

The Las Positas College



ESL Program



Las Positas College ESL Program

PART I: ESL Student Population

The student population in ESL classes is much like that of the college in general with respect to age and socio-economic diversity. Some are returning students; others are recent high school graduates. Some work full-time, others are full-time students, and a surprising number both work full-time and attend LPC full-time.

Our students represent a tremendous variety of backgrounds, varying widely in terms of culture, language, years in the U.S., circumstances under which they came here, previous level of education, and nearly every other area one could imagine. Our students are here to learn language skills first, but they also need to develop academic skills as well as social and cultural skills.

Age

19 or younger	14%
20-21	9%
22-24	13%
25-29	14%
30-39	23%
40-49	19%
50+	7%

Educational Goals

Transfer with AA/AS	20%
BA without completing AA	6%
2 yr Assoc without transfer	4%
Job related goal	19%
Personal development	7%
Undecided goal	45%

Race/Ethnicity

Hispanic	44%
Asian	40%
White, Non-Hispanic	10%
Black	3%
Filipino	1%
Pacific Islander	1%

Current Units

12 +	32%
6.5 – 11.9	50%
0.5 – 6.5	18%

Gender

Male	38%
Female	62%

Data is from Fall 2010 provided by LPC Office of Institutional Research and Planning

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Part II: ESL Program Overview

GRAMMAR

- ESL 130A: *Beginning Grammar* 2 units
- ESL 130B: *High-Beginning Grammar* 2 units
- ESL 120A: *Low-Intermediate Grammar* 2 units
- ESL 120B: *Intermediate Grammar* 2 units
- ESL 23: *College Grammar* 3 units
- ESL 26: *Advanced Editing* 3 units

ORAL COMMUNICATION

- ESL 133: *Beginning Oral Communication* 2 units
- ESL 123: *Intermediate Oral Communication* 2 units
- ESL 126: *Pronunciation of English* 2 units

READING AND WRITING

- ESL 131A: *Beginning Reading and Writing* 6 units
- ESL 131B: *High-Beginning Reading and Writing* 6 units
- ESL 121A: *Low-Intermediate Reading and Writing* 6 units
- ESL 121B: *Intermediate Reading and Writing* 6 units
- ESL 24: *Low-Advanced Reading and Writing* 6 units
- ESL 25: *Advanced Reading and Writing* 6 units

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Special Notes

- **Courses in bold are required and serve as prerequisites for the subsequent courses.**
- Courses not in bold are optional but highly recommended.
- Students are advised to take all courses at each level for maximum proficiency development.
- Whenever possible, it is best for students to take the same level reading/writing and grammar courses in the same semester. (i.e., 120B and 121B in the same semester)
- Students cannot progress to any Advanced course until they have completed both 120B and 121B
- All ESL courses include one TBA hour (held in the Integrated Learning Center) per week.

LEVEL ONE (Beginning)

Level 1A

ESL 130A	Beginning Grammar	2 units
ESL 131A	Beginning Reading & Writing	6 units
ESL 133	Beginning Oral Communication	2 units

Level 1B

ESL 130B	High-Beginning Grammar	2 units
ESL 131B	High-Beginning Reading & Writing	6 units
ESL 133	Beginning Oral Communication	2 units

LEVEL TWO (Intermediate)

Level 2A

ESL 120A	Low-Intermediate Grammar	2 units
ESL 121A	Low-Intermediate Reading & Writing	6 units
ESL 123	Intermediate Oral Communication	2 Units
Or		
ESL 126	Pronunciation of English	2 Units

Level 2B

ESL 120B	Intermediate Grammar	2 units
ESL 121B	Intermediate Reading & Writing	6 units
ESL 123	Intermediate Oral Communication	2 Units
Or		
ESL 126	Pronunciation of English	2 Units

LEVEL THREE (Advanced)

Level 3A

ESL 24	Low-Advanced Reading & Writing	6 units
ESL 23	College Grammar	3 units
Or		
ESL 26	Advanced Editing	3 units

Level 3B

ESL 25	Advanced Reading & Writing	6 units
ESL 23	College Grammar	3 units
Or		
ESL 26	Advanced Editing	3 units

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Part III: ESL Assessment Process

The ESL Department uses a combination of the CELSA (Combined English Language Skills Assessment) and a writing sample to place students into appropriate levels. The scores are considered together, and placement recommendations should never be made based only on their results in one area.

