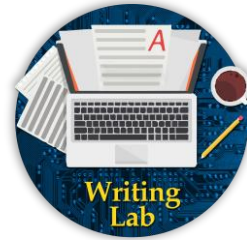




Assessing International Student Writing:

Applying a Writing-Center Approach



Meg Varney
Lead Writing Specialist
Air University

Goals

- Define terms
- Reflect on differences
- Understand influential factors
- Consider motivation and purpose
- Apply a writing-center approach
- Share additional strategies



“Reading an ESL Writer’s Text” (2011) by Paul Kei Matsuda & Michelle Cox



https://sisaljournal.org/archives/mar11/matsuda_cox/



Key Terms



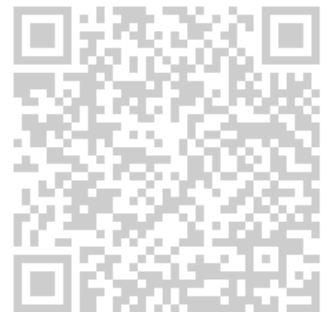
- International
- Multilingual
- English as Second Language (ESL)
- Difference¹
- Assessment

Introductions

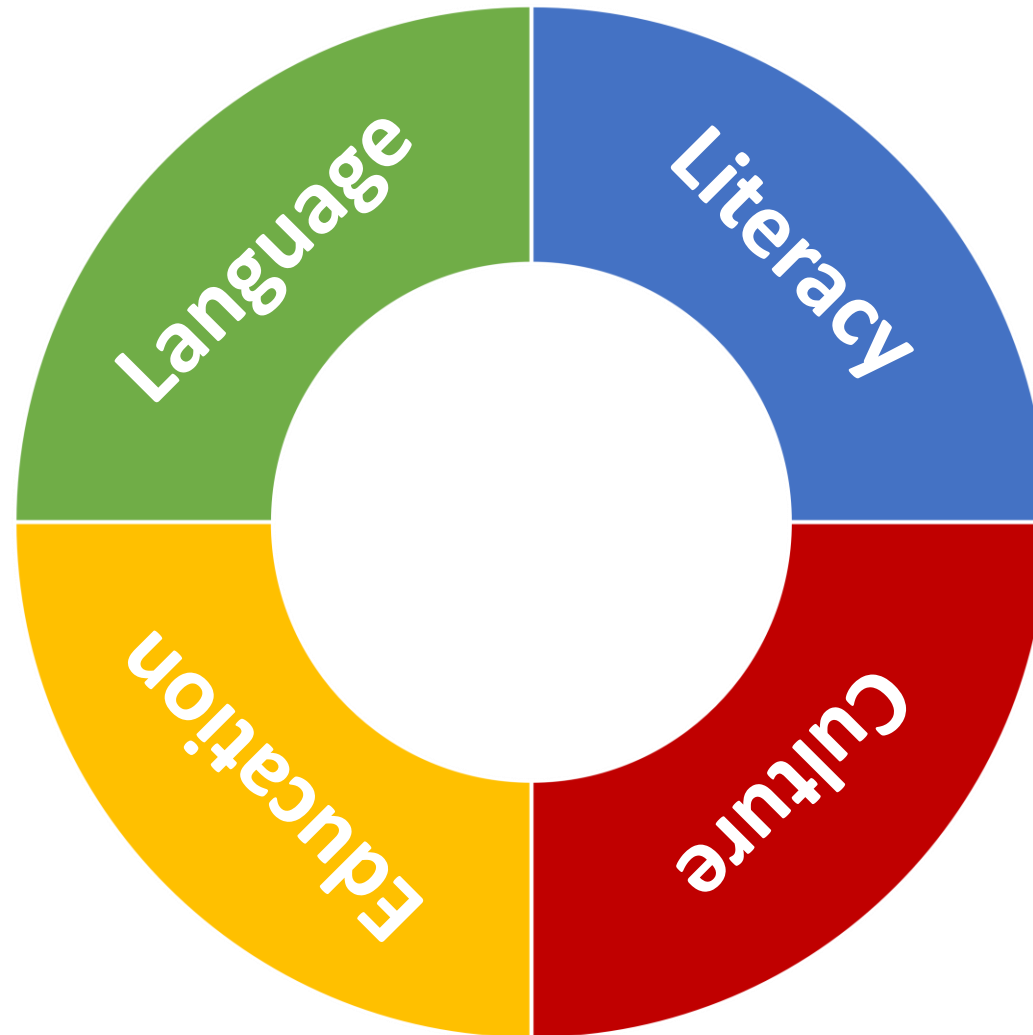


Reflection 1

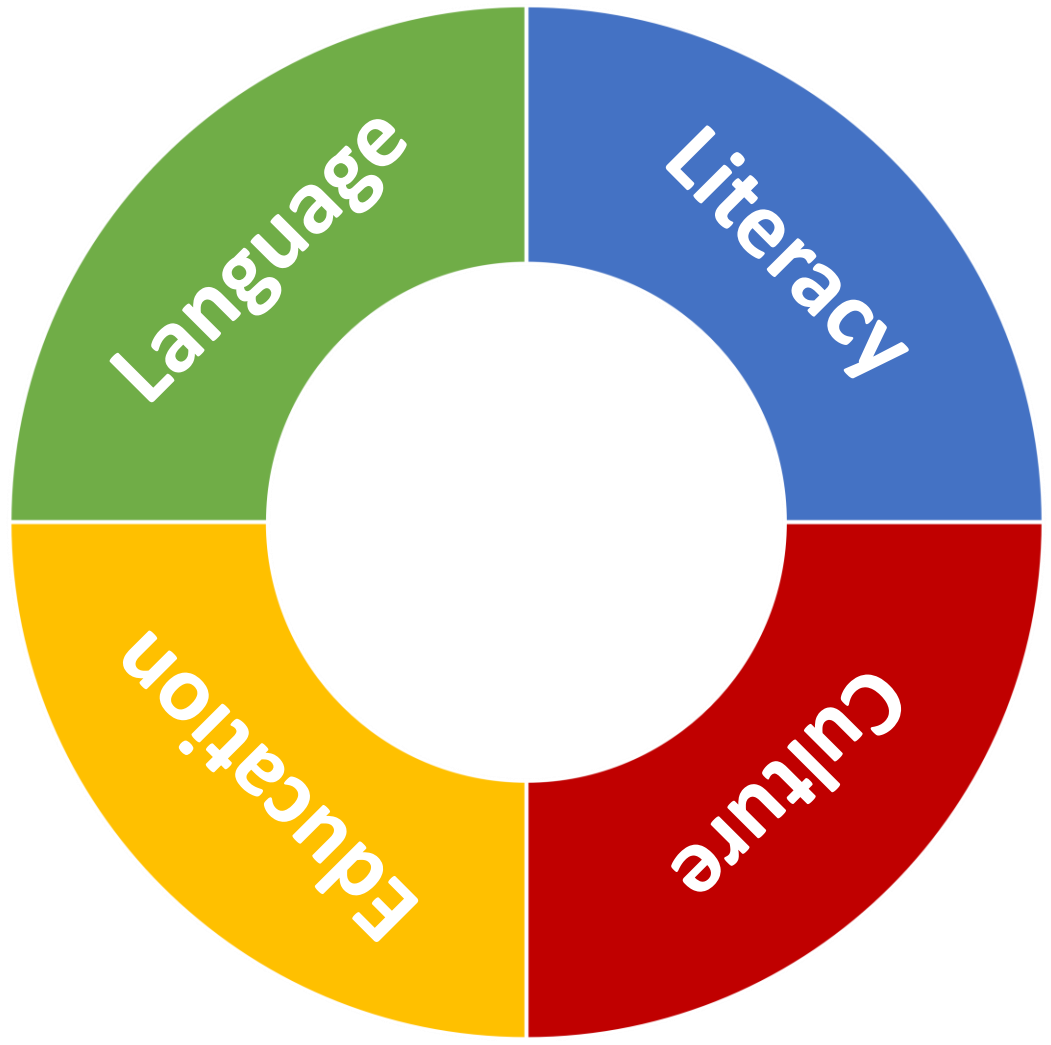
- What differences have you noticed in international and/or multilingual student writing?
- What challenges (if any) have these differences posed during assessment?



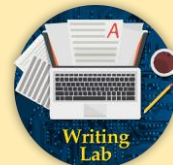
Our perceptions are influenced by...



