

JOURNAL OF BASIC WRITING

FALL 1994

VOLUME 13, NUMBER 2

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CALL FOR ARTICLES

We welcome manuscripts of 10-20 pages on topics related to basic writing, broadly interpreted.

Manuscripts will be refereed anonymously. We require four copies of a manuscript and an abstract of about 100 words. To assure impartial review, give author information and a short biographical note for publication on the cover page *only*. Papers which are accepted will eventually have to supply camera-ready copy for all ancillary material (tables, charts, etc.). One copy of each manuscript not accepted for publication will be returned to the author, if we receive sufficient stamps (no meter strips) clipped to a self-addressed envelope. We require the MLA style (*MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 3rd ed., 1988). For further guidance, send a stamped letter-size, self-addressed envelope for our style sheet and for camera-ready specifications.

All manuscripts must focus clearly on basic writing and must add substantively to the existing literature. We seek manuscripts that are original, stimulating, well-grounded in theory, and clearly related to practice. Work that reiterates what is known or work previously published will not be considered.

We invite authors to write about such matters as classroom practices in relation to basic writing theory; cognitive and rhetorical theories and their relation to basic writing; social, psychological, and cultural implications of literacy; discourse theory; grammar, spelling, and error analysis; linguistics; computers and new technologies in basic writing; English as a second language; assessment and evaluation; writing center practices; teaching logs and the development of new methodologies; and cross-disciplinary studies combining basic writing with psychology, anthropology, journalism, and art. We publish observational studies as well as theoretical discussions on relationships between basic writing and reading, or the study of literature, or speech, or listening. The term "basic writer" is used with wide diversity today, sometimes referring to a student from a highly oral tradition with little experience in writing academic discourse, and sometimes referring to a student whose academic writing is fluent but otherwise deficient. To help readers, therefore, authors should describe clearly the student population which they are discussing.

We particularly encourage a *variety* of manuscripts: speculative discussions which venture fresh interpretations; essays which draw heavily on student writing as supportive evidence for new observations; research reports, written in nontechnical language, which offer observations previously unknown or unsubstantiated; and collaborative writings which provocatively debate more than one side of a central controversy.

A "Mina P. Shaughnessy Writing Award" is given to the author of the best *JBW* article every two years (four issues). The prize is \$500, now courtesy of Lynn Quitman Troyka. The winner, to be selected by a jury of three scholars/teachers not on our editorial board, is announced in our pages and elsewhere.

Editors' Column

This is our last issue as editors of the *Journal of Basic Writing*. Although we have greatly enjoyed our six years at *JBW*, it has always been our view that a journal which seeks to stay current with its field must change editors frequently. However, we leave with a sense of regret that we will no longer be working closely with a wonderful group of total professionals: Lynn Troyka, our predecessor as editor of *JBW*, the members of *JBW's* far-flung Editorial Board; colleagues and friends in the Office of Academic Affairs at CUNY; and, above all, our managing editor, Ruth Davis. Thanks to you all; without your constant help and advice, we could never have edited *JBW*.

We would also like to express our appreciation to all those who submitted manuscripts to the *Journal* during our editorship. Thanks for your confidence in *JBW* and its editorial process, in particular your patience in awaiting decisions which sometimes took longer than we expected.

If there is one accomplishment during our tenure that we are especially happy about, it is the extent to which we were able to give encouragement and support to authors without extensive previous publication. We feel very proud that *JBW* has continued to publish the work of established scholars in the field of basic writing, but even more so to have introduced many newcomers during these six years.

During the summer of 1993, when we informed University Dean Elsa Nuñez-Wormack of our decision to step down at the conclusion of our second three-year term, she convened a Search Committee (on which we served) to select a successor. By unanimous decision, the Committee chose Professors Karen Greenberg and Trudy Smoke, both of the English Department at Hunter College, as new co-editors of *JBW*.

Professor Greenberg will already be well-known to most *JBW* readers for her many publications as well as her spirited advocacy for basic writing and basic writers at many professional conferences and through the National Testing Network in Writing. Less well-known is the fact that Karen has been one of our most active members of the Editorial Board during our tenure and perhaps the record holder for quick turnaround on manu-

scripts. Professor Smoke has also published widely and been very active in professional associations in the fields of composition and ESL. We welcome Karen and Trudy as editors of *JBW*, confident that the *Journal* will prosper under their direction.

We turn now to a brief introduction of the articles in the Fall '94 issue. Their variety and eclectic nature confirm that the field of basic writing is alive and well in the '90s, as it absorbs, reflects, and debates some of the recent pedagogic shifts in the profession.

In the first article, Sally Fitzgerald examines the implications of computerized scoring of placement essays on the theory and practice of writing assessment and writing instruction. She argues that the very feature that makes computerized scoring inexpensive—its universality—undermines its validity.

Carol Severino looks at the relation between error and creativity in the writing of ESL students. She shows how syntactic and lexical constraints combined with students' cultural and aesthetic preferences produce remarkable poetic effects in their writing.

Hope Parisi demonstrates that students who attempt graphically to represent their own writing process increase their involvement and self-awareness while validating their new writing behaviors. Through this metacognitive intervention, students come to understand their role in managing the unique complexities of their own composing process.

Akua Duku Anokye argues that teachers today face broad cultural and racial differences between themselves and their students which negate some of the old assumptions about teaching and learning. In this context, a pedagogy based on narrative and storytelling encourages students to appreciate cultural and racial diversity as it helps them become active participants in the broader conversation of a literate community.

In the final article, Kelly Belanger looks at the basic writing course described in Bartholomae and Petrosky's *Facts, Artifacts and Counterfacts* from the perspective of four gender-typed categories: "masculinist," "femininist," "androgynous," and "undifferentiated." Interview data suggests that teachers define themselves, give shape to their pedagogy, and emphasize certain aspects of the course around these categories.

A Cumulative Index of articles appearing in the *Journal of Basic Writing* over the past three years concludes the issue.

—**Bill Bernhardt and Peter Miller**

Kathryn R. Fitzgerald

COMPUTERIZED SCORING? A QUESTION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

ABSTRACT: *This article examines the implications of computerized scoring of placement essays for the theory and practice of writing assessment, particularly for the complexly interrelated issues of economics, universality, and validity; and then considers its broader implications for the theory and practice of writing instruction. It argues that the very feature that would make computerized scoring inexpensive—its generalizability for widespread use—undermines its validity. The ultimate criterion for measuring the validity of any placement instrument is whether the instrument matches the specific local conditions, in this case, the purposes and content of the courses in which the students begin writing instruction. A generalized scoring system by definition cannot meet that criterion. More importantly, a computerized scoring system undermines the hard-won though still insecure recognition that writing is a communicative act inseparable from audiences, purposes, and contexts.*

If, as Emil Roy suggested in his article “Computerized Scoring Placement Exams: A Validation” (*Journal of Basic Writing*, Fall 1993), computer programs can accurately and inexpensively assess samples of student writing for placement purposes, it appears that computer technology might reform holistic scoring, frequently criticized and often rejected for being too costly and too subjective. Terming the computer a “new and authoritative tool,” Roy seeks to appropriate its efficiency to

Kathryn R. Fitzgerald coordinates the placement program for the University of Utah's Writing Program. She is also past coordinator of Utah's basic writing program and currently coordinates standard freshman writing. Coauthor with Jamie McBeth of the basic writing textbook, The Student Writer (HarperCollins, 1991), she has also published and conducted workshops on holistic placement techniques.

