EMBRY-RIDDLE
Aeronautical University™
SCHOLARLY COMMONS

Publications

1-9-2014

"I Don't Know if That Was the Right Thing to Do": Cross-Disciplinary/Cross-Institutional Faculty Respond to L2 Writing

Lindsey Ives
University of New Mexico, ivesl@erau.edu

Elizabeth Leahy
University of Arizona

Anni Leming
Central New Mexico Community College

Tom Pierce
Central New Mexico Community College

Michael Schwartz
St. Cloud State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.erau.edu/publication

🎨 Part of the Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons, Higher Education Commons, and the Rhetoric and Composition Commons

"I DON'T KNOW IF THAT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO": CROSS-DISCIPLINARY/CROSS-INSTITUTIONAL FACULTY RESPONDTO L2 WRITING

Lindsey Ives
University of New Mexico

Elizabeth Leahy
University of Arizona

Anni Leming
Central New Mexico Community College

Tom Pierce
Central New Mexico Community College

Michael Schwartz
St. Cloud State University

This chapter investigates faculty expectations for student writing, specifically L2 writers of English, across disciplines at a flagship university and an urban community college in the southwest. Drawing from a faculty survey and follow-up interviews with faculty from various disciplines, the authors argue that study participants tend to hold multilingual writers to a monolingual standard, but that they are conflicted and/or ambivalent about this practice. The survey and interview data show, first, that markers of nonnative speaker status or any features that depart from Standard American Academic English often discourage and even preclude engagement with higher order concerns like ideas and argument. Second, the data show that study participants want native-like prose but do not necessarily expect it, despite what

> *they may claim. Third, the data suggest that many faculty across disci-*
> *plines are open to discussions about language variety and working with*
> *multilingual writers.*

Matsuda (2006) observes that composition instructors often operate with the assumption that all students who enroll in their classes are "native speakers of a privileged variety of English" (p. 638), and that they come to class having previously acquired Standard American Academic English (SAAE). Within the framework of WAC, we extend Matsuda's "myth of linguistic homogeneity" by investigating the experiences and expectations of faculty in the disciplines at a local university and community college. In short, do these faculty assume and demand a native speaker standard for their multilingual writers? Not only have we seen some anecdotal evidence that this might be the case, but scholarship in second language writing also suggests that such expectations are likely. For instance, Ferris (2008) points out that

> While we language professionals may rest in our enlightened
> awareness that language acquisition takes time, and that
> progress and not perfection should be our objective, the
> realities and expectations of the world outside of our
> classrooms often pressure us to reach that unattainable goal.
> (p. 92)

Although our study was guided by many questions, this chapter focuses on two of these: What do faculty across disciplines and college contexts expect from L2 student writing and how do these expectations shape the ways that they respond to their multilingual students' writing?

Hall (2009) argues that embracing the needs of multilingual writers requires WAC to transform itself so that these needs are acknowledged and addressed within the scope of the goals and mission of WAC programs. Cox (2011) concurs, stating that "... WAC has increased emphasis on writing across undergraduate programs without creating mechanisms that help second language (L2) students succeed as writers and without creating faculty development programs that offer training in working with L2 writers" (n.p.). Our study responds in part to these calls for more articulation between second language writing and WAC research, seeking to understand the ways in which WAC and second language writing can complement each other in their collective efforts to better serve the needs of faculty in the disciplines and multilingual writers in those disciplines.

To investigate our study questions, we surveyed and conducted follow-up interviews with tenured and tenure-track faculty, adjunct instructors, and graduate teaching assistants across disciplines at two different institutions. The themes that emerged from the data are somewhat contradictory, as we'll explain. While some responses to the survey and follow-up interviews indicate that faculty across disciplines expect unmarked SAAE from multilingual and monolingual writers alike, other statements in the survey and interviews, often from the same participants, indicate that this is not actually the case. Instructors across disciplines do in fact expect language diversity to be reflected in their students' writing but don't know how to address this diversity, resulting in continued insistence on writing that meets a monolingual ideal, however this is interpreted. Our data further indicate, however, that many faculty, like those who participated in our study, *are* open to discussing new ways of addressing language diversity in the classroom.

METHODS

For all of us, the driving force behind this project was to become more informed about the communicative situations that our students will face in the future so that we, as teachers, can talk more knowledgeably with them in pre-college writing courses and first-year composition (FYC) about what they need to know to prepare to communicate effectively with a variety of academic audiences. When this study began, we were all graduate students—Anni and Michael in educational linguistics, Lindsey, Elizabeth, and Tom in rhetoric and writing—who wanted to collaborate on this project because of a shared interest in second language writing and WAC. At the time, Lindsey, Elizabeth, and Michael were teaching at the university and Tom and Anni were teaching at the community college less than a mile away, which is why we chose these two locations as our research sites.

Further, as even our small group of researchers indicates, there is much overlap between our university and the neighboring community college. Many graduate students in English, linguistics, and other disciplines support themselves by teaching pre-college writing and FYC at the community college, or by teaching some courses at the university and some at the community college. Community college instructors in English and across the disciplines are often alumni of graduate programs at the university and were trained to teach there. Some university undergraduates choose, for financial reasons, to take approved summer courses at the community college instead of the university. Further, freshmen who have been admitted to the university but whose ACT

scores are not high enough to place them into college-level composition must first take pre-college writing courses that are provided through the community college and staffed by community college instructors, but that are taught on the university campus. While taking these community college writing courses (which they don't necessarily know are community college courses), these students are simultaneously enrolled in university courses in biology, psychology, and other disciplines. That the two institutions have so much overlap contributed to our decision to include both in our study.

