ESL Students and WAC Programs: Varied Populations and Diverse Needs

ANN M. JOHNS

San Diego State University

During the years since the WAC movement was initiated, the student populations in many college and university classrooms have become increasingly linguistically diverse.[1] This ethnic diversity is due to an influx of new immigrants, the result of changes in the immigration laws (as noted by McLeod and Miraglia in the introduction to this volume), and, to a lesser extent, to increased enrollment of international students. In states such as California, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas, the growth in the immigrant population has been dramatic. There has also been considerable growth in unlikely states such as Alabama, Arkansas, Nevada, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

These linguistically diverse students present new challenges to faculty in the disciplines, who may have planned their curricula with native speakers of English in mind, who may feel alienated from diverse students (Zamel),[2] and who have what may be unrealistic expectations about the level of proficiency a non-native speaker can attain in written prose. In order to work with these faculty, it is important for those involved in writing across the curriculum to review the literature on second-language acquisition, error, and contrastive rhetoric; examine how the "foundation" ESL writing courses, if any, are taught; and consider how best to help faculty in the disciplines (perhaps including composition and rhetoric faculty) work with ESL writers. Before we examine these issues, however, let us first look at who these writers are.

Who Are the Linguistically Diverse Students?

Perhaps the most important point to be made about our ESL students is that they are diverse in many ways: they vary in their proficiency levels in their first languages and in English, in their professional aims and literacy theories, and in their academic expectations. In order to sort out some of these differences, educational experts have somewhat artificially separated diverse students into categories. The largest and most dispersed of these groups consists of naturalized citizens and documented or undocumented aliens—students who were born in another country, have come to the United States, generally with their families, and intend to remain. Many of these students are identified in primary and secondary schools as limited English proficient (LEP)—that is, as not having achieved the academic language proficiencies necessary to compete with monolingual English-speakers.[3] The LEP student population increased more than 100 percent in U.S. public schools (K–12) between academic years 1985–86 and 1994–95, jumping from 1,487,549 to 3,132,201 students (Olsen 6). In some states, such as California, Texas, and New York, this population represents the majority in many urban schools. When these students enter colleges and universities, they may be required to enroll in ESL or basic writing classes in addition to a full complement of university-level courses.

Of course, some immigrant students are no longer limited English proficient when they enter universities. Nonetheless, they may have cultural backgrounds or values that are considerably different from those of North American academic cultures (Johns, "Interpreting" 380; Welaratna). Immigrant students tend to select from a limited set of majors, dictated by their cultural values or the need for immediate family income, as well as by their English proficiencies. Many of the Asian immigrant students, for example, select technical and engineering majors because they are concerned about competing with monolingual English-language speakers in professions requiring extensive written and spoken communication (Takaki 26). Additionally, the parents of many of these students immigrated or got their green cards because of their technical skills, so there is family pressure to follow a career path

that has proven successful. Often, immigrant students must work long hours to put themselves through school while helping their families adjust to a new cultural and linguistic context. Thus, they may view courses in the humanities and social sciences, and writing assignments in these courses, as extraneous to their goals.

A second, related group of linguistically diverse students consists of emergent English-dominant learners, "children of immigrants who have oral competency in English and the cultural references of native English speakers" (*California Pathways* 19). These students may lack expertise in academic writing in both their first, or "heritage," language[4] and in English, particularly in the use of vocabulary and standard grammar. In many cases, emergent English-dominant learners continue to make errors that have become so much a part of their language that they do not recognize them as nonstandard and therefore cannot correct them. Teaching about these errors is difficult for the students' instructors for a variety of reasons: because the rules for use are extremely complex; because the standard English usage is illogical grammatically; because grammatical usage in the first language continues to be dominant in the student's mind; or because of fossilization.[5] Errors such as the misuse or omission of the definite article "the" occur in the discourse of many Asian-origin and some Arabic-speaking students and fall into the "extremely complex rules" category. Errors related to using the third-person singular -s form ("I know, you know, she/he know") fall into the illogical category and are found in the discourse of students from many language groups. In Romance languages such as Spanish and French, speakers inflect adjectives; thus, students from these backgrounds sometimes transfer this feature into English ("the beautifuls girls") because in the case of this grammatical feature, the heritage language remains dominant. Fossilization, resulting in permanent "interlanguage"[6] or between-language errors, occurs among many of these students for a variety of reasons. This error type may have developed over time because of large classes, insufficient teacher input, or other factors affecting a student's primary and secondary education in North America. Many overworked public school teachers fail to give students sufficient feedback on their written work, and unfortunately, if second-language

(L2) learners function for a long time in a language without being corrected, they may not develop full control of English grammar, syntax, and semantics. In fact, their English-language development may stop, or fossilize, before they have acquired all of its central features (*California Pathways* 19; for a useful list of fossilized errors, see Leki, *Understanding*).

