ENGLISHUSA JOURNAL

ISSUE 5 | 2021 FALL-WINTER

ENGLISH USA
EnglishUSA.org
LEARN · EDUCATE · ENGAGE

Editorial Staff

Contact

Address	2900 Delk Road Suite 700, PMB 321 Marietta, GA 30067
Inquiries	info@englishusa.org (404) 567-6875
Website	https://www.englishusa.org/page/Journal

About the Journal

The EnglishUSA Journal focuses on theory and practice in the field of teaching English as a second/foreign language and serves as a medium for sharing best practices, addressing current issues and presenting research. Submissions will be received by the EnglishUSA Professional Development Activities Committee (PDAC), evaluated by peer-reviewers and published in an online journal to be shared with the EnglishUSA members and the wider ESL/EFL community. The EnglishUSA Journal is created for readers interested in English language teaching, administration and leadership at the post-secondary level. The journal is published twice/annually and features practical and theoretical content primarily focused on programs that serve language learners in proprietary programs or university-governed institutions. Featured articles support EnglishUSA's interest to represent, support and be the recognized voice of English language programs, emphasizing engagement, integrity, excellence and collaboration.

Call for Submissions

EnglishUSA is accepting submissions for the 2022 Spring Issue of the EnglishUSA Journal in the following categories:

- In the Classroom articles provide a space for instructors, trainers, administrators and managers to share practical ideas, resources and tools to use in the classroom. The objective of this section is to share best practices, encourage peer collaboration and inspire creativity.
- Reports and Reviews offer summaries of relevant events, conferences or resources in the English language teaching field. The objective is to update the EnglishUSA community with reports on useful topics recently presented at events and conferences in the USA and overseas. This section also offers professional reviews on English language-related publications to help inform readers, which would be useful for their own programs.
- Journal Articles feature research, analysis and studies on teaching, learning and administration in the field of ESL/EFL. Content is relevant for instructors and administrators of the English language and focuses on language acquisition and learning, aspects of the English language, applied linguistics in addition to issues related to program administration.

For more info about the journal and submission guidelines:
https://www.englishusa.org/page/Journal

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial

by Engin Ayvaz

It is with great enthusiasm that I present you the 2021 Fall-Winter Issue of the EnglishUSA Journal. In the past four months, authors, peer-reviewers, the Professional Development Activities Committee (PDAC) and the EnglishUSA Office collaborated on this biannual publication, which serves as a medium for sharing best practices, addressing current issues and presenting research in the field. I am confident that you will find the content interesting to you and relate to the work you do.

This issue is published at a time of partial recovery from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student enrollment. While embassy closures, restricted travel and new strains of the virus pose continued threats to student mobility, we are seeing initial signs of what might [or we hope to] be a recuperation period for the profession. Programs and institutions are -anecdotally- reporting a meaningful and consistent increase in inquiries, applications and enrollment; however, it is still too early to say that we are out of the woods. Thus, we need to continue our efforts to be more resilient, resourceful and creative than ever and there is no better way to achieve this than doing it collectively. While we can individually reach out to our network and collaborate with them to find solutions to common problems and voice our concerns, we also can do so along with the professional organizations in our field. In addition to EnglishUSA, we have some exceptional professional organizations in our field, such as ACCET, AIRC, CEA, NAFSA, TESOL, the Alliance and UCIEP supporting, leading and advocating for the profession. Aligning our efforts with such organizations will not only accelerate the recovery period but will undoubtedly strengthen the profession as a whole.

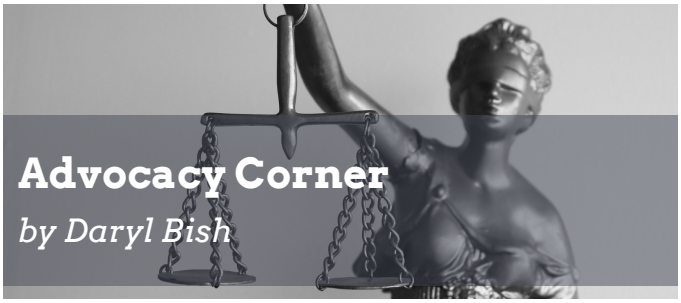
In this issue of the journal, you will find several interesting pieces written by authors coming from various sections of the profession. In his advocacy corner, Daryl Bish provides updates on the regulatory front and how EnglishUSA is taking action to advocate for the students, faculty, administrators and eventually the programs. Based on the *2021 IIE Open Doors Report*, Julie Baer's article will provide information on data and trends on student enrollment at English language programs in 2020, which I am sure you will find quite sobering. I believe we will have the full picture of the impact of COVID-19 on the English language programs and international education at large, once the 2021 enrollment data is published in 2022. Misty Wilson's article provides a methodical approach to evaluating a language test's appropriateness for admission at colleges and universities. As traditional language testing providers are moving their services to the virtual realm and new providers are entering the market, this article will provide you with the basic toolset to make an informed decision on which language tests to adopt. Md Mijanur Rahman's article takes a comprehensive look at cross-cultural issues revolving around teaching writing and presents an example of how ESL/EFL teachers can develop their own action research to investigate the pedagogical dilemma. With this issue, we are also introducing the "Interview with…" section. In this part, we will publish interviews with leaders, experts, innovators from the field and what better way than to start with the EnglishUSA's Executive Director extraordinaire Cheryl Delk-Le Good.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to consider contributing to the EnglishUSA Journal as authors and/or reviewers for the

upcoming issues or any other capacity that you may find feasible. The Executive Director and the EnglishUSA Board Members will be happy to answer your questions and work with you in this process.

Happy reading!

Engin Ayvaz is the Director of the Intensive English Center at Tennessee State University. He serves on the EnglishUSA Executive Board and is the Chair of the Professional Development Activities Committee. His work focuses on quality and excellence in language teaching and international higher education.



Advocacy Corner

by Daryl Bish

While English Language Programs (ELPs) are still coping with and adapting to the unprecedented challenges created by the pandemic, there are reasons for optimism: travel restrictions related to COVID-19 have eased; wait times at US embassies have improved; and programs have reported increasing student enrollments. On the regulatory front, in July the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officially withdrew its proposed rule to eliminate duration of status (D/S) for F students and J exchange visitors after significant advocacy efforts from across the international education industry, including ELPs. If enacted, the proposed rule would have significantly altered English study in the U.S. for international students. EnglishUSA will continue to monitor this issue.