In addition, the two institutions where our study was conducted can be seen as a microcosm of the growing multilingual population of the United States. As Hall (2009) observes, multilingual learners are now part of the mainstream (p. 37), and this is certainly true for our institutions. Although language data are not collected by the two institutions that are our study sites, they are located in New Mexico, which is identified as a Minority-Majority state with many cultures and languages represented. The most predominant language after English is Spanish and its many varieties. Many Native American languages are also spoken throughout the state, including Navajo, Keres, Tiwa, Towa, Tewa, and Zuni. Additionally, many resident-immigrant languages are included in the mix, such as Vietnamese, Tagalog, Mandarin, and Korean to name just a few. Finally, both of the study institutions have large international student populations, representing over 90 different countries. Given this diversity, it is safe to assume that Hall's (2009) "Next America" is very much already present in the institutions where our study was conducted.

We want to note here that, while neither of the institutions we studied has a formalized WAC program, we are currently making efforts at the university to build a program informed by the Writing Across Communities (WACommunities) philosophy. According to Kells (2007), a leader in this movement, "A Writing Across Communities approach to WAC foregrounds the dimensions of cultural and sociolinguistic diversity in university-wide writing instruction" (p. 90), so WAC programs following this model are necessarily informed and infused by scholarship in second-language writing.

The first phase of our research was a faculty survey distributed through surveymonkey.com. The survey asked respondents to report on several different facets of writing in their classes, such as assignments, instructions, the use of rubrics, and assessment. Additionally respondents were asked to rate two paragraphs on the same topic—issues concerning poverty—that were written as conclusions to an essay. The first paragraph, Passage 1, was written by a multilingual writer from Hong Kong enrolled in an intermediate writing course at an intensive English program in the United States. The second paragraph, Passage 2, was a control paragraph, written by the research

team to control for subject matter, content, organization, and surface-level features.

Passage 1 Non-native speaker of English
In conclusion, poverty indeed creates some negative consequences for society, includes illiteracy, unemployment,crime rate, lack of science and technology, we know there is still some problems need to resolve. Due to this negative consequences, we supposed to pay more attention about third world countries; instead of ignoring the problem, we can make some decision to reduce the negative consequences and make these countries better.

Passage 2 Control passage
In conclusion, illiteracy, unemployment, crime rate, and lack of science and technology are negative effects of poverty. These problems can be resolved. We should do something to improve poor countries.

Survey respondents were asked to rate each passage on three categories: content, organization, and mechanics. The rating options for each category were "exemplary," "above average," "average," and "substandard." In addition to rating the passages, respondents were given the opportunity to provide qualitative comments following each passage. While all the members of the research team expected Passage 1 to be generally rated as "substandard" in the "mechanics" category, the research team thought that the ideas expressed in Passage 1 were more complex than those in Passage 2, in which sentences were shortened and edited. We also agreed, independently, that the organization of the control passage, Passage 2, conformed more closely to the expectations of SAAE, but thought that it transitioned less effectively from one idea to the next than did Passage 1.

A total of 104 faculty responded to the survey, with 72 coming from the university and 31 coming from the community college (see Appendix A). When asked about their language background, 96 of the respondents identified as native speakers of English, while eight identified as nonnative speakers. Aside from English, the respondents identified their native languages as Serbian, Spanish, Tewa, Cherokee, Tagalog, Chinese, and Dutch.

Survey respondents were invited to provide contact information if they were interested in participating in an hour-long follow-up interview. We contacted those who provided their information and interviewed them in a location of

their choice. Roughly 11% of survey respondents participated in follow-up interviews. The qualitative data we present here, however, include only eight of the 12 interview participants since four interviews have yet to be transcribed at the time of this writing (see Appendix B). The interview questions aimed at giving us a more detailed picture of the participants' understanding of the role of writing in their field, the relationship of that understanding to the writing they assign, and how they respond to their students' writing. We also directly asked "What are your expectations for multilingual writers?" since we were especially interested in helping multilingual writers enter the discourse communities that our participants represent. We expected that our participants would have had some experience with multilingual students and that they would be able to discuss those experiences. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. We worked collaboratively to analyze the data, engaging in the process of discourse analysis as conceptualized by Gee (1999) and Cameron (2001), by which we sought to understand the construction of faculty roles and expectations of student writing in the local community college and university. Further, we allowed themes to emerge via open and axial coding processes (Creswell, 1998).

