

The challenges faced by non-English native students during their first year of college

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Introduction

Because higher education is growing more global, more students without native English skills now attend colleges. Though cultural and linguistic variety adds value to the college experience, it first raises many issues for students in their early years. Students who are not native English speakers usually experience many obstacles due to language skills, school assignments, and connecting socially. These problems in learning may cause students to do badly academically, be socially isolated, and eventually withdraw from the program. Even though diversity and inclusion receive more attention at universities, many institutions still offer support that does not fit the needs of this group.

This problem is most important in the first year of college since it impacts students' school performance and how they feel accepted. Lack of language skills may stop students from being involved in class activities, comprehending lessons, and benefiting from available campus services. The problems are also increased by cultural barriers and the lack of assistance designed for these individuals in institutions. Taking on these hurdles is necessary to help non-native English-speaking students succeed and also meets the goals of fairness, acceptance, and working with people worldwide at the institution.

Impact on Students and the Higher Education Environment

The problems that non-native English speakers meet during their first year at college affect their academic studies, mental state, and social involvement on campus. The main people dealing with these issues are international students, immigrant students, and first-generation college students living in homes where English is not spoken. Due to language issues, it becomes harder for them to grasp lectures, fulfill their assignments, and take part in classroom debates

(Akhtar, 2021). As a consequence, learners might not do as well in school as native English speakers, which can challenge both their success and their confidence. These students also tend to feel alone socially, on top of facing difficulties with schoolwork. Because of their limited understanding of English and differences in cultural ways of speaking, they prefer to spend less time among their peers outside of school (Ching et al., 2020). Being excluded can negatively affect a student's bond with the campus, something essential for retaining and helping them succeed.

In addition, the problem is present in larger organizational settings. Despite their good intentions, teachers and assistants usually do not have the knowledge or resources to support these students as they should. If teachers do not address learners' cultural and language differences using standard teaching methods, it makes it harder for them to succeed (Liu et al., 2021). The problem is also present outside academics, as it determines how welcoming and friendly the campus atmosphere is. As a result, non-native English-speaking students experience more difficulties than others in their academic and social lives during the first year. This also points out a significant difference in how higher education institutions make their policies and support systems, which influences how fair and successful the institutions are. Working on this concern improves both the learning of each student and the general sense of inclusivity in education.

Relevance of the issue to Higher education and Campus environments

Issues faced by students whose first language is not English are very meaningful to higher education, as they refer to important topics such as inclusion, equity, student retention, and effective colleges. More and more countries are making their colleges and universities international, resulting in a bigger number of students from across the globe who have English as

a second language. Nevertheless, many educational institutions have failed to change their methods to help students who speak other languages (Akhtar, 2021). Doing well in college calls for strong language skills since classroom discussions, critical reasoning, and writing assignments are important parts of education there. Studies have shown that speakers of other languages encounter difficulties here. In 2021, Liu et al. discovered that nonnative English students usually do not engage in classroom activities and achieve less improvement, specifically in critical thinking and writing, when compared to their native peers. It means that having insufficient language support can block a person's progress both in school and later in life.

In addition, the problem influences students' emotional and social well-being, not only their studies. Ching et al. (2020) mention that those who have less ability in English usually feel anxious, lack self-assurance and find it hard to be accepted by their peers. As a result of these barriers, students often do not feel connected to others, and this is strongest during the first year at college. Because of this, students tend to spend less time being active outside their academics and interacting with their peers, both of which are important for a whole college experience. In a lot of cases, institutions are not designed to support people from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds. For instance, while writing centers and tutoring services are common on many campuses, they are usually ignored or looked down upon by non-native English-speaking students because there is often little effort to reach out to them with cultural relevance (Liu et al., 2021). Since faculty members are not always prepared to teach in linguistically diverse settings, the class can give a more substantial advantage to students who speak the same language correctly (Ching et al., 2020).

The difference between what students need and what institutions do weakens the goal of promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in these institutions. Besides, it has effects on how

many students graduate and continue their studies. If students do not feel welcomed or feel that support is lacking, many are likely to leave the school, which reduces the institution's performance and negatively impacts its reputation. The literature also stresses that combining non-native English learners with academics and researchers is beneficial. Research by Jensen et al. (2022) determined that students in undergraduate research projects feel more accepted and confident. In such cases, people gain strength in their academic persona and combat feelings of being isolated, proving that inclusive actions boost both the individuals and the whole institution. In short, the language and culture issues faced by non-native English speakers play a key role in the mission of all higher education institutions. Dealing with this issue contributes to higher achievements among students, promotes equality, and improves the academic performance of the institution on the global stage.

Policy/Decision-Makers and Key Stakeholders

Support for first-year non-native students in college requires the action of many policy and decision-makers at different levels in the higher education system. They decide on what is important for the institution, how to spread resources, plan the curriculum, and provide help for students. These teachers can play a major part in easing or increasing the difficulties these students have. Department chairs are responsible for major decisions regarding academic policies, how academics are taught, and designing new programs in universities. These leaders choose whether the institution pays attention to being inclusive of many languages and intercultural skills. Examples of these stem from administrative policy-making, such as providing monetary support, hiring people who are bilingual, and supporting faculty through workshops (Akhtar, 2021). Stressing equity and inclusion by leaders helps create a university that addresses the needs of non-native English speakers better.