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reduce expenses and its authority to legitimate writing evaluation processes whose reliability still remains questionable. I wish to be clear from the outset that the objections to these assertions that I will raise are a particular response to Roy's arguments insofar as they are based on his use of data supplied from the placement files of University of Utah's Writing Program. But more important, Roy's article provides an excellent opportunity to reconsider the complex practical and theoretical issues currently surrounding writing assessment. Before embracing computerized scoring technology, I wish to examine its implications for the theory and practice of writing assessment, particularly for the complexly interrelated issues of economics, generalizability, and validity, and then consider its broader implications for the theory and practice of writing instruction. My concern is that this "new and authoritative tool" will authorize views of writing that run counter to composition's most generative theories and its theory-based pedagogical practices.

Such results certainly are not Roy's intention. On the contrary, his research is focused on demonstrating the validity of a computerized scoring instrument according to current theory. It is important to note the entirely proper shift from a focus on reliability to validity at this point. In this connection, Brian Huot (1990) points out that the researchers who developed holistic evaluation procedures simply assumed the validity of direct writing assessment. However, from the beginning they were forced to focus on challenges to the reliability (replicability or consistency in scoring from rater to rater and session to session) of holistic scoring. Huot argues that it is now time to turn to the question of validity in writing assessment—whether the instrument measures what it claims to. The proposal for a computerized scoring system propels this issue front and center. By its construction reliable, a computerized system is more vulnerable to challenges on the grounds of validity. Roy summarizes four types of validity to be met: *predictive*, *concurrent*, *face*, and *construct validity* (43).

Ed White (1985) points out that testing theory typically calls for establishing the validity of a new test by demonstrating *concurrent validity*, that is, by demonstrating that the new test will produce the same results as an existing test whose validity in other regards has, presumably, already been demonstrated (185). When he began his project, Roy contacted the University of Utah among many other institutions to request copies of holistic placement criteria and exemplary placement essays.

Concurrent validity would be achieved by coordinating quantitative measures of selected stylistic features with the results obtained by means of human readings based on apparently sound holistic criteria. Upon Roy's decision to use Utah's criteria as the standard for validating his scoring program, I provided another set of 46 randomly chosen placement essays written in the summer of 1990 and the writers' grades in writing courses and ACT scores when available.

The stylistic features to be quantified for Roy's Structured Decision System (SDS) were selected on the basis of the findings of prior research into the correlations between verbal features and essay quality and of his stylistic analysis of the four anchor essays provided by the University Writing Program (UWP). Features initially identified as salient to placement included essay length, "demonstrat[ing] development within paragraphs, structural completeness, and scribal fluency" (42); high syllable average per word, indicating a "mature lexicon" (42-43); and low percentages of unique words, a negative correlation based on the reasoning that competent writers use repetition and reuse transitional words to achieve coherence (42-43). As he expected, Roy found that the majority of computerized ratings by these three stylistic features (65%) agreed with the essay's holistic ranking (45). He sought to adjudicate the remaining discrepancies by triangulating the computer's placement level with grades in the writing course when available and with ACT scores, adjusting cutoff points in the quantitative measures or adding new categories when they seemed warranted. Following standard principles for concurrent validation of a new testing instrument, Roy searched for and in most cases located quantitative features that could be adjusted to align his SDS rankings with holistic ratings. These procedures resulted in aligning the SDS ranking with the holistic scoring of nine of the original disagreements, determining five more to be misplaced by holistic reading, and leaving two unresolvable by any combination of available information (48). The bottom line is, Roy claims, that the computerized scoring has the potential of producing "an accuracy rate of 95.66%" (48), surpassing holistic ranking, which produced an accuracy rate of only 85% (48).

Roy's procedures, based on current testing theory, seem to be implemented responsibly. I have no quarrel with his procedures, but I am concerned about implications for composition theory and practice of this or any similarly conceived program. One implication emerges from the economics of marketing such

a program. The principle that would allow a computerized program to be produced inexpensively is that it could be generalized for widespread use. And fundamental to broad general use is the premise that a universal ideal of good writing exists which varies only as a function of cognitive development. However, theorists informed by post-structuralist notions of linguistic difference, especially as located in the speech and literacy acts of discourse communities, no longer accept the possibility of a single standard of successful written or oral performance.

That Roy, unfortunately, accepts that possibility is evident in his reference to White's regret that "our profession has no agreed-upon standard of proficiency, and certainly as a consequence, no agreed-upon definitions for proficiencies at various levels of schooling" (42). But White, with many others, now advocates the acknowledgement of discursive difference (White, 1990), while Roy's desire to "limit the ambiguities of holistic grading as applied to impromptu placement exams" (42) reveals his adherence to the expectation of such a standard.

The assumption of a universal standard for good writing becomes an issue when attempting to establish *construct validity*. Roy posits an ideal that has become traditional in composition studies since the early eighties, the ideal of the "professional writer." He asks of his model, "Does the SDS measure the essential skills and abilities that comprise the writing competence of professional writers, establishing its *construct validity*?" Huot defines *construct validity* by stating that it ensures "the theoretical soundness of an assessment procedure" (206) or "the extent to which the test may be said to measure a theoretical construct or trait" (206). Ed White explains a *construct* as "an unobservable trait that is hypothesized to understand and account for observable behavior" (1985, 188). Thus, in the case of writing assessment, something called "writing ability" or "essential skills and abilities" in Roy's terms are hypothesized to account for writing performance.

But to propose the performance of professional writers as the ideal by which other performances are measured is again to posit a single, universal standard for writing competence. This standard fails to acknowledge differences in the expectations for various purposes, contexts, and genres within professional writing, to say nothing of differences between professional writing and good student writing. Clearly, criteria for judging performance by professional writers varies with contextual factors: the standards by which an advertising copywriter's texts would

be judged vary from those by which a legal clerk's would be judged and those by which a software manual writer's, a journalist's, or a novelist's would be judged. The underlying skills and competences explaining excellent performance in these areas would as a consequence also vary.

Not only are there crucial differences among criteria for good writing in the multiple genres of professional writing, there are equally crucial distinctions between professional and student writing. To achieve construct validity for assessment of college-level writing competence, the *construct* must be a description of rhetorical and stylistic expectations for good student writing, not for some outside genre. It is essential to note that school writing is itself a unique rhetorical situation in which writers write to demonstrate their content knowledge, reasoning ability, and rhetorical competence to readers whose competence in all three areas, as well as authority to evaluate, surpasses the writer's. Such a situation requires quite different, and in many ways more complex, competences than professional writing (Fitzgerald, 1988).

Here I am directly raising the deferred question of the validity of applying quantitative measures to writing assessment. By addressing the rhetorical situation of the entering student writer in the ways that they do, the University of Utah's placement criteria confound the results obtained by purely quantitative measures of stylistic features. Of course, any attempt to describe "the" rhetorical expectations for student writing will be met with the same critique I have made of Roy's criteria—that student writing genres, bounded by discipline-specific purposes and expectations, call for a variety of competences which cannot be summed up in a single set of rating criteria. Granting that view, yet required to develop a placement instrument within certain institutional constraints, we at Utah have attempted to distill rhetorical as well as stylistic features for which construct validity in the entering student's rhetorical situation might be claimed.

Ten years of administering the placement essay to over 30,000 students at Utah have resulted in our recognition of the significance of evidence in the writing of two specific cognitive moves to accurate placement of students within the rhetorical context of the University of Utah's Writing Program. They are 1) evidence of an inductive move from specific to general, and 2) evidence of viewing an issue from more than one perspective. The inductive move represents the fundamental logic of em-

pirical investigation that is the basis, at least ideally, of the scientific method undergirding a major portion of university research. In its inverse—thesis followed by evidential support—it is still the predominant format for student writing. All of Utah’s placement essay prompts invite students to demonstrate their written competence in managing the inductive move. The essays Roy used responded to a prompt asking students to describe a disturbing situation, explain desired changes, and draw conclusions about how people can or should respond to such situations. Here are two other similar prompts:

Describe an experience that was educational for you and tell what you learned from it. Then go on to consider education in more general terms by discussing what your experience indicated about how people learn.