While our team had previously heard anecdotal evidence that some instructors at the university impose a rigorous monolingual standard for their multilingual students, we did not assume that this would be the case with our interviewees. Initially, however, some of us on the research team believed we would find differences between the university and community college faculty regarding expectations for their students in terms of academic writing, while others on the research team anticipated relative uniformity between the faculty groups. For example, Tom, Anni, and Michael's experiences at the community college and the university led them toward an expectation that community college faculty might be more likely to focus on sentence-level errors, while faculty at the university might be more concerned about the content of ideas expressed. While the data did not confirm this initial expectation, in our discussion of our findings in this chapter, we are not going to make comparisons between expectations for student writing at the community college and the university, even though we think the comparative analysis is important. While there were significant differences between community college and university participants on some of the survey questions, we found no a significant difference in the passage ratings, which are the focus of this chapter, between these two demographics. In addition, delays with the community college Internal Review Board shortened the amount of time that we had to conduct interviews at the community college, so, as of this writing, we lacked enough interviews from the community college to draw any conclusions about them in comparison to the university interviews. Of the interviews that we have so far conducted

with community college instructors, however, there is enough overlap in the categories with which this article is concerned to discuss them together.

In this chapter, we draw upon survey and interview data to argue, first, that markers of nonnative speaker status or any features that depart from SAAE discourage and even preclude faculty engagement with higher order concerns like ideas and argument. Second, we argue that the faculty who participated in our study want native-like prose but do not in fact expect it, despite what they may claim. Third, we suggest that some of the interview responses indicate that the faculty participants would be open to discussions about language variety and working with multilingual writers.

OUR FINDINGS

FEATURES SIGNALING ENGLISH L2 STATUS NEGATIVELY AFFECT AVERALL PERCEPTION OF THE WRITING AND THE WRITER

The results, illustrated in Figures 8.1 through 8.3, show content for Passage 1 being rated as "substandard" by 44% of respondents as opposed to only 18% for Passage 2. They show organization for Passage 1 being rated "substandard" by 55% of respondents and for Passage 2 only 20%. Finally, they show, as we expected, mechanics rated as "substandard" by 92% of respondents for Passage 1, and only 9% for Passage 2. The fact that Passage 1 was rated as "substandard" in all three categories at a much higher rate than Passage 2, which tended to be rated as "average," indicates that features signaling non-native speaker status tend to negatively affect instructors' perceptions of student writing overall. Survey participants were given the option of explaining their passage ratings, and their explanations also support this interpretation, as do our interviews.

Many of the respondents who rated Passage 1 as "substandard" overall explained that the mechanical issues in this passage preclude comprehension. An instructor in anthropology noted in the comment section for Passage 1 that "This appears to be an ESL student's work, and if so, I would take that into consideration in grading. However, it is so garbled as to be nearly incoherent." An instructor in biology in the comment section agreed, saying "If the mechanics are below average, I find it difficult to read the passage and make sense out of it. If something is poorly written, the reader will get bogged down and it doesn't matter how it is organized or what the content is."

Both of these instructors indicate that, indeed, features signaling non-native speaker status make it difficult, if not impossible, for them to respond to

aspects of the student's writing beyond grammar and mechanics. While the first instructor suggests that she takes language background into account in grading for sentence-level issues, and, while she would like to respond to the content and organization, she suggests that the passage departs so far from SAAE that she cannot even do so. (This response aligns with the evaluations of L2 writing that Zawacki and Habib [this volume] report from their faculty interviews regarding concerns about their L2 students' comprehension of the material.) The second instructor equates "poor writing" with "below average mechanics," seemingly reducing the meaning of writing to sentence-level concerns, placing other elements like content and organization outside of the category "writing." While the commentary on Passage 2 is also negative, it is important to note that the respondents, seeing native-like usage, are more willing to address higher order concerns in the student's writing.

A few respondents directly compared Passage 2 favorably to Passage 1. An instructor in biology said that Passage 2 "is better, but it doesn't flow very well." An instructor in anthropology views Passage 2 as "Concise and with acceptable grammar and spelling." Most of the comments about Passage 2 focus on the passage's content and what it lacks. An instructor in biology advised that the student "specify 'improve WHAT in poor countries' and how ..." An instructor in communication and journalism saw Passage 2 as characterized by:
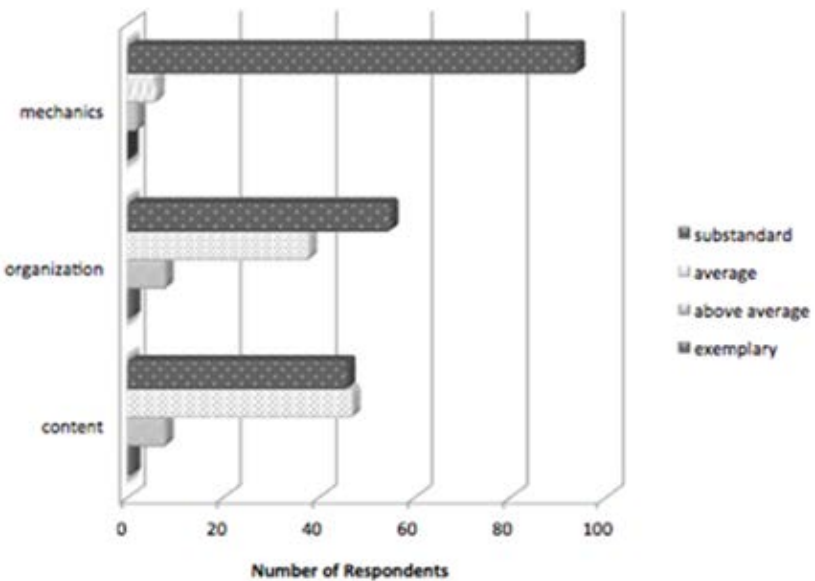

Figure 8.1 Passage 1: Non-native Speaker

> Substandard content, a low level of critical thought. Short and glib. No passion. The student is not struggling or highly engaged with the topic. They are writing to turn in a requirement. Clarity in organization. The brevity of course makes it easy to follow the flow of their ideas. This student is good at organizing their ideas, but not making an effort further than organization.