International students' texts may be influenced by...²



“[M]any teachers read student essays with the primary purpose of finding errors, whereas they read their own colleagues’ drafts-in-progress for ideas.”³



Motivation & Purpose



- Lighten assessment load
- Provide effective feedback
- Support the mission
 - *Strengthen strategic alliances and build mutual respect*⁴
 - *Demonstrate “the value of multiculturalism and allied perspectives”*⁵

Three stances:⁶

Assimilationist

“Correct”
everything

Accommodationist

Learn new,
preserve old

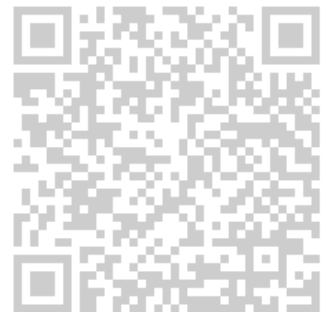
Separatist

Overlook
differences



Reflection 2

- Think of your own education: did your teachers take an assimilationist, accommodationist, or separatist stance when assessing your writing?
- Which stance have you taken most often when assessing student writing?



Three stances:⁶

Assimilationist

Accommodationist

Learn new,
preserve old

Separatist



“Expecting nonnative speakers to produce fluent, unaccented English is an unrealistic goal.”⁷