We all experience peer pressure at one time or another in our lives. We usually think of peer pressure in negative terms, but it can actually have either positive or negative effects. Write an essay in which you first describe a time when you experienced peer pressure. Then, on the basis of your experience, discuss how people respond to peer pressure, and what we can learn about ourselves, about others, and/or about how to make choices from experiences with peer pressure.

Like all of our prompts, these ask students to provide details about a personal experience and then to draw logical conclusions from their experience—mimicking the inductive move. Because we view the ability to make the inductive move a better predictor of writing performance than background knowledge of any particular subject matter, the prompt always asks students to draw upon specifics from personal experience.

The second characteristic that determines accurate placement is evidence of the capacity to view an issue from more than one perspective. As a developmental issue, this capacity has been viewed as an indication of maturity, and admittedly, that rationale originally supported its inclusion in Utah’s criteria. However, recent interrogation of developmental universals as cultural and/or ideological constructs has opened an alternative space for construing the question of multiple perspectives as a rhetorical issue. It is relevant to student writing because it reflects the culturally constructed rhetorical ethos of the academic, which requires him or her to hear and consider all reasoned views. In other words, consideration of multiple per-

spectives “works” as a placement criterion because it is a feature of the expectations of the particular rhetorical context constituted by the University.

Not convinced that incorporating language expressing this expectation into the prompt itself would be helpful to students, we point it out in the evaluation criteria they read before writing:

The essay readers will be reading to see:

. . . How you make your answer relevant to the broader concerns and perspectives that the essay question suggests.

Attention to evidence of the two features of an inductive move and multiple perspectives undermines paper length as a placement criterion, though paper length is viewed as “the most reliable measure of the quality of impromptu writing exams” by several researchers and by Roy (42). Previous researchers have noted that paper length is an indirect result of students’ ability to generate detail and the explicit structural language of cohesion. Indeed, students able to use vivid detail, to consider complex interrelationships between details and possible generalizations, and additionally to consider experience from a variety of perspectives will often write longer papers. But the crucial point is that length does not signal whether the student’s text demonstrates the inductive move and/or multiple perspectives. And this discrepancy is where a human reader’s discrimination is crucial.

Some students, especially those whose narration of an experience is lengthy, may generate long essays without making any inductive move, while others may demonstrate an ability to make efficient logical connections among several layers of abstraction in relatively short essays. Students whose writing remains at a single level of abstraction are almost invariably placed into one of two levels of preparatory writing no matter how long their essay. Those whose writing moves among levels of abstraction, even if the logical connections are not tight, are usually placed in Utah’s standard freshman course, while students who, to some extent, manage both valid logical connections between specifics and generalizations and multiple perspectives on the topic are placed in the advanced freshman course.

I have selected the following essays to illustrate this point from a file of sample essays used for norming essay raters. Both

were timed forty-five-minute essays written to what is probably our most successful prompt, the educational experience question quoted above. The first example, 489 words, demonstrates a typical level 2 placement (the second quarter of preparatory writing). The second, placed at level 4 (advanced), is 430 words long. I quote the level 2 essay in its entirety because one cannot omit material in demonstrating a lack.¹

Level 2 Essay (placement in second quarter preparatory writing)

Recently I had an opportunity to visit Europe. While we were there we went into East Berlin. I have never had such a dramatic learning experience as the one I received in here. People sure do take the freedom we have in America for granted, and so did I. After going into East Berlin and witnessing the lifestyle, I sure became very honored that I was able to live in America. We sure are blessed with the freedom we have, and we should never take that for granted.

As we rode the train into East Berlin, we were greeted with dark, unfriendly looks. I even felt as if the sky seemed to get grayer. We hardly saw any cars, but the ones we did see were very small with the color either black or dark gray. The roads we saw were made out of cobblestones. Many of the stones were missing making the road seem very bumpy and rough. People over there seem so unhappy. I never saw anyone smile or laugh. I sure am not saying that they never do smile or laugh, but they don't seem to as much as you or I. And of course, that is quite explainable.

My mother has been writing a pen pal who lives over in East Berlin. That was one of the major reasons for going there. We wanted to meet her and also talk with her. It was very hard to find and communicate with her. In fact, we actually never did talk directly to her. We always had to relay messages through other people. Finally we arranged a time and a place to meet her. The exciting moment came where we were able to meet face to face. We had so much to talk about. While we were conversing back and forth, some policemen came and broke us up. We were not allowed to stand and speak like that. So we had to walk and talk very quietly. She told us she knew she was not free, but she knew that America was. Also we learned that at the age of sixty, you have the

choice whether to leave the country or not. But at that age, the people usually don't have the money to do so, and besides, who wants to leave their family. Well, the time had come for us to leave. Tears fell from everyone's eyes. We wanted to take her back with us, and I knew she wanted to come.

I think when one goes into a communist country and experiences their lifestyle, one becomes so much more appreciative for the word freedom. I know I did. I will never forget this great learning experience I was able to receive. I wish that everyone who takes freedom for granted could experience what I did. Freedom is much more than a word, it is the best place to live. We should all be grateful that we live in America.

Much could be said about this essay, but what is pertinent to this discussion is its lack of an inductive move and its reliance on a single perspective. On an imaginary continuum from the very specific to the very general, this essay is written in a very narrow range slightly to the specific end of center. It recounts an experience in some detail, but until the final paragraph it does not stray from a single level of specificity. Moreover, the attempt at generalization in the final paragraph does not develop out of the material in the essay—it does not elaborate what the experience demonstrated about how people learn. Instead, the essay falls back on a commonplace construction of cold-war experience. No explanation appears to link observed incidents to generalizations: the observed unhappiness was “of course” easily understood.

Except for the caveat, “I . . . am not saying that they never do smile or laugh,” the writing remains within a single point of view. The text does not attempt to account for experience in Berlin in any terms other than those of cold-war rhetoric. Though the topic is now dated, this essay is still an excellent example of the logical and rhetorical limitations of a typical level 2 essay. Length is irrelevant: the salient feature for placement is whether the essay moves between specific detail and more generalized statement and among two or more perspectives. (This is not to say that other stylistic features are irrelevant; syntactical complexity and lexical sophistication are components of our rating criteria.)

The second essay is also about a trip. I must again quote the entire essay, this time to demonstrate the presence of significant logical and rhetorical moves.

Level 4 Essay (placement in advanced freshman writing)

I spent my summer break last year working on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. I had always been fascinated by the interactions and reactions of the buzz and selling of stocks and when I learned that I could participate in this distillation of the American culture, I was exuberant. It taught me not only how bids and offers affect the stock prices, but also how people interact. The floor was not at all how I expected it. Granted I knew that people were screaming at all hours of the working day, but it was what they were screaming that had a profound impact on me. I had expected people to be at least a little courteous when it came to making a deal, but instead, the traders were exactly the opposite. They could be standing, acting completely friendly toward each other and suddenly when trading began they would start calling each other (and their co-workers in the booths) every name in the book (and quite a few that can't even be printed in *that* book). I learned through this experience that in our society, at the heart of capitalism, every man is for himself. There is no second prize, and compassion is only for those who wish to lose (or can put it in an ad campaign). This in and of itself may not be any great revelation to a thinking person, however this experience wiped any and all of the haze that people use to tarnish that stark reality.

My experience was fairly unique (especially for a sixteen year-old), however the way I learned from my experience, I feel, is universal. It was not as if someone pulled me aside and said "Can you see that? It means each and every man for himself." I learned it by absorption, bit by bit, day by day I picked up more of a feel for what it was really like on the floor. I would assume that this is the way the traders learned to be cutthroat, they little by little found that if they were nice, some other guy bought his family a new apartment while he struggled to keep his that he has been in for the last five years. This process of rationalizing what one observes may well be the oldest form of learning, dating back before communication was even possible (of course I can't say for sure, I've never read anything on precommunicative thought processes). I think that people learn by rationalizing what

they observe, the same method by which I made my “amazing discovery.”