An instructor in education explained that she would "object to the use of 'poor' in this passage because 'poor' is frequently not within the power of a country to change but is the place where that country is assigned by its neighbors and world powers." Engagement with the student's thoughts and encouragement to think more critically about the topic are evident in the comments about the second passage. While such comments would also be valuable to the writer of Passage 1, respondents offered almost none of such feedback to that passage, focusing instead on grammar and mechanics.

The questions about and implications of this division of commentary on the two passages are too multiple and complex to address in detail here, but it is worth considering some of the more obvious ones, i.e.: Does adherence to SAAE facilitate instructor comprehension and therefore permit more
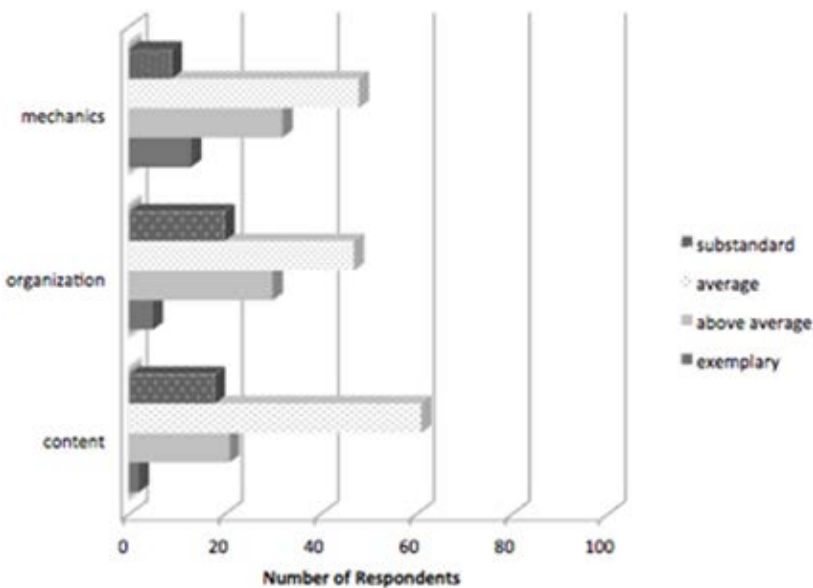

Figure 8.2 Passage 2: Control

discipline-specific critical questioning? Does the lack of instructor comments about higher-order concerns for a paper that does not follow SAAE conventions hinder the student's cognitive development in that particular content area? Does the instructor focus on sentence-level features rather than higher-order questioning negatively influence a student, who may otherwise have a high level of interest in the subject and whose perspective may provide useful and creative insight?

In a follow-up interview with an instructor in sustainability studies, she told us that she marks all of her student papers for grammatical issues. "I mark up their papers thoroughly every time. I give comments and suggestions in terms of content and also in terms of grammar because sometimes I have a hard time grading their work if I can't get past all of the grammatical issues, so I try to work with them to the extent that I can." This response indicates that, while she is committed to helping her students to write successfully in her discipline, departures from SAAE at the sentence level make it difficult for her to engage with other aspects of student writing, a position that echoes many of the respondents' comments for Passage 1, the non-native speaker passage. Her response suggests, then, that writing that does not adhere to the conventions of SAAE invites sentence-level commentary rather than higher order commentary, even when an instructor is committed to focusing on the content of the students'
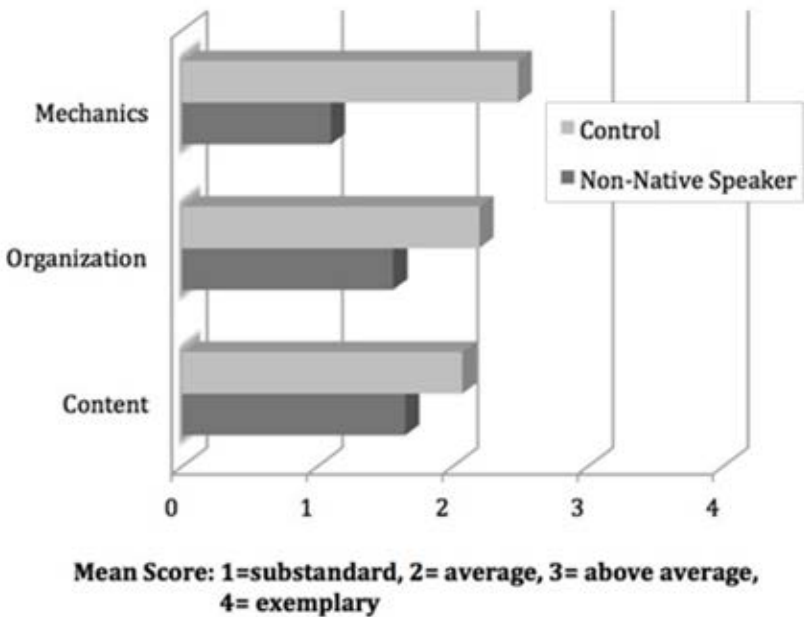

