

PP 3.05

Posted  
November, 2005

Last updated  
May, 2009

*The PEPNet Listserv*

# Past Posts

## ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)

Providing access to English programs for postsecondary Deaf/Hard of Hard students has been a frequent topic on the PEPNet listserv. The selected posts in this document provide information, resources and some names of colleges and universities with ESL Programs.

Summary of links provided in this FAQ:

<http://www.rit.edu/ntid/rate/sea/articles-nouns/an02grammatical.html>  
—*Rochester Institute of Technology*

<http://sunsite.utk.edu/cod/tank/e-tank.htm> - *University of Tennessee—Knoxville*

<http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/330/grammar/index.htm> - *University of Victoria*

<http://depts.gallaudet.edu/Englishworks/> - *Gallaudet University*

---

I teach English as a Second Language writing courses and have had some deaf students in my courses. Completely mastering the use of articles and prepositions in English is almost impossible for non-native writers of English, BUT they can certainly learn more about how to use articles and prepositions in their writing.

I'll attach a couple of documents I wrote for my students. Maybe they will be helpful. A good writer's handbook that pays special attention to the challenges faced by non-native writers of English is *\_Keys for Writers\_* by Ann Raimes.

Deciding whether to use "a" or "an" will be especially challenging for deaf writers because it is based on the sound that begins the following word, not the spelling. However, if they base it on the spelling ("a" before consonants, "an" before vowels), they will get it right most of the time, and no one will be too upset when they get it wrong, since it doesn't affect the meaning.

If students have trouble with basic concepts of grammar (such as identifying nouns and verbs), a good book is *\_Think About Editing: A Grammar Editing Guide for ESL Writers\_* by Allen Ascher. It has answers in the book, so it can be useful to students working on their own.

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*  
*October, 2005*  
*(updated May 2009)*



---

*The PEPNet  
Past Posts is a  
compilation of  
the most  
frequently  
discussed topics  
on the PEPNet  
listserv.*

During the PEPNet biennial conference, we usually have several sessions that focus on teaching English. We also have a "hot topics" discussion for people interested in it. As a result of some of the hot topics discussions at previous PEPNet conferences, we've posted a few resources on our website at <http://sunsite.utk.edu/cod/tank/e-tank.htm>.

*University of Tennessee  
October, 2005  
(Updated May 2009)*

I teach a deaf and heard of hearing English class at the Jr. College level. There are many web sites for grammar that can be a resource for the student. I've added some of the web sites we have on our class web site. (These seemed to be some of the easiest to navigate. The Gallaudet sites are, of course, specific to deaf students needs. English works has some nice visual grammar explanations. )

<http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/330/grammar/index.htm>  
<http://depts.gallaudet.edu/Englishworks/>

English Club is another good site. To be honest all you need to do is search on the web with "grammar" or "writing" and you get alot of choices.

Some of the ESL books we have used are *Focus On Grammar*, *Grammar Links* (they have a web site for practice) and *Grammar in Context*. I particularly like the books *North Star - Focus on Reading and Writing* (Longman) and *Weaving it Together* (Heinle and Heinle) Students often learn how to answer questions in a grammar book with ease but find it hard to apply what they learn. Books such as the last two I mentioned combine writing and reading together with a emphasis on increasing background knowledge. North Star and Weaving it Together also have low enough levels to be useful for deaf students that are really behind their peers. I hope this gives you something to start with. We've been working on finding answers for a long time! There is no perfect system. If you have any questions, let me know.

*Harper College  
March, 2005  
(updated May 2009)*

We also have English classes specifically for deaf students which I have been teaching for the past three years. I am hearing and fluent in ASL.

We also found the ESL classes to fall short of the specific needs of the deaf students here. The classes are offered through a combined effort of the English and disabled students departments. It has been very successful.

*Glendale Community College  
April 2005*

We are not fortunate enough to have remedial English classes specifically for deaf students. However, we encourage our deaf students to take ASL as an elective. Most deaf people do not understand the syntax and grammatical rules of ASL, so they have nothing to build English upon. After taking ASL course they all agree that learning ASL (in a class room) has improved their English skills.