Also in July, the U.S. Departments of State and Education, supported by Departments of Commerce and Homeland Security, released a Joint Statement of Principles committed to "undertaking actions to support a renewed focus on international education." The statement is a welcome endorsement of the many benefits of international education, including enhancing national security and the economy, strengthening U.S. higher education, and benefiting American students and communities. Given the current administration's support for international education and continued improvements in student mobility during the pandemic, ELPs have cause for hope going into 2022.

While this may be true, it is imperative to continue advocacy efforts to support ELPs. In response to the Joint Statement of Principles, EnglishUSA, with NAFSA, UCIEP, TESOL, and support from the accrediting agencies CEA and ACCET, submitted a joint letter to the Departments of State, Education, Commerce, and Homeland Security emphasizing the importance of post-secondary ELPs and advocating for their inclusion in the renewed U.S. commitment to international education. Specifically, we are advocating that the current administration adopt a national strategy for international education that includes support for English study in the U.S. We recommend that the administration create a coordinating entity at the White House to ensure the success and collaboration of all the necessary government agencies in implementing a first-ever national recruitment strategy. We urge you to discuss this with your congresspeople. You can also submit a letter to the administration via NAFSA and urge them to take action and include key stakeholders that reflect all facets of international education, including English language training.

In another positive development, Eva Mollina, DHS Assistant Secretary for Partnership and Engagement, announced at the EnglishUSA Stakeholder's Conference in October that DHS would reinstate the Homeland Security Academic Advisory Council (HSAAC). The HSAAC advises DHS leadership on matters of homeland security specifically related to the academic community, including international students and visa processing. We hope that the reinstated HSAAC will include members with experience and expertise in the ELP field. To that end, EnglishUSA has contacted Assistant Secretary Mollina about stakeholder involvement in the HSAAC.

While the moment is trending positive, there are still many current pandemic-related challenges facing ELPs and their students. Visa appointment wait times, while improving overall, are still very long in many countries, and many embassies still only see students through emergency appointments. Many students still have to delay or cancel their study plans. Beyond the pandemic, there are also potential regulatory impacts that could hurt schools. The Build Back Better Act, the massive social spending bill that would assess new fees on higher education institutions related to their international student enrollment, is still pending in the Senate.

We at EnglishUSA will, as always, monitor issues affecting ELPs and will continue to advocate on their behalf. We encourage you to share your thoughts and questions about any of the above topics on EnglishUSA's Engage Forum.

Daryl Bish is the Assistant Director and PDSO at the University of Florida English Language Institute. He has extensive experience as a teacher, program recruiter, and administrator, having taught in university and community college programs. His master's degree is in Curriculum and Instruction, with TESL Certification. He has served as the NAFSA IEP Network Leader, a CEA site reviewer, and is currently Chair of the Advocacy and External Relations Committee on the EnglishUSA Executive Board.

An *Open Doors* Report Update: International Enrollment at U.S. Intensive English Programs

By Julie Baer

According to the *Open Doors 2021 Report on International Educational Exchange*, the external shock of COVID-19 resulted in a decline in the number of international students studying at U.S. intensive English programs (IEP). In the 2020 calendar year, 37,365 international students studied in-person or online for a total of 514,685 student weeks at U.S. intensive English programs. This represents a 50 percent decline, the lowest level of IEP enrollment recorded in *Open Doors* since 1992.

Although the number of students and student weeks fell from the 2019 to the 2020 calendar year due to the impacts of COVID, a number of key characteristics remained stable. The length of time that students pursued their studies at U.S. IEPs did not change. International students studied at U.S. intensive English programs for 14 weeks on average, the same as before the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, more than half of the enrolled IEP students (54 percent) in 2020 planned to continue their studies in the United States, pursuing undergraduate or graduate degrees at U.S. higher education institutions. Finally, the leading places of origin of China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, and South Korea remained the same and comprised approximately 71 percent of all international intensive English students at U.S. programs.

COVID-19 Impacts at IEPs

Most IEPs in the United States pivoted to offering some level of online instruction in 2020 (Figure 1). By the summer of 2020, the mode of instruction for 96 percent of programs were either fully or primarily online or offering a hybrid/hyflex option. In fall 2020, although most programs continued to offer online or hybrid options (78 percent), some institutions began to welcome students back to in-person classes on campus, noted by the uptick of programs fully or primarily in-person (20 percent). The data IIE collected on the mode of instruction showcases how U.S. IEPs remained resilient and pivoted to offer flexible programs to meet international students' needs throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Open Doors also collected data in a special survey section about how COVID-19 affected IEP offices throughout the 2020 calendar year (Figure 2). An overwhelming majority of programs, 93 percent, indicated that COVID-19 resulted in investment or innovations within their programs. A large number of IEPs increased engagement in outreach and recruitment through virtual programming (80 percent). IEPs worked to ensure the safety and security of students, with 77 percent noting increased communication on health and well-being during this time. Furthermore, 65 percent took the time to invest in course or curriculum redevelopment, and more than half (59 percent) of IEPs invested in technological equipment for online study. This data highlights how IEPs continued to nimbly adapt to shifting circumstances and support students pursuing intensive English studies.

Likely due to the significant enrollment declines, 90 percent of IEPs reported adverse impacts, with a third of programs reporting budget cuts, staff furloughs or layoffs, and the need to combine classroom levels. In addition, eight percent of programs reported a program closure.

COVID-19 Global Impact at IEPs

IEP student enrollment declines were not unique to the United States, with similar

declines noted globally across the English language training industry. Leading host destinations for intensive English reported declines ranging from nearly 50 percent to more than 80 percent in the 2020 calendar year (Figure 3) (Bonard, 2021; English UK, 2021; ICEF Monitor, 2021a; ICEF Monitor, 2021b; Malta National Statistics Office, 2021). While each destination may have used different definitions to count students this last year, it is clear that COVID-19 resulted in significant declines across the global English language training market.

