benefit to Student: Gives students a chance to work on content and organization without worrying about grammar. Outline markers easily become transition words

Benefit to Teacher: Allows previewing for content and organization. Grammar considerations can come later.

Writing Process: Outlining on the Computer

Writing Process: Strategies for Organization and Coherence

- *Although students know what an outline is and understand that it can be an important part of the writing process, they often do not have strong outlining skills.*
- *In the lower developmental courses, we work on creating outlines that follow a specific style for paragraph writing:*
 - states the topic sentence*
 - uses numbers for ordering*
 - uses 'a,b,c' lettering for supporting details*
 - includes a closing sentence*

Ease of Turning a Good Outline into a Good Paragraph

Creating an outline allows students to work on unity, support and coherence:

- *Share their work in a way that gives readers a quick and clear preview of the content and organization of the paragraph*
- *Increase coherence in the writing by using some of the symbols in the outline as 'transition words' in the paragraph*
- *Recognize the value of a closing sentence as a strategy for strengthening coherence in the paragraph*
- *Transition activity*

Writing Process:
Outlining Strategies
for Organization and
Coherence

Strategies for Teaching Writing to Lower Proficiency Students

Assign writing—such as narration, description, and process—in which students can maintain consistent point of view and verb tense—and emphasize grammar/writing concepts relative to each mode.

- Narrative paragraphs allow for focus on *past tense verbs, time order, complex sentences, and pronoun use* within a controllable format.

In addition to having students write from personal experience, have students write summaries of selected readings and selected short media so students can avoid overusing first person point of view.

Strategies for Teaching Writing to Lower Proficiency Students

- Descriptive paragraph writing assignments allow for focus on word choice/word forms (*adjective use*), *sentence structure*, and prepositional phrases of *location*.
- Process paragraphs help students work on *present verb tense*, modals, *2nd person point of view*, and *time order words and transitions*.
- Whatever the pattern of development, including summary writing, students should be reminded that they are writing to develop a point.

Strategies for Teaching Writing to Lower Proficiency Students

Sentence Skills

Require complete sentences in all student writing, not just in the paragraphs

- Discourage students from copying questions to selected readings
- Encourage students to respond to reading questions by borrowing key words from the questions and then answering the questions.

Strategies for Teaching Writing to Lower Proficiency Students

Include Peer Review

- Include peer review as a part of the writing process for some of the assignments.
- Use peer review [forms](#) that reinforce the writing terms of the course.

Strategies for Teaching Writing to Higher Proficiency Students

Assign writing at the essay level

Organization/Content

Assign expository writing using the traditional essay model:

- introduction w/thesis
- body paragraphs
- conclusion

Strategies for Teaching Writing to Higher Proficiency Students

Organization/Content

Emphasize outlining as a fundamental part of the writing process

Benefit to Student: Gives students a chance to work on content and organization. Outline markers easily become transition words.

Benefit to Teacher: Allows previewing for content and organization.

Strategies for Teaching Writing to Higher Proficiency Students

Content – Unity, Support, Coherence

Emphasize that expository writing requires students to make points, provide support, and explain to emphasize those points.

- Support involves including specific examples.
- Coherence involves using strategies to guide the reader.

Strategies for Teaching Writing to Higher Proficiency Students

Include Peer Review

- Include peer review as a part of the writing process for some of the assignments.
- Design more advanced peer review forms that reinforce the writing terms of the course.
- The review forms should encourage both description and analysis of classmates' writing. Give a grade for the quality of the peer's response.

Strategies for Teaching Writing to Higher Proficiency Students

Language/Vocabulary

Sentence structure

Parts of speech

Practice, practice, practice!

- Whatever the type of writing being discussed, reinforce students' ability to build sentences with types of "clauses" and "phrases." These terms come up regularly in my classes.
- Continually reinforce students' recognition of parts of speech—especially noun, verb, adjective, adverb—with word form and parallelism practice exercises.

Strategies for Teaching Writing to Higher Proficiency Students

Examine Unity, Support, Coherence, and
Sentence Skills in Professional Writing

- Provide “accessible” reading selections demonstrating that the “pros” use many of the same strategies learned by students

Sentence Skills Priority for Both Lower and Higher Level Students – Explain How Passive Voice Works

Do the following errors affect reader
comprehension? Answer: Yes

Last week, my father was sold the house.

I was killed the bug that scared my sister.