- CELSA is a paper and pencil test consisting of 75 multiple choice questions. One of two forms is randomly given. Students are given 45 minutes to complete it.
- The writing sample is a response to a prompt. One of four prompts is randomly given. Students are given 30 minutes to write an essay.
- Students scoring below our 1A cutoff should be referred to their local adult schools or public libraries to improve their skills before returning to LPC.
- The following scores are used to calculate a student's placement:

CELSA	Writing	Placement
20-34	1	1A
35-48	2	1B
49-55	3	2A
56-64	4	2B
65-69	5	3A
70-75	6	3B

ESL or English Placement

Students often arrive at the Assessment Center unsure of which assessment (ESL or English) they should take. It is important for students to understand that ESL is not “below” English and that getting the student into the most appropriate course begins with the student choosing the appropriate assessment. To choose the most appropriate assessment, students should be directed to the following document (it is available in the Assessment Center):

Which assessment should I take? English or ESL?

Choosing the most appropriate assessment is the first step to get into the class that can best help you learn the English skills you need to be a successful student. Many students believe that ESL is “below” English, but at Las Positas, this is not true—in fact, we offer some ESL courses that are at a higher level than some English Department courses. The correct assessment for you will depend on your background.

To choose between the English and ESL assessments, answer the following questions:

1. Is English the first language you learned as a child?
2. Did you complete at least six years of education, including high school, in schools where all of your subjects were taught in English?
3. Do you usually speak English with your friends and/or co-workers?

If you answered “Yes” to two or three of the questions, select the English assessment.
If you answered “No” to two or three of the questions, select the ESL assessment.

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Part IV: Course Recommendations for Non-Native Speakers

ESL Students enrolled in the following ESL courses, are likely to be successful in one of the following courses each semester. Students should be advised to take no more than three units of transfer level work per semester until they are eligible for ESL 25.

ESL 25 & 23 or 26

ANTH 3	Social/ Cultural Anthropology
ANTH 5	Cultures of the US
ART 2A	Introduction to Drawing
BUSN 30	Business Ethics and Society
CIS 8	Essential Computing skills
CIS 71	Computer Typing
ECD 50	ECD Principles and Practices
GEOG 1	Intro to Physical Geography
GEOG 2	Cultural Geography
GEOL 1	Physical Geology
HLTH 1	Introduction to Health
HIST 22	U.S. Women's History
HUMN 10	The American Style
INTD 50	Residential Space Planning
INTD 52	History of Interiors/Furnishings
MATH	
MATH X	
MUS 6	Basic Music Skills
PHTO 50	Introduction to Photography
PSCN 15	College Study Skills
RELS 1	Religions of the World
SPCH 1	Fundamentals of Speech Communication
SPCH 11	Intercultural Communication
WMST	Introduction to Women's Studies
VCOM 48	Intro to Design Studio
VCOM 50	Visual Communications/Process of Design
VCOM 51	Color for Design
VCOM 52	Introduction to Typography

ESL 24 & 23 or 26

ART 2A	Introduction to Drawing
CIS 8	Essential Computing skills
CIS 71	Computer Typing
ECD 50	ECD Principles and Practices
HLTH 1	Introduction to Health
INTD 50	Residential Space Planning
INTD52	History of interiors/furnishings
MATH	
MATH X	
MUS 6	Basic Music Skills
PHTO 50	Introduction to Photography
PSCN 15	College Study Skills
SPCH 11	Intercultural Communication
VCOM 48	Intro to Design Studio
VCOM 50	Visual Communications/Process of Design
VCOM 51	Color for Design
VCOM 52	Introduction to Typography

ESL 121B & 120B

ART 2A	Introduction to Drawing
CIS 8	Essential Computing skills
CIS 71	Computer Typing
INTD 50	Residential Space Planning
MATH	
MATH X	
MUS 6	Basic Music Skills
PHTO 50	Introduction to Photography
PSCN 15	College Study Skills
VCOM 48	Intro to Design Studio
VCOM 50	Visual Communications/Process of Design
VCOM 51	Color for Design
VCOM 52	Introduction to Typography

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Part V: ESL Proficiency Level Descriptors

LEVEL 1A Low Beginning

Listening

The listener comprehends some words and phrases within simple questions, statements, frequently occurring commands, and courtesy formulae about topics that refer to basic personal information or the immediate physical setting. He or she also understands some short, learned utterances, particularly when context strongly supports understanding. The listener may cease to keep pace with the on-going message in order to focus on the uncomprehended pieces of the utterance and thus may fail to understand the remainder of the message.

Reading

The reader comprehends highly contextualized words and/or phrases in English, including true cognates, repetition, rewording and other aids to communication, borrowed words if either exists in the reader's native language. The material understood rarely exceeds simple sentences, and re-reading may be required.