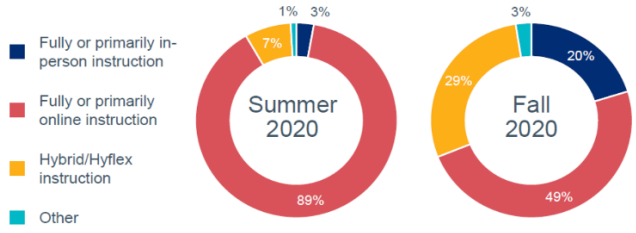


Figure 1: Mode of IEP Instruction by Term, 2020

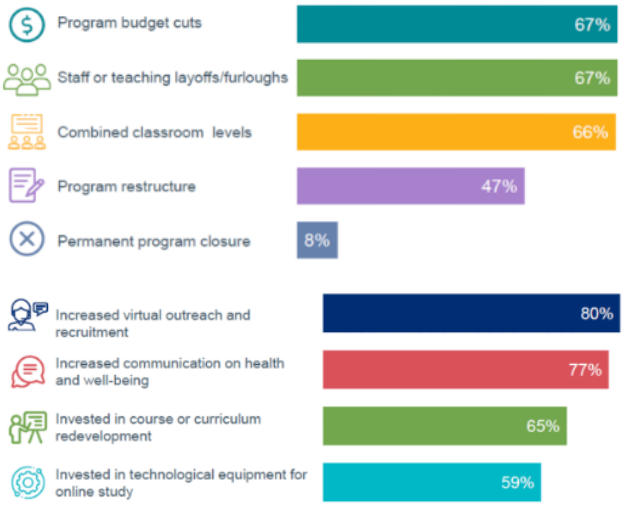


Figure 2: COVID-19 Impacts on Intensive English Programs, 2020

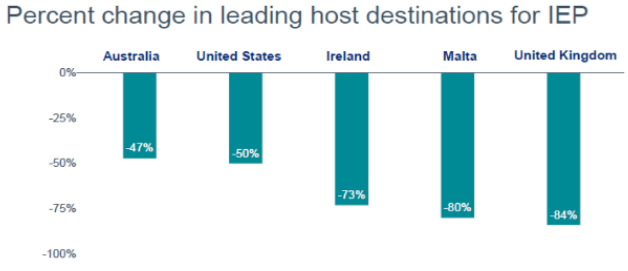


Figure 3: IEP Enrollments by Select Host Destination, 2019-2020

References:

Bonard. (2021, May). *State of the language education sector in Canada*. Languages Canada Annual Conference. https://www.languagescanada.ca/web/default/files/uploads/Docs/2021-conference-presentations/lc-2021-conference-bonard-deck.pdf

English UK. (2021, May). *Student statistics report 2021*. https://www.englishuk.com/uploads/assets/intelligence/2021_English_UK_-_Student_Statistics_Executive_Summary_2020_data.pdf.

ICEF Monitor. (2021a, March 17). *Latest data release measures pandemic's impact on Australia's ELICOS sector in 2020*. https://monitor.icef.com/2021/03/latest-data-release-measures-pandemics-impact-on-australias-elicos-sector-in-2020/.

ICEF Monitor. (2021b, April 27). *Ireland reports a 73% drop in ELT students in 2020*. https://monitor.icef.com/2021/04/ireland-reports-a-73-drop-in-elt-students-in-2020/.

Malta National Statistics Office. (2021, April). *News Release*. https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2021/04/News2021_062.pdf.

About Open Doors Intensive English Programs Survey:

IIE, with the assistance of two leading professional intensive English program (IEP) associations, English USA and University and College Intensive English Programs (UCIEP), annually collects national-level data on IEP enrollments in the United States, a known pathway toward enrollment in full degree programs. Programs that are not English USA or UCIEP members were also invited to participate in the survey.

Reporting institutions include university and college-affiliated programs, as well as independent entities that offer English language training. The Open Doors 2021 IEP survey reflects student enrollment during the 2020 calendar year (January 1 to December 31, 2020). Data elements in this survey include place of origin, program sponsorship, percentage of students intending to continue further (non-IEP) study in the United States, and program duration (18 hours or more, fewer than 18 hours). Both total student enrollment and total student-weeks (one student studying for one week) are captured. These two measures provide a more complete picture of IEP enrollments in the United States. Because they cover different populations, enrollment data from the IEP survey are not always congruent with IEP enrollment data from the International Student Census.

Julie Baer is a Research Specialist at IIE where she manages the data collection and analysis for Open Doors and conducts specialized research for IIE program teams on strategic program design and planning. Her areas of expertise include analyzing trends in international academic mobility in U.S. higher education across sectors and using geospatial analysis to highlight trends in educational access. Ms. Baer holds an EdM in International Education Policy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and BS from Centre College. She was a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant to Malaysia in 2021.

English Tests Used for Admissions Decisions: An Opportunity for ESL Professionals

By Misty Wilson

International students studying in colleges and universities in the US are often asked to provide proof of English proficiency as part of the application process. Proficiency can be proven through various ways: completion of an English as a second language program, reported country of origin, proof of previous English-medium school attendance, or through English proficiency test scores. Not all English proficiency tests, however, are the same. Some measure a test taker's knowledge of the language while others measure a test taker's ability to use the language. Some tests measure all four skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) while others might only fully measure only one or two skills. Some were designed to be efficient while others were designed to accurately measure English proficiency. Which English proficiency tests to accept and what score to set is not a one-size-fits-all answer, and it could be argued that the testing environment has become even more complex with the number of new tests appearing on the market and the most recent move toward digitally based at-home tests, accelerated by COVID-19.

In the United States, decisions regarding which tests to accept and what score to set have increasingly moved to international enrollment managers who, among other university test users, may lack the language assessment literacy needed to make such decisions (Baker, 2016; Taylor, 2013). While language assessment experts are best placed to assist in determining whether a test is fit for purpose, that is whether it is appropriate for use as an admission requirement, they are not often sought during the decision-making process. This presents an opportunity for ESL professionals to use their expertise to offer guidance on these decisions, and recent research suggests ESL professionals can be influential in an admissions officer's decision to accept or reject English proficiency tests (Wilson, 2021). In order to be a part of the decision-making process, however, it is important that ESL professionals have a foundational understanding of testing principles so they can effectively contribute to decisions regarding choosing tests and setting scores.

Testing Principles

Many ESL professionals have heard of the five general principles of language assessment that should be considered when designing an English test: practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). My goal in this section is to introduce principles that may be used when evaluating an English test for admission purposes and provide enough information on each to aide in the decision-making process. There are five principles, seen in the Test Evaluation Model in Figure 1, that can serve as a springboard to evaluate language tests for use as an academic admission requirement: validity, reliability, security, practicality, and impact.

Fig.1 Test Evaluation Model

Validity

In general, test validity refers to a test's ability to measure what it says it will measure. A test may appear to be valid to an untrained eye (this is called face validity), but does it work? This question can really only be answered through validation studies, which provide evidence that the test measures what it says it will measure. When investigating the validity of a test, there are, however, a few elements you can look for. For a test to be used to measure English for admission into an academic program, the test should adequately measure all four language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking), and provide a clear score for each skill. This is important because it is not uncommon for students to have unbalanced skill levels, and some academic programs to have higher expectations for speaking skills than perhaps listening skills. To get a complete picture, you need a test that can provide information on each skill. Secondly, you should consider the task types included in the test. Using English for academic purposes is different from using language for interpersonal communication, so you need a test that assesses the test taker's ability to use the language for academic purposes. For example, does the test measure reading or writing in a way that replicates the type of reading and writing they will be expected to do in class?