Mean Score: 1=substandard, 2= average, 3= above average, 4= exemplary

Figure 8.3: Average Scores for Each Passage

writing rather than being distracted by errors, as another interview participant from linguistics explained. When asked what kinds of writing her students do, the linguistics instructor talked at length about a final paper, explaining that she tries "to weight it more heavily on content and not be distracted by the illiteracy evident" in many of them. While this instructor expressed a commitment to focusing on the content of her students' writing regardless of whether their sentences conform to the standards SAAE, she said she does find departures from SAAE distracting and tries to communicate that to her students:

> When they give me these answers on the tests I do correct
> the grammar on them. At the bottom of their test I will write
> "Boy you really need to work on that comma splice problem
> if you're going to continue in academic study." [...] You know
> if I can correct their grammar I will do it! [...] Agreement
> errors I also comment on, you know. Especially for nonnative
> speakers that's a toughy.

We also want to note that, while this instructor may appear to be understanding of and attentive to the relationship between language background and student writing, she equates sentence-level issues with illiteracy, which suggests to us that she has little tolerance for other varieties of English that do not meet the standard.

The linguistics instructor's use of the word "illiteracy" to describe errors in students' writing calls attention to another theme that emerged from the interviews: that readers often make judgments about a writer's level of literacy based on errors they see or perceive in the writing. That sentence-level errors influence the decision-making process for gatekeepers, such as, for example, potential employers and those who weigh admission to an institution and/or program, is a well-documented fact (a fear also expressed by faculty interviewed by Zawacki and Habib [this volume]). In a follow-up interview with an instructor in physical therapy, he explained that only about 10% of all applicants are accepted into the physical therapy program and that few of those admitted are multilingual students. When asked why, he said, "I don't think we have that issue as much. I think it's people that come in and English is their first language. I think because our applicant pool is so rigorous, and we have the luxury of taking the very high level people. The test scores and the people who, you know, English is their second language don't obviously score as well up front ... They have a tougher time getting in."

His comments can be understood in multiple ways. One interpretation might be that the winnowing process for admission, because of the sheer

number of applicants, is warranted, even necessary for no other reason but efficiency. Another may be that physical therapy is such a technical profession that "highly sophisticated" English is a requisite for successfully completing the program. Yet another interpretation of the admissions practices that the instructor described, considering his exclusion of multilingual writers from the pool of "high level people," may be that he has conflated intelligence and cognitive ability with language skill, as Zamel (1995) has observed often happens. We also considered whether the highly selective process could be attributed to the profession requiring the ability to communicate health issues or life threatening emergencies expertly, accurately, and efficiently. If this is the case, then we wondered why, given our location, being multilingual and having the ability to communicate effectively in, say, Spanish, Navajo, or Keres is not as valuable, if not more so, than speaking and writing only in English?

A similar gatekeeper position was reiterated in a follow-up interview with a faculty member in communication and journalism, who recounted a story about how an undergraduate from Bulgaria had asked her to write a letter of recommendation for her as she was planning to apply to the graduate program in communication and journalism. The instructor's response to the international student, as she told us, was, "... you know what, I can't because you need to take some intensive English courses that I'm not qualified to provide for you." The instructor acknowledged that it was difficult for her to say this to the Bulgarian student, but she also felt as if would be doing the student a disservice if she did write a letter of recommendation for her. Here again surface-level features are serving as a mechanism for preventing some L2 students from pursuing their academic and career goals.

FACULTY WANT NATIVE-LIKE PROSE BUT THEY DO NOT REALLY EXPECT IT

Our results indicate that the faculty we surveyed and interviewed want all of their students to produce unmarked SAAE prose, but they do not really expect it even though they might claim to. They do, in fact, expect language diversity to be reflected in their students' writing; at the same time they don't know how to address that diversity, which seems to lead to their continued insistence upon writing that conforms to a monolingual standard.

These contradictory views are evident in the survey passage ratings. Three of the survey respondents remarked in the comments section of the survey that Passage 1, the passage from the L2 writer, is average for students at their institution, whether the community college or university. An instructor in communication and journalism lamented, "Unfortunately if you are looking

for 'average' this reflects a lot of the writing that I receive. But it is substandard to what I expect and require." An instructor in psychology wrote, "I personally think this is awful overall, but it is about average for a [student at this institution]. The grammar is particularly sub-standard however." Finally, an instructor in communication and journalism reiterated the statements above, going on, however, to qualify his/her assessment by stating that it is beyond the purview of his/her responsibility to address surface level features, but that he/she feels that this is something that must be done. Another instructor, quoted below, focused her initial comments on the students' critical thinking skills and content knowledge and then addressed the passage's surface level issues. That the instructor first acknowledged the student's ability to critically analyze and comment on the issue of poverty is worth noting.