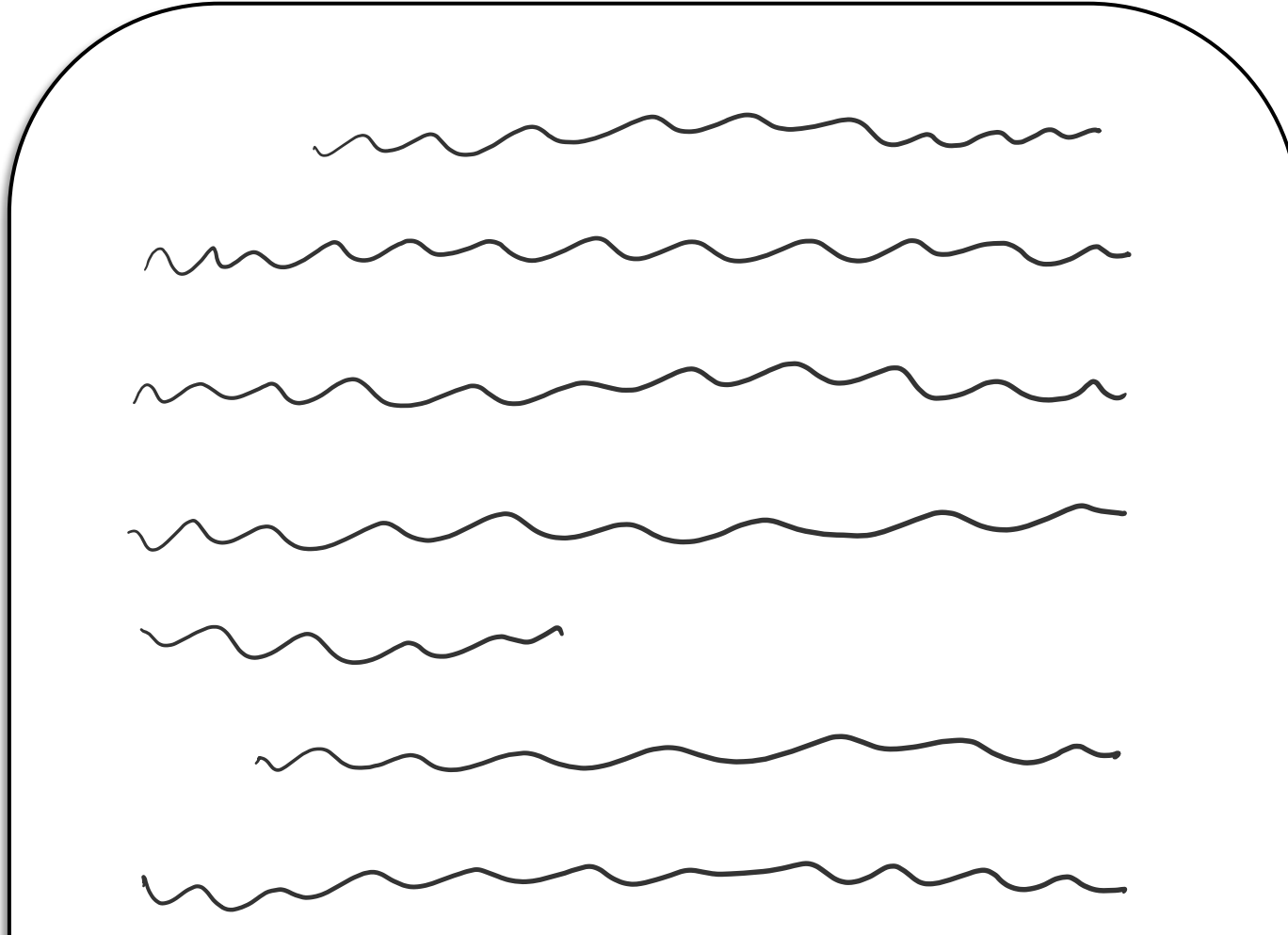


Accommodationist Stance¹⁰⁸

1

Suspend judgment; give benefit of the doubt

Read for
meaning & organization

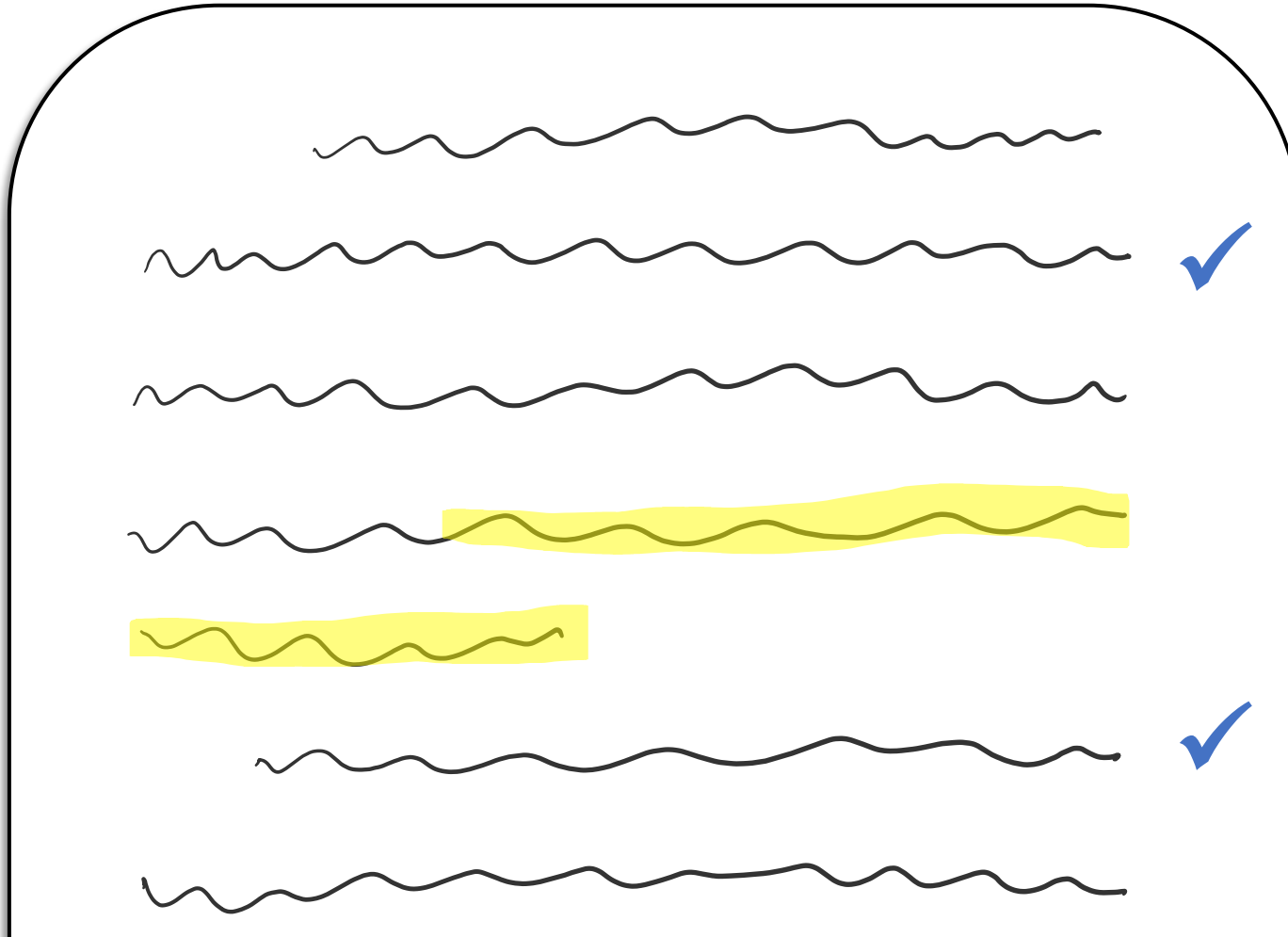


Accommodationist Stance¹⁰⁸

1

Suspend judgment; give benefit of the doubt

Read for
meaning & organization



2

Reread for
the unexpected



Accommodationist Stance

3

Prioritize feedback

AKA help students adjust to the expectations of U.S. academic writing

Meaning & organization

Source documentation

The unexpected



The Unexpected *(grammar, vocabulary, punctuation)*

Focus on clarity—not native-ness.

...

Attend to grammar later in the assignment process.

...

Point out errors—don't simply 'correct' students' work for them.

...

Look for patterns of errors—not isolated instances.

...

Remember what matters most. ¹⁹



“[S]tudents’ apparent skill level varies according to the cognitive complexity of the writing task.”¹⁰



Accommodationist Stance

3

Prioritize feedback

AKA help students adjust to the expectations of U.S. academic writing

Meaning & organization

Source documentation

The unexpected

Bonus tip:
Frame feedback as a reader; ask questions



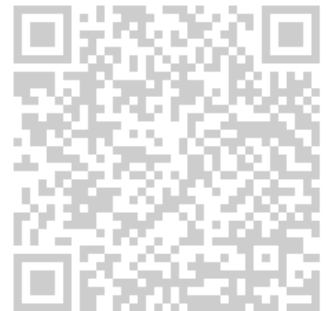
Application

1. Read the essay excerpt, applying an accommodationist approach.
 - a. *Read for meaning & organization.*
 - b. *Reread for the unexpected.*
2. Jot some notes about how you would prioritize feedback.
 - a. *Meaning & organization*
 - b. ~~*Source documentation*~~
 - c. *The unexpected*
3. Extra time? Compose a haiku about assessment.



Discussion

- How did it go?
- What feedback did you prioritize for meaning & organization?
- What feedback did you prioritize for unexpected differences?
- Other thoughts?



“As each new course immerses students in new, unfamiliar ideas and rhetorical contexts, the quality of students’ writing predictably degenerates.”^{[11](#)}