Writing

The writer can fill out simple forms, write fixed expressions, and produce some simple sentences and short phrases based on previously learned materials. The writer's ability allows limited independent expression, which is characterized by simple language and frequent errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling, and absence of appropriate vocabulary. The writer is:

- Able to write short messages and elementary needs
- Able to create statements or questions within a limited scope
- Able to write re-combinations of learned vocabulary and sentence structure

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LEVEL 1B High Beginning

Listening

The listener sometimes understands face-to-face interaction when context is familiar and strongly supportive. In addition, the listener occasionally understands information in public settings when comprehending fulfills high, immediate personal needs. However, the listener's ability to comprehend in a one-to-one setting may not reflect his or her ability elsewhere because of difficulties with ellipsis and reductions. The listener may be unable to distinguish the central message from details in the discourse.

Reading

The reader comprehends written English in areas of practical need. When corresponding vocabulary and grammar have been learned, the individual can read standardized messages, phrases, expressions which may appear in lists, labels, signs and forms. The reader may be able to follow simple written directions. In addition, the reader will comprehend clearly connected sentences when context and or extra linguistic background knowledge are supportive.

Writing

The writer meets only limited writing needs on familiar and concrete topics: short messages, and simple note dictation. He or she can also write original statements or questions using familiar vocabulary and structures. There is emerging independence from practiced or rehearsed forms; however, this independence may result in a high frequency of errors. The writer is limited in his or her ability to produce sentences on a given topic by a lack of control of grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling. The writer is:

- Able to write for practical needs such as personal preferences
- Able to express simple present tense consistently
- Unable to write with conscious organization or control of syntax

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LEVEL 2A Low Intermediate

Listening

The listener understands new combinations of learned elements in a limited number of content areas when those elements are strongly supported by context. He or she is generally successful in keeping pace with face-to-face conversations; however, understanding is uneven and misunderstandings in both the central message and details arise frequently. Understanding may be limited especially when information is unfamiliar or lengthy or when cultural knowledge is required.

Reading

The reader grasps the central meaning and can locate facts from simple connected texts that are linguistically non-complex, culturally transparent, and have an obvious organizational structure. Such texts impart basic information about which a reader need make minimal suppositions, or they are texts which are familiar to the reader. Although the texts provide information intended for the widest audience, they may often be misunderstood by the reader.

Writing

The writer meets a number of writing needs on familiar and concrete topics. He or she can demonstrate control of basic verb markers of tense and person and the syntax of noncomplex sentences using appropriate punctuation. These skills also support the expression of his or her sense of rhetorical patterns as demonstrated by appropriate word choice; however, word form may be inappropriate. The writer is:

- Able to meet limited social needs in writing
- Able to write synopses, summary of biographical material
- Able to use simple and progressive verb tenses with some accuracy and consistency
- Able to write simple narrative and description in paragraph form
- Rarely able to use cohesive devices

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LEVEL 2B High Intermediate

Listening

The listener understands new combinations of learned utterances on a variety of topics. He or she comprehends information on personal background and needs, relevant or familiar topics, some personal interests and activities, and a variety of instructions and directions. In addition, the listener is often successful with short, routine telephone conversations and some deliberate speech such as simple announcements and reports on radio and TV. Understanding continues to be uneven.

Reading

The reader generally comprehends main and subordinate ideas and simple facts, but comprehension will be literal and dependent upon learned definitions of vocabulary. Comprehension depends upon the organizational structure of the written text and the familiarity of the topic. Texts include short, straightforward reading written for a wide audience. Misunderstanding occurs when the text deviates from the reader's frame of reference and expectations of the discourse.

Writing

The writer, using common vocabulary and structures, meets most writing needs on familiar and concrete topics and responds in writing to written and oral questions. Simple sentences containing structures the writer has practiced are often free from syntax errors. Errors are frequent in coordination and subordination in complex sentences. The writer shows some ability to achieve paragraph coherence through the use of transition words and phrases. The writer is:

- Able to write simple discourse of at least several paragraphs on familiar topics
- Able to write cohesive summaries of short readings
- Able to write description and narration of factual nature
- Able to use simple, progressive and present perfect verb tenses with some accuracy and consistency
- Able to control syntactic structures: word order, coordination, subordination, but makes frequent errors in producing complex sentences
- Limited ability to use cohesive devices
- Sense of organization emerging

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LEVEL 3A Low Advanced

Listening

The listener can sustain understanding of extended discourse on a number of topics that are familiar or that pertain to immediate need when presented with limited context. The listener may understand some discourse on familiar abstract topics as well. He or she understands discourse on unfamiliar topics fairly successfully when there is extra-linguistic support for the discourse. Nevertheless, portions of the discourse may be misunderstood. When hearing discourse on unfamiliar topics, the listener is often able to identify subjects and details, but may not be able to extrapolate the message.