Clearly, this student’s available repertoire of syntactical and lexical alternatives is much greater than the previous student’s, and clearly these features, which are quantifiable, will affect the readers’ judgment. But these were not the primary criteria for placing this essay in advanced writing. Its exceptional logical and rhetorical sophistication were.

The writer’s use of the inductive move is impressive. The essay elaborates the logical connection between the experience and *how* the learning occurred on at least two levels. First, it generalizes the specific process of learning to apply to human behavior at large: “My experience was fairly unique (especially for a sixteen year-old), however the way I learned from my experience, I feel, is universal.” In detail, the text traces the writer’s own rational experience and then, incorporating parallel syntax to reinforce the observed similarity between self and others, generalizes to the limited group of other traders. From that incremental hop, the logic leaps to humankind as a whole, including “humans” who could not communicate verbally. But apparently aware of the danger of the broad generalization’s sliding into the ridiculous, the writer steps back by acknowledging other possible views—“of course, I can’t say for sure, I’ve never read anything on precommunicative thought processes.”

At a second level, the learning process the writer describes, though termed only “rational,” is indeed the inductive process. The text explicates it in some detail: “It was not as if someone pulled me aside and said ‘Can you see that? It means each and every man for himself.’” The writer did not learn by direct instruction. Instead, “I learned it by absorption, bit by bit, day by day I picked up more of a feel for what it was really like on the floor.” The writer learned by the accumulation of observed detail until it could be generalized to a pattern of behavior, in other words, by inductive logic.

As impressive as is this essay’s use of inductive logic are its multiple perspectives. On the lighter side he gives us, “they would start calling each other (and their co-workers in the booths) every name in the book (and quite a few that can’t even be printed in *that* book)” with its humorous nod to more than one scale of “dirty” words. Capitalists, a group from whom the writer is distanced enough to judge, evoke two differentiated views about compassion: it is either for losers or for exploita-

tion. Worth noting is that this sentence about compassion—“There is no second prize, and compassion is only for those who wish to lose (or can put it in an ad campaign)” —is scrawled in the margins of the original test booklet, an afterthought which indicates that the writer kept working on the capitalist’s perspective even while composing another sentence voicing alternative positions. The next sentence reflects on past naiveté (without taking ownership of it) and acknowledges more mature perspectives, perhaps that of the placement reader: “This in and of itself may not be any great revelation to a thinking person, however this experience wiped any and all of the haze that people use to tarnish that stark reality.” This mature/naive duality reappears in the final sentence of the essay in quotation marks around a phrase no longer the writer’s: “I think that people learn by rationalizing what they observe, the same method by which I made my ‘amazing discovery.’”

These two essays are quite common in Utah’s placement experience. Both were among the first ten I reviewed when looking for examples for this article. Though Roy’s sample group did not seem to have any examples of level 2 essays longer than level 4s, several of the sixteen discrepancies between the SDS and holistic ratings were based on word length, including all six that were not borderline cases. Roy attempts to explain these anomalies quantitatively by adding other features to the equation, seemingly on an ad hoc basis. For instance, in the case of three essays that were too long by SDS criteria for their level 2 holistic rating, Roy found low counts of syllables per word, and so, added that feature to the criteria for placement in preparatory writing, reasoning that “short, simple words probably overrode the favorable impression created by paper length” (46). Indeed, short simple words would have affected placement, but probably to verify a judgment made on the basis of the absence of inductive reasoning and multiple perspectives. In fact, far from positively influencing raters schooled to look for evidence of these logical and rhetorical features, long essays that fail to demonstrate such moves tend to try their patience.

In another case where a short essay placed its writer in advanced freshman writing, Roy noted that sentences were unusually long. He consequently added this criterion to level 4 placement, hypothesizing that “sentence lengths averaging \Rightarrow 23.25 words apparently override modest word production” (47). Again, sentence length, or more likely syntactical complexity, probably do influence placement. But more salient

would have been evidence of inductive reasoning and multiple viewpoints. On the basis of other anomalies, Roy also adds to the placement equation percentage of unique words, the Flesch-Kincaid readability level of the essay, and percentage of prepositions.

Making these ad hoc adjustments, Roy is addressing a problem that human readers constantly confront—that few essays perfectly fit the profile of a single placement category, even when described holistically. Human readers must constantly weigh the importance of one feature of a text against another, a process that a computerized system is forced to quantify. This is the necessity that leads to complex and inelegant ad hoc additions to a computerized scoring system.

It might appear, then, that logical and rhetorical features of texts are likely to invalidate any quantitative system feasible in the near future. That is not the argument I wish to make. It may be that if the resources were available for further research, and Roy points out the difficulties of that situation (50), a theoretically sound quantitative scoring system could be devised for which construct validity could be demonstrated. To achieve construct validity, the researcher would need to return to a critical examination of the writing features hypothesized as relevant to expectations for texts in the rhetorical context of a student entering the university. On the basis of Utah's experience, I would predict that such research would result, for starters, in the elimination of length as a criterion but the inclusion of syllable-per-word count, and, if valid measures could be devised, of syntactical complexity.

However, even if such a computerized program were to be devised and found to be less expensive and more accurate than holistic placement, I would still be concerned about using it to the exclusion of human readers. My first concern would have to do with the very feature that would make such a program inexpensive—its general acceptance for widespread use. In this regard, Roy's research provides an opportunity to discuss the theoretical issue of the universality of writing standards in the context of a particular practical application. It is a good example of theory, misguided theory in this case, meeting practice. I noted above my reservations about the claim that it is possible to identify a single set of criteria even for a genre apparently so limited as "student writing." Utah's holistic criteria have been effective for placing students into freshman level writing courses developed in tandem with the placement

essay. The essay prompts and criteria are designed to elicit writing to demonstrate whether students as yet handle competently the features of writing taught at each course level. If a student questions a level 2 placement, for instance, I can point out that the essay failed to demonstrate the ability to generalize from specifics and assure her or him that the level 2 course focuses on a series of writing assignments that will all, in a variety of ways, give students practice in making this inductive move. The ultimate criterion for measuring the validity of any placement instrument is whether the instrument matches the local conditions, specifically in this case, the purposes and content of the courses in which students begin writing instruction. The danger is that cost-conscious administrators would be tempted to adopt a computerized program without regard to the instrument's theoretical and contextual premises, which determine its appropriateness to any local situation. On the other hand, the reliability requirement that forces human readers continually to discuss their rationales for rating also works to ensure content validity. Local concerns will, willy-nilly, figure into the discussions.

There are additional reasons related to the material impact of college testing, well-documented since the initiation of Harvard's composition test for admission over a century ago, to question the use of computer scoring for student writing. Placement procedures that avowedly ignore the content and discursive moves in a text convey an old, product-centered message about writing to a public that matters for writing instruction—high school English teachers, administrators, school boards, college instructors, and college administrators. The message is that writing consists merely of discrete stylistic components that operate independently of communicative contexts, that is, of audiences, purposes, and genres. The implications are frightening. A text's reception by readers could again be ignored, and school boards and administrators would not be required to pay (or, at least, not required to feel guilty for not paying) the costs of small class size for English teachers. Teachers could revert to workbook exercises in vocabulary and complex sentences, saving themselves the immense time commitment to read student papers. The message would condone the reinstatement of Harvard's Subject A and its correctness-oriented descendants.