This emergent English-dominant group of students, made up of the children of immigrants, is the one about which ESL and developmental composition instructors in postsecondary institutions are often most concerned. Their difficulties with English tend to be intractable, and like their monolingual English-speaking counterparts but unlike their international student peers, they may not have acquired a metalanguage—language about language (Johns, *Text* 133)—that enables them to talk about the features of their written, or spoken, discourses.

A third, considerably smaller, linguistically diverse student group consists of international students. Since 1954 this population has increased in U.S. postsecondary education by 1,200 percent, from 34,232 to 453,787. Currently, international students represent 3.1 percent of the total college and university enrollment. This figure is misleading, however, because of concentrations in certain levels of education, in certain regions, and in a few majors. Students from this group generally hold F-1 or other student visas and represent 2.5 percent of the four-year university enrollments, 10.1 percent of graduate enrollments, and 33.0 percent of doctoral degree enrollments. The majority of these students are enrolled in large public, and a few large private, universities concentrated in the Northeast, Midwest, and Pacific West Coast. The most popular majors for international students are business and management (20.2 percent) and engineering (16.1 percent). Twelve of the top fifteen countries of origin are in Asia: Japan, Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines (Davids 12–15). International students, in contrast to many immigrant and English-emergent students, tend to be academically proficient in their first languages and to use a metalanguage when discussing English grammar because of their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educations in their home countries.

Reviewing the Research on Second-Language Acquisition, Error, and Contrastive Rhetoric

All three groups of students may fall under the ESL rubric at our universities, though they may respond differently to our classes and face very different obstacles to attaining their degrees. For these reasons, it is important that WAC administrators, and the faculty with whom they work, be aware not only of the variety among the "ESL" groups but also know something about the literature on second-language acquisition, error, and contrastive rhetoric. This literature demonstrates that language learning processes are complicated and idiosyncratic, sometimes resulting in fossilization into nonstandard grammatical and lexical forms. Some of the best and most accessible discussions of second-language acquisition (SLA) as it relates to ESL writing include Sridhar's article "A Reality Check for SLA Theories"; Silva, Leki, and Carson's "Broadening the Perspective of Mainstream Composition Studies" (which discusses second-language acquisition research and writing instruction, noting the importance of each to the understanding of diverse student populations); and Leki's *Understanding ESL Writers: A Guide for Teachers.* Leki is especially helpful because the volume includes a discussion of the types and possible sources of student mistakes. She makes this comment on current theories about sources of error: "It does seem clear that students' first languages have an influence on the kinds of problems they will have with English . . . . But although a small number of errors can be associated with particular language backgrounds, the vast majority . . . resemble each other and, therefore, seem to be a result of the structure of English itself" (110). Thus, according to current theory, particular features of the English language itself contribute most to the fossilization of errors in student discourses.

Leki also makes these important comments about second-language acquisition processes and error variation:

A learner's progress [in learning a second language] is not stable but is characterized by movements backwards and forwards along the path toward the second language, as new input, previously

> too complex to take in, is analyzed and processed. . . . This ana-
> lyzing and processing causes previously in-place interlanguage
> features to shift.
>
> Sometimes, under certain conditions, a seemingly acquired
> correct second language form is dropped in favor of an error. . . .
> This phenomenon occurs in a variety of situations: if the learner
> must suddenly deal with new or difficult subject matter in the
> second language, experiences anxiety, lacks practice in the sec-
> ond language, or slackens attention. (*Understanding* 111–12)

These comments should be useful for faculty, for they explain why L2 learners make errors on timed written examinations that they would not make if provided with sufficient time to revise; why complex assignments sometimes result in error-ridden papers; and why drafts written under relaxed or ungraded conditions might also result in unusual errors. The best conditions for L2 student writing are those in which students understand the content[7] and the expected format of the required paper, have practiced the task assigned, have time to conscientiously correct their errors, and know that their instructors consider error correction sufficiently important to make it part of the grade.[8]

