CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN AN
ACADEMIC ESL WRITING CLASSROOM

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The students still have a power to be a good class, not only the teacher. We can do
something. Maybe we can join the class more, not waiting til the teacher asks something. We
can ask teacher before teacher gives the students the questions, like giving some examples of
ourselves. We can do it. —Mieko, ESL writing student

Over the past 20 years, international students have been arriving at American
universities in ever-increasing numbers. There were more than 150,000 international
students enrolled in U.S. universities in 1976; there were more than 450,000 enrolled in
1996 (Davis, 1996). These students arrive bringing varied language backgrounds and
cultural expectations about academic life. A skill that is extremely crucial to the
students' success is, of course, writing, since it is through this modality that they are
expected to display their mastery of a subject to their evaluators. In addition to mastery
of content, mastery of the modality itself is expected, and often influences evaluator's
impression of the students' actual knowledge of the content (Zamel, 1995).

Obviously, those ESL teachers who have been given the responsibility to help these
students learn to write academically have a crucial task. Not only is it crucial, it is quite
complex, as is evident in the many and varied approaches to second language writing
pedagogy that have been developed over the past few decades (Elbow, 1973; Macrorie,
1988; Johns, 1990; Kutz, Groden, & Zamel, 1993; Fox, 1994). In addition, teachers and
students from various backgrounds often have differing ideas concerning not only what
writing is and what it means but also how to effectively go about learning it (Cortazzi &
Jin, 1996; Ballard, 1996).

Critical pedagogy maintains that in the process of learning, students should become
actors in and on their worlds instead of passively receiving knowledge about what is
expected of them (Auerbach, 1992; Freire, 1972; Shor & Freire, 1987; McLaren, 1994;
Kanpol, 1994, 1997). Educators who approach the teaching of academic writing from

a critical perspective are presented with these interlocking questions: Learning must be grounded in the lives of the students, offering them personal involvement; how then does this manifest itself in a writing classroom? In what ways can students' master the academic writing required for their careers in the university while participating in a critical classroom? How can student and teacher expectations of teaching and learning to write complement instead of oppose each other? What could make a critical approach appropriate in an academic English as a second language setting?

In an attempt to find out more about these issues, this study provides an ethnographic investigation of an academic ESL writing classroom. I explore how students' understanding of what it means to write and learn to write interacts with the teacher's perception of these processes. I also examine how a critical approach might be used in a way that is appropriate for international students in an academically oriented classroom. In the review of the literature that precedes the discussion of the study, I examine several philosophies of writing, then discuss what has been written about the place of a critical approach in the academic ESL writing classroom.

WRITING PHILOSOPHIES

Although much research has been undertaken in the name of discovering the best way to teach writing, the conclusions drawn from this research vary. Not surprisingly, the philosophies of writing that spring from what has been learned from the research are quite diverse. These philosophies prove quite difficult to categorize since many of them often contain attitudes and approaches that are not mutually exclusive, yet give rise to divergent classroom practices. The profusion of different philosophies is an indication of the lack of agreement on the underlying theories of L2 writing. Johns (1990), even while calling for the development of coherent ESL composition theory, states that, "no single, comprehensive theory of ESL composition can be developed on which all can agree" (p. 33). Nevertheless, in order to provide an idea of where the field as a whole has come from and the direction in which it is going, I will attempt to delineate four general philosophies of writing, all of which are currently in use. In reality, it is difficult to draw the boundaries of these philosophies exactly since some parts of one philosophy may overlap with or seem similar to parts of another.

The widely touted process approach, perhaps the dominant philosophy in ESL writing, focuses on the experience of writing, what people really do when they write, rather than on the product. It is helpful to keep in mind, however, that the term "process" has been applied to many types of approaches to writing, some of which may barely

resemble the philosophy described here. Johns (1990) delineates two schools of thought within the process approach—the expressivists, led by writers such as Peter Elbow and Ken Macrorie, and the cognitivists, including Linda Flower. Expressivists encourage personal self-discovery, emphasize fluency in writing, and focus on the writer's interaction with the text, rather than the reader's (see Macrorie, 1988 and Elbow, 1973. In many years of teaching and writing, however, Elbow has certainly come to recognize the importance of the reader while still insisting on the importance of self-expression (see Elbow, 1991, and Elbow & Belanoff, 1995). Cognitivists, whose work is rooted in studies involving think-aloud protocols (Zamel, 1983; Hayes & Flower, 1983), are interested in the writer's mental processes while writing, and view writing as a series of problems to be solved. Writers plan by thinking through their ideas. Then they put their thoughts and ideas into words and arrive at a conclusion. Afterward, they review and revise their work (Johns, 1990).

Contrastive rhetoric was born with Kaplan's (1966) famous "Doodle Article" in which he used line diagrams to illustrate the patterns of written discourse in different cultures. Although contrastive rhetoric has moved away from such a simplistic analysis of cultural differences in writing style, the basic premise is still that English writing is direct and linear in nature while other cultures' writing is not. This is believed to be the primary reason that students from other cultures have difficulty with academic writing: their cultures' ways of putting thoughts together in writing are quite different from what is expected at North American universities (Fox, 1994).

Another approach to writing focuses on students learning to write specifically for an academic audience by learning the genres academic writing requires and the language expected in academic writing. This viewpoint is commonly called, not surprisingly, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), or English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Johns (1990) states that for proponents (including herself) of this approach, which she calls 'social constructionist,' "the language, focus, and form of a text stem from the community for which it is written" (p. 27). Students succeed in joining the academic discourse community by studying and imitating its patterns of discourse. (See also Coe, 1987).

The "inquiry" philosophy of writing sees student writers as ethnographers who undertake research as a way of building writing proficiency. Pioneers in this approach are Kutz, Groden, & Zamel (1993). Based on the work of Heath (1983), who examined the different ways of knowing and learning in several communities in the Carolinas, Kutz, Groden, & Zamel have investigated ways to build on students' previous knowledge and life experience through making students themselves ethnographers of communication

(Saville-Troike, 1996). The students' research involves them as part of the academic community they are ultimately attempting to join, while allowing them to discover the discourse patterns of that community for themselves out of actual need, in actual practice.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

A critique of the aforementioned philosophies of teaching writing comes from critical pedagogy, a movement whose beliefs and practices have historical and ideological roots that may safely be called eclectic. McLaren (1994) names important critical pedagogues as diverse in background as John Dewey, Henry Giroux, Maxine Green, Paulo Freire, and bell hooks. Despite the varied nature of their particular ideologies, these thinkers and writers agree on basic objectives: "to empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices" (McLaren, 1994, p. 168). Most critical pedagogues subscribe to a group of basic beliefs that come from critical theory. Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) provide a thorough summary of the assumptions of criticalists:

...that all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are socially and historically constituted; that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription; that the relationship between concept and object and between signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption; that language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious awareness); that certain groups in any society are privileged over others and...the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable; that oppression has many faces and that focusing on only one at the expense of others...often elides the interconnections among them; and, finally, that mainstream research practices are generally...implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression (p. 139).

Critical pedagogues would add that mainstream education practices also reproduce unjust systems of class, race, and gender. They maintain that a teacher must seek to empower his or her students by helping to raise their awareness of such systems so that they can challenge them (resist) and begin to take action for change. Freire (1972), perhaps the most well known of the critical pedagogues, called this process "conscientização," and viewed it as the basis of liberatory education. He states that in order for this process to take place, learning must encompass material that is relevant to

the students, that has meaning in their lives. He goes on to say that knowledge is not something static to be deposited by the teacher into the brains of passive students, as it is conceived in what he calls the "banking method" of education. Instead, the teacher should be a learner along with the students, showing that knowledge is to be constructed and shared by the group through dialogue. Only as students become "subjects" rather than "objects" in their world can they recognize hegemonic[1] forms of control for what they are and together find ways to resist them.