Sally was cooked a dinner for her family.

Note: Only the first
sentence was highlighted by the grammar checker!

Discussing Active vs. Passive Voice

I ~~was~~ killed the bug that scared my sister.

Teaching Tip...
“Those little ‘be’
verbs (is, am, are,
was, were) don’t get
much respect...but
they should!”



Sally ~~was~~ cooked a dinner for her family.

Teaching Tip: Stress that ‘Be’ Verbs suffer from the ‘Rodney Dangerfield Syndrome.’ In other words, they don’t get enough respect. After all, they are tiny and sometimes just called helpers. But they should command a lot of respect. Why? Using one of these little verbs with past participle can result in a confusing sentence that the writer didn’t intend!

Strategies for Teaching Writing to Higher Proficiency Students

Teach Summary-Writing Skills

- Assign Accessible Readings
- Develop students' skills in writing summaries
 - In the summary:
 1. state the article's main idea
 2. summarize to explain the main idea
 3. use your own words

Develop Paraphrasing Skills

Beginning of quarter: Students were asked to paraphrase the following:

Give students the opportunity to develop skills in paraphrasing

Researchers were told by 39,999 Americans that they would rather lose five, six, seven, eight, nine, or ten pounds than achieve any other goal.

Student attempts at a paraphrase:

39,999 Americans that they would rather lose five, six, seven, eight, nine, or ten pounds than achieve any other goal told researchers.

Almost 40,000 Americans informed researchers that they have high priority to lose between five to ten pounds .

Strategies for Teaching Writing to Higher Proficiency Students

Language/Vocabulary

Introduce students to paraphrasing techniques and strategies

Steps:

1. Understand what you are reading
2. Decide whether the sentence is in active voice or passive voice
3. Re-state by using your own words and possibly by changing the sentence structure.
4. Try to paraphrase in less number of words than original

Give Students Plenty of Practice with Paraphrasing

Student paraphrases:

Original:

After Laura Smith was mauled by a lion in the park, the town was sued by the girl's kindred. Eventually, her kindred were awarded \$1.9 million by the adjudicator of the case.

After the lion mauled Laura Smith, and the girl's kindred sued the town. Eventually, the judge awarded her kindred .

Laura Smith's family sued the town after the lion attacked her. Later, the judge gave her family almost \$2 million. (Best paraphrase)

Writing Samples: comparison of one student's writing—entry vs. exit

Entry: SVP Writing Test, Fall 1999 (score = 36)

Exit: Writing IV, Spring 2003-04 (final essay)

Writing Samples: comparison of one student's writing—entry vs. exit

Entry: SVP Writing Test, Fall 1999 (score = 36)

Exit: Writing IV, Spring 2003-04 (final essay)

Addressing the Writing Needs of Deaf Students at Different English Proficiency Levels

- Consider a “smart classroom” networked for display sharing
- Use laptop projection when possible in the traditional classroom
- Whether working at the paragraph or essay level, emphasize outlining as a pre-writing strategy
- Ensure that instructors are fluent in sign language and have good receptive skills
- Develop “organic” grammar lessons related to the type of writing and re-visit previously-covered grammar concepts...

Addressing the Writing Needs of Deaf Students at Different English Proficiency Levels

- Continually examine student writing by applying the Four Bases: unity, support, coherence, sentence skills
- Always require complete responses whenever students answer questions about a reading selection
- Before asking students to write a summary, discuss paraphrasing strategies with them
- Include peer review as an important part of the writing process

Student Comments about Using the Smart Classroom

- I really like room 2500 because the room provides everything technology has. The positive things is technology help your grammar and process. I like that teacher control our computer to discuss grammar or talk about something wrong. Teacher doesn't have come to computer. It is fast and easy.
- I think that Smart Classroom is really best technology that many students really needed. Smart classroom is the best way to help the students to improve their English skills a lot from computer. I absolutely like the Smart Classroom.
- I remember I came in smart classroom that has computer desktop. The students couldn't see me when I talked to teacher while I sat because the CRT monitor blocked me, so I had to stand up and signed to teacher again. Now, it is much better than before because I can fold a laptop then I can sign to teacher while student see me clear.
- The Smart Classroom was very good room for me because it met my needs of learning including laptops for typing essays and "Visualizer" for getting idea of the task of writing and example of essay that help me to learn about the writing.

Contact Me

If you have any questions about materials or about technology,
feel free to contact me:

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