Another topic that is central to understanding the ESL student populations is contrastive rhetoric, a research area that has become increasingly sophisticated over the years in its analyses of relationships between discourse and culture. Sources particularly accessible to faculty are Leki's *Understanding ESL Writers* and two excellent collections: Connor and Kaplan's *Writing Across Languages* and Purves's *Writing Across Languages and Cultures.* Two important contributions to contrastive rhetoric are a chapter by Hinds (in Connor and Kaplan), in which he argues that American English texts are "writer-responsible" and thus rhetorically quite different from "reader-responsible" texts in more homogeneous cultures, and an article by Matalene ("Contrastive Rhetoric: An American Writing Teacher in China"), one of the most culturally sensitive essays in the literature. Hinds argues that in "writer-responsible" cultures, such as those in North America, readers are more heterogeneous and thus writers must lead them through the texts in ways not necessary in more homogenous cultures such as China and Japan. This "writer responsibility" involves many tactics, including the use of meta-

discourse, which tells readers where they have been and where they are going ("In the last section, we discussed XXX; now we turn to YYY"), and conjunctions of various types (e.g., "however," "in conclusion") that signal readers about changes or continuations in argumentation or discourse function (see Williams 28 for a thorough discussion of metadiscourse features). Western academics require such metalanguage and sometimes penalize writers for not including it. Matalene suggests that various historical influences on Chinese writing persist in modern prose, despite the vicissitudes of the Cultural Revolution and other major upheavals affecting education. She discusses the influences of Confucian thought, the features of the "8-legged essay" that was characteristic of civil service examinations for centuries, and other cultural influences that leave their traces on the discourse of modern writers from China.

Examining the "Foundation" Writing Courses

Once WAC administrators acquaint themselves with the literature, they should take a careful look at how ESL, and other writing classes in which ESL students are enrolled, is taught in their universities. When preparing this manuscript, I sent out this query on the WAC list: "How do you integrate the teaching of ESL students into your WAC programs?" One response was from the irate director of a writing program with many enrolled ESL students who are taught, for the most part, by graduate students in a Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) M.A. program. He complained that because his university's TESOL M.A. students do not take classes in the teaching of writing, they believe that writing is "nothing more than a string of sentences in no way distinct from language skills." He argued, quite convincingly, that many TESOL graduate programs around the country still do not devote sufficient time to the teaching of academic reading and writing.[9]

This perceived difference between some TESOL graduate programs and programs in composition and rhetoric is an important one for our understanding of students' theories of writing and writing tasks derived from their writing classes. In a study

at one comprehensive university, Atkinson and Ramanathan found considerable disparity between writing programs for monolingual English-speakers (MES) and those courses for ESL (particularly international) students. ESL teachers assumed that students did not have native competence in "American culture," whereas the MES programs assumed considerable knowledge of the "Western" way of life. The MES programs valued originality, creativity, Western logic, and rationality as commonsense notions in composition, whereas the ESL writing courses valued academic writing that followed certain discourse conventions, particularly the "modes" (e.g., comparison/contrast, cause/effect). The ESL writing courses emphasized form at both the discourse and sentence levels; the MES courses focused on writing development. Atkinson and Ramanathan concluded that "some of the very approaches to writing that are rewarded in [one] program appear to be stigmatized in [the other]" (563).

These findings are useful to WAC administrators because research indicates that linguistically diverse students bring to all of their academic classrooms theories of writing and how writing tasks should be approached that have been developed in their first cultures and in their writing classrooms in their home countries and in North America. These theories undoubtedly influence the ways students conceptualize, plan, and execute their writing assignments in all of their classes. Wise WAC administrators will begin thinking about ESL writing issues by talking to the teachers of ESL or basic writing in their own institutions about pedagogies employed.

Helping Faculty in the Disciplines Understand ESL Students

After educating ourselves, there are a number of steps we can take to assist other faculty in understanding the issues and in improving the academic achievement and motivation of ESL students. In particular, WAC administrators can help faculty recognize the variety of needs, language proficiencies, and cultural contributions among linguistically diverse students, and to understand that linguistically diverse students' notions about aca-

demic writing and writing in the disciplines may differ from those of the dominant university culture.