Reliability

Test reliability refers to a test's ability to produce stable and consistent results. For example, if the same test taker takes the test on different days, will they receive the same score? Or will a test taker receive the same score if marked by different examiners? Another threat to test reliability could be cultural bias. For example, if the test taker is asked to describe an image of a man grilling, but has no previous experience with this activity, their inability to describe the image may have nothing to do with their language proficiency. Some items to look for when examining test reliability include clear instructions at the beginning of the test, practice materials that familiarize test takers with all task types, and the testing of materials before being released into a live environment.

A good test needs both validity and reliability. Consider a scale that is 3lbs off. You may weigh yourself every day and get a consistent weight, but if the scale is off, then the measurement is not reliable. Maintaining validity and reliability requires knowledge and evidence-based assessment design, in addition to rigorous ongoing procedures to support the test in question.

Security

A valid and reliable test is nothing if it is not secure. Whether the test is given in-person or online, security measures must be in place to authenticate the identity of the test taker, assure material security and accountability, and to ensure the test results have not been influenced by malicious behavior. With the advent of online language tests being used for admission purposes, the question of security becomes even more important, and online tests which claim to be secure should be examined closely. There also needs to be an understanding that accepting these tests may come with inherent risks, and institutions should be prepared with policies in place that allow them to respond to various situations.

Practicality

If the test's validity, reliability, and security are the three main pieces of the test puzzle, then practicality is the central point connecting all three. Understanding how a more practical test might impact validity and reliability is important. A longer test, though less practical, could be more reliable if it

provides more opportunities for a test taker to showcase what they know. For example, consider the role of time in a writing task. An extended writing test would take longer for the test taker, but it would provide greater evidence of the range of vocabulary and grammar; in contrast, a shorter writing test would take less time but provide less information on the ability of a test taker.

Impact

Impact is often called washback in language assessment research, and it refers to the impact preparing for or taking the test has on the learner or the curriculum used to prepare the learner. In other words, does preparing for the test build proficiency and the targeted skills needed to succeed after the test? In questioning the impact of a test, take what is known about the test items or tasks, and consider what test preparation might look like. If a test taker was to prepare to do well on those task types, would they increase in proficiency and their ability to use the language? If so, then this would be positive washback. Preparation for the test should lead to better readiness for college and social experiences in an English language setting.

English proficiency tests can also have a profound impact on colleges and universities which trust that the test accepted is valid, reliable, and secure. If it isn't, there can be dire consequences to student retention and the academic achievement of students.

How to Choose Tests and Test Scores

When asked to weigh in on decisions regarding English proficiency tests used for admissions purposes, start by reviewing samples of the test and consider the five testing principles discussed above. Then review test taker sample responses and evaluator commentary. This is important so you can determine whether the test is assessing language in a way that reflects how students will use it in their academic programs. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, all tests should be evaluated through a critical and independent lens, so you should look for 3rd party peer-reviewed empirical studies that support the test's claims of validity, reliability, and security.

While some programs rely on institutional benchmarking, trusting that peer institutions have done their due diligence in evaluating a test, programs should not rely on this alone. It is not always clear by looking at a list of institutions that accept a test whether an institution is accepting a test as a supplemental piece of evidence or whether they have institutional safeguards, such as placement tests, language support services, or academic support programs as a safety net. Furthermore, when accepting a new test, especially one that has only recently been widely accepted and is lacking a substantial amount of peer-reviewed validation studies, an institution should be cognizant of the risks inherent in that decision and set up policies that allow for retesting of students or placement into an ESL program if needed.

Setting Scores

Similarly, when setting scores for tests, colleges and universities need to go beyond choosing a score based on what peer institutions have set and even beyond concordances touted by test creators. Score setting is the process of establishing a cutoff score for an assigned purpose such as admission into a graduate program. Setting scores too high may lead to rejecting qualified applicants while setting scores too low may lead to accepting students who do not have the needed English proficiency to succeed.

Concordances may be used to equate two different tests that measure the same construct; however, several studies have

shown that linking two tests that have different constructs (e.g., measuring speaking ability through the reading of a sentence vs. an interview task) is a flawed methodology (e.g., Jones & Xu, 2020; Yannakoudakis & Cummins, 2015). Just because a concordance table has been created by a test provider does not mean a test is comparable to another one or that the scores from the two tests can be used interchangeably.

Though there are several methods for determining what score should be set, these decisions should only be made with a clear understanding of what a test score represents in terms of what a student is able to do at that level, the academic rigor of the institution, and the language support available to students. Once a score has been chosen, qualitative and quantitative data should be regularly collected and examined to determine whether the score has been appropriately set.

Conclusion

Admitted students should have full access to the academic and social offerings of the program they are enrolled in, but this starts with ensuring the tool used to measure their language proficiency works. As many schools move to expand how a student can provide proof of English proficiency, there will be continued opportunities for ESL professionals to advocate for the needs of multilingual learners and contribute to the decisions regarding which tests to accept. Determining whether a new English test should be accepted as proof of English language proficiency for international students is a complicated task that should be undertaken with great care. There is too much at stake for both admitted students and colleges and universities to make quick, uninformed decisions.

References

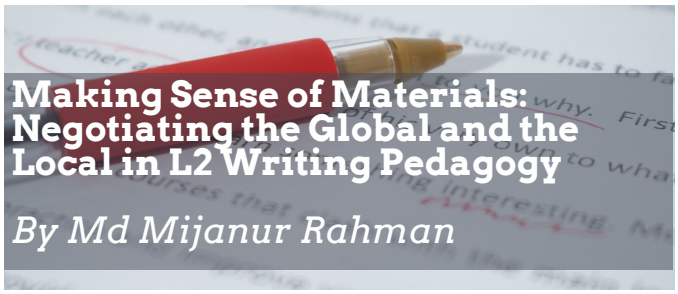
Baker, B. A. (2016). Language assessment literacy as professional competence: The case of Canadian admissions decision makers. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 19(1), 63–83.

Brown, H.D. & Abeywickrama, P. (2010). *Language assessment, principles and classroom practices* (2nd ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson Education, Inc.

