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What Is Trendy in Information Literacy for International Students?

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Introduction

Every year thousands of international students leave their home countries to study in the United States. According to the Institute of International Education, the number of international students in U.S. colleges and universities has reached new high of 1.09 million in 2018.* This student population whose native language is not English face unique academic challenges as they adapt to the American educational setting. How to help this group of students to adjust themselves to the new learning environment effectively is crucial to their academic success. Therefore, many academic libraries develop special support and outreach, and design information literacy classes tailored to the needs of international students.

This poster explores the recent library and information science research on information literacy for international students. Challenges that international students have encountered in the new learning environment are highlighted. Trendy aspects of information literacy are summarized, including programs offered, features and characteristics, pedagogy, and needs analysis for international students.

* Institute of International Education. 2018. "Number of International Students in the United States Reaches New High of 1.09 Million." Accessed December 10, 2018. https://www.iie.org/en/Why-IIE/Announcements/2018/11/2018-11-13-Number-of-International-Students-Reaches-New-High.

Challenges of Int'l Students

Culture Shock
When placed in a foreign educational environment, the experience of international students can often be quite daunting, resulting in culture shock and misunderstandings of the new culture.*

Language Barriers
International students often experience difficulty in understanding/communicating English well, due to levels of proficiency. Most common linguistic challenges are discipline-specific terminologies called "academic English."

Library Jargon
Many international students do not understand library-related jargon, such as "citation", "abstract", etc., which often results in increased anxiety for them in understanding information literacy classes.

Research Difficulties
Students' limited vocabulary makes it difficult to find proper search terms when searching for resources in the library.

Differing Cultural Norms
Cultural differences in the perception of authority and formality can prevent international students from seeking help in information literacy classes.

* Blas, Elise A. 2014. "Information Literacy in the 21st Century Multicultural Classroom: Using Sociocultural Literacy." *Education Libraries* 37.1-2 (2014): 33-41.

Why Info Lit for Int'l Students

Problems
- Library orientations are often brief and rushed.

- Introductory library classes generally focus on generic information without considering the unique needs of international students.

- Lack of customized library instruction to help international students transition to the overwhelming academic resources.

Solutions
- Identify the levels of linguistic proficiency of the students, and avoid idiomatic phrases and cultural references.

- Explain library "jargon" and offer a list of library terminology.

- Speak slowly and clearly, using normal sentence structure.

- Allot additional time in class for questions and explanations about vocabulary and cultural references.

- Ask open-ended questions. Do not assume that a nod or a "yes" from a foreign student means positive answer.

Trends

Library information literacy classes are specially designed and tailored to the needs of international students. To achieve maximize effectiveness, the following methods have been used successfully:

- Create specific tailored programs to accommodate students' various levels of language proficiency and address different learning needs

- Consider small-group classes and one-to-one instruction and consultation

- Simplify instructional language by using simple phrases and comparisons

- Design specialized workshops on locating and evaluating different types of resources

- Offer bilingual library instruction sessions when possible

- Leverage the Flip Method: create a specially designed set of "self-guiding" library quiz questions to equip students with the tools to seek out the answers on their own.*

*Hughes, Hilary, et al. 2016. "Passport to Study: Flipped Library Orientation for International Students." *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* 47.3 (2016): 124-42.