Faculty have no doubt already been advised to administer early needs-assessment surveys to determine who their students are, what they are studying, and what they expect from their classes. An early survey is particularly important in classes in which linguistically diverse students are enrolled. These assessments can help faculty identify the various student populations represented and what these students might be able to contribute to a particular classroom. Assessment questionnaires can also assist faculty in identifying those who might have difficulty with speaking, reading, or writing assignments. Questions such as the following might be posed in a survey: "What is your first language?"; "Do you read and write in this language?"; "How long have you lived in the United States?"; "What English language writing difficulties do you have, if any?"; "What university-level writing classes have you completed?"; "What is your major?"; "Why did you select it?" (Johns, "Language"). On my own campus, we have found that faculty who are aware of the diverse students in their classes tend to model and scaffold their assignments more conscientiously and to recommend a writing center or tutor when the need arises.

Faculty can use the information about diverse students gathered from needs assessments to enhance class discussion and presentations and to bring a more international or multicultural approach to a course. In an article from an excellent collection on cultural diversity and cultural literacy, Walters has this to say about the contributions of diverse students to our classes: "Research demonstrates the strengths that students from various cultural and linguistic groups might possess, strengths that could be used as a starting point for our pedagogy and shared with classmates so that they can learn from each other" (15). The literature suggests many ways for faculty to draw from ESL students' strengths. In linguistics, language, literacy, and education classes, students can provide examples from their spoken or written first languages to exemplify certain teaching points. In anthropology, students can discuss the kinship terms used in their families; in sociology, the various cultural norms of student groups can be a topic for discussion or writing. Postmodern historians

can draw from students' own views of U.S. history or of the history of their own countries or families, demonstrating that historical retelling is socially constructed. Even in the sciences, students' first-culture theories about evolution or other topics can be discussed as ways of viewing natural phenomena.

As noted earlier, ESL students bring to academic classrooms their own ideas about what good writing is and what roles they should play as writers as they both produce and process texts. Though this statement may be true of all students to some degree, the gap between what is expected in our academic classrooms and the students' own literacy expectations and experiences may be even greater when those enrolled are linguistically or culturally diverse.[10] In a useful discussion of this issue, Basham, Ray, and Walley make the following comment:

> When . . . teachers ask students to read a text and then to respond in writing, whether to summarize, criticize or comment, they do so with certain underlying assumptions about the nature of texts, of literate practices in general, and more specifically, about what constitutes "academic discourse." The fact that these underlying assumptions are often left *implicit* can cause problems for students, particularly those second language learners who come to university with very different expectations about discourse in general and academic discourse in particular. For example, Asian students may incorporate whole phrases from known texts in their writing (Matalene 1985, Scollon and Scollon 1991). . . . Problems can also occur when students' culturally determined rules for spoken discourse affect their writing. Within the cultural experience of most Alaskan Native groups, for example, there are limits to the authority a speaker may claim on a topic. . . . The resulting circumspection of assertion is in direct variance with demands of academic writing. (299)

Central to this argument is the fact that many students do not "naturally" share with faculty an understanding about the values that underlie the discourse of a particular academic subject. Thus, they would benefit from instructor explanations or classroom discussions about how a successful paper for that particular context is organized, what content should be included, and how the argumentation is made (see Belcher). If students are given some clues about the values and "ways of being" (Geertz) that

are realized in texts in particular academic disciplines, they may begin to develop an appreciation for or a critical stance toward those values and an understanding of why they may need to acquire discourse repertoires for certain academic contexts.

Other issues relating to "good" writing and thinking may be at odds with the cultural and discourse experiences of ESL students. Muchuri, Mulamba, Myers, and Ndoloi (175–98) note that an insistence on the use of personal voice, common to some composition and humanities classes, is anathema to students who come from cultures in which drawing attention to oneself is discouraged. In some parts of Africa and Asia, for example, writers are encouraged to take on not personal but community voices: of local leaders, of mythical characters, or of famous heroes of the past. In a related article, Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996) argue that "voice and audience are largely culturally constrained notions, relatively inaccessible to students who are not full participants in a culture within which they are asked to write" (22).