Reading

The reader consistently and fully understands simple connected texts on familiar topics or those of particular personal interest, as well as derives some main ideas and information from texts on unfamiliar topics. Structural complexity may interfere with comprehension. Basic grammatical relations may be misinterpreted; temporal references may be misunderstood unless they rely on lexical items such as yesterday, now, since 19, and just five minutes ago. Some difficulty persists with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents. Texts containing cultural information or idiomatic usage may not be understood. The reader may have enough confidence with written English to begin to read for pleasure.

Writing

The writer can write on newly presented topics with vocabulary sufficient to express original ideas in some detail but with some circumlocution or paraphrasing. The writing displays good control of morphology and simple sentences. Frequently used syntactic structures contain few errors. However, some grammatical errors occur when producing complex sentences. There is good control of paragraph form with uneven use of basic cohesive elements. The writer is:

- Able to write about a variety of topics
- Able to describe and narrate personal experience but has difficulty supporting points of view
- Able to write about concrete aspects of a topic relating to personal interest of field of competence
- Able to write with some inaccuracy under time constraints
- Rarely strong in both grammar and vocabulary
- Style still obviously foreign

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LEVEL 3B High Advanced

Listening

The listener sustains understanding of the central message and most details of lengthy, extended discourse, (e.g., lectures) on a variety of topics beyond the immediacy of the situation. However, the advanced listener may not be able to sustain comprehension in extended, unfamiliar discourse, for example discourse that is both conceptually and linguistically complex. Comprehension may be uneven due to a variety of linguistic and extra-linguistic factors, including topic familiarity. The listener has limited awareness of culturally implied meanings beyond the surface meanings of the text and may not discern the socio-cultural nuances of a message. He or she is also usually able to comprehend reduced speech. Since distractions and interruptions cause some problems, even when topics are familiar, significant difficulties occur.

Reading

The reader demonstrates advanced control of written text and some understanding of figurative language. The reader comprehends facts to make appropriate inferences, but may do so inconsistently, depending on the subject matter. The author's purpose, point of view, and tone do not usually interfere with comprehension. The reader may comprehend texts that are either conceptually dense or linguistically complex, but not both. Comprehensible texts may treat unfamiliar topics and situations and may involve common and explicit aspects of the culture of the United States. Such texts as news items routine written for the general reader will be comprehensible to the advanced reader the reading level is adequate to meet most personal professional and academic needs; however some college level texts books may present difficulty.

Writing

The writer can write about a variety of topics with significant precision and detail and showing fluency and comfort in the use of English to express his or her own ideas. He or she can write most social and informal business correspondence; describe or narrate personal experiences fully' and write about the concrete aspects of topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. The writing displays good organization and some ease in expressing abstractions; however, is may be inaccurate under time constraints and pressure. Occasional errors occur in complex structures, particularly in the use of cohesive elements within and across sentences. Transitions are occasionally awkward. However, such characteristics rarely interfere with comprehensibility, but the writing style may retain traces of foreign accent. The writer is:

- Able to express self effectively
- Able to write most types of correspondence
- Able to control a broad range of structures with a wide vocabulary
- Able to hypothesize and present arguments
- Able to write with underlying organization strongly evident
- Able to use both formal and informal style
- May not be able to tailor writing precisely to the purpose

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Part VI: Academic Considerations for Non-Native Speakers in College Courses

Language Skills

Academic language proficiency is difficult to assess. LPC students are placed in ESL classes based on their scores from an objective test as well as a writing assessment. Even with these two assessments some students find their way into courses they may not be ready for. Students who cannot generally comprehend the subtle nuances of the language when they read or listen to lectures and who cannot express them in writing are probably not ready to learn in academic courses. Some easy to identify errors that indicate a lack of academic readiness involve mistakes or non-use of complex verb tenses and forms. Additionally, students who use a very simple vocabulary or use language which is only appropriate for spoken English may not be able to comprehend the vocabulary and grammar of a college level text book.

ESL students at LPC do not learn all of the verb tenses in English until the end of their second year. They are still developing their ability to comprehend and use those verb tenses and forms through the third year of the ESL program. Even after they have completed the ESL program, they may still not have consistent control of these verb tenses and forms.