In their practice, therefore, teachers must consider the socio-political milieu in which every classroom, whether its members are aware of it or not, is situated. Schools and, by extension, teachers and students are part of a system set up by and for those who have power (Beare & Slaughter, 1993). Therefore, what is taught and how it is taught are not neutral, but, as Shaull explains in the forward to Freire's (1972) book, either an instrument for bringing about conformity with the system, or "the practice of freedom," a means by which learners can change their world (p. 15).

Strict adherence to the process philosophy of teaching writing, focused solely as it is on the act of writing and what it entails, leaves little room for examination of the orientation or purpose of writing, and therefore fails to acknowledge the broader context in which the writing skills are being learned. The proponents of contrastive rhetoric and the social constructionists likewise stress only the process of adopting the conventions and forms of the academic community without examining the ideology inherent in doing so, or the unequal balances and abuses of power on which the structure of academia often rests. And although Kutz, Groden, & Zamel (1993) imply their cognizance of a larger context with their shift from viewing the academy as all-knowing to seeing students as already having some expertise, their primary emphasis is nevertheless on academic learning. A critique of their work from a critical standpoint would point out that while their class helps students discover their own competence in relation to the academic community, it does not necessarily empower students to effect change in their lives.

Auerbach's (1992) work is some of the most vocal in its call for learning that is not only based on students' real needs in their lives outside the classroom, but that is student-empowering and a catalyst for social change. The bulk of her work concerns adult and family literacy, where students' L2 writing needs may be quite different from those of

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[1]This word is used here in the sense first delineated by Gramsci (1975) and later summarized by Kanpol (1997): "[H]egemony refers to the body of practices, energy, lived experiences, or common-sense interpretations that become our unquestioning world. Hegemony, then, refers to an organized assemblage of meanings, wherein the central, effective, and dominant actions are lived. These lived actions contain meanings and values, and constitute the limits of common-sense knowledge. . . . This common sense is shared meaning, perpetuated in social practice..." (p. 37). A key to social transformation, he says, is counterhegemony, or alternative meaning-making (Kanpol, 1994).

students in an academic writing classroom. However, her urging that teachers be aware of the effects on the classroom of power structures beyond the classroom is nonetheless appropriate for an academic setting. Teaching and learning, wherever they take place, occur in a socio-political context that always affects and may hinder both student and teacher empowerment.

What would a critical academic ESL writing classroom be like? Descriptions of the application of critical pedagogy in academically oriented ESL classes are very few. The only example is a study by Benesch (1996). A comparison of her critical approach to the teaching of academic writing with Johns' (1995) description of a similar situation approached from a social constructionist philosophy of writing will help to illustrate the significance of implementing critical pedagogy in an academic setting. Benesch, like Johns, reports on an ESL class held in conjunction with a general education content course in psychology. Unlike Johns, however, who assumes students' primary need is to learn the written discourse of the academic community without ever questioning the assumptions upon which the academy's system is founded, Benesch searches for ways to empower her students to go *beyond* the system. She helped them challenge the requirements of the psychology course they were taking in conjunction with the ESL class by having them write questions related to the content of the course. She then got the psychology professor to answer the students' written questions in class. In addition, she invited that same professor to the ESL class to answer students' questions in a more individualized way. Issues reaching beyond the university itself were raised in their in-depth study of the topic of anorexia, which dealt with women, power, and social expectations. In addition, the students, who had already experienced the effects of underfunding in the impersonal lecture hall, wrote letters to the state government protesting proposed budget cuts.

In his dialogue with Paulo Freire in *A Pedagogy for Liberation* (1987), Ira Shor raises the question: "What gives liberating educators the right to change the consciousness of students?" (p. 171). Freire answers that a liberating educator does not dominate the students, but acts as a director in the process of inquiry. It is imperative to remember that pedagogy from a critical stance is informed by both students' cultural expectations and knowledge and their needs. Critical pedagogy is not simply a way to force students to become political activists. It means recognizing injustices that exist in the system and offering students opportunities to address them. Students encountering a new culture are encouraged to investigate their own cultures as well as the new culture. Awareness of their own cultures' perceptions of literacy and its practices gives them a starting point from which to analyze and understand the literacy practices of the new culture. This

analysis, then, can lead to a questioning of power structures that affect the students' lives, and new literacy practices can be used to work for positive change. Just as the gaining of new knowledge must grow from the soil of previously held knowledge, so a critical standpoint must originate in students' realities and needs.

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH: THE STUDY

Ethnography seems to be the best kind of process to search for answers to complex questions about the role of critical pedagogy in approaching an academic ESL writing class, for these questions are embedded in the daily workings of a community. They cannot be answered independently of their context because the answers involve an understanding of the nature of the interactions of the students and teacher and why these interactions take place. Focusing as ethnography does on thick description—the underlying meaning of observable activities (Geertz, 1973)—and the vertical aspect of situations in addition to minute-by minute horizontal observations (Watson-Gegeo, 1995), it seems especially suited to helping the critical researcher to understand the power structures that affect the classroom. In addition, since an ethnographer seeks the emic perspective (Davis, 1995), the experiences and viewpoints of the students can shape the direction of both the research and the class, as is crucial to any critical pedagogy method.

In order to collect data for this study, I became a participant observer in an academic ESL writing class for a semester. This report is comprised of the analysis of data collected during that time. After obtaining the permission of the teacher and the students to be present in the class as a participant observer and audiotape the class sessions, I attended the class almost every time it met (thrice weekly) for an entire semester. During this time, I also conducted interviews with the students in the class as well as with the teacher in order to explore their perceptions of what went on in the class and their perspectives on and previous experiences in teaching and learning writing. Another important source of data was the students' writing. I looked at many samples of their writing, including an essay due at the beginning of the class, several in-class writing assignments, journal entries, the final paper, midterm class evaluations, and end-of-term self-evaluations. Over the course of the semester, I worked with the teacher of the class in order to design a section of the writing course that would be critical in some aspect.

I chose this particular class for two reasons: first because the students in ESL 100 are preparing for further academic work and second because I knew that the teacher, Laura[2],

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[2] To ensure the participants' anonymity, all the names used for in this paper for the teacher and students are pseudonyms.

is a firm believer in the ideals of critical pedagogy. Laura has taken classes and read extensively on the subject of critical pedagogy and has gone to conferences dedicated to the promotion of a critical approach to teaching. As a result, she has a good understanding of the tenets of critical pedagogy and believes that it is a helpful way to approach the teaching of a class.

THE RESEARCH SITE AND POPULATION

ESL 100 is a freshman-level composition class at a large public university in a mid-sized city on the Pacific Rim. This required class is designed for speakers of English as a second language and is the equivalent of English 100, the composition class required for all first-year university students. It is part of a program at the university called the English Institute, a program designed to meet the English learning needs of international students who have been accepted to the university. It differs from Benesch's class in that it is not connected with a certain content area. Since the students in the class hail from majors all across the university system, the teacher is expected to focus on general academic writing skills that will be applicable to many areas of study. Unlike the other classes taught at the Institute, ESL 100 is a credit-bearing class; while the other classes are also mandatory, the students do not receive credit for taking them. All the classes in the English Institute are taught by graduate students from the university's department of English as a second language.