Most U.S. faculty value "critical thinking," a variously defined concept that has become an increasingly controversial topic in the ESL literature. Fox, for example, speaks of this concept as deeply rooted in U.S. culture and in the particular academic stances that academics reward (125). Atkinson, after discussing the variety of approaches to critical thinking in North American pedagogy, concludes that

> critical thinking is cultural thinking. Thus, I have suggested that critical thinking may well be in the nature of social practice—discoverable if not clearly self-evident only to those brought up in a cultural milieu in which it operates, however tacitly, as a socially valued norm. . . . [The literature points to] vastly different understandings across cultures of three notions directly implicated in critical thought: individualism, self-expression, and using language as a tool for learning. (89)

These comments reveal why many ESL students major in the sciences or engineering. According to L2 speakers in science and technology disciplines (Johns, "Written Argumentation," "Interpreting"; Swales), the specific directions for how critical thought can be achieved, the exploitation of visuals, repeated standard text structure, the use of the passive to subdue or omit the per-

sonal agent, and multiple authorship of scientific and technical writing appeal to many students for whom the personal nature of other writing and vague suggestions for critical thinking pose difficult problems. Instructors in the humanities and social sciences might consider a variety of ways for students to complete an assigned task, thereby encouraging involvement of students' own cultural "ways of being" as they think and write (see, e.g., Leki, "Coping Strategies").

The initiatory practices of faculty in the disciplines have also been interrogated in the ESL literature. In an important discussion of this issue, Casanave presents the story of a young Hispanic woman who eventually dropped out of a Ph.D. program in sociology because she could not conform to the pseudoscientific values of her professors or to the register in which they required her to write, and because the faculty steadfastly refused to acknowledge her values or approaches to texts. Casanave notes that "[this study] leads us to ask . . . whether disciplines should socialize all students into a preordained set of values and practices, or whether they should accommodate the cultural diversity of the populations they serve and thus open themselves to change" (148–49). Villanueva elaborates on this issue in "The Politics of Literacy Across the Curriculum" (Chapter 7, this volume).

The Casanave essay is part of an expanding literature on the challenges and difficulties that ESL students face as undergraduates (see, e.g., Johns, "Toward," "Text"; Leki, "Coping," *Understanding*) and as graduate students (see Schneider and Fujishima; Connor and Kaplan) in North American universities. In this literature, instructors are advised to listen for and respect student difference by encouraging students to draw from their own experiences and interests to complete academic tasks, or to contribute to classroom discussion or group work in ways with which they are comfortable. Also important to faculty understanding are examinations of their own assumptions about what it means to be academically literate or to think critically in their classrooms. The more explicit faculty can be about their assumptions, goals, and expectations, the more their diverse students will understand the language registers and academic cultures in which they are attempting to succeed. And, like all students, those

who speak English as a second language need to have opportunities to talk to knowledgeable students and faculty about drafts of their assigned texts, thus encouraging critique and discussion of their progress before a grade is awarded (Belcher).

Confronting Errors

Many faculty members complain vociferously about the sentence-level errors in ESL students' written texts, though, as Belcher points out, others ignore errors in student writing, grading only for content. The first group tends to stigmatize students. They associate errors with inadequate thinking, "thus conflating 'bad language' and 'insufficient cognitive development'" (Zamel 507). They complain that students "can't write" or that they "can't think," when they actually mean that students have difficulty correcting minor errors in their assigned writing. Fully as problematic are those faculty who completely ignore error, for by ignoring mistakes they do not help their students learn the discourse features of their disciplines.

What can we do about and for these two groups of faculty? This is a complex question that has been discussed exhaustively in the ESL literature, and the research findings are contradictory. Some research has dealt with faculty tolerance for error. Vann, Myer, and Lorenz found that faculty were tolerant of ESL mistakes that monolingual English-speakers make such as misspellings, comma splices, and subject-verb disagreement. They were forgiving of article ("the/a/an") and preposition errors because these are considered minor and "tricky." Faculty could not forgive other types of ESL errors, however, such as those in which verb affixes were incorrectly used or one verb tense was substituted for another. Santos, on the other hand, found that faculty were most annoyed by errors that both ESL and native-speaking students make, such as those involving subject-verb and pronoun agreement. They were most forgiving of "foreign" grammatical and mechanical errors, but they would not tolerate misuse of disciplinary vocabulary or weak argumentation by any of their students. Interestingly, Santos found that professors in the

humanities and social sciences were more lenient toward ESL errors than those in the physical sciences, older professors were more lenient than younger ones, and (perhaps most interesting) non-native-speaking professors were *less* lenient than monolingual English-speakers.