The question is, finally, of greater import than the validity of a testing instrument. It goes to the core of the identity of practice and theory. As we make decisions about practices—whether

they be the practices of large-scale assessment, of placement, of pedagogy, of textbook selection or authoring, of teacher training—it behooves us to consider how one practice implicates another and how practices determine strategic articulations of theory. Compositionists have fought against the view of writing instruction described above for twenty-five years, especially in regard to basic writing at the college level. The recognition that “writing” is a rhetorical act inseparable from its content, contexts, and purposes has been hard-won. It would be a mistake now to undo these admittedly partial victories in the name of seemingly “new” but, no doubt, “authoritative” technologies.

Note

¹I have corrected some mechanical errors to foreground the rhetorical and logical differences between the two.

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Carol Severino

INADVERTENTLY AND INTENTIONALLY POETIC ESL WRITING

ABSTRACT: Arguing against a rhetoric/mechanics split and in favor of greater attention to the lexical level of language, especially where second language writing is concerned, the author demonstrates how syntactic and lexical constraints as well as cultural/aesthetic preferences result in astonishingly poetic effects in the writing of ESL students. Linguistically classifying and analyzing the poetic ESL examples she has collected, she makes connections to the grammar of first-language poetry and to the relationship between error and creativity.

When writing in a second language or responding to second language writing, as we do more frequently as communities and classrooms become increasingly multicultural, the issue of balance between rhetorical and mechanical matters which has characterized many discussions of first-language composition teaching (see Connor) loses some of its relevance. One of the largest obstacles facing second-language writers is not rhetoric or mechanics, not considerations of purpose and audience versus punctuation and spelling. Rather, it is *wording*—being constrained to pour complex thoughts into the limiting linguistic molds of one's syntactic and lexical repertoires, or—the focus of this essay—*inventing new expressions*, sometimes by relying

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on the more available structures of the native language. Whether working in their first or second language, writers often sense that Aristotle's means of persuasion are available to them, but that the right words to effect these means seem unavailable—Plato's "Words fail me" predicament.

Wording, ESL students tell us, is one of their most compelling concerns. For example, the day she enrolled in our writing center, a Japanese student wrote, "Sometimes I don't know how I can explain exactly what I think or feel in English"; her writing teacher, a native English speaker, empathized in the margin: "Sometimes *I* have this problem, too." A Chinese student wrote, "I never think that I am a writer when I am writing. I just feel that I try to put words together. Frequently I feel I don't have enough words. Maybe I'd better try to memorize more vocabulary." (Actually, she wrote "memberize" more vocabulary, an added layer of meaning (the idea of discourse community) that foreshadows the poetic overtones of ESL writing that I will discuss.

Psycholinguists Herbert and Eve Clark emphasize that it is the *availability* of structures of the language that determines what is said and written and how—for both native and non-native speakers, but especially the latter. According to Denise Murray, the average native-English-speaking college student has a passive reading and listening vocabulary of 150,000 words. She estimates that if most bilingual ESL college students were to learn 40 new words a day, it would take four years to acquire such a vocabulary. It is no wonder that many second-language writers experience more distress at the lexical rather than at the rhetorical or mechanical levels.

When writing teachers read a piece of ESL writing, what immediately strikes them, "as a kind of foreign accent, only in writing instead of speech" (Leki, 129), are the ways in which ideas and feelings are explained, ways that are often different from those of native speakers. Some phrasings might be convoluted and difficult to comprehend, causing double takes, as with the syntactic derailments Mina Shaughnessy discusses. Other phrasings, even if somewhat twisted, are startlingly unique and poetic—refreshing alternatives to the stock phrases, worn-out clichés, dead and dying metaphors, and routine formulas commonly found in native-speaker college student prose. The phrases are "inventive," a word poet Kenneth Koch uses to describe poetry. ESL writers literally invented them instead of using conventional expressions, which they might have bor-

rowed had they known them and felt comfortable using them. According to Boccaccio, "Poetry brings forth strange and unheard-of creations of the mind." "Unheard-of creations," I might add, as opposed to expressions that have been heard over and over again. When first-language composition teachers come across such poetic phrasings, examples of which are below, they often remark, "I wish my native speakers would write like that." "Make it new," they advise those native-English-speaking writers, repeating Ezra Pound's directive. By expressing complex thoughts and intense emotions without convenient access to conventional structures of English, second-language writers cannot help but make it new.

This lack of availability of structures and lexical items, therefore, is double-edged. It brings forth as much innovation for writers and readers as it does frustration. Thus, Wilga Rivers is not quite right when she claims that "Innovative ability will exist only to the extent . . . that the set of rules has been internalized" (34). Failure to internalize sets of syntactic and semantic rules *can* result in innovative ability—unheard-of creations of what Larry Selinker calls "interlanguage." Ironically, traditional analyses of poetry emphasize the writer's choice of words and structures to achieve poetic effects, whereas in the case of second-language writers, it is often the very lack of choice that contributes to interlanguage innovations and poetic effects. Most discussions in the field of poetics, such as Samuel Levin's *Linguistic Structures in Poetry*, are predicated on notions of choice of patterns and structures—the conscious intentions of the artist to create new forms and meanings.

It is these new forms and meanings that I wanted to examine when I began collecting them from the writing of ESL students enrolled in our writing center. I wanted to classify and analyze them to discover the exact qualities and features that make them seem poetic to native-English speakers. If, as David Bartholomae and Lou Kelly both recommend, teachers read native-speaker writing as carefully and with as much appreciation as they do literature, surely they should read non-native-speaker writing the same way. I will focus on the writing of Asian ESL students from China, Japan, Vietnam, and Korea as they are the largest ESL population enrolled in our writing center.

In order to classify and analyze the examples, I "translated" them into more typical everyday English and compared the everyday versions to the ESL ones. For example, in writing

about her parents (example 3a below), a Japanese student noted, “I have never been scolded by them *with big voice and violence*.” I reformulated the underlined prepositional phrase with adverbs, resulting in the more conventional, “I have never been scolded by them loudly or violently.” The effect of the original version is poetic; the prepositional phrase “with big voice and violence” slows the reader down and accentuates the idea of loudness and force. Using prepositional phrases instead of the adverbs expected by native-English-speaking readers can certainly be classified as an error on the part of the ESL writer. However, because of the psychological effects of the phrase on the reader, it fits Louis Ceci’s definition of “syntactic imagery”—poetic effects achieved by grammatical structures, a relationship whose study, he notes, dates back to Longinas’ *On the Sublime*.

Misuse of the indefinite article is another such example. In the passage, “They [those who dropped the atom bomb] gave a birth to something very evil” (4b below), the ‘a’ highlights the evil, intensifying the original meaning. Are these grammatical variations mistakes or are they syntactic imagery? Bartholomae notes that “the distance between text and conventional expectation may be a sign of failure and it may be a sign of genius, depending on the level of control and intent we are willing to assign to the writer” (257)—the elements of choice and intent that seem more appropriate to discussions of first-language writing. I would add that regardless of the level of control and intent assigned, attributing failure or genius should also depend on another element—the cognitive effects on the reader—whether the writer’s words generate new layers of meaning in the reader’s mind.

A double caveat is necessary here. I am neither trying to romanticize second-language writing by classifying all or even some of it as poetry, nor to trivialize it in the Art Linkletter mode of “International students write the darndest things.” The writing of international students enrolled in our writing center is not poetry in the strict sense. It is prose written in response to assignments. It usually doesn’t have the consciously constructed rhythmic or sound patterns characteristic of poetry—the conventions of rhyme, alliteration, meter, and verse. In addition, the aforementioned matters of artistic intention and freedom of choice are problematic enough to render a label of “poetry” controversial. However, some ESL writing, as the following sentences and passages show, is *poetic*, primarily be-

cause of its effects on the reader. These words are surprising, unexpected, and innovative, and to paraphrase Richard Ohmann, they set the reader's cognitive and emotional processes in motion.