There are 12 students in the class (though one Japanese student dropped out mid-semester). Most of them have already completed one semester of college. They have various majors, including psychology, computer science, travel industry management, and international business. The students are also from different countries. The majority of them (eight students) are from Japan. Other countries represented are China, Hong Kong, Columbia, and Sweden. Most of the students are in their late teens or early twenties.

Laura, the teacher of the class, is a master's candidate in the English as a second language department. At the time of this study, she is in her last semester there and is taking two classes in addition to writing her master's thesis. In addition to ESL 100, she is teaching another class at the Institute. She has been teaching in various parts of the world for more than five years, and at the Institute for two years. Laura plans carefully and investigates thoroughly educational options such as classes she takes, research projects she does, new approaches to teaching, and opportunities for further education. Her research and writing has won praise from her professors and she expresses a sense of accomplishment in her academic achievements and growth as a teacher during the course

of her master's program. In sum, she demonstrates purpose and self-confidence in her education and career.

ESL 100

ESL 100 meets in a bare classroom on the third floor of un-airconditioned Miller Hall. On most mornings the jalousies are open, allowing the breeze to blow in the sounds of birds chirping and lawn mowers running. The students enter the room before the teacher does. The first ones there rearrange the chair-desks into a circle as Laura has asked them to do. As more people trickle in, they sit in pairs and chat quietly in English or Japanese (depending on their first language) until the teacher arrives.

Almost every day Laura writes a numbered agenda of activities for that day's class on the board before "officially" opening the class with a proposition such as, "Let's get started." She returns the homework and comments about her response to the students' work in general. For example, on returning students' writing from an in-class activity called "Four Voices," Laura says to the class, "This writing is so wonderful, maybe because you chose something emotionally impacting. It's the most interesting writing I've read so far."

After the agenda/homework routine, the activities vary. At times, Laura lectures using the textbook as a base about various "how to" aspects of academic writing. One day, for example, she spent the class explaining how to use paraphrasing, quoting, and summarizing in an academic essay. Other times, the students work in small groups discussing a reading or giving feedback on each other's work. Still other times the students freewrite or do other in-class writing, or they participate in whole-class discussions about the content of assigned readings.

The atmosphere of the class is rather relaxed. Students are free to ask questions, although they mostly remain quiet, especially at the beginning of the semester. As time goes on, however, the students become slightly more willing to speak up when Laura asks, "Are there any questions?" Laura makes small jokes with the students and shares freely from her own experience as a writer. In fact, in almost every class, she refers to something that she has experienced that is relevant to the topic at hand, often in the form of how she felt or what she thought when doing an activity that she is asking the students to participate in. She also shares small tips that she uses as a student and a writer. In addition, she reminds students of the personal nature of writing, and is frank about how difficult it is.

In observing the class, I did not see critical pedagogy in the classical sense occurring in the classroom. There were no codes (the name Freire gives to pictures that symbolize issues in students' lives and that the teacher presents in order to instigate critical thinking), no lively debates about social or political issues, no encouragement to act on one's world in order to change it. I had thought that due to Laura's apparent commitment to the ideals of critical pedagogy, some activities of this sort would take place. Where was the critical pedagogy I was expecting?

CONSTRAINTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

As I found out more about Laura's life as a graduate student and a teacher as well as about the structure of the institute in which she teaches, there seemed to be several factors affecting the implementation of the Laura's beliefs about critical pedagogy. Bell hooks is a critical pedagogue whose writing blends Freirian and feminist ideals in the practice of what she terms "engaged pedagogy." (This term will be explained in more depth beginning on p. 61 of this paper). In her book *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), she mentions the same constraints on critical pedagogy that I was noticing in the ESL 100 class as well: lack of time, lack of experience, and lack of institutional support.

Probably one of the most important factors affecting Laura's implementation of critical pedagogy in her class is her personal lack of time. At the end of the fourth week of the semester, Laura tells me, "I don't have enough time to design a critical program. That's the main one [constraint] because I could probably overcome all of the rest of them if I had the time."

The main reason for her lack of time is the academic requirements of her own course of study: as previously mentioned, Laura is a student herself in a master's program, and is currently writing her master's thesis in addition to taking graduate course work. As a result, she is quite pressed for time and finds it necessary to look for ways to reduce her workload.

Seeking to make one's classroom more critical unfortunately does not decrease a teacher's workload. bell hooks' dialogue partner Ron Scapp asserts that "...professors and students alike are afraid to challenge, because that would mean more work. Engaged pedagogy is physically exhausting!" (p. 160) Laura's reaction to opportunities to implement critical pedagogy seemed to bear this out. About a third of the way through the semester, we sat down to work out a plan for the remainder of the term. Laura had asked me to come up with some ideas as to how to make the class more critical in nature. We spent quite a bit of time brainstorming and putting ideas on paper, then revising them

as new ones occurred to us. In the end, we had an outline for the rest of the term that I was excited about because it appeared to give the students opportunities to engage in their world, bring it into the classroom, and critique it. However, about a week later, as we began what I had thought was a small planning session to iron out the final details of our previous plan and its implementation, Laura surprised me by saying that one of her goals was to minimize what she had to do for the class. Consequently, she discarded most of what we had previously discussed and instead chose a much more traditional plan of having them write a research paper on a subject they could choose.

Related to Laura's lack of time is her lack of experience in implementing critical pedagogy. Although she has read quite a bit of literature on the theory and practice of critical pedagogy, most of it focuses on describing critical pedagogy in the context of literacy education and community ESL programs, both settings quite different from the university classroom. Even Benesch's class, which was content-based, did not provide a model that exactly fit Laura's skills-focused class. As a result, Laura was handicapped by having few to no appropriate examples of critical pedagogy in academia, and as a result lacked the experiential knowledge necessary to put it into practice in a masterful way. Bell hooks also speaks of the challenges that faced her as an inexperienced teacher seeking to challenge traditional teaching practices:

> Aware of myself as a subject in history, a member of a marginalized and oppressed group, victimized by institutionalized racism, sexism, and class elitism, I had tremendous fear that I would teach in a manner that would reinforce those hierarchies. *Yet I had absolutely no model, no example of what it would mean to enter a classroom and teach in a different way* (emphasis mine) (p. 142).

Another constraint is the lack of institutional/organizational support. If Laura is to make her class critical, everything depends entirely on her, since the set-up of the Institution makes no provision for critical pedagogy. Teachers are supported in striving for excellence; they meet every week with other teachers and the assistant director to discuss issues in the Institute such as testing, placement, and teacher workload as well as pedagogical matters in their skill areas (reading, writing, or listening). However, the overall orientation of the organization is not critical, and Laura maintains that this makes a big difference. She sees a lot of work that needs to go into the planning of an overall critical program. She says,

> In a perfect world, directors would need to spend time and energy examining all the materials that are out there. We'd have to get more in touch with a publisher who is publishing books on critical pedagogy and see if they publish materials. We'd have to

do more contacts with Elsa Auerbach and people in the field who are trying to practice it in other areas. We'd have to do a lot of research on what's out there, if anything. And that's how they would support it. They would be really involved in doing that. Then we would work with making explicit the teacher's beliefs. We would have to involve students who have been through the writing course...and ask them to reflect on their writing needs. And not just their writing needs but also on what issues came up in their lives that really affected them deeply in college and try to see if we can create common themes based on that, and then involve them explicitly in the planning process, if that's at all possible.

