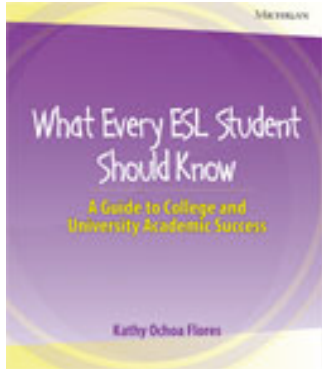


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What Every ESL Student Should Know: A Guide to College and University Academic Success		
Author:	Kathy Ochoa Flores (2008)	
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What Every ESL Student Should Know: A Guide to College and University Academic Success is a text written to prepare international students interested in furthering their education in U.S. colleges and universities. The layout is very user-friendly. It is great for pre-academic orientations abroad designed to prepare international scholars and English language learners for academic life in the U.S.A. The language is simple and accessible to learners of English, and the content of the book is a compilation of experiences of many international students from various nationalities and learning strategies developed based on these experiences. In addition, the book provides students with suggestions for the problems they might face in the classroom. The classroom scenarios Flores has collected over many years of teaching international students might also provide U.S. faculty with useful information about working with diversity.

One of the strengths of the book is that each chapter attempts to answer one question an international student might have during their time of study in the U.S.A. For instance, Chapter 1, “Should I use my dictionary while I read?”, briefly discusses some reading strategies ESL students might use, such as reading for the main idea first. Chapter 2, “What should I do to learn English?”, provides learners of English with various tips to create opportunities for practicing their English during their stay in the U.S.A. These include making friends with Americans, reading English from as many sources as possible such as newspapers, junk mail, and cereal boxes. Chapter 3, “Is it okay to make mistakes?”, is

designed to show students how to learn from their own mistakes while learning English. Chapter 4, “How can I be a good student?”, prepares students to meet academic demands and teacher expectations in the classroom in U.S. colleges and universities. Suggestions included actively participating in class discussions, visiting teachers’ office hours and asking questions.

Chapter 5, “What’s it like inside an ESL classroom in the United States?”, provides international students details of classroom atmosphere and academic practices in U.S. classrooms. In this chapter, students are not only provided with some strategies to make the best of their language learning experiences, but also are informed about some cultural differences which might be unfamiliar to students. For instance, in this chapter, readers are reminded that classroom practices such as seating arrangement in a horseshoe (U) shape and calling the teacher by his/her first name might be very different for those international students who come from more traditional classroom environments that position faculty vertically. Another possible source of discomfort for some international students is explained in the sixth chapter, “What are the benefits of diversity?” In this chapter, the author underlines the fact that most American classrooms are diverse and some international students might feel uncomfortable at first with such diversity. Students are reminded of the fact that this atmosphere might be a source of learning, not only of English but also different cultures in the world. Another way to learn language is presented in Chapter 7, “Why should I work in a group?” This chapter reminds international students of the importance of group work for learning and communication in the classroom. Chapter 8, “How long does it take to learn English?” briefly discusses three important factors which determine the length of learning a second language. These include motivation, immersion, and learning attitude. Chapter 9, “Am I too old to learn English?” is intended for adult language learners who might have some reservations about communicating in their second language(s). They are first reminded of some disadvantages adult language learners face, such as marked accent and a slower pace of language learning. They are then presented with some advantages they might have such as learning from their first and previous language learning knowledge and experiences. The final chapter, “How can I increase my vocabulary?” offers some tips for English language learners to expand their vocabulary. These tips include making 8.5’x11” posters for visual learners and making a sound recording of the words for aural learners.

Some comprehension and discussion questions for Chapters 1-10 are presented in Appendix A. This allows learners to check their own comprehension of issues discussed in the book and helps facilitate discussions in pre-academic orientations using the book. More additional and useful sources, such as reading lists for various levels of English proficiency, are presented in the Appendices. Similarly, some useful websites for vocabulary acquisition and a very clear example of ways to map or cluster vocabulary words are provided

International students in postsecondary ESL classes come from a variety of backgrounds. They are all required to fulfill the academic demands of college classrooms despite linguistic, educational, personal, and cultural factors that may influence their expectations and practices.

In this respect, Flores's text fills a gap in the area of language learning. It is full of useful advice compiled through years of teaching and learning with international learners.

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