The features characteristic of ESL poetic phrasings comprise the headings 1-7 on the following list. Before each example is the language background of the student who produced it. Most of the examples are by Chinese-speaking writers from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China, who constitute the majority of the Asian enrollment in the writing center.

Poetic Features of ESL Writing

1) INVENTED WORDS blends (portmanteaus), analogical reasoning, or different morphemes:

a) (Korean) She laughs well, eats well, and a good *sporter*.

b) (Vietnamese) I can stay in the pool for many hours until my fingers all *shrinkle*.

c) (Chinese) Of 55 persons coming from that city, 5 friends became Christians and many of Christians *revivalized* their spiritual lives and commitments to God.

d) (Chinese) The difficulty is that every time I feel upset or frustrated here, I cannot get his timely *comfortness*.

e) (Chinese) . . . our curiosity made our *bravity*.

f) (Chinese) For example, the greatest physicist Newton was *sparkled* by a falling apple and Archimedes invented a famous hydrostatic theory during taking a bath.

2) COMMON EXPRESSIONS OR WORDS USED IN A NEW WAY:

a) (Japanese) Disappointment fell on me like a *wet blanket*.

b) (Chinese) Even today a man prefer to marry a tender, *home-style, no ambitious* woman.

c) (Chinese) It is a pity that when people grow up they can scarcely find *an indeed friend*.

d) (Chinese, same writer as above) When I was waken up by the *alarming of the clock*, I thought “How can time pass so fast?”

e) (Chinese) These two problems *wave* together causing the difficult situation I am right now . . . and since they are *maxing together*, I can work on one to improve the other and vice verse.

f) (Chinese) There were many *oil bleeding* case happened in Alaska before.

g) (Chinese) My self-esteem was *nibbled by the sense of failure* little by little ever since I started to take Rhetoric class. I was afraid.

3) USING CERTAIN GRAMMATICAL AND SYNTACTIC PATTERNS (i.e. prepositional phrases, nouns) INSTEAD OF OTHERS (adverbs, adjectives) including inverted or archaic syntax:

a) (Japanese) I have never been scolded by them *with big voice or violence*.

b) (Chinese) from “Taking a Passenger Train in China.” Many people displayed various kinds of gymnastic skills, but some others simply leaned against us sitting people and seized the chance to vent their *spite of no seat* upon us.

c) (Chinese) I was always so shy to ask her to give me a *dishwash chance*.

d) (Chinese) The sound of the waves and the wind of *the madness ocean* made us feel like the voices of unfortunate people yelled out for help before they die.

4) DIFFERENT CONSTRUCTIONS WITH TWO-WORD VERBS:

a) (Japanese) I was so glad that *she is counting me on*.

b) (Japanese, same writer as above) Perhaps when the atomic bombs were dropped, nobody knew exactly what will happen. When they dropped it, *they gave a birth* to something very evil.

c) (Chinese) To develop a good working relationship with your fellow employees . . . don't try to *show up* too much.

5) UNIQUE METAPHOR OR SIMILE:

a) (Chinese) I tried to concentrate all my nerve and my mind on topic with strong mind . . . however, 5-6 minutes later *all my minds run separately not concerning with my will.*

b) (Chinese) I am eager to do certain thing but *I am bent on a stick and cannot move.*

c) (Chinese, same writer as above) After my grandma died, my grandpa face *never turned bright again.*

d) (Chinese, same writer as above) When a foreigner or a migrant is placed in a group of Americans, it seems like *a turkey in a flock of chickens.*

e) (Chinese, same writer as above) Taking care of her children and her husband is the *portrait of her life.*

f) (Chinese) I write and it seems that in the process of writing I have written out *the question marks in my mind.*

g) (Korean) I had to *chase their eyes* to understand the quick conversation of my classmates.

6) REFERENCES TO/IMAGES FROM NATURE:

a) (Korean, about a friend) So the way home was always a bit sorrowful *with long shadows . . . seeing another's soul over the shoulder* is always a wonderful experience. After that, I hadn't seen him, but only heard his well-being through wind.

b) (Vietnamese) But once he was within 15-20 yards of us, our feet went flying *like that of a deer that just saw it predator, the lion*, and over the fence we went . . .

c) (Vietnamese) When I was 7 or 8 years old, I was told that it was a bridge built across the *sea*. Wow! I wished that I could have walked on that bridge. But later on I realized that the fishing boats made up such *a bridge of night.*

d) (Chinese) We rode on bicycle for a long time, *accrossing the creek*, following the curve roads, seeing those rice field aside,

facing the *fresh breeze* . . . the bridge was narrow and swang with the *wind*.

7) HEIGHTENED EMOTION AND/OR SPIRITUALITY expressed via (3) including old-fashioned and inverted syntax:

a) (Korean) from “A Gap between Reality and Want to Be”

Alas! What a tragedy! When I think about that idea, I expected a pure, a brilliant, and perfect expressions. But the result, I rather say, practical reality, is always a tragedy. So usually I decide that wonderful idea stays in its own way, and lives in its own life—in my mind, of course.

I guess that would be better for it than *sculptured* by coarse, pretended artist—me, and humiliated by shallow-minded people.

b) (Korean, same writer as above) You may think that I’m romantic. No way. But yes! *Just a little romantic and a little realistic am I!*

c) (Japanese) It seemed to me that *desires come limitlessly forever*.

Some of the Asian ESL passages listed contain a combination of two or more of these features, increasing their poetic quality. For example, in 7b, heightened emotion is indicated by two exclamation points and inverted word order characteristic of Wordsworth and the romantic poets. At the same time the student is professing to be romantic. Some of the types of poetic phrasing are more unintentional, what can be called “inadvertent” poetry (Features 1-5), and some intentional (Features 6 and 7); that is, the appearance of metaphor, nature and intense emotion in some Asian ESL writing is not an accident or a mistake, but a complex rhetorical and cultural phenomenon related to: 1) the writing center’s encouragement of self-expression and verbal risk-taking and its historical valorization of personal and nature essays; 2) the rural and small-town backgrounds of some of the students; that is, they have had more experiences with nature than many suburban U.S. college students; and 3) most importantly, national and cultural preferences for certain features in writing.

Hence, poetic features result primarily from ESL interlanguage but also from cultural preferences, with inadvertently poetic features arising from interlanguage effects and intentionally poetic features from cultural preferences. According to the

International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) study of writing which involved fourteen countries (unfortunately not the four Asian countries above), preferred features for writing vary according to a complex of interrelated factors: the nation, its culture, its educational system, and its writing pedagogy (Purves). What makes writing "good" for many Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese students educated in their home countries, may be slightly different from what makes school writing good for many U.S. students. More Asians might place greater value on writing that is aesthetically pleasing, more Americans on writing that is clear and precise. As a Korean student enrolled in our writing center wrote, "In Korean, the more being poetic or has meanings in a sentence, the better it is considered. In English, being clear and straightforward seem to be the way to write." Jie and Lederman's study of entrance exams in China revealed that essays with metaphors and literary references were rated higher than those without. The Chinese preference for images and metaphors may also be related to their pictographic writing system, as Nancy Duke Lay says, "the concrete imagery of the language." "The written character . . . is the direct representation of that which is being described A sincere person is a man standing by his words" (41).