No doubt we all have stories from our own campuses that support the findings cited here. One of my experiences involves a very intelligent Chinese-speaking student whose history instructor, like some whom Zamel mentions, confused error with poor thinking and could not extricate the content from the grammar. He noted all of the missing definite articles ("the") in her well-constructed paper and wrote in red ink across the top of it, "You shouldn't be in college!" For the most part, however, faculty are well-meaning but bewildered by the problems in ESL student writing that neither they nor, in some cases, the students can identify or correct.

When should errors become a major issue? WAC administrators might recommend that faculty have different standards for in-class examination essays and out-of-class assignments, requiring careful editing only in out-of-class papers. Linguistically diverse students tend to write more slowly and take more time to plan; often they can correct their work if they are permitted to draft their papers and edit them over time. Faculty should also be aware of the growing number of English-emergent students who have acquired fossilized errors. After producing these errors in their spoken and written English for years, these students cannot hear or see their mistakes, nor can they identify them in their own written work. Thus, under some circumstances, students should be permitted to work with a competent monolingual English-speaker in correcting their sentence-level errors. In addition, faculty might recommend a general handbook written by an ESL expert. At my own institution and many others, Raimes's *Keys for Writers* has been adopted because the author has been an ESL teacher for most of her professional life and her ESL section is intelligently written. (I have included at the end of this essay a brief description of this and other useful resources for WAC directors to consult as they work with faculty on ESL issues.)

Heading Off Plagiarism

As we all know, plagiarism is considered a major academic crime in North American universities (see Mallon). Nearly every college catalog includes warnings against plagiarism and lists the penalties that infractions of the rules can bring. Many faculty mention plagiarism in their syllabi, and some spend hours in the library attempting to determine which sections of a student paper have been plagiarized. Pennycook suggests some reasons for faculty wrath: "Plagiarism . . . undermines the authority of both teacher and text; . . . the ferocity of this hunting down of borrowed words may be seen as part of a desperate rearguard action against changing textualities" (215).

This is a useful argument, but one that will not be readily accepted among faculty who have been chasing down and punishing plagiarists over the years. What may be more acceptable are Pennycook's suggestions for teaching students who have learned in their home cultures that memorizing and copying the "greats" without citation are essential elements in the written work of a learned person:

> Part of any discussion of citation, paraphrase, textual borrowing, and so forth needs . . . to include a discussion of how and why these notions have been constructed, how authorship, authenticity, and authority are linked, and how these practices may be in a process of flux. . . . Also needed is an attempt to understand the other side of the coin—our students' textual and language learning worlds as well as the constraints upon their lives and their perceptions of how academic norms operate and may be flouted. (227)

In addition to understanding some of the motivations behind the issues of authorship and authority, diverse students need to practice summary and paraphrase. A volume that many students have found useful for this purpose is Braine and May's *Writing from Sources: A Guide for ESL Students,* particularly the long chapter "Using and Acknowledging Sources" (119–138).

In some academic classrooms, however, "plagiarism" means more than copying text and not acknowledging sources. In one

classroom on my campus, for example, if a student models a paper on the organization of another student's paper, she or he will receive an F. Thus, as Pennycook and others have noted, plagiarism can refer to copying ideas, to using language without appropriate citation, or, in rare cases, to mimicking the organization of another text. Clearly, each faculty member must determine what he or she believes plagiarism is and make the definition, and penalties, clear to the students in the class. It would also be useful to diverse students to see examples of plagiarism and adequate paraphrasing in student papers so that they can avoid the standard pitfalls.

Final Thoughts

Like many of the topics discussed in this volume, the issues of ESL writing and the nature of writers are complex and the research findings are contradictory. If there were a single L2 literacy instead of many literacies (McKay), if there were easy methods to eradicate errors or explain our academic cultures and discourses, then teaching diverse students would be much easier. But the very complexity of the issues is what makes them interesting. As a teacher of academic literacies, I learn a great deal from students who are linguistically and culturally different from me, and, like many of my faculty colleagues, I enjoy the polyphony (as Laurence terms it) of my classes. Certainly, discoveries about the diversity within our classrooms and our worlds, and an appreciation for difference, must be two of the most important achievements of a North American liberal education.