Taylor, L. (2013). Communicating the theory, practice and principles of language testing to test stakeholders: Some reflections. *Language Testing*, 30(3), 403-412.

Wilson, Misty E. (2021). When professional roles take center stage: how international enrollment managers make sense of their decision to accept Duolingo English Test. Northeastern University. http://hdl.handle.net/2047/D20406239

Misty Wilson, Ed.D., currently uses her TESOL expertise to support teacher training, test taker resource development, and research initiatives at IELTS USA. Previously, she spent 15 years in higher education, initially teaching English and later directing a large ESL program.



Making Sense of Materials: Negotiating the Global and the Local in L2 Writing Pedagogy

By Md Mijanur Rahman

Abstract

This self-reflexive article traces the narrative an L2 writing instructor systematically investigating a pedagogical dilemma arising out of cross-cultural differences in writing. The instructor initially considered the differences a problem to overcome in every iteration of an ESP writing course in an EFL setting but later learned to utilize them as a resource to enhance student learning outcome for college level writers of English in a variety of contexts. Centering around the global and the local cultural tensions in instructional materials, the paper shows how a writing instructor can reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable cultural forces in writing genres by applying the principles of contrastive rhetoric, translingualism, and genre theories.

Contrastive rhetoric, L2 writing, & translingualism

In 1966, Robert B. Kaplan, an applied linguist, published an article titled "Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-cultural Education", investigating how second language writers from around the world write, and how that compares with the mainstream writing practices in the U.S academic discourse communities. That article essentially started the field of second language writing, especially its contrastive rhetoric tradition, in the U.S. Kaplan (1966) argued, among many others, that "each language and each culture has a paragraph order unique to itself" (p. 14) and characterized the typical English speakers' method of paragraph development as linear, that of Semitic language users as full of parallel constructions, that of Oriental writers as indirect, and that of Romance and Russian writers as full of digressions and tangential details (Kaplan, 1966).

During the last 50+ years, the scholars of second language writing and contrastive rhetoric problematized Kaplan's rather essentialist description of L2 writing styles, but one of the many statements that still stands out is that different cultures have different rhetorical tendencies in their writing, or writing is accomplished differently in different cultures (however one defines cultures) (see Atkinson, 2004; Connor, 2011). In second language writing classes, these cultural influences in writing, especially those coming from outside the U.S., have often been seen as deficiencies that instructors were supposed to correct with a goal to assimilate the L2 writers into the norms of the Western academic discourse communities.

But over time, this deficit approach to linguistic diversity in writing faced sustained criticisms, giving rise to what we call the linguistic turn in writing studies, or "translingualism". Translingualism is an approach to language difference that appreciates divergent language practices going beyond the difference as deficit notion. Translingual pedagogy also attempts to transform the phenomena of linguistic differences as a potential teaching moment for greater awareness about language, writing, audience, and the purpose for using the language in a certain way, instead of dismissing them as non-standard or bad (see Horner et al., 2011). Translingualism thus undercuts the ideologies of monolingualism and standard language, making space for both intralingual and interlingual variations in writing.

It should be kept in mind, however, that L2 writers' performance in writing can be

different for two reasons: 1. The difference might reflect their developing interlanguage system, which is always in transition as they make further progress in communicating effectively in the target language. 2. Many of these differences, however, can better be explained as a reflection of the writer's culturally preferred styles in writing and rhetoric. When Kaplan wrote about culturally variable writing practices, he meant this second category of difference.

While there have been a lot of developments like these in the L2 writing scholarships in the last few decades, not many L2 writing instructors receive training on L2 writing pedagogy even if they complete graduate degrees in ELT/TESOL, a scenario that has been recorded in many parts of the world (see Seloni & Henderson-Lee, 2019). The teaching gets further complicated when these writing instructors are required to use textbooks and materials produced for audiences in the mainstream native English-speaking countries like the U.S. The rhetorical preferences and writing styles in these materials reflect the globally dominant norms like those in the Western academic discourse communities, the norms that often come in direct conflict with the local writing conventions. As an L2 writing instructor at a university in Bangladesh, an EFL setting, I found myself in exactly the same position. This paper describes how I developed an extended action research project (in the form of a PhD dissertation) to address that dilemma, with a hope that transnational writing instructors like me will gain useful insights from this experience.

The pedagogical dilemma

In early part of my teaching career, I was teaching a course entitled "English for Professional Purposes" to native Bengali learners of L2 English, and I was required to use a textbook, *How to Write First-Class Business Correspondence: The Handbook for Business Writing* (Baugh, Fryar, & Thomas, 1997/2007), which was written primarily for the U.S. audience. The text presented me with a series of challenges related to the linguistic differences in writing, especially writing business letters. Much of it had to do with the fact that the letter writing conventions put forward in the textbook came in conflict with many of the local conventions for writing letters in formal settings in Bangladesh. This became particularly prominent when I was teaching my students how to write letters of request in school settings, a type of letters the Bangladeshi students typically write to university administrators in Bangladesh for a range of purposes, including requesting a transcript, requesting permission to attend an exam without paying dues on time, requesting a testimonial or a studentship certificate, and so on. I wrote my fair share of these letters as a student myself and, as an academic coordinator in that institution, I also found myself on the receiving end on a daily basis.

For example, one key rhetorical difference I noticed among these letters lies in our addressing practice in schools, colleges, and universities. In Bangladesh, we address our professors and school administrators as Sir/Madam. But the textbook suggested we use Dear+Title+Last Name like:

> Dear Ms. (Miss or Mrs.) Culver:
> Dear Mr. Jacobs: (Baugh, Fryar, & Thomas, 1997/2007, p. 21)

The textbook, however, does mention that "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam" can be used "if you do not know the name of the recipient, but you do know that you will be addressing a man or woman" (p. 21). As for the school letters, the students, however, do know the names of their addressees very well and the textbook tells me to address them as Dear+Title+Last name. But students' terms of address like "Dear Professor Karim" or "Dear Professor Islam" to the head of the department are not likely to have any positive reactions. As a writing instructor, I somehow told my students to address their

teachers and administrators as Dear Sir/Madam, which, in the textbook writers' eyes, would mean the letter is being addressed to a person whose name the student does not know, which is not true. I considered this an uncomfortable problem to overcome in every iteration of the course.