This topic also surfaces in bell hooks' dialogue with her colleague Ron Scapp: "In terms of the institution, we have to realize that if we are working on ourselves to become more fully engaged, there's only so much that we can do. Eventually, the institution will exhaust us simply because there is no sustained institutional support for liberatory pedagogical practices" (p. 160).

Closely linked to the lack of critical ideals in the overall organization of the Institute are the Institute's requirements for the ESL 100 course and Laura's dedication to meeting those requirements. The Institute has delineated official goals and requirements for the other skills in the program (listening and reading), but the objectives for writing are still being compiled. However, based on what she has been told by her supervisors and her previous two semesters of experience in teaching ESL 100, Laura says that she sees the purpose of the class as giving students "more opportunities to write so they can improve their writing. It's an introduction to the genre of academic writing, defined as 'what we do in school,' like responding to essays, doing research papers, or critiquing something. This course is dedicated to how you take something and write about it in a way that's academic." She seems to see encouraging students to take action on issues as incompatible with, or at least different from, her goal of helping students how to improve their writing. In an interview, she stated, "I'm not encouraging [the students] to act because I'm trying to teach them to write right now." She feels frustrated with the limited time in the semester that she has to accomplish this task of teaching the students how to write academically.

Laura sees clearly the imperfections of the system and acknowledges freely the effects on her class of the lack of time, experience, and institutional support. She defines critical pedagogy for herself as "guiding the students to think critically about their world and act on it in some way." Reflecting on the reality of that definition in her class, she mused, "Is that happening in my class? I don't know. I *think* I'm encouraging them to think about

things. In terms of action, no.... If the course were longer I think I would incorporate more of an action part, or if I had more experience, I would have incorporated it already."

However, she feels at ease overall with the way the class is. She said, "I guess there are some things that I know on a gut level are okay: knowing where I'm at in my own teaching development, I know when I want to take a risk on trying out something, and I believe in it, and I also know when I need more time to figure out how to address this issue."

STUDENT NEEDS AND PURPOSES

Critical pedagogy has as one of its fundamental concepts the idea that student needs and purposes should drive and shape what takes place in the classroom. In approaching the understanding of this ESL 100 class from a critical point of view, then, it is important to examine the needs and goals of the students in this class. However, a distinction should be made between current needs and purposes and future needs and purposes. In an interview, the teacher told me,

> I don't think students who are in [the class] always know [what they want or need]. It depends on what your focus is. If you're focusing on present needs, then yeah, the students will know. But if you're focusing on preparing them for college life, then they're not gonna know, because they don't know what it's gonna be like a year from now. They don't know . . .That's why I kinda don't believe that a needs analysis should focus just on the current learners, especially if the program is part of a system.

As I talked with the students in the class, Laura's words seemed to be borne out. The students have some ideas about what they need and want in a writing class now, but they are quite unsure about how it will relate to their future writing needs and activities.

In order to understand the nature of the students' current needs and purposes for the writing class, it is informative to examine their previous educational and writing experiences. Just like the students themselves, their backgrounds are varied. Yuan came to the United States from mainland China when he was 12 years old. His pre-university training took place in a large urban public school where he took ESL classes for a year before joining regular content classes. The writing instruction he has received has been mostly in the context of English literature classes, which he found boring. Amy, the other student with immigrant status, describes learning to write in the ESL classes in the private high school she attended as more structured: "The teacher tells you how to make introduction, body, conclusion." She says they also focused more on organization rather than content and required specific formats.

Alexandra, a Colombian student, and Kristina, from Sweden, were both educated in European-style schools. They report that they have had a lot of practice in producing academic writing that is similar in style to the kind of writing they are asked to do in this university. Ever since they were in grade school they said they have had to write essays and, in high school, they did research papers. Writing was a part of content classes rather than a specific subject.

Several of the Japanese women in the class have taken writing classes in English before either at other universities or intensive English programs. For example, Michiko took several academic writing classes both at an intensive English program and a community college. Yukiko took a lower level of writing last semester at the English Institute. Eri says that in junior college in Japan she took an English writing class but they focused on what she calls "practical writing," such as typing and taking formal notes. Satoko, on the other hand, had never taken an English writing class before. Interestingly, however, none of them reported ever having had overt writing instruction in their native language. Also, the kind of academic writing they have to do in a Japanese university is quite dissimilar to the type of writing they are asked to do here. Satoko tells me, and Yukiko agrees, that at universities in Japan students are not expected to use their own words when they write a research paper for a class. Instead they copy the words of published authors since the authors and not the students are the experts.

With such diverse backgrounds in writing, it is not surprising to find that the students also have a wide variety of expectations about how to learn to write as well as differing preferences for approaching the task. These expectations and preferences are often diametrically opposed and seem to have little relation to the student's country of origin. Both in their anonymous midterm feedback forms and in personal interviews, the things that they say they would like to change or the things that would be ideal in a writing class are quite disparate. Amy and Michiko (from Hong Kong and Japan respectively) both state that they disliked freewriting and wished that they didn't have to do it. Michiko says, "I also do not like the freewriting. I really hate that. I cannot write fast my idea. I cannot summarize my idea for short time." Amy would just prefer to write in private: "I think writing is so personal...For me, I can't really write in class. I like writing in home, so even the teacher give me time in class, I can't write it. I have to, like, go home." In direct contrast, Yuan, from China, and Eri, from Japan, say that they thoroughly enjoy freewriting and want more opportunity to do it in class. With such widely ranging preferences, it seems that it would be quite difficult for a teacher to negotiate a syllabus or even daily classroom activities with which every member of the class would be happy. Even educational background and country of origin does not seem to be a helpful

predictor of what students' preferences will be. How to find class activities that will satisfy everyone?

A clue may lie in the one common theme that emerged clearly from the student interviews: academic writing is difficult and not particularly fun. Halfway through the semester Yuan told me,

> If I don't have the pressure, I would like to write a lot. I can write a few pages in a couple hours, just express my ideas. You don't have to turn it into the teacher or something, you just write it maybe for friends or some other stuff . . .But when I try to write a paper for the teacher, I guess I'm kinda nervous and I have to think about what kind of ideas should I put in, should I include. And maybe that way I kinda get stressed out.

Another student said, "Even if it's in Japanese, I don't like writing." She hastened to add that she loves to write letters to friends and likes to write in her diary, then continued, "The writing that I hate is just for the class, because we write an essay or journal or something that will be evaluated by somebody—by teacher or others, and I don't like to be evaluated in the writing. That's the main reason, maybe, I hate writing." It seems that one need that most students have is for the teacher to address and help them to overcome their fear or aversion to academic writing. As will be seen later, Laura's attention to each student as an individual may meet this need as well as overcoming the hurdle of the students' many different preferences for class style.

The students in ESL 100 are preparing for many different academic and professional careers in their various majors, and, as a result, will probably use writing in different ways in the future. Two of the students are immigrants to the U.S. and will probably stay and work in the U.S. Four of the students are planning to complete their higher education at either this or another U.S. university, then pursue a career in their respective countries. Several are exchange students for the year from Japanese universities to which they will return to finish their studies. When I asked them how they see this writing class helping them in the future, most students seemed uncertain. They were sure that it would, somehow, but couldn't provide details. This was unsurprising since most of them are only in the second semester of university and do not really know what kind of job they want, even if they have already decided on a major. In fact, most of them are still taking classes to fulfill general university requirements, such as history and geography, and do not have much experience with the kind of writing tasks that will be required of them in their particular major or field.