Inadvertently poetic interlanguage effects result from the transfer of specific native-language grammatical patterns. The dense, telegrammatic nature of Chinese students' English prose is caused by direct transfer from Chinese grammar, which lacks function words such as articles and prepositions (cf. Lay's example of "city springtime" instead of "springtime in the city"). Some Japanese ESL writing has poetic qualities also—because of telegrammatic denseness, but possibly because of cultural preferences as well. In JoAnn Dennett's survey of Japanese technical writing students, she asked them how they would characterize good technical writing. Such writing, they answered, would engage the emotions and possess beauty, surprise, and flow—not usually the features stressed in technical and business writing courses and textbooks in the U.S. In fact, a native-English-speaking reader might perceive some Asian ESL writing as poetic because the kind of transactional, down-to-business prose that we are culturally accustomed to expect of U.S. students because of their preference for and training in clarity and the plain style, probably may not contain as many images, metaphors, and references to nature. Such

national comparisons and contrasts must be made tentatively. Research in culturally preferred features for writing—the field of contrastive rhetoric—is still in its formative stages. Likewise, in a “global village” united by corporate, technological, and media influences, cultural preferences shift and change, thereby making a “national writing pedagogy” difficult to define or pin down.

Features 1 through 5 imply that mistakes were made and errors committed, albeit unintentional, innocent ones. Yet accident, error, and mistake should not be construed negatively. Many of the best discoveries in writing, research, and life occur by accident, as artists and those who study artistic processes remind us. Poet Kenneth Koch describes the value of error in generating poetry in *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams*, a book about teaching poetry to New York City public school children, many of whom are also bilingual. He tells how he assigned his students a poem which required a strangely composed object in every line with the word ‘of’ in between the words—again, an “unheard-of creation.” A third grader accidentally wrote “Swan of bees,” when he meant “swarm of bees,” a mistake Koch thought an improvement over the original because of the added, meaning/image of a swan shaped with bees or assaulted by bees. He notes: “Believing that the student’s error had created something interesting and beautiful, I wanted to share it with the class; I was pleased to have a live example of the *artistic benefits that come from error and chance*” [emphasis mine] (13).

Alan Maley and Alan Duff, also poets, and authors of *The Inward Ear*, a book about teaching poetry to ESL students in England, argue that poetry’s tolerance for what would be considered error or deviant in conventional discourse makes the genre ideal for ESL students’ reading and writing. Children and second-language speakers, if they are not inhibited and apprehensive about error, are excellent sources of inventive language use.

H.G. Widdowson in his analyses of the grammar of poetry discusses poetic error in terms of “deviance” from the syntactic patterns of conventional discourse. He shows how poets such as Wordsworth, Eliot, Tennyson, Shakespeare, e.e. cummings, and Ted Hughes violate the rules of standard communication when they use inverted and deviant syntax and word order and heightened emotion, and when they use one part of speech for another (i.e., nouns as verbs)—the very same features found in

many of the ESL phrasings above. Widdowson points out how many of these poets' constructions, if used by children or foreign learners, would be regarded as incorrect. Widdowson's view of poetic and metaphorical discourse as contrasting with and deviant from "normal" discourse conflicts with the views of Paul Kameen and of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson who argue against the dichotomy, emphasizing the metaphorical nature of everyday "normal" conversational discourse.

What are some of the processes by which second-language writers come up with new expressions or common expressions used in a new way? What are some of the cognitive operations that result in such "unheard-of creations"? A partial explanation is given by Suzanne Irujo in her article "Don't Put Your Leg in Your Mouth," a discussion of how Spanish-speaking students arrive at interesting expressions such as the one in her title, reminiscent of the humorous constructions (Spoonerisms) of the Reverend Spooner and of ESL TV characters such as Latka from *Taxi*, Mipos from *Perfect Strangers*, Russian comedian Yakov Smirnoff, even Mork from *Mork and Mindy*. Irujo notes that one way ESL writers arrive at these constructions is by confusing part of an idiom they have heard but not mastered, producing such examples as, "to go out on a stick" instead of "to go out on a limb" or "to kill two birds with one rock." A second way is by combining part of an English idiom with a Spanish idiom such as "to spread the voice," a combination of "to spread the news" and "correr la voz." Substituting the equivalent of Spanish words in English idioms creates unique approximations such as "looking for a nail in the backyard" instead of "a needle in a haystack."

The Chinese preference of using such maxims, aphorisms, and proverbs in their writing results in unique constructions when such sayings are translated successfully or not into English. What was routine in Chinese becomes poetic when translated, for example, the reference to time with which many of Carolyn Matalene's Chinese students began their essays: "Time flies like an arrow" (794), an expression which is not clichéd in English. To summarize the process, the unintentional and inadvertent, or incompletely learned second-language sayings, combine with the intentional and purposeful, or cultural preference for such sayings in the native language to produce poetic effects.

One finds another dimension to the relationship between poetic and stock expressions in the growth and development of the language itself. The process, recounted by George Orwell in

“Politics and the English Language,” is that overly used metaphors become “frozen” or dead; they lose their symbolic or analogic meaning, and become idioms or clichés. What was once unique, vivid, and poetic, when repeated, becomes over-used, common, and normal. However, new second-language learners find it hard to tell the difference between what is *fresh* and what is *frozen*. For example, beginning ESL students, upon learning the English word “breakfast” (break/fast) might think it metaphorical, quaint, and poetic. They might even draw the same conclusions about English speakers themselves, marveling, “Ah, breakfast, the meal at which the fast of the evening is broken.” Yet there is nothing really poetic in the 20th century about “breakfast.” We say it and eat it without experiencing metaphoricity. By the same token, when English-speaking learners of Spanish as a second language first encounter the expression “Ojalá que,” literally “Allah grant that,” they marvel, “Ah, the Moorish roots of Spanish.” But Spanish-speaking people of the 1990s are not actually invoking Allah when they say Ojala, they are merely thinking “I hope that,” which is the way the expression is translated. The break/fast and Allah meanings have become frozen or dead. With many examples of ESL poetry, however, it seems that the *opposite* of the process of freezing metaphors and turning them into standard expressions is happening. With the new semantic levels and overtones supplied by the so-called mistake, the frozen idiom or stock expression such as “wet blanket” or “home-style,” thaws out, is “re-freshed,” becomes revitalized, or “revitalized” (1c) and poeticized, which is why these expressions reveal so much about language, culture, and life experience.

How do we college English teachers respond to writers of passages with thawed-out idioms, invented words, and other new, unheard-of creations? By simply applauding their poetic nature in the margins or in a writing conference? (“What a beautiful phrase!”) By correcting them and substituting typical native-speaker versions? (“No, what you really meant to say here was ‘loudly and violently.’”) We can both compliment the writer on the freshness and inventiveness of, say, the portmanteau “shrinkle,” explain why it affected us the way it did, and discuss how she may have come up with it, but we can and should also teach her the conventional, perhaps more boring ways of conveying a similar idea. Such complex and subtle responses and discussions are more effective in one-to-one conferences than in a classroom or via comments on students’ papers.

Walker Percy, in his essay "Metaphor as Mistake," discusses metaphorical mistakes that lead to poetic thinking and discourse. For example, as a boy, Percy thought the name of his favorite bird was the *Blue Dollar Hawk*, not the Blue Darter Hawk. The black people Percy knew called a coin-operated record player or juke box, a *Seabird* instead of a Seeburg, the company that made it. Both mistakes added a new layer of meaning, lost when Percy found out the correct name of the bird and the juke box. Such mistakes, Percy says, caused by "misnamings, misunderstandings, or misrememberings, have resulted in what the critic Blackmur calls 'that heightened, that excited sense of being'—an experience moreover which was notably absent before the mistake was made" (65). By misconceiving or misnaming something, the namer conceives it with "richer overtones of meaning . . . even as being *more truly* what it is . . ." (68).

