

# FOREWORD: MULTILINGUALITY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

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Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) research was rather a latecomer to the project of investigating the impact of linguistic diversity among our students on our pedagogy, outcomes, and procedures. At the risk of grossly oversimplifying, one might almost say that research on second language (L2) writing issues followed something of a developmental curve, with the earliest work emerging from K-12 studies on bilingual education and Generation 1.5, then spreading to basic writing and the first-year composition level. The relation between WAC and multilingual issues was forcefully raised in the 1990s to early 2000s by scholars such as Paul Kei Matsuda, Ann Johns, and Ilona Leki. In recent years, WAC has been making a concerted effort to explore its own patch of L2 ground. Most recently, a special issue of *Across the Disciplines* (hereafter *ATD*) addressed the theme of “WAC and Second Language Writing: Cross-field Research, Theory, and Program Development.” The call for that issue advocated a heightened attention to the presence of L2 writers in WAC and Writing in the Disciplines (WID) courses and called for “research that would contribute to the growing understanding of the complexities of writing across languages, cultures, and disciplines.” Contributors to the issue applied a variety of theoretical perspectives, research methodologies, and institutional contexts to questions raised on multilingual writers and WAC/WID. Subsequently, a panel at the 2012 IWAC conference brought together several contributors for a live exchange on topics raised in the issue and directions for future research and WAC/WID practice.

The panel, like the *ATD* issue itself, advanced the argument that the concerns of multilingual writers are not in any way peripheral to or unusual in the way that our profession will evolve, but rather are rapidly assuming a central position in discussions of the future of WAC. The present volume, with the same editors as the special issue, continues that argument, applying it to the specific audiences and administrative functions of a twenty-first century WAC program. In this preface, I draw examples from that *ATD* issue and the present collection to identify and discuss three axes in WAC/WID research and practice on L1/L2 issues, polarities that may be in tension, but are not incommensurable:

local and global, student experience and faculty expectations, and traditional WAC pedagogy for all students and differentiated instruction for multilingual learners. These are, in many ways, the same conflicts and uncertainties that have been inherent in the WAC/WID project from the very beginning, yet all of them take on new meaning and new dimensions in the age of the multilingual majority.

## LOCAL AND GLOBAL

Historically WAC has been both an international movement and an intensely local phenomenon. No two WAC programs are exactly the same, though, and there has always been a tension between, on the one hand, an almost evangelical fervor, a feeling of WAC as a universal and transformational pedagogy, and, on the other, an insistence on the local—this campus, this faculty, this student population, this course, this writer, this paper. But in today's interconnected world, the relation between the global and the local takes on added complexity as well as urgency.

The very names of the institutions from which Amy Zenger, Joan Mullin, and Carol Peterson Haviland (this volume) and Lynn Ronesi (*ATD* special issue) file their reports pose the global/local issue in all its contradictory complexity: the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the American University of Sharjah (AUS). The latter, with a faculty largely imported from abroad (not all from the US) and a student body representing 82 different nationalities, is a good example of an English as an International Language (EIL) context: an institution where English is the medium of academic instruction but not the dominant local language. As Ronesi details her efforts to adapt a US-style writing fellows model to the needs of local students and faculty, she delineates the need to re-think even well-known and successful models in new contexts. Even more fundamentally, as Zenger, Mullin, and Haviland suggest in their description of AUB, such projects raise the question of what exactly we might mean by “English” in this context. How, for example, are the various “Englishes” present on a particular campus related to other languages that students might use both outside and inside the classroom? To what degree does the emphasis on “English” —especially within an “American” university with US accreditation but outside of the US —carry with it an inherent US/Western cultural imperialism in its very structure, and to what extent are students able to strip out these cultural associations, regarding English as a pragmatic, straightforward language to be used in business and other transnational transactions? Can they, as some of them desire, simply speak English without having English unconsciously speak them as well?