> The student shows evidence of average content: critical thought on cause and effect and lists categories in their domain knowledge that I assume are summaries of content in their paper .... The organization is above average, in that the student attempts to create lists, associate cause and effect, and includes a call to action directed at the reader. Although the student is not accomplished in grammar, he/she makes an above average attempt to organize his/her thoughts. Mechanics, of course, are atrocious. But that's the type of student we have at our [institution]. It is not my role to teach grammar and sentence structure, but I do make strong levels of editing in the abstract and conclusion to show the student how to introduce and summarize their thoughts using the standards to which I hope they aspire. We work on a little bit of their writing together, the most important part, in mandatory one-on-one office meetings, but only one meeting per student is required. They can come back for seconds, and a few do return.

For this instructor, unlike the majority of survey respondents, sentence-level departures from SAAE do not preclude focus on content or organization. Although s/he is dissatisfied with the student's work at the sentence level, s/he expressed understanding that levels of conformity to the prescribed standards of SAAE will vary in linguistically diverse classrooms. S/he also seems somewhat confident about working with linguistically diverse groups of students, but this is not the case with many of her colleagues across disciplines. (The faculty's recognition that the most important work on student writing happens during

conferencing is affirmed by Chozin, the international graduate student featured in Phillips [this volume]).

The quality of writing, particularly at the sentence level, was quite obviously at the forefront of many of the survey responses. And while the respondents appeared to be highly critical of the quality of student writing they see in their classes, the survey and follow-up interviews also show that faculty seem to be conflicted about how to handle the variations to SAAE that they encounter on a regular basis. During the follow up interviews, faculty participants were asked if they had ever encountered papers that might reflect language issues. An instructor from sustainability studies replied,

> You know, I haven't taken the time to pursue those sorts of things necessarily. Up until this point, I haven't given it special consideration. I try to grade people fairly and the same across the board, and I have rubrics. I don't think that's necessarily the right thing to do. However, when there are students that are having difficulties, I tell them to come to me.

Yet this same instructor, in a statement we quoted earlier, also said that she holds all of her students to the same set of expectations as outlined in her rubric. Still she struggles with this expectation, recognizing that holding multilingual writers to the same standard in terms of SAAE as she does her native English writers may not always be as fair and equitable as it seems. (This issue of fairness also came up in many of the interviews Zawacki and Habib [this volume] conducted.)

An instructor from communication and journalism, when asked in an interview about her expectations for multilingual writers, responded, "My expectations for multilingual writers are the same as my expectations for native speakers." Having said that, however, she immediately went on to say:

> However, I am willing to work with them on a one-on-one basis. I am encountering this in the graduate realm, where um, I strongly disagree with admission of students to this type of program who are not highly fluent in English because it's taught in English. I had a transfer student from Bulgaria and a visiting student from Spain, and the Bulgarian student was pretty fluent but the transfer student from Spain had a horrible time ...

This statement indicates that this instructor, like the others we've quoted, does not actually expect all of her students to have the native-like fluency in English necessary to consistently produce unmarked SAAE in their writing. She wants to be able to expect this, however, and thinks the placement of students who cannot produce native-like SAAE into courses like hers is an injustice to them. Further describing her experience with multilingual students, she said:

> And you know we have a problem. I have three Asian students who I'm working with now in a seminar. So I'm trying to help them with their writing. 'Cause once you admit them I think you have a responsibility, and not everybody feels that way .... And it's not really the students' fault. They're being told if you want to go to the United States [passing the TOEFL] is what you have to do and this is how you do it. But then they get here and have trouble because they don't understand our system.

The insistence on native-like SAAE even among an increasingly diverse student population expressed by the faculty and instructors quoted above supports Matsuda's (2006) point that "implicit in most teachers' definitions of 'writing well' is the ability to produce English that is unmarked in the eyes of teachers who are custodians of privileged varieties of English" (p. 640). However, as much as our study participants might want linguistic homogeneity, they are acutely aware that this is not the situation in their classes. In fact, the majority of the interview participants seemed genuinely concerned with the success of all of their students, regardless of language background, even as they seem to be at a loss as to how to work most effectively with non-native speakers of English. This finding leads us to several implications.

FACULTY ARE OPEN TO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT LANGUAGE VARIETY IN THE CLASSROOM

The faculty who participated in our study, with a few notable exceptions, seemed to be open to thinking more systematically about language diversity in their classrooms and to having conversations, such as WAC promotes, about how to work more effectively with multilingual writers. The need for such conversations is most clearly indicated by the self-doubt two of the instructors we quoted earlier expressed about working with multilingual students. One, for example, concluded her remarks about a student whose organization and

ideas were good but whose grammar "was atrocious," by saying, "I held him to the same standard, and I don't know if that was the right thing to do." This was the second time within just a few sentences that she had indicated doubt as to whether holding multilingual students to a monolingual standard is the best practice. Another questioned herself by saying, "I pass everybody. I'm responsible for some of the problem, right?" indicating, presumably, that she too is at fault for passing students who do not write in native-like SAAE by the time the class is finished, thus allowing them to enter still other classes for which they're not prepared to meet existing expectations.