In sum, many of the students in the ESL 100 class seem somewhat ill at ease with English academic discourse. Their past experiences with learning to write have not

adequately prepared all of them to write at the university level. They are acutely aware of their lack of expertise in writing in English and thus become nervous when their writing is to be evaluated. Since they are all university students, however, whether they are conscious of it or not, this is exactly the kind of writing that will be expected from them at some point in the future. Most likely, it will be in a situation where their writing will serve as proof of their expertise in a field. In order for them to succeed academically, they must learn to communicate their ideas clearly and within the conventions of the discourse of the academy.

Crookes and Long (1992) maintain that needs analysis should "be conducted in terms of the real-world *target tasks* learners are preparing to undertake"(p. 44, emphasis in the original). Although they are referring to language learning in general, the parallels to the needs of students learning academic writing are clear. Importantly, they also make a distinction between the learning process and deciding on the target tasks to be learned. The former can and possibly should be negotiated between the students and teacher; the latter is best done by the course designer. They believe that this distinction is compatible with "a principled approach to content selection" (p. 45).

However, Benesch (1996) cautions that before any taxonomy of needs is produced and adopted, consideration must be given to "the unequal social positions of the different parties involved and the possible effects of such inequality on curriculum development" (p. 724). In other words, any teacher approaching needs analysis from a critical perspective must be willing to incorporate into her course design more than just the requirements of the academic writing community or individual preferences of the students. She must be willing to acknowledge and in some way address the political context of the classroom. In the remainder of this study, I discuss the way in which Laura uses critical pedagogy and her writing philosophy to meet the students' academic writing needs.

ENGAGED PEDAGOGY

As previously noted, critical pedagogy seeks to choose content directly from the needs and knowledge of the students and to negotiate what happens in the classroom with the students.

In the face of such diverse student goals, needs, and backgrounds, is such an approach appropriate or even possible for a teacher to take in an academic writing classroom, especially in view of the time, experience, and institutional constraints described earlier? It is not only possible and appropriate, but beneficial to both teacher and student—if we

look not at specific methods but rather at the appropriateness of the manifestation of a teacher's critical pedagogical philosophy. Bell hooks makes this clear through her explanation of what she calls "engaged pedagogy." This is her term for the way she embraces the values and philosophy of critical pedagogy in her own teaching practice, for the way the ideals of critical pedagogy can manifest themselves in a real college classroom. She advocates a holistic approach to teaching that seeks to take into account the entirety (mind, body, spirit) of both teachers and students in order to make education liberatory rather than oppressive. Hooks appeals to students and teachers to dialogue with each other and endeavor to ensure that education produces freedom rather than oppression. That endeavor is free to take many forms. There is not one failsafe formula, which, if followed perfectly, produces critical or "engaged" pedagogy. Bell hooks writes, "[We] are saying that a different, more radical subject matter does not create a liberatory pedagogy, that a simple practice like including personal experience may be more constructively challenging than simply changing the curriculum" (p. 148). In the following sections, I will discuss several major and related ways in which Laura demonstrates her dedication to the practice of critical pedagogy: providing for student choice, paying attention to issues of culture in a multicultural classroom, and focusing on meaningful content. These areas, while highly interconnected, are separate enough that I believe it will be helpful to discuss them each individually.

Choice

Laura is deliberately dedicated to providing the students with choice and sees it as a part of implementing critical pedagogy. She believes that her job is "empowering students to make choices and supporting them in their choice-making." For her, another important part of critical pedagogy is dialogue. Laura feels that students need to be able to talk about things with the teacher. She often challenges the students to ask her questions in class, to make appointments to see her, to write questions to her on their drafts, to explain the situations of their lives to her (for example if their printer broke and thus they cannot hand in the paper on time). Related to this, she sees the importance of "creating an atmosphere in the class where people are comfortable because people have to take risks in a critical pedagogy class."

In seeming contrast to her ideal of choice, at the beginning of the course Laura decided without student input which parts of the book to use and which writing assignments would be appropriate. However, throughout the term she allows for choice and negotiation in specific areas, particularly content and assignment due dates. In the first assignment of the class, students can choose among several essays to read.

Afterward, they must write an essay about what they have read, but they have a choice of several writing prompts. Laura encourages them to choose the essay and prompt that means something to them personally. In the next assignment, Laura helps the students choose research topics in which they are personally interested and involved. She also negotiates with the students on two issues. The first is the number of absences and late-comings that will be allowed in the class (this happens on the first day as she discusses the syllabus) and the second is the dates on which assigned drafts will be due (this happens several times over the course of the semester). In addition, Laura encourages the students to dialogue with her about their writing. She often meets with students individually for 5- or 10-minute conferences both inside and outside of class to discuss their topic, her feedback on their writing, or any questions they might have. Through choice, negotiation, and dialogue, Laura gives the students some control over their own learning.

Culture

In a classroom where students from many different school cultures are encountering a new one, both the students and teacher approach the writing process with different past experiences of writing. Therefore, as we have seen, they hold different expectations of what writing is and what comprises legitimate ways to learn to write. In this situation, the insights provided by Street (1984), Ferdman (1990), and Gee (1996) are relevant. Street's ideological model of literacy emphasizes the culturally defined nature of literacy practices. Ferdman links the use of and familiarity with these socially constructed practices to a cultural identity that may be threatened when students confront new literacy practices to which they are unaccustomed. Gee presents the idea of "Discourse," a set of practices (including attitudes, assumptions, and often ways of reading and writing) that identifies a specific group of people (p. viii). New Discourses can be acquired through a process he calls "apprenticeship." This means that someone who is an expert in using the discourse helps a newcomer to recognize and use the practices of a certain group. Gee (1989) describes it this way: "[Y]ou scaffold their growing ability to say, do, value, believe, and so forth, within that Discourse, through demonstrating your mastery and supporting theirs even when it barely exists" (p. 180). Thus, learners are given a bridge between their cultural practices and the new ones.

Consciously or unconsciously, Laura is providing the students such a bridge. As inexperienced members of the U.S. academic community, the students need guidance. They need to be made aware of important aspects of being members of that community. Laura does this by simultaneously giving guidelines and validating the students' opinions

and experiences as she allows them to make their own choices about what they will write and gives them control over decisions that will affect their lives, such as due dates of assignments.

Another important way in which Laura provides scaffolding for the students' ability is her constant explanation of the purpose of the requirements and activities of the class. Laura constantly attempts to make clear the *why* of what she is asking the students to do. She explains everything from why she asks them to volunteer answers and comments in class ("in American classroom culture, teachers ask you to volunteer") to why she has written so many comments on their papers (she wants to give them meaningful feedback, not just pat phrases.) Every assignment has an aim and Laura makes sure the students know what it is. She frequently makes statements in class such as "This will help you learn how to develop your own ideas," or "The reason we're doing this is to broaden your perspective on different writing styles." Laura even takes time to go over the idiosyncrasies of her handwriting and abbreviations so the students will be able to understand her written comments on their papers. She makes sure the students understand the standard format of typed papers (double-spacing, font size, and style) and the reason behind her requirement for extra-large margins (so she can write comments.) In this way, she calls the students' attention to a practice of the academic community, then makes it accessible through her explanation of its purpose.

Content

Laura says that she strongly believes that content matters in a writing course. She says that is "one way I try to do a little critical stuff, is by giving meaningful content...the things we do are kind of like thought-provoking stuff which could be related to their life. So, content is important."