Martha Patton's contribution to the *ATD* special issue focuses on what the editors call "globalism at home": international students in a US context. These students come to the US with some literacy in their L1, but often not much familiarity with US academic procedures and little experience with writing in English. Patton's article is particularly timely given the current trend, both at cash-strapped public institutions still reeling from large cuts in state funding and at financially struggling private colleges, of importing full-paying international students to boost enrollments. But these students cannot ethically be educated on the cheap: they often require support services of various kinds, as Patton details while arguing for the value of conducting a systematic needs analysis at one's own institution.

On English as an International Language campuses, the need to accommodate WAC practices to local culture is easily evident, while in domestic US cases, the imperative for adjusting to local conditions is likely to be more subtle, but nonetheless urgent. Most campuses are now aware that examinations of linguistic diversity need to go beyond international students to consider the complex language backgrounds of US-resident multilingual students. The particular conglomeration of students (immigrants, "Generation 1.5," "heritage learners," etc.) in particular classrooms, with their various multilingualities and multicompetencies, requires our attention. In the US context, what are the cultural consequences of the decline of the subtractive model of language acquisition, i.e. the expectation that a student's second language will eventually replace the first (Hall, 2009, pp. 36-37)? How will students who maintain multicompetence in a variety of languages which they use for particular purposes, which they mix and match casually and skillfully in their everyday lives, bring a different sensibility to their academic studies? How will they read differently and write differently, between multiple languages and across diverse cultures, moving among and synthesizing genres and ideas in ways that we cannot predict in advance, but will have to respond to day after day in the present moment of the classroom?

The relation between the "global" and the "local" becomes yet more complex when interactions between instructor and student—or between student and academic support staff—take place neither on a US campus nor on a campus in another country but rather on a little bit of both and quite a lot in the vast nowhere/everywhere of cyberspace. In the particular Globally Networked Learning Environment (GNLE) described by Jennifer Craig in this volume, students work toward a master's degree in engineering at MIT in a program which includes 1) a one semester residency on the US campus, 2) continued coursework over synchronous video connecting MIT faculty with students residing in Singapore, 3) a research internship in Singapore, and 4) academic

support provided online by staff in the US during the thesis-writing process. Who is “at home” and who is in the “international” position in such a scenario?

The comprehensive description by Dana Ferris and Chris Thaiss in the *ATD* special issue of the various forms that L2 work takes on the University of California at Davis campus emphasizes the complexity of the changes required, showing how serious attention to these issues goes well beyond the occasional faculty development workshop to impact nearly everything that we do on campus, from placement to first-year composition, to writing intensive courses, to curriculum within particular majors, to assessment, to writing centers and other academic support services. If we are truly to situate ourselves both critically and consciously in a global context and at the same time attend to the intensely local characteristics of a unique campus population, and of the various needs of the individuals within that population, a consciousness of linguistic diversity has to be a factor in all of WAC’s administrative and pedagogical decisions; it must be explicitly included, because otherwise we may easily fall back on our unspoken assumptions of monolingualism.

## **STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND FACULTY EXPECTATIONS**

Students and faculty, though they intersect in the same physical space on campus, often seem to be speaking different languages. Once this was a metaphor, but nowadays it is often literal. Faculty may find themselves not fully understanding, especially on an experiential basis, either the challenges faced or the resources brought to the table by their multilingual students, while students, both L2 and L1, often regard faculty expectations as a guessing game, a process of figuring out what the idiosyncratic instructor wants, rather than as an example of discipline-specific rhetorical expectations.

Faculty expectations for student writing are often complex and conflicted. The studies by Ives, Leahy, Leming, Pierce, & Schwartz, and Zawacki and Habib in this volume discuss this faculty ambivalence, finding that faculty “want to be fair and ethical in working with linguistically diverse students, but don’t know how to do so while still sticking to the commonly held standards for writing in their disciplines and institutions” (Ives et al.) Peggy Lindsey and Deborah Crusan (*ATD*) show how assessments of student writing may be affected by knowledge that faculty have about students’ nationality and language background, but that this effect may be in either direction, dependent, in part, on the method of assessment. Thus issues of L2 literacy become entangled with broader debates about how best to assess student writing, not only at the college level but also K-12. Would it be fairer, as Lindsey and Crusan ask, to

