

# Study skills in the university assignment

[Education](#)



The items that should be covered in a pre-university study skills course for non-native international students. Effective study skills are essential for international students because it will make students to be more motivated to learn as they know what are they learning and how they will do in the learning (Burns & Sienfield , 2008). In the context of tertiary education, international students have big responsibilities in learning since they are learning in a new environment that is challenging with unfamiliar people who are waiting for them.

Therefore, study skills are crucial for international students because university life can be considered as their ‘ full occupation’, meaning that 24 hours of time will be devoted for university life (Carrol & Ryan, 2005). In other words, strong commitment is needed for lectures, tutorial and time-management so that they can survive in a new academic culture. The main focus of the study skills course here is for international students with English as their target language or specifically English is learned for academic purposes (EAP).

This means that English is used as a medium of instruction in classroom or the language itself is learned (Gillet, 2008). Here, I would like to talk about the items that should be covered in a pre-university study skills course for non-native international students. The first study skill that I choose to be implemented in this course is good note-taking. It is proposed that note-taking is essential for reading purposes so that they can focus on understanding of the lectures’ ideas in their own words (Howe, 1986).

Other than that, the reason for a good note-taking skill is that international students are asserted to have difficulties in learning vocabulary as compared to local learners (Howe, 1986). From here, the problems can be solved if student's needs' are fulfilled in terms of vocabulary and language competencies. Therefore, when they are doing note-taking, they should productively write the notes in their own words as it will be easier for memorization. Furthermore, it is important for students to select the gist and salient notes only and ignore the unimportant words.

While talking about concentration, sometimes it can be a big issue for international students. It is noted that they face problem within the social and cultural context with the home students (Carol, & Ryan, 2005,) thus affecting their confidence. Therefore, it is suggested that learners should become good note takers if they are at their full concentration during lectures or tutorial. In terms of note presentation, the notes should be legible so that it is interesting to look at and easily to be referred to later.

This interest of looking at the note means that the note is accessible and it can be a good way of motivation in learning with competitive local students. According to the needs analysis of the international university learners, note taking is considered as important for them as 'to reinforce what you have read and look'. This reinforcement will be good for future use and they will be critical thinkers in understanding the content of the lectures.

It is worth noting that, at university level, lecture notes are not always something that they can fully understand due to the high level of the language being used (Howe, 1986). Therefore, the solution for this unfitting

language level is they need to write and read their own notes because it is considered to be more understandable and easy to digest (Howe, 1986) In addition, the note-taking process is a must for international students because their level of proficiency can be low (Hall, 2008).

Note taking is considered to be the best way to measure how far they understand what they have learned. In the university situation where all international students face problems in understanding the lecture, intelligent note taking is needed since they can be slow in processing information due to low background knowledge ( Carroll & Ryan, 2005 p15). So, these notes can help them to prepare themselves better in their everyday learning at the University. The second study skill that I want to implement is a good academic writing.

It is believed that students need a good academic writing skill because sometimes they cannot produce their own learned language skill in the new learning setting (Carroll & Ryan, 2005 p. 5). This may be due to the feeling of being intimidated with the local students thus making them to perform poorly along with them. Sometimes they cannot use the skills because of the indifference in terms of cultural context that might cause the students to feel clumsy in thinking. In addition, they might feel that they are not critical enough in doing assignments as compared to the local students.

Therefore, academic writing skill is needed and can be implemented with the help of teacher. The teacher here can help the struggling international students by explaining to them the information such as the format and organization needed for the assignments. That information will ensure a

clearer view of what is the assignments' demand. It is also suggested for students to have a good knowledge of the culture and a good common mastery of English as to make an establishing rapport in their writing jobs (Ryan & Carrol , 2008 p 57).

The third skill that I would like to implement in the pre- study skills course is group work or discussion. International students should be involved with local students in terms of discussion so that they can exchange views or opinions about the content of a subject and not fully rely on their own knowledge that can be quite burdensome. A variety of views about a subject can help learners to be critical thinkers thus becoming more active in mastering a topic. Their opportunities in the classroom should not be closed so that their need to be critical thinkers can be achieved.

Group work is also a must with the purpose of sharing the workload of reading (Ryan & Carroll, 2008). The workload should be shared because all of the views are discussed and being sorted out together, making the ideas as a personal thing to everyone involved. In order for a group work to be a success, there should be a set of ground rules and a chairperson present to avoid resentments and off track among members. Sometimes, the group work members can be discussing about something else. Moreover, the success of a group work also depends on the participation of the group members as well.

All members need to be active participants that would contribute and not just being passengers. Contribution can be done by being assertive in demonstrating their opinion to encourage the learning in the classroom

(Burns & Sandra, 2008). Hence, it is important for them to do some research about the topic before entering a discussion for a better-prepared session. It is worth noting that two heads are better than one head in terms of learning and therefore, it is advisable to discuss and critique a lot about the topic of discussion for the reason to activate the schemata.

In terms of reading, one of the difficulties faced by international students is that not all prose are using simple language (Howe, 1986). Some prose can be tackled by private reading while some prose need help from others. Therefore, learners need to have a good level of English proficiency for the purpose to sort out the ideas that they have found (Howe, 1986). Discussion can be a big help for international students so that they can keep moving forward in terms of understanding of ideas that will be useful in their academic learning (Macalister & Nation, 2008)

The fourth item that is concerned to be taught at University level for international students is effective listening skills for communication purposes. According to the environment analysis of students, international students might face different people with different accents in universities as well as with the home students. Even though the language used for communication is the same, but the varieties being used in their speech act still have great effects on the message. One research (Carroll and Ryan, 2008) indicates that international students take 3 times of energy to progress in academic learning compared to local students.

This is totally correct and applicable in the lecture room, tutorial room and exam hall. All of these places need good communication skills in order for

students to live well in these settings. As in New Zealand, international students might face difficulties while communicating with Kiwi students (Ballard & Clanchy, 1984) and other international students from different background. Therefore, what they need is a good receptive skill in order to receive and to decode the information while they are talking to native students or other people at the university.

The ability to reply back sufficiently will make them to be more alert in learning (Carrol and Ryan, 2008). In addition, when they react appropriately to the speech of native speakers or during conversation, the tendency of misunderstanding of the message can be avoided. In conclusion, there are four items that should be included in a pre university study skills for non-native students of English – a good note-taking skill, academic writing skills, listening skills and group discussion being the main criteria.

These four items have been explained in detail in the previous paragraphs in terms of their aims in this pre – study skills course and how it is related to the curriculum design model and in what ways it can help to develop the international students' study skills. Using note taking as an example, the needs of students that are being emphasized here is for the reading purpose, a way of adapting in a new university learning environment and also to assist in their low vocabulary level as compared to home students that might possess a great number of vocabulary and being more competitive (Carrol & Ryan, 2008).

Not to forget, academic writing helps the learners who are unable to fit in into the new learning environment that consists of different culture. For

group work, the need is for the purpose of sharing the workload of reading and finally effective listening skills is to help the students reply the natives' speech in an appropriate way that could avoid misunderstanding. Hopefully, all of these four items should be strong enough to create a good pre study skills course, making the international students to be at their highest motivation point to perform well in their strenuous academic life.

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