Through her teaching, she demonstrates that content can be used in a critical manner in an academic writing class in two ways. First, the approach can become more critical by giving the students control over the content, by letting them choose what interests and motivates them. For example, as previously noted, Laura helps the students through the process of choosing a topic for their research paper but leaves the choice of topic to them, stipulating only that it has to be something they are interested in. The second way she uses content as an entry to critical pedagogy is by ensuring that the content itself is "thought-provoking stuff," material that encourages students to reflect critically on their own experience and how it relates to important broader social themes.

In the last section of the course, the students read several chapters from bell hooks' book *Teaching to Transgress*, write a journal entry after each chapter, then write a short

paper synthesizing their ideas about the readings from class discussions and their journal entries. In so doing, they are challenged to think about their experience of education and their beliefs about what education should be.

On the first day of this final section of the course, Laura gives the students the material to read, gives them a bit of background on bell hooks and the idea of critical pedagogy, and then asks them to read and have questions ready for the next time. The following class period, each member of the class shares a short passage from the reading that caused a strong reaction in them. They discuss each quote briefly and Laura answers questions as they arise. At the end of the period, the students indicate that they would like to re-read the chapter for homework. The next time the class meets, Laura puts the students into groups to work together to address any last things that they don't understand before proceeding to the next chapter. As the groups are reporting on the questions they have, Mieko refers to the passage where bell hooks states, "In the apartheid South, black girls from working-class families had three career choices. We could marry. We could work as maids. We could become schoolteachers. And since, according to the sexist thinking of the time, men did not really desire 'smart' women, it was assumed that signs of intelligence sealed one's fate." Mieko asks, "Being a teacher is considered to be smart woman by men?" Laura turns the question around and asks the class if they have heard that men didn't like smart women. Suddenly all the students are looking up rather than staring at their books. They are listening and participating. Yuan says he doesn't think it was really true. Kristina says it definitely is not true in Europe. Yukiko says it is an issue in Japan, but Mieko hastens to add that it was in "older days." For a brief moment, the class is focused as a group on a topic of their own interest, and they seem to take ownership of the discussion.

The students also seem to participate more in small group discussions during this portion of the course. Laura gives the students the opportunity to talk about what they have been reading and work together to answer any remaining questions they have. The resulting discussions are, in most groups, quite lively and show that the students are actively engaging with the text and each other. The following exchange takes place in a small-group activity. The students are discussing Chapter 10 of bell hooks' book:

> Mieko: I think in this chapter within the conversation she gives us some solution and the method practicing pedagogy, like the teachers need to move, or the teachers whatever they can do outside of the class too, or the teacher need to teach the students how to listen to the peers, and all the things you need to learn for practicing to get the freedom from education. Kristina: Yeah, and

she's talking about how the student and teacher should [xx], like the teacher shouldn't just be a mind, they should be a body, too.

Mieko: yeah, yeah.

Kristina: And I think that is so true, because when I have a teacher that is just, like, standing up there talking, not talking about himself at all, or about his own experience, like that, I get so—It's so boring. He just like rattling everything off.

Mieko: Yeah, just teaching the information.

Kristina: because you can kind of relate to a person, cause if you're just a mind you can't really relate to that. And I didn't know that before. I wasn't thinking about the teacher and what had happened to the teacher before this, like how did he or she grew up. And stuff like that, I didn't even think about it.

Mieko: Yeah, it's interesting. Teachers should be do that.

Kristina: Yeah. I mean, I'm not saying that they should tell own life story, but it's more interesting if the teacher can share a little bit of her own.

Mieko: Something related to the academic information.

Kristina: Yeah, exactly. I think the atmosphere gets so much better if you can feel a teacher is open and you can talk about anything.

Mieko: And she says in this chapter that it is important to make the community in the class, so in this sense the teacher and students are equal. I like that idea.

Kristina: I think it's interesting, the thing that he was talking about that he made his student laugh. Like the other teacher thought that the students didn't respect him enough. But that is so wrong. I had this teacher last semester in human development, and he was like the funniest teacher ever. I went to all his classes. I loved his classes, and I learned so much from that class. He was so funny, I mean, ok, everybody can't be, but...

Mieko: I think I never met such a teacher.

Kristina: Never? No? That was the first time I ever met a funny teacher.

Yuan: This class is ok. At least our teacher, like, the way she talks is more interesting than so monotone.

Kristina: Exactly. When they have this—Their voice is like blah, blah, blah, blah.

Yuan: Yeah, the way she presents [xx] is so interesting sometimes, because you like to listen to her.

Kristina: Exactly. And she seems so, like, into it and really wants us to learn.

Yuan: Yeah.

The three students in this group, all from different countries and educational backgrounds, are discovering common educational experiences and are able, in an academic setting, to voice their opinions about what that experience should and should not be like. It is also clear that they are aware that Laura is genuinely concerned that their educational experience, at least in this class, be a worthwhile one.

The students are also discussing these sorts of issues among themselves outside of class. About a week after the previous incident occurred, I talk with three of the Japanese women in the class. One of them, Takako, says that some of the ideas in bell hooks' writing are new to her because she doesn't think that in Japan people talk about race and gender roles as much as they do in the U.S.. When I ask her why, she says that in Japan they have a very traditional system in which women are considered weaker than men but that people "don't much care about that." This leads to a long discussion on their experience and personal opinions on women's roles and even how they view other women who do not follow traditional roles. Additionally, several comments that they make tell me that they have talked about this before among themselves, suggesting that they are involved in thinking about this subject not just because they are motivated to do well in the class, but because it matters to them in real life.

TEACHING WRITING

In a basic university writing skills class such as ESL 100, the institutional requirements must be considered. ESL 100 is a required course for all undergraduate ESL students at the university. It is billed as a writing course, and thus Laura believes that is what the students expect. She thinks it is unfair to "pull the rug out" from under students who are taking a required course about how to write by surprising them with political content. Thus, as the teacher of a class specifically and officially dedicated to the purpose of teaching students to write academically and as a responsible educator, Laura is expected to and wants to fulfill her duty of helping the students improve their writing. As Delpit (1995) reminds us, assisting students in accessing discourses of power is part of empowering students and encouraging them to act on their world rather than passively submit to injustice. Her proposition is that in order to have the tools necessary to challenge injustice and inequality in existing structures of power, students who were not "born into" the discourse of those structures need to be taught the discourse of power. Delpit asserts that teachers who fail to do so, even in the name of "liberal" or "progressive" education, do these students a great disservice, since only by learning how to use the discourse of power *in addition* to appreciating and cultivating their own

discourse will their voices be heard. Her argument, while based on the experience of people of color in the United States, can be extended to ESL students seeking to succeed in the academic world of a foreign country. These students also need to learn how to use to their advantage, indeed, for their survival, the discourse (especially written) of the academe. Critical pedagogy that does not make available to ESL students the knowledge and skills they need to meet their educational goals is not in reality fulfilling its purpose of empowering those students.

Choice, culture, and content go hand in hand with Laura's goal of helping her students begin to master academic discourse. Her means of doing so are mediated by her philosophy of teaching writing, which she describes as having several parts.

I truly believe that I need to give [students] as many opportunities to write as possible. The act of writing itself does something. I think it helps stimulate thought. The other thing I'm really starting to believe strongly in is helping them to learn how to *think* about these ideas. I have to learn how to guide them so that they can learn how to generate ideas, because that's what is at the heart of writing—generating these ideas.