assess writing based on a reading of a student paper in which the instructor is unaware of the identity of the student, and therefore unaware of the students' language background, nationality, and other factors that might impact their writing? Many writing instructors want to know more rather than less about their student writers, integrating literacy narratives and language background information into their pedagogy and their assessment of student writing. Or should we, as some suggest, adopt a distinction between “content” and “writing,” exactly the sort of dubious dichotomy that much of composition research has laboriously debunked? The faculty in the Ives et al. study sometimes characterized their assessment procedures as a no-win situation: feeling guilty if they applied the same standards to monolingual and multilingual students—and also feeling guilty if they did not do so. There are no easy answers to these assessment questions, which are made more urgent by the frequent demands, often coming from outside the classroom, for a universal standard of writing proficiency, which all too often becomes defined reductively. How can we insist on complexity, critical thinking, and subtle attention to the nuances of language while also opening ourselves up to new insights that may arise from translingual processes in student writing? How can we find ways for students to access what they know—and what they are able to do in terms of writing skills—in their other languages, and apply these knowledges and abilities to the new rhetorical situations they encounter in their writing tasks in US academic contexts?

While we have become more aware of the multilinguality of our students, we have tended to overlook the equally complex—and potentially relevant—multilinguality of some of our faculty. Anne Ellen Geller's survey (*ATD*) focused on respondents who were teaching writing courses across the disciplines, and who also identified themselves as multilingual. If multilingual students are often invisible, multilingual faculty may be even more so, as they have adapted, in order to survive in US academia, to a norm of English-only in their professional publications and communications, and, often, as well, in their interactions with students, even those with whom they may share a non-English language. Yet, as Geller suggests, such faculty potentially constitute an under-utilized resource as we seek to re-invent WAC/WID in the era of global Englishes and translingual practices. But these faculty sometimes need encouragement to step forward and bring their expertise to the WAC/WID classroom, to participate in a program which they might otherwise perceive as dominated by unarticulated monolingualist assumptions. In addition, multilingual faculty are potentially a vital resource as we research the relationship between the process of entering a discourse community—often described as analogous to learning a new language (what Matsuda and Jablonski call “the L2 metaphor”) —and the process of learning to write in a completely new language code. These faculty have done

both, and often have complex insights to share about both processes and the relation between them, but we will only learn about these insights if we actively seek these faculty out and ask them.

## **TRADITIONAL WAC PEDAGOGY FOR ALL STUDENTS AND DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS**

Thus far, WAC/WID approaches to L2 issues have focused primarily—and appropriately—on changing faculty attitudes about multilinguality, and here I think we have been somewhat successful. The next step, though, is more difficult: persuading faculty to experiment with alternate pedagogical practices. In order to do this we need to be able to answer, with a high degree of specificity, the perennial question: “What can I do differently in class on Tuesday morning?” L2 students, like their L1 peers, need rigorous training and practice in academic writing, but some of our core WAC practices, such as in-class spontaneous freewriting, may prove particularly difficult, and even potentially counter-productive, for students who usually produce English text slowly and only as part of a complex translingual process which involves their L1 as well. Vivian Zamel (1995) suggests that ESL students need:

multiple opportunities to use language and write-to-learn, course work which draws on and values what students already know, classroom exchanges and assignments that promote the acquisition of unfamiliar language, concepts, and approaches to inquiry, evaluation that allows students to demonstrate genuine understanding—is good pedagogy for everyone. (pp. 518-519)

From the point of view of WAC administrators, Zamel’s view sounds like good news, for it is essentially an affirmation of the basic principles of WAC pedagogy. The suggestion is that we are doing the right things, as we advocate for better implementation of these principles in courses across the disciplines, but we just need to make sure that faculty apply them in an even-handed way to L1/L2 students. An opposing view, one first posed by Ilona Leki in reference to first-year composition, and extended to WAC/WID by Michelle Cox in the *ATD* issue, asks:

Is it possible that WAC administrators and scholars, like our colleagues in L2 writing studies and first year composition,

place the same overemphasis on writing? Have we paid more attention to the potential benefits of integrating writing into curricula than the possible costs to some students? (n.p.)