Notes

1. "Linguistically diverse," though awkward, appears to be the most appropriate term for the variety of bilingual and ESL students in our classes. I also use "ESL," but readers should note that this term is considered derogatory by many students and teachers, particularly in Latino communities.

2. A faculty member Zamel interviewed said he had so many diverse

students in his classes that he thought he was in a foreign country. Recently, an instructor on my campus came to me during the first week of class to complain that "none of [his] students speak English," because so many appeared to be of Asian parentage.

3. Most experts agree that it requires at least six years of concentrated instruction in academic English for most students to attain proficiency. Some students, however, do not attain this goal even after twelve years (Scarcella).

4. A large number of these students are not literate in their family's first language.

5. This first-language dominance was called "interference" by second-language acquisition theorists in the 1960s; now it is referred to as "negative transfer."

6. In second-language acquisition, we refer to the language students use as they attempt to become proficient as "interlanguage." Many of the emergent English-language speakers are fossilized into a particular interlanguage period. As a result, they continue to make errors that they themselves cannot identify. Here are a few examples from Leki (*Understanding*), Chapter 9:

> Cut down more trees creates hotter conditions.
>
> This compromise succeeded to bring about a ceasefire.
>
> A real revolution was occurred with her election.
>
> The man he is very interesting in being there.

7. See Berkenkotter and Huckin and Giltrow and Valiquette for interesting discussions of uses of content in the disciplines.

8. A remarkable number of ESL students with good grades in their disciplinary courses are enrolled in basic writing classes in North American colleges and universities. Many claim that their instructors in the disciplines are interested only in their understanding of content, not in their errors. In some cases, especially in engineering, most of the faculty are former ESL students themselves, and a "foreign accent" in written work has become acceptable (Johns, "Written Argumentation").

9. The opposite problem arises in some rhetoric and composition studies programs in which *no* discussion of grammar and its rhetorical purposes takes place.

10. It is important to note here that reading may be fully as challenging as writing for some ESL students, as well for other students in our classes. In California we have found that many more students have difficulty with the reading section of the English Placement Test (a diagnostic examination, administered when students enroll) than with the writing section.

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Other Resources

Overviews of the Major Issues

Belcher, Diane, and George Braine, eds. *Academic Writing in a Second Language: Essays on Research and Pedagogy.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1995. This sixteen-chapter collection is particularly useful for WAC practitioners working with upper-division and graduate classes. Among other sections of the volume, the introduction and a chapter by Joel Bock and Lan Chi on use of citations in Chinese and English are particularly helpful. This volume and Swales and Feak, listed in the works cited, should greatly benefit faculty teaching more advanced ESL students.

California Pathways: Second Language Students in Public High Schools, Colleges, and Universities. Glendale, CA: CATESOL, 1997. (Address: California Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 1146 N. Central Avenue, #195, Glendale, CA 91202. (818) 502-4ESL or Browning@cccd.edu.) Compiled by ESL educators at all levels of instruction, this report discusses the different categories of ESL learners, challenges to acquisition of academic English, cultural factors affecting student achievement, and writing proficiency assessment. Though the volume was written for a California audience, the information, approaches, and list of resources are valuable in most ESL contexts.

Connor, Ulla. *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-Cultural Aspects of Second-Language Writing.* New York: Cambridge UP, 1996. This is the latest of three modern volumes on contrastive rhetoric (see also Connor and Kaplan and Purves in the works cited). Here, Connor

traces the evolution of contrastive rhetoric (CR), beginning with the famous Kaplan 1966 "doodles" study; she then discusses the CR interface with various theoretical and disciplinary camps: rhetoric and composition, textual linguistics, cultural studies, translation, and genre studies. To understand CR issues, WAC administrators might consult all three of the volumes mentioned here for specific chapters of interest.

Huckin, Thomas, Margot Haynes, and James Coady, eds. *Second Language Reading and Vocabulary Learning*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1993. If we were to ask the ESL students in our classes to name the one major problem they face in acquiring academic literacies, they would undoubtedly say "learning vocabulary." This rich collection discusses ways in which L2 students in academic environments confront issues of vocabulary acquisition, sometimes with negative consequences. Chapters such as "False Friends and Reckless Guessers: Observing Cognate Recognition Strategies" (Holmes and Ramos) and "Too Many Words: Learning the Vocabulary of an Academic Subject" (Parry) should be particularly useful to WAC practitioners.