Requiring an in-class reading and writing assignment early in the semester can help determine the academic language skills of students.

Vocabulary

According to Michael McCarthy, a leading author and researcher in the field of vocabulary development, a mature native speaker of English has a vocabulary of between 40,000 and 50,000 items. This does not mean that the speaker knows 40,000 to 50,000 distinct words, but does know the multiple meanings and subtle nuances of such common words as *come* or *know* or *digest* or *read*.

A non-native speaker must know 2,000 words to communicate at a survival level. That speaker must have a vocabulary of about 2,700 words to read at a beginning level. A vocabulary of 6,000 words generally provides 90% comprehension, but at that level the reader cannot guess the meaning of an unknown word from the context because one word in ten is unknown. With a vocabulary of about 10,000 words, a student will reach a 95% comprehension level. That student can begin to guess the meaning of words in context when only one in twenty words is unknown.

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Hypothetical Expressions and Problem Solving

Students learn how to read and express complex and hypothetical ideas midway through the three year ESL program. The grammar required for comprehending and expressing hypothetical statements and questions is quite difficult.

Level One students do some very simple problem solving in English involving real situations.

Level Two students are able to do some more difficult problem solving in English after learning to comprehend and present hypothetical situations.

Level Three students gain experience comprehending and expressing those complex and hypothetical ideas. They practice writing skills for presenting complex and hypothetical situations in their compositions.

Summarizing and Paraphrasing:

It is very difficult to learn to summarize and paraphrase because these skills require not only the ability to comprehend and remember what was read, but also to distinguish the key concepts and facts from the less important. Students must be able to infer meaning.

Level One students begin to write summaries of very short readings through guided instructions. In the second semester, students write short summaries of short readings.

Level Two students have extensive practice in outlining, summarizing and paraphrasing, beginning with short readings, and by the end of the year, they read and summarize works of several paragraphs.

Level Three students read independently, write summaries, and paraphrase important concepts to respond to a writer's ideas and to research topics for a research paper.

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Critical Thinking

Analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are not universally required in academic work. Instead, in many countries, students are required to remember learned material and to grasp the meaning when they read; they may also be asked to apply the learned material to new situations. Analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are essential components of college level courses in the United States. Students who have not been educated in the United States must learn these skills and they must develop the language for both comprehending and expressing complex thoughts.

Level Two students begin to analyze and synthesize reading material and by the end of the second year students complete simple critical thinking tasks associated with all of their reading, often comparing two different writers.

Level Three students practice critical thinking skills regularly. They are required to read and respond to the ideas of the several writers. They must learn to compare and contrast the ideas from two or three essays and offer their own analysis and opinions.

Library Research

Students learn to use the library gradually over the three years they are in the ESL program. Students must first develop the reading skills necessary for reading and comprehending the materials, and they must learn the academic skills for researching and documenting their sources.

Level One students learn to find their way around the library. They learn to locate specific materials through very basic and detailed assignments.

Level Two students research specific topics for short oral and written presentations. They learn to identify the source of their research.

Level Three students learn how to write and document a full length research paper of 8-10 pages.

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Research Documentation

Documentation as we expect it is not required throughout the world in academic settings. Plagiarism may not be equally understood by all of the students who come to Las Positas from other countries. In some countries no documentation is required for research papers. ESL students must not only learn the rules for documentation, but they also must learn the concept.

Level One students are not required to write papers based on their own research, but by the end of the first year, they are asked to make an oral presentation on some aspect of their native culture. They are required to provide the source materials in their presentations.

Level Two students will write short papers based on information they found in the LPC library. Generally they will be required to use only one or two sources. They learn to use MLA guidelines for citing their sources

Level Three students are required to research specific topics and provide a bibliography using MLA guidelines.

Classroom Considerations

Students from other cultures generally have very different expectations about the classroom than the faculty and students at Las Positas. Much, perhaps most, of what we consider appropriate behavior for the classroom we have learned from our culture, including attitudes about cheating, collaborating, attending class, completing homework, and addressing teachers and other students. It may take students from other parts of the world a little while to learn the cultural expectations of the U.S. They may, consequently, benefit from very explicit instructions and statements regarding classroom behavior.

For example, students benefit from knowing what the teacher considers cheating. Students are often required to collaborate on a project or assignment, but they may need specific instructions about what the final product should be. Should students write their results in their own words or can they copy the work of a classmate word for word?

**Las Positas College
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VII: ESL Department Faculty

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