The pursuit of a PhD and changes in instructional circumstances

Entering a PhD program in English Studies with a focus on TESOL/Applied Linguistics at a university in the U.S. Midwest, I had to teach a variety of genre-based writing classes, including first-year-composition, writing in the academic disciplines, and written business communication courses, as part of the responsibilities for my doctoral teaching assistantship. Because I had the opportunity to choose almost any genre of writing in these classes, I started incorporating the genre of business letters in these courses and used materials from the same textbook (Baugh, Fryar, & Thomas, 1997/2007). This has to do with two things. First, the book provided lots of practical advice on how to write different genres, including letters, in business settings. Second, it was also written for the U.S. learners of business correspondences. Because the text's guidelines matched with the local practices, I didn't have to face, at least apparently, the trouble arising out of cross-cultural differences in writing and instructed students what they could do to address the readers of their letters.

On a personal level, though, it was not so easy, as I still experienced a kind of linguistic insecurity, which Meyerhoff (2006) explains as "speakers' feeling that the variety they use is somehow inferior, ugly, or bad" (p. 292). William Labov (2006) interprets the phenomenon of linguistic insecurity as a result of people's "[adopting] a standard of correctness which is imposed from without" (p. 318), and Denis Preston (2013) attributes it to people's prejudice for what Lippi-Green (2012) called "standard language ideology", subscribing to the view that "an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language" exists and is desirable (p. 67). This linguistic insecurity was reflected in my variable practice in addressing my professors: I moved away from my local Bangladeshi practice of addressing my professors simply as "Sir/Madam" and generally addressed them as Dr+Last Name. But I experienced an addressing conundrum when I saw my peers addressing their professors simply by their first names. This insecurity was also creeping into my writing pedagogy that was initially characterized by an apparent erasure of my linguistically diverse self and allegiance to the standard language ideology, promoting the so called homogenous and normative mainstream American English variety.

However, I experienced a sea change in my attitude to language variations and linguistic diversity in my writing classrooms as I continued to take courses on sociolinguistics, language ideology, pragmatics, cross-cultural issues in TESOL, and became familiar with translingualism or what has been called a linguistic turn, in composition studies (Horner et al., 2011). As my ideologies about language diversity changed, so did my understanding of why people write the way they write in different contexts and communities.

A dissertation project and a confluence of theories to investigate the pedagogical dilemma

As I developed my PhD dissertation project, I became familiar with a genre approach to understanding writing in disciplinary, professional, and civic life contexts (e.g., Miller, 1984; Swales, 1990). Traditionally defined as text types with distinct textual regularities, the term "genre" in the last three or more decades assumed new meanings as it came to be seen as social action (Miller, 1984)

and ways of being (Bazerman, 1997), promoting the understanding that genres of writing are more of an action than just words on the page. This is because the way we write reflects a lot on how we live our lives in specific settings, and that genres of writing both construct and reflect a community's norms, values, assumptions, and ways of life (e.g., Bazerman, 1997; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1993). Genre conventions are not neutral or objective. They are rather value laden.

In addition, I drew on Austin's (1962) speech act theory in the context of letter writing, seeing letters as speech acts. According to Barton and Hall (1999), "letters have particular illocutionary force" as the participants in the written correspondence assume "some roles and identities" (p. 6) that go beyond the boundary of a simple writer and reader dichotomy. These assumed roles and identities affect how different parts of the letters are written, and these influences are particularly noticeable in three sections: salutations, bodies, and complimentary closes, which are culturally variable, reflecting the social power dynamics (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The rhetorical and cultural variability of letters becomes all the more obvious if we consider letters as Face-Threatening Acts (FTA), requiring the use of specific politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1978/1987). Brown and Levinson's politeness theories posit that the degree of face-threat or its "weightiness" of a particular verbal (spoken or written) performance is determined by the measures of "social distance between speaker and hearer, the power that hearer has over speaker," and the degree to which the verbal interaction is considered "an act of imposition in that culture" (p. 76). This "weightiness" determines whether someone will do or not do the FTA and what kind of politeness strategies one will use.

Based on these theoretical perspectives, I conducted a genre-specific contrastive rhetoric study of model business letters from a Bangladeshi school textbook, Grammar and Composition, and then some similar letters models from a U.S handbook. I started my study with the two research questions: 1. *What values do the model business letters of request in the Bangladeshi and the U.S. school settings represent?* 2. *To what extent are those values cultural and/or colonial?*

For the actual analysis, I chose to focus on four different sections of the letters: reference or subject lines, salutations, bodies (especially their beginnings and endings), and complimentary closes, mainly because it is in these sections that one can find significant variability in conventions. During the analysis, I examined the genre conventions and textual differences, especially the lexico-grammatical choices made and the politeness strategies used to identify the potential value differences. This analysis helped me answer the first research question.

The findings show that the letter writing conventions in the Bangladeshi samples are significantly different from those in the U.S. in various ways, especially in the level and type of politeness strategies used, and their implication for social power dynamics. The analysis also shows that the Bangladeshi letters employ a higher form of politeness (e.g., negative politeness) through a humble, or rather, humiliated subject position of the writers, indirect speech acts, elaborate ritualized language, devotional vocabulary, depersonalized addressing practice (like Sir/Madam), polite pessimism, and acknowledgment of serious debts while also delaying the introduction of the requested action until the end. On the other hand, the U.S. letter models exhibit a far less polite way of making a request through letters by using direct speech acts, introducing the request mostly upfront, and using a personalized address that reduces the social distance

between interactants, which represents very little power differential between reader and writer.

Once I established these textual differences and the associated values, I answered the next research question: *To what extent are those values cultural and/or colonial*? by doing a historical sociolinguistic study based on letter data (e.g., Auer, Schreier & Watts, 2019) in the Bangladeshi context. For this I referred to what can be called some colonial antecedent genres: 1. begging letters or letters of supplication, "a quintessentially hierarchical form of address" that was used by the ordinary people to draw the attention of the colonial authority to everyday troubles during the British Raj in the Indian subcontinent (Raman, 2012, pp. 161-164); 2. Arzdashts, or arzi, a regular component of the letter writing practices during the Mughal empire (Raman, 2012; Zaidi, 2005); and 3. the daily correspondences of the British civil servants in India (Ashraf, 1995). To keep my historical sociolinguistic discussion current, I also examined the letter writing conventions in Bengali in a nationally prescribed textbook (Hassan, 2018). In these analyses, I compared the dominant genre conventions and their implication for the reader's and writer's social power dynamics to arrive at a conclusion that many of the present-day letter writing practices do come from the correspondence practices during the colonial period of Bangladesh's history: both the British Raj and the Mughal empire before that.