*Pellissippi State Technical Community College  
April 2005*

We have an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program here for pre-curriculum classes in English writing, grammar and reading taught by instructors trained in languages. We have had several deaf students (ASL users) go that route with success. The instructors seem to understand the deaf students' grammar and writing difficulties and deal with them in a more systematic way. The interpreters sometimes pull their hair with all the strong accents of the other students in the classes. I recommend the EFL program.

*Wake Tech Community College, North Carolina  
May 2005*

*Post #1 from Austin Community College:*

At my college we are fortunate to have an ESL Program for deaf students taught by Erika Domatti-Thomas (hearing w/excellent sign skills) and Don Miller (deaf). Erika is on this list serv so she may reply as well.

We also have an ABE Program. We have not had any deaf students in ABE and I probably would suggest placing them into these classes unless Erika, Don or someone like them was teaching this class even though some of our students seem better suited for ABE because it is not as academically orientated as ESL.

In many cases it may not be so much an issue of ESL or ABE but who is teaching these classes and what is their knowledge of ASL and Deaf Culture.

We had deaf students in ESL classes with interpreters for years with little success. That is why we created ESL classes specifically for deaf students.

*Post #2 from Austin Community College:*

Here at Austin Community College, we offer parallel English/ASL courses that compare the languages by 'mapping' English onto ASL. We just completed our second semester and the students have unanimously agreed that Understanding English grammar concepts in ASL has improved their English skills.

*Post #3 from Austin Community College:*

Here at Austin Community College we offer developmental courses for Deaf students within the ESOL and Math departments. Our major focus in ESOL is L1 development which is a hot trend in Deaf education. We all can agree that Deaf students need L1 instruction but as of yet there is very little research and no formalized curriculum. This is an area in great need of attention at the primary, secondary and post secondary levels.

*Post #4 from Austin Community College:*

We have had deaf students in ESL classes with hearing instructors and interpreters. A large percentage of them did not do well. Most of them either dropped out or gave up after a class or two.

Because of the lack of success we created deaf only ESL classes where we have both deaf instructors and hearing instructors with proficient sign skills. This has proven to be more successful.

*Post #5 from Austin Community College:*

Knowing the type of students who take ESL classes at my college I wouldn't even consider having a captionist. Our students would be completely lost if they had to receive their information from a captionist.

We use to have interpreters in these classes but students did not fair well so now we have ESL classes for deaf students taught by deaf and hearing instructors who are sign proficient.

I would be interested in knowing how students do with a captionist, or other transcription services.

*Austin Community College, Texas  
April, May, June, 2005*

We have very few C-Print or Typwell trained captionists, so we use a regular Real Time Captionist--with great success. We're still working out how students can participate in classes in a time-sensitive fashion, but other than that, I think it is a good option for ESL and English classes that are grammar oriented.

*City College of San Francisco  
June, 2005*

It seems those of us teaching English to deaf students in postsecondary settings all share the same concerns. At Saint Petersburg College, we follow the model of having separate developmental classes for deaf students and have done so for a number of years. And, like you, as the instructor I am fluent in ASL and even teach an ASL linguistics course here at SPC. In my deaf developmental English classes, which are quite small, the students work to gain a sense of how meaning in ASL relates to meaning in English - the focus is on the ability to put ideas and knowledge to use in written communication.

We also use synchronous and asynchronous technologies for developing English (WebCT/ANGEL). Electronic chat (synchronous) is an excellent tool suited particularly for those students who struggle the most with simple communicative language, particularly those students you mention from other countries. Synchronous role play and case study are two techniques that I've used in the past to help students develop a natural use and the sense of the registers in professional and trade language. The students loved taking on the roles of various working individuals and communicating to their peers ("coworkers" or "subordinates") the needed information as it related to the situation. Using case studies also provides for rich language development as it forces various views on issues and helps students in developing the propositional statements/language structures needed to get their points across. Printing or out or displaying the chat transcripts proves a very useful follow up to review grammatical constructions and to have students note areas where they have not communicated their intended messages.

In my opinion, however, synchronous chat has little instructional value at the level of paragraph/essay development. Chat sessions move too quickly to target large blocks of text in beneficial ways. Most of my focus at SPC is, of necessity, at that level. The developmental students are required to pass a state grammar and writing test before taking composition. For developing the skills necessary to function in composition I, I prefer asynchronous communication techniques. Students focus on process writing in that vein (posting drafts, critiquing peers, revising and submitting final writings for grades). It just seems more effective.