In other words, is Zamel right that WAC is part of the pedagogical solution for L1/L2? Or is Leki right that our insistence on writing to learn may inadvertently be part of the problem? One midpoint between these positions would be to find ways of incorporating theoretical insights, research methodologies, and pedagogical techniques from other disciplines into our WAC/WID classroom practices. Zak Lancaster's article (*ATD*) provides an illustration of both the potential benefits and the particular difficulties of this approach. Drawing on the concept of stance from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Lancaster analyzes student writing from a particular course, and suggests potential pedagogical interventions. The course instructor found these techniques useful, but he clearly would never have come across the SFL-based analysis on his own; the breakthrough was only possible after a rather labor-intensive study of a sample of student papers on the part of Lancaster. Thus Lancaster's project highlights both the potential gains of a situated interdisciplinary approach—which examines the texts and practices of a particular pedagogical context using research-based tools—and also the difficulties inherent in exporting the hard-won findings of such a time-invested study in ways that ensure they will actually be used to help students in an upper-level disciplinary writing classroom. How can we present our findings to faculty in a way that is both useful and nonthreatening, and that is likely to filter through to the students? Michelle Cox's contribution to this volume addresses this question of professional development head on, describing specific workshop strategies for moving faculty gradually from a difference-as-deficit model to an interim difference-accommodation procedure and ultimately toward a difference-as-resource consciousness which even advanced theoretical work in the area is only now in the process of fully articulating.

Sound WAC pedagogy remains an indispensable prerequisite to the type of targeted differentiated instruction that a linguistically diverse student body demands. But we also need to incorporate new methods, models, and technologies which potentially offer previously unavailable means of implementing strategies tailored to L2 students while also serving the needs of L1 student writers. We are still in the relatively early stages of developing WAC-based multilingual-friendly instructional techniques that are suitable for a mixed population of students with a wide variety of linguistic backgrounds in the same classroom. Given the extensive variety of instructional situations that fall under the umbrella of WAC/WID, we will require a broad palette of

approaches, some developed through painstaking situated studies in individual courses and classrooms, others incorporating more general principles of course and assignment design developed through interdisciplinary cooperation. Traversing this pedagogical frontier is one of the most important challenges that we face as WAC instructors, administrators, and researchers.

## **THE FUTURE**

The future of WAC/WID in pedagogy, administration, and research will be determined by how well we negotiate the polarities represented by these axes. It would be easy to do more of the same in administration, without using local assessments to drive adaptations to the needs of specific populations, cultures, and conditions. It would be easy to repeat our traditional faculty development workshops on teaching effectively with writing in the discipline without adapting them for our new student populations, and without exploring ways of reaching these students directly using both emerging technology and new adaptations of traditional resources such as writing centers. WAC/WID can only maintain its viability as a twenty-first century pedagogical movement and academic discipline if it recognizes the ways that linguistic diversity is transforming our institutions. Multilinguality across the curriculum is not a matter of adapting multilingual students to a monolingual English norm, but rather of helping faculty adapt to the reality that multilingual students are not going to check their other languages at the door; rather, the academy has to open up the door and listen to what is being said in the hallway, and bring that conversation inside, where it can be continued. We need to find ways, in other words, for students to use their other languages in academic contexts—doing archival research in their home language(s), for example, as happens in the program Thomas Lavelle and Alan Shima describe in this volume, or providing linguistic or cultural commentary on assigned readings that are in English translation.

Our classroom practice, our pedagogical theory, and our research all need to change and develop in order to meet the challenges of the new mainstream. By building our pedagogy on a solid research base which combines global awareness with local specificity, we can adjust our college writing pedagogy in order to reach multilingual learners and help them to succeed at the highest academic levels. That is: Think globally. Research locally. Teach consciously.

The articles in this volume are a good place to continue that process and that journey.



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