Enhanced sense of materials and the value of action research

Through my PhD research, which I developed as a kind of action research in college settings, I developed a better understanding of the pedagogical materials I used in writing classes. I came to learn that a genre of writing is not just words on a page or a collection of textual regularities. The differences in word choice and genre conventions are not meaningless either. Rather, these linguistic differences in writing do represent a cultural and often colonial baggage, which we need to make explicit to our second language writers so that they can make their own choice to write letters (or any other writing genre for that matter) in a way that reflects their own positionality. Instead of unilaterally dictating them what to do, we can help them develop a kind of L2 writing agency that scholars in second language writing have been advocating for some quite some time (e.g., Kubota & Lehner, 2004).

As a writing instructor and researcher from an EFL context, I did this project on business letters, but others can do it on a variety of other genres of writing, including CVs/resumes, paragraph development, and essay writing. I share this story with a hope that instructors like me can pave their own path forward by developing their own action research projects to negotiate the dilemma put forward by the pedagogical materials we see in L2 writing classes. The end result is that cultural differences in writing do not have to be a problem to overcome, but we can utilize these differences as a resource to enhance student learning outcome in all writing classes, including those involving the second language writers. That's what the recent translingual approaches to teaching writing inspire us to do.

References

Ashraf, C. M. (Ed.). (1995). *Officers of the Punjab commission (1849-1879): Images of day-to-day life of the district officers of the Raj as reflected in their private correspondence*. Neda Publishers.

Atkinson, D. (2004). Contrasting rhetoric/contrasting cultures: Why contrastive rhetoric needs a better conceptualization of culture. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 3, 277-289.

Auer, A., Schreier, D., & Watts, R. J. (Eds.). (2019). *Letter writing and language change*. Cambridge University Press.

Austin, J. L. (1962). How to do things with words: The William James lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955. Clarendon.

Barton, D., & Hall, N. (1999). *Letter writing as a social practice*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Baugh, S. L., Fryar, M., & Thomas, D. A. (1997[2007]). *How to write first-class business correspondence: The handbook for business writing*. NTC Publishing Group.

Bazerman, C. (1997). The life of genre, the life in the classroom. In W. Bishop & H. Ostrom (Eds.), *Genre and writing: Issues, arguments, alternatives* (pp. 19-26). Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.

Berkenkotter, C., & Huckin, T. (1993). Rethinking genre from a sociocognitive perspective. *Written Communication*, 10(4), 475-509.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1978/1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.

Connor, U. (2011). *Intercultural rhetoric in the writing classroom*. The University of Michigan Press.

Hassan, Z. (Ed.). (2008/2018). "*Rochona shomvar*" ("Composition collection). National Curriculum and Textbook Board.

Horner, B., & Tetreault, L. (Eds.). (2017). *Crossing divides: Exploring translingual writing pedagogies and programs*. University Press of Colorado.

Horner, B., Lu, M., Royster, J. J., & Trimbur, J. (2011). Language difference in writing: Toward a translingual approach. *College English*, 73(3), 303-321. https://ir.library.louisville.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1065&context=faculty

Kaplan, R. B. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in inter-cultural education. *Language Learning*, 16, 1–20.

Kubota, R., & Lehner, A. (2004). Toward critical contrastive rhetoric. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13, 7–27. DOI: 10.1016/j.jslw.2004.04.003

Labov, W. (2006). *The social stratification of English in New York City* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Lippi-Green, R. (2012). *English with an accent: Language, ideology and discrimination in the United States* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Meyerhoff, M. (2006). *Introducing sociolinguistics*. Routledge.

Miller, C. R. (1984). Genre as social action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70, 151–167.
Preston, D. R. (2013). Linguistic insecurity forty years later. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 41(4), 304-331. https://doi.org/10.1177/0075424213502810

Raman, B. (2012). *Document Raj: Writing and scribes in early colonial south India*. The University of Chicago Press.

Seloni, L., & Henderson-Lee, S. (Eds.). (2019). *Second language writing instruction in global contexts: English language teacher preparation and development*. Multilingual Matters.

Shamsuddin, M. A. K., & Mondol, M. A. H. (2005). *English grammar and composition*. National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge University Press.

Zaidi, A. I. A. (2005). Introduction. In M Siddiqui, *The British historical context and petitioning in colonial India*, 22nd Dr. M. A. Ansari Memorial Lecture. Jamia Milia Islamia.

Dr. Md Mijanur Rahman is an Assistant Professor of English (Multilingualism and Translingualism) at California State University, Los Angeles. He completed his Ph.D. in TESOL Applied Linguistics from Illinois State University. He researches the issues of language differences in writing classrooms and the social justice implications of language diversity.

Interview

Cheryl Delk-Le Good
Executive Director, EnglishUSA

Where are you from?

I'm originally from the Chicago metro area—a suburb on the southwest side. I went to Illinois Wesleyan University for undergrad and earned M.A. in French Language & Teaching and then TESOL at Michigan State University. My school mascot journey includes being a Viking, an Argonaut, a Titan, and a Spartan! I love Michigan and lived there after grad school for my first full-time ESL position at Western Michigan University before moving to Atlanta in 2000.

What do you like to do in your free time? Anything new during COVID?

I work hard and play hard! My husband and I golf, and we take advantage of the weather in Atlanta to play throughout the year. We've been married for 10 years, and when we first met, I was so relieved that he was willing to give it a try because it's such a great way to spend time together. We play with my dad (and mom, until she passed away in 2017) and a big group of friends here and in Alabama. And October 25th this year goes down in my personal golf history—my first hole-in-one! I also took up kayaking a year ago—like golf, it helps expand the peripheral perspective away from a screen into meditative nature.

How would your family describe what you do?

I can do a really good impression of my Chicago-born mother, and I can imagine her saying (and what I'd give to hear her again): "Cheri [yes, my family calls me Cheri] talks to a lot of people, in person at conferences and on 'the Zoom.' She works closely with a Board that work in programs like she used to; she says they're so dedicated to working hard to help international students learn English in the U.S. She told me that on most days, she doesn't even feel like she's at work because she loves the people and the mission."

What's on your bedside table/Kindle?

I just finished *Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett. And I had the fortune of meeting Rajika Bhandari in person at the AIRC Conference in Miami a few weeks ago and have her *America Calling: A Foreign Student in a Country of Possibility* on my table to finish for the holidays and suggest for the next EnglishUSA Book Club choice!

When did you first hear about EnglishUSA? What attracted you?