Laura gives students the opportunity to write in her class by involving students in activities such as freewriting and journal writing, and of course writing several formal papers. She challenges students to truly process the ideas in their own and each other's writing as well as the reading it is based on. To this end, the students write journals to help shape and chronicle their interaction with the text. Then they discuss the ideas in class where they are free to ask any questions they may have about the material so that Laura is sure they understand it well. Often the students talk with each other in small groups about the reading selections, providing even more opportunity for analysis of the ideas at hand.

Another part of her philosophy involves helping students to explore ideas and to learn that the way they explain their ideas to the reader is important. As the course progresses, in order to heighten the students' consciousness of interaction with a reader when they write, Laura becomes an active reader for them through the feedback she gives on their papers, both in writing and during conferences. She also encourages them to be readers for each other in class by putting them into groups of two or three and having them read what others have written. She attempts to broaden their awareness of readers even further by asking them to find other readers outside of the class. Their final paper must be handed in already proofread by either a native or more advanced English speaker. She reminds them that in the future as they continue to write in academia, she will not be there to read and critique their papers for them, so they need to practice now locating

other people and resources to help them succeed in their academic career. This is an active demonstration of Laura's stated goal of helping her students become more aware of themselves as writers and more aware of the writing process in a metacognitive way.

Although Laura may not be aware of it, she practices engaged pedagogy in yet another way. Almost every class period, she shares with the students something of her own experience as it relates to the assignment she was giving or an issue or skill they were discussing. When telling the students how to double-space, she relates the struggle she had with learning computers as an undergraduate. She often refers to her experience as a student, whether it is about getting organized (as she asks the students to keep all their writing together in one spot) or her feelings about assignments professors gave her, or things she learned as she started her academic writing career. As is evident from their conversation as shown earlier, and as they told me in interviews, the students appreciate her human-ness. Michiko told me in the last month of the semester, "I like the teacher. She is very kind. Her teaching way is very good. She really understand students' feeling and how students work well or not." Shortly thereafter, Alexandra, a student from Colombia, stated, "She's trying to do what the book [*Teaching to Transgress*] says, get an interaction between her and the students." Indeed, Laura's teaching style is summed up well in bell hooks' words, "[S]haring personal narratives yet linking that knowledge with academic information really enhances our capacity to know" (p. 148).

It is clear both from the students' writing and from their own perceptions of what they have learned and accomplished as writers in the class that their goal of improving their academic writing is being met. In their final self-evaluation, several students express specific ways that their academic writing skills have developed throughout the course.

Takako: I think I've learned some good terms for academic writing. So my paper become more academic as the time went by.

Yoko: I think I could be getting to write more analytically/organizingly. It means in the beginning of this semester I just wrote whatever I felt/liked without further thinking, but now at least I know if I write based on some reading, how to connect my opinions with authors' and how to quote and paraphrase.

Amy: I do feel I have learned more about academic writing, what area I was weak when I write my paper such as sometimes, I missing the part of the content and jump too fast to the conclusion.

Michiko: I think I could write my ideas while relating with some author's ideas. At the beginning of this semester, I didn't know how to relate my idea with authors ideas from given reading. However, I got some way to

> write an those kind of paper. I knew the way of annotation, journal entry. Those ways are very helpful when I write an academic paper.

It is also apparent that the students are beginning to find and own their writing voices in a new language and new discourse:

> Kristina: I feel more comfortable now when I write than I did in the beginning of this semester. I am not that scared to use "hard word" and bend the language any more. *I think this has to do with me not being afraid of doing mistakes* (emphasis mine).

> Mieko: I have learned to develop and explain an idea in detail. The deeper the idea is, the more the paper can be interesting. Also, readers can understand the idea better and easily. My favorite is an essay and to choose a topic by myself. I like it because I can arrange the paper freely; from readings and from my own experiences.

> Amy: I can see my writing is more organize and also the content is more insight and well-written.

> Takako: As the class is going, I found it is very important that *I* have something to say in the paper, it's not someone else who write a paper... . I think I've learned that I should have a strong opinion in my paper.

Not only have the students gained confidence, they demonstrate a greater awareness of themselves as writers, in the area of skills as well as in the area of ideas. Their growing understanding of the interconnectedness of these two areas as expressed in their self-evaluations is testament to the balance Laura has created between teaching forms such as essays, citation conventions, and paraphrasing, and focusing on content by encouraging the students to use personal experience and authentic voice in writing.

This increased skill is evident in the students' writing. Each student's writing changes throughout the semester in a unique way, and each person has his or her own strengths and weaknesses. However, an analysis of the first drafts of Takako's initial and final essays provides an illustration of the movement that the majority of the students made by the end of the semester toward becoming more sophisticated writers in terms of both forms of academic writing and depth of ideas. In her first paper (see Appendix A), which is based on an essay she read from the textbook, Takako shows little knowledge of how to skillfully incorporate an author's ideas into her own writing. She attempts to do so by using paraphrase and quotations, but the result seems choppy, and she does not observe conventions such as using page numbers with direct quotes. The overall organization of her paper is fairly clear but her ideas are not fully developed or clearly related to each other. For example, she writes, "I felt some difference between the author,

May Sarton's thought and my thought." No summary or explanation follows, however. Takako exhibits some understanding of the text, but does not end up making a strong point; though she tries to do so in the conclusion, unclear language frustrates her efforts.

In contrast, in her final essay (see Appendix B), which is based on the bell hooks text, Takako creates a clearly-organized piece of writing in which she establishes at the beginning the direction she will take by gracefully summarizing an important point from bell hooks' writing. She then responds to it from her own experience, and raises a question that sets up the design of the essay: "What are the differences between wonderful classes and not wonderful classes?" In the remainder of the essay, she answers that question by developing her ideas about the roles of teachers and students in "true education," while linking them analytically to the text. Throughout, she paraphrases and embeds quotations in a naturally flowing way and observes the conventions of citation.

The students use their increased control of academic writing in a critical analysis of their experience and surroundings that challenges the academic institutions they have encountered. In the final paper, several Japanese students critique the Japanese education system. Satoko writes in her introduction, "In this paper, I am going to describe the education system at my Japanese university and consider how it can be improved" and proceeds to write a thoughtful comparison of her experiences in Japanese and U.S. university systems. Several other students address the issue of student and teacher roles. Yuan titles his paper "Rethinking Education: The Path to Transgression" (the class had discussed the meaning of "transgress" both in its traditional sense and the sense in which bell hooks uses it: to purposefully go beyond the boundaries of learning set by traditional education). In it, he uses scenarios to paint a picture of education that is not "exciting," and then to imaginatively place both himself and the reader in the role of a "self-actualized" teacher. He details concrete ways that teachers can communicate with students. In his conclusion, he writes,

> Cooperation is the key then to successful education. Students should not view classes as a place to just sit and listen to lectures. Professors should not view teaching as just another job. The classroom is a forum that offers the opportunity for students and teachers to discover themselves, to self-actualize and realize their dreams. Education then isn't just learning, it really is a path to transgression. It's a path both teachers and students must take together.

Without exception, the students write intensely of their longing for more interesting classes, more real communication with teachers and professors, more opportunities to develop and express their own ideas. They write of the powerful influence that such (unfortunately rare) experiences or the lack thereof has had on their lives. Their increased

academic writing skills give them the self-assurance to express these powerful ideas in a way that they can be heard.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite being unsure of her ability to combine a critical class that encourages students to act on their world with a class where students learn academic writing skills, in reality, Laura seems quite able to weave together her writing philosophy and her value of critical pedagogy. Rather than adopting a single approach to writing pedagogy, she chooses ideas from various philosophies and adapts them to her value of critical pedagogy and to the needs of her students. She borrows from the process approach by having the students write drafts and emphasizing the ongoing and cyclical nature of writing. In the tradition of English for Academic Purposes, she requires the students to master the basic conventions and requirements of academic writing and introduces them to the genres they will be expected to produce in academia. She also adopts an inquiry approach by having students use writing as an exploration of their own and others' ideas and experiences. Most importantly, as a critical pedagogue, she encourages them to work with ideas and issues that are relevant to their lives.