Among the main decision-makers are also faculty members and those in charge of building the curriculum. The teaching methods, language of communication, and awareness about different languages of instructors greatly affect students' learning. Educators who have not received training to handle diverse classrooms may inadvertently leave behind students who have difficulty with academic English (Ching et al., 2020). Hence, making decisions on offering language services, different assignments, or changing ways students take part in class helps ensure all students are included. Having student affairs professionals and support service coordinators on the team is important as well. Others in this field are in charge of writing centers, tutoring, advising for studies, and counseling services. Much of their work is needed in the first year, since this is when students develop their understanding of the community that helps them. They play a key role in determining how services are available and suitable for students coming from different languages (Liu et al., 2021).

In general, educational accrediting agencies, those who set national education policies, and government bodies that oversee schools also impact a university's actions. They determine the goals that educational institutions should meet in terms of quality of education, student results, and diversity. Institutions change their policies based on national and regional efforts that support international students, use several languages on campus, and help students financially. More groups outside the central authorities are affected by this situation. Since their future in school depends on the results, students are the ones most affected by an assessment. Long-distance learning organizations should also include students' families and local communities, since the results of international students have effects abroad. Native English speakers are an important part of making classroom learning environments inclusive and supportive.

Current Approaches to Addressing the Issue

Currently, more attention is being given to non-native English-speaking students during their first year in college, which has resulted in both nationwide and local responses. Nonetheless, although certain institutions are making positive changes, the efforts are not even or fully running throughout the sector. English-speaking universities are implementing measures to help internationalize their systems by looking after students who do not speak English natively. DEI is often set as an important goal in these policies, and a few may even influence institutions' ability to receive government help or be accredited. For instance, in the United States, the federal government has supported colleges and universities in helping underserved students whose first language is not English. The U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of International Education support programs for English, student support and learning how to interact with people from other countries. Nevertheless, institutions handle this differently, and assistance for students who speak different languages is not always given top priority.

Some colleges and universities in the same area have put in place programs for non-native English speakers. Some of these are ELL programs, bridge or foundation courses, peer mentoring, and academic writing workshops. Writing centers and tutoring services are widely offered to help improve students' language skills. Still, students do not know about these services or feel that using them is looked down upon by others (Liu et al., 2021). Numerous universities have also started providing faculty development to help instructors address linguistic diversity among their students. Such lessons concentrate on practices that make teaching more inclusive, including talking slowly, using visual support, and testing in several ways. Despite the efforts, lots of faculty members do not receive training in teaching a foreign language or intercultural skills, which makes classroom guidance less effective (Ching et al., 2020).

Certain institutions encourage students to become involved in society by creating multicultural centers, having international student organizations, and offering additional program activities. They are set up to facilitate interaction between people from different cultures and to lessen the isolation of non-native English speakers. Programs such as language partnering and international orientation give students a good start to developing relationships at the start of their studies. Yet, these programs are usually voluntary, have low budgets, or are not always mixed into the regular student activities at the university (Gayles & Crandall, 2019). Even though these examples show progress has been made, there is still a major difference between what is said in policies and what actually happens. A lot of institutions have a single student involvement model that does not suit the different needs of non-native English speakers. Also, student help systems are usually not connected between the departments, language support services, and student affairs. Various approaches are being used to help non-native English speakers with language, yet their success and how far they vary a lot. Better, well-organized, and all-inclusive methods are important for giving proper support to these students.

Recommendations and Future Research

This researcher argues that universities must find new and better strategies to support students whose native language is not English, mainly when they are in their first year. The challenges identified in the literature suggest that policy reform, new training for faculty, and special services for students who speak languages other than English are needed right away. To start with, this researcher suggests that institutions train all teachers to be inclusive and develop skills in second language teaching. Professors can have a big impact on students' academic journey, and if they know about language diversity, they can help prevent students from being left out in their classes (Ching et al., 2020). In addition, writing centers and tutoring programs

should be set up without stigma so that assistance is available inside academic departments linked to students' coursework.

The researcher recommends that universities help students build listening and speaking skills outside of academic writing, which is needed for presentations and classroom talks. Orientation for international and immigrant students ought to reach beyond the beginning of the semester and provide continual support and interactions. It is also the view of this researcher that institutions should link these three areas into one centralized system. When all the support services team up, it's easier to assist students and prevent anyone from being left behind during their college years. This researcher suggests that future research evaluate the continuing results for students who are supported in English and culture and compare them to students without such support. Data from surveys can show the way for better policies and guide education systems to value diversity.

Conclusion

The difficulties that non-native English-speaking students have in their first year of college influence their grades, their connections with people at school, and how they feel overall. Since higher education institutions are now more diverse, it is important to address their students' needs to ensure equity, inclusion, and success for everyone. According to the literature, it is the combination of language problems, new cultural challenges, and poor help from the school that often results in these students facing academic issues and choosing social isolation. Solutions to the problem that are being tried both on a national and local scale appear applicable, yet they lack coordination and are limited. While some places have introduced aid and inclusive ways of teaching, these are yet to be applied on a large and unified scale. People in charge of universities, along with faculty and staff, should work more actively and together to support

learning for all students. This researcher finds that training faculty, supporting students in various ways, and adding more language support are necessary to address the gap. In the future, researchers should pay attention to the effects of specific actions on institutions. Helping non-native English-speaking students succeed promotes both their individual achievements and furthers diversity, cultural sharing, and global participation among everyone in school.

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