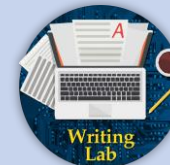
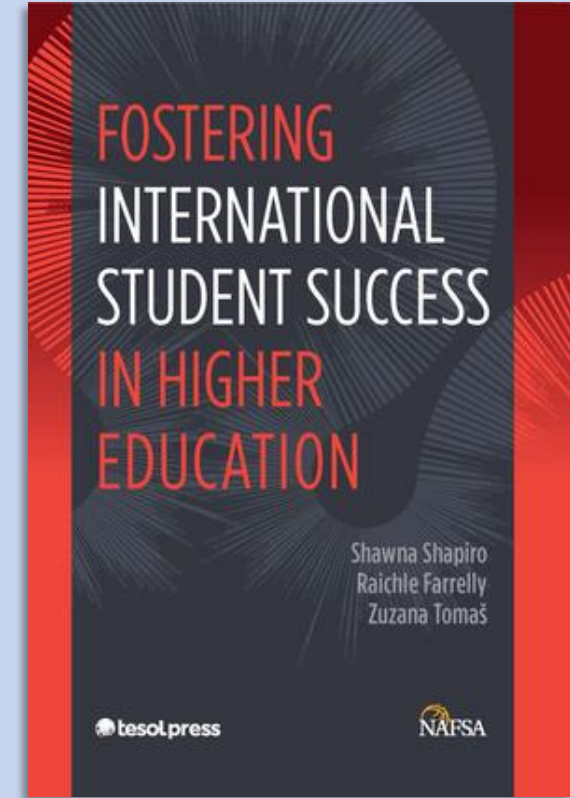
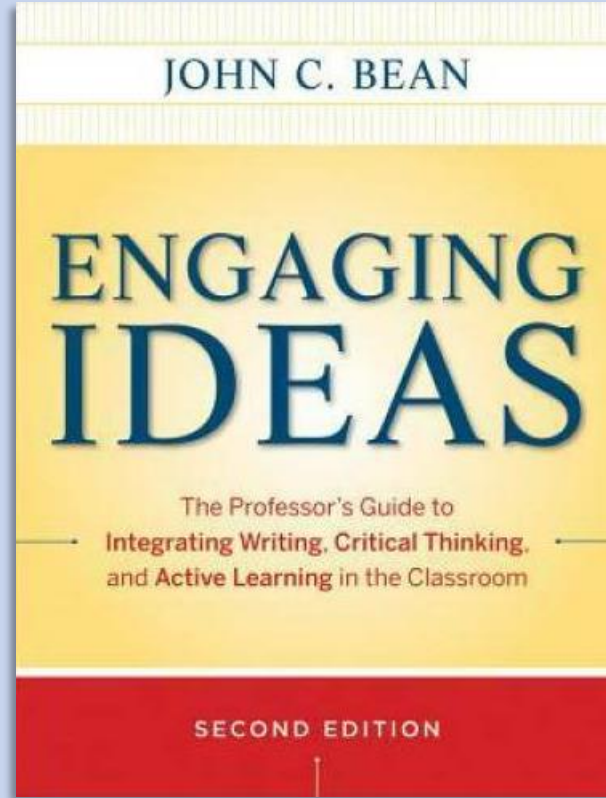
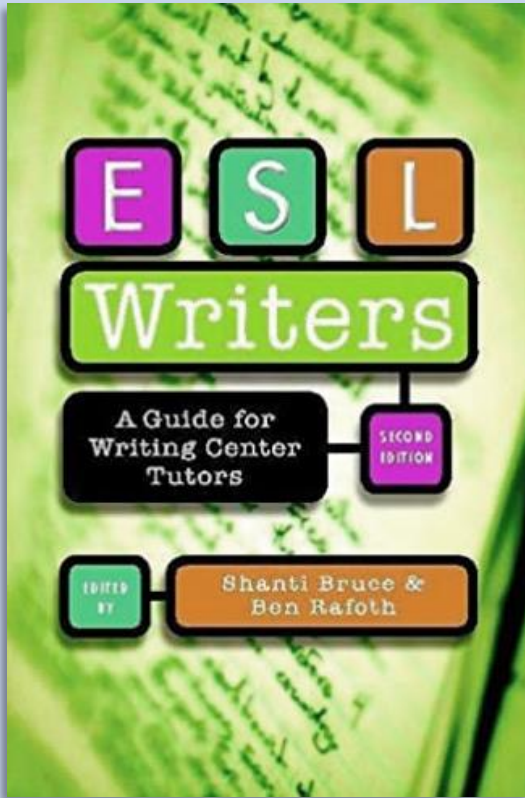


Additional Strategies



- Integrate a scaffolding process into your course schedule
- Add a low-stakes writing assignment early in the term
- Share and explain discipline-specific writing conventions
- Incorporate guided peer review
- Provide clear, specific rubrics
- Allow subsequent revisions
- *Connect with your writing center!*

Recommended Resources



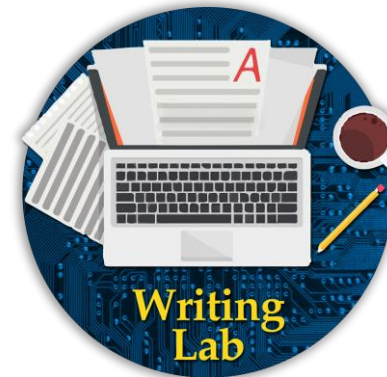
Questions?

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Notes

1. Matsuda and Cox, *Reading an ESL Writer's Text*, 5.
2. Matsuda and Cox, 6-7.
3. Bean, *Engaging Ideas*, 74.
4. Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy*, 8-9.
5. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Vision and Guidance*, 7.
6. Matsuda and Cox, *Reading an ESL Writer's Text*, 7-8.
7. Bean, *Engaging Ideas*, 85.
8. Matsuda and Cox, *Reading an ESL Writer's Text*, 10-11.
9. Shapiro, Farrelly, and Tomaš, *Fostering International Student Success*, 50.
10. Bean, *Engaging Ideas*, 77.
11. Bean, 78.



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