UTSC’s rich cultural diversity: Challenges & Opportunities

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the numbers

39% of students speak another language other than English or French

31% of students are Permanent Residents, Visa Students, Refugees

20% of students were born outside of Canada

(source: UTSC Registrar’s Office)
diversity at UTSC

What opportunities do you anticipate?

What challenges do you anticipate?
diversity & inclusion

DIVERSITY
Variety of differences that make us unique

INCLUSION
Valuing and Supporting Differences
equity vs. equality
Transitional challenges for incoming students

- **Reading**
  - Vocabulary
  - Academic Reading Strategies

- **Writing**
  - Grammar
  - Syntax
  - Genre difference

- **Speaking**
  - Moving from receptive to active speech
  - Unwillingness to participate

- **Listening**
  - Speed
  - Unfamiliar accent
  - Lack of familiarity with structuring cues
“ESL” at UTSC is a spectrum

L2 International Students

• May be highly proficient user of English, or may feel very anxious using English
• May avoid language-based courses, or welcome the challenge
• May have studied at an English language high school with native English speaking or highly proficient teachers, or may have passed the language proficiency exam, but with little prior active use of English

L2 Domestic Students

• May be highly proficient in L2
• May have excellent oral skills, but writing that is still inflected by L1
• May be recent immigrants
• May spend few hours a week in an English language environment, and those may be spent in only passive English use, e.g. lectures
• May have attended a high school with a large population from their language group
Your students’ affective challenges beyond language: Transitioning to independence

- Self-efficacy
- Learning culture
- Culture shock
- Responsibility for learning, self care
- Relationships: Other students, Faculty, Inter-cultural communication
Scenario 1

Many students in your first-year course seem confused when you invite them to challenge an idea in the textbook. They also seem reluctant to engage in discussion in class, and seem to prefer to be passive learners.

1. What cultural, equity, or other issues might underlie this pattern of behavior in your students?

2. Are there ways that you can manage this that might provide learning opportunities for all your students?
Scenario 2

You have a 2\textsuperscript{nd} year student whose writing seems unnecessarily elaborate, not following disciplinary conventions of concision and directness that you feel she should have adopted by now.

1. What cultural, equity, or other issues might be at play here?

2. Are there ways that you can manage this that might provide learning opportunities for all your students?
Scenario 3

Throughout your course, you have communicated to students that they should ask questions during class because it benefits all students. Instead, they are silent in class, but rush the podium to ask questions after class is over.

1. What cultural, equity, or other issues might underlie this pattern of behavior in your students?

2. Are there ways that you can manage this that might provide learning opportunities for all your students?
CTL resources

**Reading**
- VEA tool
- Reading and Writing Excellence program (RWE)
- Academic Reading workshops (TWC)
- Reading Express

**Writing**
- TWC 1x1s, in-class workshops, clinics
- RWE program
- VEA
- First Steps

**Speaking**
- Communication Cafes
- Discussion Skills Cafes
- Facilitated Study Groups

**Listening**
- Web Option
- VEA tool
- Facilitated Study Groups
Academic English Health Check

Reading Express

Communication Café

ELD Consultations

Reading & Writing Excellence (RWE)
Reading course materials with online interactive support—with instant lookup and pronunciation and highlighted academic words.
Impact of daily practice with online interactive VEA

- In Fall 2017, a student who practiced a great deal on VEA, scoring **over 12 000 points**, improved from AEHC score in the low 70’s at the start of semester to high 90’s by end of semester.