The doubt that both of these instructors express indicates that they want to be fair and ethical in working with linguistically diverse students but may not know how to do so while still sticking to the commonly held standards for writing in their disciplines and institutions. The first question that comes to mind, and perhaps the first question that we might raise with stakeholders across disciplines, is whether and why writing standards have to be the same as they were in a monolingual, idealized, and largely fictional past. As Horner and Trimbur (2002) argue, standards and norms for academic writing have shifted throughout the history of American higher education and should not remain static now:

> While Bartholomae was being ironic in suggesting that students needed to "invent" the university in their writing, there is a real sense in which students, like all the rest of us writers, do participate in re-inventing—not simply reproducing but potentially altering—university language in each act of writing … If we reject the reification of academic language and competence in it, we cannot use instances of students' language to deny them academic citizenship. (pp. 620-621)

Cross-disciplinary, and even cross-institutional, conversations focusing on the development of language standards that reflect our institutions' unique regional location as well as the values of our individual disciplines would be a productive response to the self-doubt that both of the instructors we quoted express. (It is interesting to note that the students enrolled in a mixed L1/L2/bilingual graduate writing workshop, described in Fredericksen & Mangelsdorf [this volume], were open to working across languages and cultures, which the authors attributed to the university's location near the Texas/Mexican border).

A primary concern to address in these conversations should be how to grade L2 students work in a way that is fair to all students. Several of our interview participants explained how they negotiate this concern in their linguistically diverse classes. One instructor said, for example,

> Some of them are just not ready to be in the class, but they're in there and you've got to work with that. And you give them a grade that reflects where they were when they came in and how much improvement they've made, rather than an absolute grading scale.

This instructor's explanation can lead to questions about what makes students prepared or unprepared to be in a class. And is the grade reflecting improvement applied to all aspects of all assignments, or just selected aspects of selected assignments? And would a grade that reflects improvement be appropriate for all students in a given class?

In these conversations, faculty can also be asked to talk about whether and why adherence to SAAE standards is important in grading. An instructor in history, for example, said in his follow-up interview that, in his class,

> They, you know, really have to show that they know the subject material. And they have to show that they have some kind of argument .... Organization to me is very crucial, but I see it as tied in with argument .... You can't fail a paper for spelling and grammar and mechanics alone.

Here the instructor is asserting his view on which aspects of SAAE are important to him and which are less so. Organization, presumably organization fitting the typical Western pattern in academic writing of stating a thesis at the beginning and relating each paragraph directly back to that thesis, is important to the instructor because he sees this structure as integral to making a convincing argument. However, that his students' grammar and mechanics conform strictly to the standards of SAAE is less important to him. Questions for further conversation in response to this point could include, for example: What constitutes strong organization in a history paper? Why is this type of organization necessary for a student to present a convincing argument? Is it possible to make a convincing argument following organizational patterns from other rhetorical traditions? When, if ever, should a paper be failed for grammar and mechanics alone?

Even seemingly fair and reasonable grading approaches to departures from SAAE standards in student writing can be problematic, as we could see in our interview responses. An approach described by an instructor in math and science, for example, seemed to embrace linguistic diversity:

> When I would grade anything that was written, I would look for the content. As long as the student ... as long as I could see that the student understood, then that would be good enough for me. The writing has to be good enough that I can discern that. If the writing is so poor that I can't .... then I can't read the student's mind.

While this instructor's practice may fit with a translingual approach, our study suggests that it's also potentially problematic, since the faculty responses to Passage 1 in our survey indicate that what is and is not considered understandable can vary greatly from one reader to the next. Questions for further conversation, then, might be: What departures from SAAE inhibit understanding for you? (See Zawacki & Habib [this volume] for faculty responses to this same question.) And where does the burden of communication lie?

In this context, we find Lippi-Green's (2004) argument useful:

> When native speakers of USA English are confronted by an accent that is foreign to them or with a variety of English they dislike, they must first decide whether or not they are going to accept their responsibility in the act of communication. What can be demonstrated again and again is this: members of the dominant language groups feel perfectly empowered to reject their portion of the burden and demand that a person with an accent (that is, an accent that differs from their own accent) carry a disproportionate amount of the responsibility in the communicative act. (p. 298)

While Lippi-Green is referring here to oral communication, we argue that the question of communicative burden can and should, in fact, be applied to written communication, especially when a student is communicating in writing to a teacher. After all, it is the instructor's job to help students become more knowledgeable about their subject. As part of that responsibility, instructors should expect that it will be necessary for them to help students to communicate more effectively to audiences within their field, instead of expecting that

students will be able to communicate seamlessly with them upon entering the class. Such assistance also entails helping students to learn the content and ways of knowing, doing, and writing in the discipline. And it may also entail helping students to determine which sentence-level features require the most attention when writing in that discipline.

The question of who should bear the communicative burden can also carry over into discussions that instructors have with their students. It could be particularly beneficial for monolingual native speakers of English to begin taking on the burden of understanding and communicating with L2 speakers/writers because, as Canagarajah (2006) points out:

> There are online journals, discussion circles, and websites that anyone in the world can go to for information. But without a willingness to negotiate Englishes, we get little from these resources. Scholars studying transnational interactions in English show the creative strategies multilingual speakers use to negotiate their differences and effectively accomplish their purposes, often with no deference to native speaker norms .... ME/ monolingual speakers come off as relatively lacking in these negotiation skills in comparison with WE speakers ... with dire implications for their ability to succeed in such transactions. (pp. 590-591)

Monolingual speakers who cannot or refuse to understand varieties of English that depart from the norms to which they are accustomed are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to communicating in linguistically diverse settings, even when English is the language of communication. Therefore, shifting standards to allow for language variety in American classrooms and clearly communicating that the burden of communications falls equally on all parties, not primarily on L2 English writers (and those whose writing does not, for whatever reason, conform strictly to the standards of SAAE), has potential benefits for all students regardless of language background.