Most of what I teach from, fortunately or unfortunately I'm not sure, is a compilation of what I have developed and gleaned from a number of websites and personal experience. I have yet to find a text that I love and have bounced around nearly every semester frantically searching for the most appropriate text. Naturally, when I find one that I like, the student population changes dramatically after the books have been ordered and the text no longer works...(sigh).

If you are interested in research on electronic communication and the development of English in deaf students, send me an email ([carlsonbeth@spcollege.edu](mailto:carlsonbeth@spcollege.edu)) and I will be happy to forward a huge list of resources.

*St. Petersburg College, Florida  
May 2005*

I'm an ESL writing teacher at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and we have had some Deaf students take our ESL writing courses. I think we can serve them well. I think that, unless a Deaf person became Deaf relatively late in life (maybe as a teenager or later), they face the same kinds of challenges in English writing as hearing non-native writers of English do. As ESL writing instructors, we do need to be aware of the Deaf students' special learning needs in our classrooms, but I think that ESL writing teachers are much better qualified to teach English writing to Deaf students than other English writing instructors who don't have the educational and experiential background to explain the aspects of written English (word order, word form, verb tenses, articles, phrasal verbs and other problematic areas) that are challenging to non-native writers of English.

Within the field of English as a Second Language teaching, the topic of teaching writing to Deaf people has been a topic of interest for decades. I can't cite any research off the top of my head, but I know that I've seen workshops at ESL teachers' conferences on working with Deaf writers over the years. The professional organization, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and its journal, *TESOL Quarterly*, might have published some articles on this topic. They have a website: [tesol.org](http://tesol.org). I'm not sure if they have a searchable database of articles in the *TESOL Quarterly* or not, but they might.

I know I have a biased perspective on this (smile), but I thought I'd share it anyway.

*University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee  
May 2005*

At Harper Community College we offer English 080/085 and Reading 080/085. These non credit classes are taught by myself (in ASL) and a deaf instructor. The focus depends on the English skills of the majority of the class. This semester we have many students who moved here from different countries and are **very** behind their peers. What I am finding is many of the students do not even have an ASL base to work from. Some of our students are hard of hearing or oral and had only learned a signed language in high school - which usually was signed English. Many of the students are stuck because they are not fluent enough in any language, including ASL, to benefit from taking the ASL linguistic classes offered here. I use ASL concepts to teach grammar as much as I can. I can't say at this point we have had a lot of success with the students who are so far behind. Other students, who come in with more language knowledge benefit from these classes and go on to higher level English. Do any of you have the same problems with students who come from other countries and have such low level skills? What kinds of curriculum do you use? In my classroom this year we are using Grammar Links (Houghton Mifflin) which has an Internet component and North Star (Longman) which has a more holistic approach to grammar. The reading class uses Basic Reading Power (Longman) and the Chills and Adventure Series (Jamestown Publishing). We also include job related English and writing skills. The most popular unit in my class is "How to write notes to hearing people"! The grammar class also has a Blackboard web site. We use this, not only for general class information, but also power point visual grammar presentations and links to web sites. The most effective use of Blackboard so far has been the chat room. During grammar lab we use "real time" to improve grammar as we write to each other in the chat room. We are constantly reinventing the classroom and looking for new ideas. Any more that you have to share on line would be wonderful - in particular curriculum that you feel has been successful.

*Harper Community College  
April 2005*

We are hoping to enhance the assessment part of the English Lab for Deaf students. We are a community college and I want an assessment tool that will assist us in identifying student learning needs- not an assessment test for class placement. I have been researching some different assessment tools, and have been working with a speech and language specialist who has worked with Deaf students in a high school setting. She uses the TOAL-3- Test of Adolescent and Adult Language. I was also considering using the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP), which I think is used at NITD and at other institutions.

*Santa Rosa Junior College , Santa Rosa, California  
November, 2006*

---

*Some of the information printed on the PEPNet Past Post is from e-mails posted on the PEPNet listserv. The PP is intended to provide general guidance and awareness of current practices; it is not intended to replace legal documents or guidelines. If any of the posted messages above were not accurately represented, please contact Cassie Franklin ([csmanuel@uwm.edu](mailto:csmanuel@uwm.edu)). All postings on the PEPNet listerv are considered public.*