Leki, Ilona. *Understanding ESL Writers: A Guide for Teachers*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1992. If there were only one volume on ESL purchased for a WAC library, this book would be the choice of many ESL specialists. Of particular interest to WAC practitioners is Leki's short and accessible discussions of second-language acquisition, the differences among ESL and basic writers, characteristics of ESL students, major findings from second-language composition research, modern issues in contrastive rhetoric, and common sentence-level errors. Using this volume, WAC administrators could provide a complete and focused ESL workshop for faculty.

Murray, Denise M. *Diversity as a Resource: Redefining Cultural Literacy*. Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), 1992. With a foreword by Shirley Brice Heath and some excellent chapters, this volume approaches literacy issues from a cultural perspective, arguing that much of what faculty object to in the writing of linguistically diverse students can be traced to cultural mismatches rather than to contrastive rhetoric or student error. Chapters are written from a number of cultural perspectives, and issues of cultural literacy are raised and critiqued.

Roberts, Helen, et al. *Teaching from a Multicultural Perspective*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994. This volume is devoted exclusively to providing practical suggestions for understanding, teaching, and assessing the nontraditional student and encouraging university administrations to recognize and embrace changes in student popu-

lations. WAC administrators can consult this volume for discussions of collaborative learning and ESL, designing initial needs assessments, involving students in class discussion, and other practical topics.

Silva, Tony, Ilona Leki, and Joan Carson. "Broadening the Perspective of Mainstream Composition Studies." *Written Communication* 14 (1997): 398–428. In this article, three of the most prominent ESL literacy specialists argue that ESL composition research and theory have been neglected by mainstream professionals. The authors discuss two topics that are central to the ESL literature: second-language acquisition research and second-language writing instruction, noting the importance of each to understanding diverse student populations.

Handbooks

Azar, Betty S. *Understanding and Using English Grammar.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981. For those WAC practitioners and other faculty who need to develop a metalanguage about grammar or who want to refresh their memory about "traditional grammar," this textbook for ESL students will provide an accessible reference. In addition to fifteen chapters on topics in English grammar, it includes an appendix that defines basic grammar terms. This is in fact a series of volumes for students at different English-language proficiency levels.

Raimes, Ann. *Keys for Writers: A Brief Handbook.* 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999. If faculty want to recommend a handbook written by an ESL expert, *Keys for Writers* is probably their best choice. In addition to being a useful handbook for all students, this volume devotes twenty-one pages to ESL issues, concentrating on some of the major student errors and common editing questions that ESL students ask. The handbook has another attractive feature: boxes throughout the text that highlight "Language Across Cultures" issues. On page 258, for example, the author discusses the implications of the fact that only English capitalizes the first-person singular pronoun "I." The volume also has a good section on citing sources and avoiding plagiarism.

Swan, Michael, and Bernard Smith, eds. *Learner English: A Teacher's Guide to Interference and Other Problems.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988. For those who would like to know more about the features of the languages their students speak, this volume is invaluable. It provides a brief discussion of verb tense and aspect and other characteristics of written languages, such as punctuation.

WEB Sites

◆ At California State University, Los Angeles, where an estimated 80 percent of the students are linguistically diverse, M. Anne Snow and others have been conducting workshops with faculty on ESL issues for a number of years. They have developed Web sites such as http://web.calstatela.edu/centers/write_cn/esltyp.htm that deal specifically with ESL issues. CSULA sites are also devoted to ESL literacy in specific disciplines, such as this one on philosophy: http://web.calstatela.edu/centers/write_cn/. With its large ESL population and its commitment to writing in the disciplines, CAL State L.A. is a good source for WAC faculty.

◆ At Washington State University, ESL experts have set up an ESL "Help Desk" which lists books and resources for students, advice for faculty, and ESL classes in the English department; Lynn Gordon, the faculty member who set it up, answers questions from non-native speakers of English from all over the world: http://www.wsu.edu/ gordon/ESL/.

◆ Purdue University's online Writing Lab provides tutoring by e-mail and dozens of helpful documents. For information, send a blank e-mail message to owl@sage.cc.purdue.edu (with the subject "owl-request").