Another factor in Laura's success is the way she provides opportunities for choice and control for the students and ensures that the content of the course is relevant and critical. By sharing her own stories and experiences and promoting dialogue, she invites the students to relate their own experience to the academic texts they encounter. In the safe space of the class, she encourages them to try their voices on subjects that matter to them such as education, gender roles, and experiencing new cultures. Along the way, she creates a bridge for the students between their past experiences of learning and writing and the expectations of the U.S. academic culture. As a result, the students are not only able to strengthen their academic writing skills, they find the freedom to use them to critique the worlds they inhabit.

Critical pedagogy, then, is appropriate for the academic ESL classroom but must be applied in ways that take into account the real constraints of the academic ESL classroom as well as the needs and purposes of academically oriented students. In this way, critical pedagogy can critique the structures and constraints that shape the classroom while continuing to meet students' needs for learning. Writing teachers who, while introducing students to academic discourse, validate student voices and ideas, encourage dialogue, and attempt to make the classroom a safe place for taking risks are invoking in a skills context the spirit of critical pedagogy.

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APPENDIX A: TAKAKO'S FIRST ESSAY

ESL 100: Draft one
February 6, 1998

Discovery in a Solitary Life.

I often think there are various ways of thinking depend upon individuals. The ways of thinking are different from person to person. Although there is something in common, it is different how a person feels or thinks about a matter. Through my reading "The rewards of Living a Solitary Life", I felt some differences between the author, May Sarton's thought and my thought. However, I found something in common with her theory and my thought.

It is true that most people seek for freedom in their lives. In other words, most people want to live as they like. Our society consists of many human relationships, such as parents and children, a husband and a wife, a friend and a friend or a teacher and a student. In every case, we need to cooperate each other, and sometimes we need to make a compromise with each other. When you have to give up your opinion to compromise with a person, you must feel stresses, Therefore, people love to have his or her own space or time to live in his or her own way.

I found two aspects of solitary life. The first aspect is what Sarton gave emphasis in her essay, that is to say, the greatness of living a solitary life. The another aspect is what I have had in my mind, that is to say, the bitterness of living a solitary life.

First, as I mentioned above, we sometimes want to be released from the tension among the human relations. In the essay, Sarton said that solitude is the time for thinking about herself moreover about the other people. You can fulfill your mind with your own way -of thinking without any interruptions by anybody. You also can get your ideas into shape away from the flood of the information in the society. By using the time and space as you like, you can feel relaxed and free, moreover feel greatness that you are living your own life. Thus, living in a solitariness has negative aspect.

Second, this is not mentioned in Sarton's essay, a solitary life is sometimes too lonely. Sarton said that she feels greatness in waking i up alone, taking a walk with her dog and thinking alone. But think this way, waking up alone "everyday", taking a walk and thinking alone "everyday". You are alone whether you are sleeping or awaking, and also whether you are in home or not, you have no one who talk or share the feeling with. Is not it sounds sorrowful? In the essay, she said she was flooded with happiness when she lived alone. I doubt if her idea is true or not. Truly, it is very convenient that one can

use his or her time freely, but do you want to be alone all the time? I often think in this way, humans are always alone when he or she dies. Most people afraid of their death because it is so lonely and is perfectly unknown thing. I always feel deep sadness when my important person passed away, and I feel some regret that I could not get know each other enough. Then I afraid of that someday I have to say good-bye to everyone. Although it is true that I want to be alone "when I am overtired", "when I have worked too long without a break" as Sarton said, I feel lonesome if I were alone all day long.

Considering these two aspects of a solitary life, I discovered one important thing. People must learn something important through both single life and non-single life. That is to say, a person who lives alone could learn the good and bad points of his or her lifestyle. A person who lives with someone together could also learn these things as well as single person does. People must learn both good and bad aspects of their lifestyles, and then they make a decision which lifestyle match with themselves. It depends on one's characteristics to decide how he or she lives. If one prefer living in freedom to living with any other persons, he or she would live alone. On the other hand, if one prefer living cheerfully to live alone, then he or she would live someone together. We have to keep in mind that there are both good and bad aspects in each lifestyle.

APPENDIX B: TAKAKO'S FINAL ESSAY

ESL 100: Paper Three,
April 29, 1998

True Education: Can we practice It?

"I loved learning" (p. 3) bell hooks says in "Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom". She loved being a student in school because she could get wonderful ideas and thoughts in school, and could find herself, and develop its there. I often feel in the same way as bell hooks does. I often feel excitement when I get new ideas or different opinions from what I have, in a classroom. I can extend my thought by attending a class and exchanging opinions with the teacher and other students. I remember that I took many wonderful classes that allowed me to develop myself. However, there were some classes whose contents I totally forgot. What are the differences between wonderful classes and not wonderful classes?

Bell hooks mentions "the practice of freedom" (p. 13). She argues that teachers, who have a prejudice against race or gender, make the class boring. These prejudices prevent students from being independent thinkers in a classroom. It is true that if we cannot speak out our thoughts freely, we can never discuss and expand our thought in a classroom. To avoid such an awful situation in a classroom, teachers should show the students that they have a capacity for speaking out their opinions freely. As bell hooks says, professors should take "the first risk" (p. 21) in terms of sharing experiences in the classroom. Professors should show the first important step to make the class exciting. Professors' words or narratives of their experiences might encourage students to speak out themselves. However, as bell hooks says, this does not mean that professors have to be the dictator in the classroom, but they have to be the leader or the healer for the students. If students' emotions were understood by their professors, they would not need to be afraid to speak them out, and would not need to keep silence in the classroom.

At the same time, the responsibilities for true education are also those of students. I agree with bell hooks's point that "student [should] be an active participant, not a passive consumer" (p. 1 4) in the classroom. It is not only the teacher who makes the class exciting but also students should be active participants of the class. After I took some classes in the U.S, I have realized that it is very important and exciting to share the opinions with other students in the class. In my country Japan, most students hardly speak their opinions out in a class. It might be because of their fear of isolation in the class. They are afraid their opinions are different from others', or afraid of making

mistakes. On the other hand, in the U.S students are more likely to insist on expressing their opinions in the class. Compared to these American students who are very active in a class, most Japanese students seem to be much less interested in the class. I can find the reason for this situation, and it is because Japanese students do not speak out. They cannot connect the subject and themselves. In my opinion, these students who cannot speak out should be aware that there is no punishment for misunderstanding or eccentric ideas in the class. Rather, these ideas might make the class interesting.

Bell hooks puts emphasis on "self-actualization" for both the teachers and students. When I was in Japan, I did not realize the importance of self-actualization in the class. However, I have been realizing that it is very important to think deeply about who I am, what I believe, and why I learn. Otherwise, we cannot find the significance of taking an education. Through the education we should find ourselves, then we will be aware of the world around us, such as people, society, politics, and other things that we are interested in. Thus, we can pursue true education by self-actualization and knowing the importance of thinking and living deeply. Again, as bell hooks points out, it is not only the teachers but also the students who should challenge themselves by practicing true education.

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