CONCLUSION

Our findings—that instructors acknowledge their role in helping multilingual students, but don't know how, that they recognize their role as gatekeepers, and that they struggle with knowing the right thing to do in responses to student writing—reiterate the need expressed in this volume and

in the special WAC/L2 writing issue of *Across the Disciplines* to conduct faculty development around WAC and second language writing. (See Cox [this volume] for strategies for faculty development related to L2 writing). In our scholarship, we should continue to investigate multilingual students' experiences as writers in their disciplines along with their goals for their own writing, a project that our research team is currently undertaking.

Finally, returning to our overarching concern in this chapter and Matsuda's and Hall's observations of the need to reconceptualize university and college classrooms as being multilingual and to embrace the rhetorical traditions that our multilingual students bring to the classroom, our study indicates a desire by faculty in the disciplines to understand this shifting demographic, but they still feel conflicted. Our data show that faculty are keenly aware of their "gatekeeper" status. They want their students to succeed and view the ability to communicate effectively, along with discipline-specific knowledge, as integrally linked to success. This is where WAC, WACommunities initiatives, and Second Language Writing scholars can and should intervene through departmental and college level discussions, workshops, and colloquia, helping to redefine with faculty in the disciplines what it means to communicate effectively. In a global environment where L2 speakers of English outnumber L1 speakers of English by nearly two to one (Saville-Troike, 2006), it is incumbent on all of us to re-imagine the role of SAAE in the American academic tradition.

REFERENCES

Cameron, D. (2001). *Working with spoken discourse*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Canagarajah, A. S. (2006). The place of world Englishes in composition: Pluralization continued. *College Composition and Communication, 57*(4), 586-619.

Cox, M. (2011). WAC: Closing doors or opening doors for second language writers? *Across the Disciplines, 8*(4). Retrieved from http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/ell/cox.cfm

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ferris, D. (2008). Myth 5: Students must learn to correct all their writing errors. In J. Reid (Ed.), *Writing myths: Applying second language research to classroom teaching* (pp. 90-114). Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Gee, J. P. (1999). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Hall, J. (2009). WAC/WID in the next America: Redefining professional identity in the age of multilingual majority. *The WAC Journal, 20*, 33-49.

Horner, B. & Trimbur, J. (2002). English only and US college composition. *College Composition and Communication, 53*(4), 594-630.

Kells, M. H. (2007). Writing across communities: Deliberation and the discursive possibilities of WAC. *Reflections, 11*(1), 87-108.

Lippi-Green, R. (2004). Language ideology and language prejudice. In Finegan, E. & Rickford, J. R. (Eds.) *Language in the USA: Themes for the twenty-first century* (pp. 289-304). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Matsuda, P. K. (2006). The myth of linguistic homogeneity in US college composition. *College English, 68*(6), 637- 651.

Rose, M. (1985). The language of exclusion: Writing instruction at the university. *College English, 47*(4), 341-359.

Saville-Troike, M. (2006). *Introducing second language acquisition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic research settings*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Zamel, V. (1995). Strangers in academia: The experiences of faculty and ESL students across the curriculum. *College Composition and Communication, 46(4)*, 506-521.

APPENDIX A

Survey Demographics

A total of 104 respondents completed the survey, with 72 coming from the university and 31 coming from the community college. One respondent did not identify an institution. Twenty-two departments are represented in the survey. The majority of our respondents, 62, identified as female, while 41 participants identified as male and one as transgender. When asked about language background, 96 of the respondents identified as native speakers of English, while eight identified as nonnative speakers. Aside from English, the respondents identified their native languages as Serbian, Spanish, Tewa, Cherokee, Tagalog, Chinese, and Dutch.

The following table shows that a little over half of our respondents, 56, identified as graduate assistants, teaching assistants, or part- time instructors, while fewer than half, 40, identified as faculty (lecturer or professor), and eight participants identified as other. The significant representation of graduate instructors aligns with Hall's (2009) "Next America" theme, as these

respondents are the faculty of the future, and their attitudes point toward the writing expectations that future generations of college and university students will face.

Please identify your position at your institution (n = 104)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Graduate Assistant/ Teaching Assistant	23.1%	24
Part-time Instructor/ Adjunct	30.8%	32
Lecturer	5.8%	6
Assistant Professor	7/7%	8
Associate Professor	11.5%	12
Full Professor	13.5%	14
Other	7.7%	8
Answered Question		104
Skipped Question		0

APPENDIX B

Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Discipline	Native Language
Dr. Carter	Law	English
Dr. Anderson	Physical Therapy	English
Mr. Thompson	History	English
Dr. Jacobs	Math	English
Dr. Russelman	Sustainability	English
Ms. Mason	Anthropology/Linguistics	English
Dr. Smith	Communication	English
Dr. Bremmel	Math	English