I first heard about EnglishUSA (formerly AAIEP) back in the late 1990s when I was working at Western Michigan University. When I relocated to Georgia State University and became director of the intensive English program in 2003, I worked quickly to apply for membership. A few years later, I served on the Board for the first time and in 2012 as President. During those years as director and ESL lecturer, having a peer group to turn to—one that included people from all over the country—was something I never took for granted. I relished every professional moment I had with the Board and other directors. Being hired in 2015 as Executive Director was a dream career that I hadn't imagined possible.

How has serving as Executive Director of EnglishUSA changed you?

What has been most fulfilling both personally and professionally, in addition to non-profit association management best practices, is

getting out of my comfort zone and asking for help when needed and showing by example for others to do the same. The term "vulnerable" has been a bit overused by pop psychologists but it's the right word and concept, but I believe that the vulnerability that I have embraced in this position to give me the confidence to learn what I need to learn to help EnglishUSA members and the industry.

Where will our profession be in 5 years from now?

The crystal ball question! When I'm asked this question, it's usually within the context of student enrollments and whether programs will bounce back to previous levels. On a panel I served on with Languages Canada and EnglishUK in November, we all agreed that the word 'renovation' is a more accurate vision to describe what we're all going through right now and likely through the next 5 years for our industry. If we maintain our strong structures and improve the many "upgrades" that we've made during the pandemic, continue to commit to high quality standards, prioritize students and their success, and share best practices within our community and beyond, we can enhance the English language study experience in the U.S. We're not rebuilding from the ground up. Our foundations, established for decades by those who created, formed and fostered this industry, are strong.

Who has been your most important professional mentor?

At both Western Michigan University and Georgia State University, we sought out CEA accreditation for the English language programs. During this time, I met Mary Reeves, who then moved into the Executive Director role at CEA. She has served multiple associations during her career (and continues to do so in retirement). I had the privilege of serving on the CEA Commission prior to starting my staff role with EnglishUSA. Mary is

a role model for fairness, diplomacy, and "continuous improvement." I learned so many aspects of association management by watching a true leader in action. She continues to inspire me with her gratitude to those who commit to the mission of English language programs and her gratitude for her family and health.

What do you think other people should know about EnglishUSA?

People should know that EnglishUSA is 100% dedicated to serving its members, and even though on paper, the program/institution name is what's listed, the Board is always seeking out ways to better serve the individuals who work so hard every day to teach, create and coordinate programs, plan activities, assist students in being compliant, help them cope with being so far away from home, etc. We do this best when our "members serve members" and share their best practices. We all help each other help students succeed on their professional/personal/academic paths.

What podcasts you'd recommend and why?

·*Make Me Smart* with Kai Ryssdal and Molly Wood because I like to learn how issues with the economy and technology have such an impact on our culture. And they use my favorite quote a couple of times a week: "None of us is as smart as all of us." (I always think of our members and their contributions over the years!)

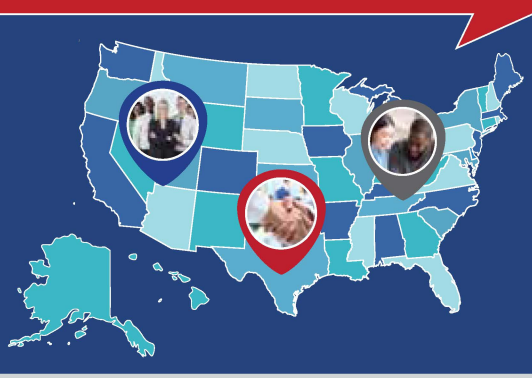
·*SmartLess* with trio Sean Hayes, Jason Bateman and Will Arnett, who each week surprise the other two with a mystery guest. Just in the past month, they've interviewed Jerry Seinfeld and Jeff Daniels. And a few months ago, Kamala Harris. I love the banter among the three of them and how the guests join in as well.

ENGLISH USA
the American Association of Intensive English Programs

BECOME A MEMBER

Join us and be among the

BEST ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAMS IN THE WORLD!



The Largest Association of English Language Programs in the USA

Collaborate with programs across the US, all accredited by CEA, ACCET or governed by their accredited institution

The Only Professional Association With All Types of English Language Programs

EnglishUSA is the one association in the US where you can find university/college-based, privately-operated independent and multi-site programs

Strong, Proactive Advocacy for the Industry

We communicate with government and other international education organizations to keep the language program industry strong

Hands-On Support for All of Our Members

EnglishUSA is educating, informing, connecting and helping our members to be successful as well as engaging volunteers who want to get involved

Making Membership Low-Cost and High-Value for Our Members

Low annual institutional membership dues allowing multiple people in each program to become active and engaged in the field

Get the Support You Need to Help Your Programs Succeed

Your Membership Benefits Include:

- **Engagement**: Multiple personnel (unlimited) in your program can access members-only resources, forums, complimentary webinars, events, etc.
- **Discounts:** Member savings on signature conferences
- **Program Visibility:** Searchable program listings on website with printed directory distributed at events
- **Promotion:** Use of EnglishUSA logo in your online and print marketing materials
- **Member Connection:** Monthly publication with updates and news
- **Advocacy:** Support for the industry to the federal government and regulatory agencies, accrediting bodies, sponsoring organizations, and industry media
- **Professional Development:** Three events (Stakeholders, Professional Development Conference and Regional Workshop prior to TESOL Convention), along with monthly webinars
- **Products & Services:** Over 20 Associates offering discounts on products & services
- **Networking:** Annual networking reception during the NAFSA Conference week
- **Collaboration:** Connections to relevant organizations in international education such as NAFSA, TESOL, AIEA, UCIEP, AIRC, the Alliance, EducationUSA, US Commercial Services
- **Volunteer Opportunities:** Development of professional networks and expansion of leadership skills

Is Your Program Eligible?

- Membership is open to intensive English and pathway programs accredited by CEA, ACCET, or under the governance of a regionally-accredited college or university
- For complete membership requirements and to apply online go to EnglishUSA.org

To Become a Member:

Visit: EnglishUSA.org • Email: info@EnglishUSA.org • Call: 404.567.6875

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION (THROUGH 1/28)

EnglishUSA members PROGRAMS, ASSOCIATES, & FRIENDS rates for the one-day conference

$40

Register by January 28th for the early bird rate!

REGISTER TODAY

Non-member rate for the one-day conference

$60

Register by January 28th for the early bird rate!

REGISTER TODAY

REGULAR REGISTRATION (AFTER 1/28)

EnglishUSA members PROGRAMS, ASSOCIATES, & FRIENDS rates for the one-day conference

$60

Register by February 16th

REGISTER TODAY

Non-member rate for the one-day conference

$80

Register by February 16th

REGISTER TODAY