

Example of education literature review

Countries, United States



Difficulties ESL Students Face When They Come to America

English as a Second Language or ESL students, study in the United States to fulfill more of their dreams. As what have mentioned, there are difficulties and challenges that ESL students are experiencing in which they need to face along with their native speakers classmates.

Yasuko Kanno and Sheila Dermer Apple Baum (1995) claim that ESL students are having an issue of raising their concerns in the classroom as they have limited vocabulary or some students may have not the awareness that they have the same right to raise their concerns (Kanno & Baum, 1995). This kind of issue is another challenge that ESL students face in which they have the idea over something, but their vocabulary is yet to be enriched so they find it hard to explain their ideas in the class. However, the two ESL researchers, Kanno and Baum also claim that if both researchers themselves and ESL students will have more time to collaborate and discuss things about their struggles, these challenges can be solved in a timely manner (Kanno & Baum, 1995).

These students will go through many adjustments once they started the initial stage of being an ESL student in the United States. There may have more issues than we thought as different ESL students have different adaptation when it comes to the new culture and environment that they will be in. Maureen Snow Andrade of Birmingham Young University (2006) asserts that one issue concerning ESL students is the process in which they will face social and academic transition during their first year in the university (Andrade, 2006).

In four studies that were conducted by Andrade in terms of ESL students' challenges, whether social or academic related adjustments, the international or ESL students found to have more adapting difficulty as to compare with domestic students. Reason is that domestic students are more exposed to the country's social behavior including the language than those who are new to the country and nonnative speakers.

ESL students would still pursue with their American Dream to finish their courses. Danling Fu (1995) wrote that as a former ESL student herself, she personally experienced difficulties being one. She asserts that she felt being alienated, helpless, confused, defeated and incapable (Fu, 1995). In addition, ESL students may have an issue with interaction between their teachers and peers as they go along with their student life. With this kind of situation, schools have a big role to play in infusing knowledge to students when it comes to cultural assumptions and identity development. This will help ESL students cope with the changes surround them so as to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of ESL courses.

Additionally, when teachers are able to accomplish curricular goals in a way that they will allow ESL students with their own cultural and personal relations to the given material, there may be positive results in the end (Fu, 1995). For this instance, an ESL student may struggle with his course materials as he does not have the cultural and personal foundation over the given topic.

It is true that ESL students may face these cultural challenges when they come to the United States to study as it will be their way to learn. Anna Chamot, Marsha Dale, J. Michael O'Malley and George Spanos (1992) claim

that these students, aside from their need of learning a new way of communicating and must be comfortable with the new culture; they should also need to use the new language so they can learn the academics of the curriculum.

ESL students who speak other language other than English can learn sufficient English for general communication in approximately two years, while they need to have five or seven years more to adequately improve their English language skills that are needed in university subject areas (Chamot, Dale, O'Malley, & Spanos, 1992).

ESL students are having difficulties when it comes to communicating with their co-students who are native speakers. However, these students are not only facing this kind of challenge. Some ESL students are also experiencing problems when it comes to academic writing. Just like conversing using English, they are also having trouble creating their academic reports and assignments in writing. Ruth Spack (1998) claim that students who are facing this kind of challenge may have been affected by the cultural and social factors, which influence their ability to compose a flawless piece of writing. In other words, the challenge with academic writing is not because these students are lacking of innate ability (Spack, 1998).

A person's cultural background directly affects his or her way of thinking in order to write academically. For an instance, a student may have difficulty in writing in English if his ideas are in his native language in which the meaning becomes different once translated to English. That is why cultural identity and new culture exposition would have a great impact on student's ability to adapt English.

As products of different cultures and identity, some ESL students are struggling to follow instructions from their teachers. Vivian Zamel (2102) shared one of the classroom talks regarding ESL student's experience. Students claim that their teacher go over the class materials not knowing that are words, which ESL students do not understand. There were times that important information and class announcements were not being written on the board. As a result, some ESL students are finding it hard to understand the message. They may have different understanding between a written message and orally delivered message as English is not their first Language. That is why teachers should be more patient and have more teaching technique especially if they are dealing with their ESL students (Zamel, 2012).

The challenges ESL students face is not only the oral and written communication, which is mainly their primary issue. In fact, there was an interview done with some ESL students, which was revealed regarding their classroom experiences. Annela Teemant (2010) wrote about the struggles ESL students and she claims that these students are in uncomfortable position of having a competition against the native speakers in terms of grades and class performance (Teemant, 2010). Some ESL students also felt that their teachers are not well-prepared to teach ESL students, who have unique testing and learning needs. In addition, first time students are experiencing a gradual shift from their home country teaching system to American ways of teaching the subjects (Teemant, 2010).

Some ESL students may not avoid comparing these two systems as part of their learning curve. Their home country style of teaching serves as their

foundation in which they still carry them once they reach the United States. That is where their education foundation may start to develop as they begin to learn new ideas and new ways about the subject materials.

Terry Milnes and Liying Cheng (2008) assert that there are ESL students who are intellectually learning the subject matter. However, these students are having trouble proving that they have learned from their course material. This is because some ESL students either has an issue showing their intellectual capabilities through writing or discussing it with their teachers and classmates in English (Milnes & Cheng, 2008). When it comes to writing, some ESL students may think that it is unfair on their part as their works are being graded according to writing technicalities such as grammars, punctuation and spelling instead of its contents. On the other hand, teachers may have not recognized the quality of the paper because their attentions might have caught by those technical writing errors.

Moreover, ESL students not only need to be exposed to American culture and English language so as they can catch up with their studies. They have to be well-exposed to every aspect of American way of living to gain more knowledge in respect to their selected course. Patricia Duff (2001) agrees that ESL students need to have in-depth classroom participation along with the writing and reading activities. However, students are also having problems with being aware with current knowledge of US pop culture, newsworthy events and mass media. These aspects are critical especially for social studies subjects as these could help their ability in expressing the wide range of social issues and to be part of fast-paced interactions (Duff, 2001). Student's being more aware of more than just the English language will have

a big part on the students' learning ability. Being exposed to current American culture and events will give vocabulary and grammar enrichment to ESL students, which will enhance and improve their English speaking capability.

On the other hand, an ESL student may have developed his English orally, but still having problem when it comes to writing. As what have mentioned earlier, writing and speaking English are two different things. Noriah Ismail, Supyan Hussin and Saadiyah Darus claim that many ESL students face the problem of writing in English. The fact of the matter is their apprehension and anguish towards writing becomes worse at the university level because of a higher level of performance when it comes to writing is expected from them (Ismail, Hussin & Darus).

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