ESL "mistakes," such as those above, do the same. They add richer overtones of meaning and get closer to the truth of what the writers are communicating. *Timely comfortness* (1d) is more consoling somehow than the correct "comfort" maybe because of the calming effect of three almost equal syllables—com-fort-ness. The *alarming of the clock* (2d) will wake one up more quickly than the ringing of the clock because when it first rouses you from a peaceful sleep it is indeed alarming. Having one's self-esteem *nibbled by . . . failure* (2g) is more disconcerting, and threatening to selfhood than having it just whittled away or diminished. Oil spills, because we are numbed by hearing the phrase so often in the news, are more easily dismissed than *oil bleeding* (2f). *The madness ocean* (3d), with its extra nominalizing morpheme "-ness," is much more fierce and frightening than "the mad ocean." Such "noun-piling" is also characteristic of some first-language poetry. *Accrossing the creek* [blending the preposition and the verb] conveys more motion/movement than just crossing the creek or going across the creek (5d).

Returning to Percy, through these phrasings, we do know these phenomena better, "conceive of [them] in a more plenary or full fashion and have more immediate access to [them] . . ." (68). Error is most certainly an instrument of knowing, not just knowing the writer's "logic of error," but knowing new meanings and reaching and sharing new understandings about the world.

Note

¹The author would like to thank the international students at the University of Iowa Writing Lab for producing these poetic “unheard-of creations” and the Writing Lab teachers, especially Dale Rigby, for identifying them. Thanks also to Gregory Lichtenberg for the Walker Percy essay.

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Hope A. Parisi

INVOLVEMENT AND SELF-AWARENESS FOR THE BASIC WRITER: GRAPHICALLY CONCEPTUALIZING THE WRITING PROCESS

ABSTRACT: Even when students demonstrate new writing behaviors, they can remain several removes from recognizing them, at risk for returning to old, less helpful, patterns. The author proposes a metacognitive intervention not only for students to understand composing in the abstract but to appreciate their important roles in managing its complexities. Students are asked to diagram their processes and, in doing so, turn their attention to the moments in between writing tasks in which they planned, questioned, and self-evaluated. The effect is to redress the tentativeness with which students progress from basic to better writers.

Taking what we know about the composing processes of experienced and professional writers, teachers of basic writing understand the ability of students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their work as a sign of growth (Sommers, Murray). Questionnaires, interviews, think-aloud protocols, and the like help to determine our students' changing attitudes about writing, and aid us in evaluation (Englebert, et al.; Flower and Hayes).

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These practices, placing the student at the center of his or her learning, are crucial for learning and often highly valued by the students themselves (Miller, 179). But for the college basic writer, sometimes the invitation to reflection meets with suspicion or consternation. A brief survey of the different ways to describe composition demonstrates the profession's own difficulty with consensus. Teachers who share similar philosophies on language learning may employ divergent techniques, while those with conflicting perspectives might actually share some practices (Davis, et al., 52). Think of the basic writer who, often involved in a sequence of courses, encounters a range of instructors, each with a potentially different idea about what writing is.

At my institution, for example, Kingsborough Community College, the sequence of basic reading and writing courses for native-speakers can take three or four terms to complete. Frequently students get caught repeating a step, sometimes two or more times. By the time I meet some students in Basic Composition 2, they may have had two other teachers at the same level. Even after they have written well, when asked to articulate what it is about that piece that makes it good, or how they are developing as writers, these students fall back on a "canned" kind of metacognitive discourse. Reporting their "new" and better attention to such things as grammar, fewer run-ons, and better wording, they describe their writing in ways that confirm the gulf noted by Sommers between student and nonstudent writers, i.e., they characterize their work as "clean[ed] up speech" (122). At the same time, the real strides they in fact may be making—e.g., in planning, focusing, or revision—receive no mention. Success in writing, for them, has generally been "hit or miss," often dependent on a particular teacher's response and some lucky measure of accord with the focus of writing for that semester. Like most low-achievers, they do not ascribe their success to their own involvement in learning or to self-efficacy (Smey-Richman, 7-10).

Changes in writing behavior do not simultaneously ensure changes in assumptions about writing. Nor do they always promise changes in students' conceptions of themselves as learners. In helping students to reflect on writing, we tend to keep students narrowly task-oriented. They think about audience, purpose, text structure, or specific options to follow when problems occur (Englebert; Bruton and Kirby, 91). But rarely do we ask them to stretch these bounds to encounter themselves think-

ing about thinking. Even at their most basic starting-points, students do more complex questioning, decision-making, and evaluations than they know themselves capable of. For basic writers, metacognition can mean confidence when it is an opportunity for students to view themselves staging their own growth as they extend to writing their innate capacities as learners.¹

During the past several years, I have devised a method to help students literally “see” for themselves the complexities of their thinking/composing processes.² I ask students to trace in a diagram the evolution of their work’s progress from the initial scratchings to final form. Such diagrams invite the students to re-present the process, objectify it, abstract it. Instead of loading the students down with terminology of teachers and textbooks from past semesters (and perhaps some of my own invention), this method encourages students to devise their own shorthands, to represent not any *one* process but *their* processes. For many basic writers, it occasions a different kind of analysis than asking students about particular aspects, such as audience and purpose, or how they redressed problems in their writing. It accesses the writer *for* the writer, rather than a process which, by now for some, has been reiterated too long.

At the top of a partially blank standard size sheet of paper, I provide the following directions: “Draw a diagram which represents what you did in putting together your most recent written assignment.” Lines are provided below the blank space so that students can explain their diagrams, or express in words what they are unable to convey graphically. (To reduce anxiety and uncertainty, I provide students with the option of starting either with the diagram or the words.) After some initial surprise, students soon settle into asking themselves something like, “What kind of diagram would most completely ‘say’ what I did?”

One student draws a series of rectangles and plus signs. Beneath the rectangles, she writes “Freewriting + first draft + inserts = second draft.” Another student begins with circles, some concentric, some overlapping. I remind those who finish quickly about the space at the bottom of the worksheet for describing the diagram and/or filling in what was omitted from it. I also go around the room, pointing to the spaces between steps in the diagrams of students who had perhaps proceeded too hastily from the graphic to the linguistic dimension of the

exercise. “What did you do between those steps?” I ask, or, “How did you get from the freewriting to the first draft? Can you develop your diagram to also represent the step or steps that you are missing?” A new path of arrows, ellipses, or plus signs begins. Students gradually elaborate on their diagrams and expand their descriptions in response to my questions.

Making visible to basic writers their cognitive processes can aid what educational psychologists call *attribution retraining*, the development of students’ awareness that their success in learning can be traced to their own ingenuity and effort (Smey-Richman 25-26). Diagramming asks students to take account of all that writing requires of them so that they can appreciate their roles in managing its complexity. Moreover, it focuses attention on the supposedly “empty” moments between tasks where they can best find themselves questioning, analyzing, criticizing, shaping new thoughts—all acts of self-investment.

The benefit of such an exercise, then, lies in optimizing the diagrams as an occasion for students to talk about their processes. Students first react with good feelings about the complication and intricacy that their diagrams convey. Most students come to this exercise having composed their assignments by integrating a variety of sources, e.g., freewriting, lists of questions, notes and/or journals, a first and second draft. To account in sufficient detail for this integration is a challenge, often beyond verbal articulation due to the simultaneity of its many tasks. The visual dimension of the exercise, therefore, conveys this all-at-once quality of much of the process, while allowing the students to construct a narrative in spatial terms of how, when, and why they did what. Talking about the diagrams, then, whether explaining them in writing or aloud to others, calls upon them first to re-engage the writing process: checking their diagrams over, students must ask themselves the same questions by which they evaluate their own writing: “Did I convey what I wanted to convey?” “Did I ‘say’ it as accurately and/or effectively as possible?” And, with the understanding that others will “read” these diagrams, “Did I relate it in a readily graspable way?” (Boiarsky, 70).

Personal interaction between student and teacher can help students toward a discovery of these issues. As already mentioned, I go around the room and talk with students as they are diagramming, much as I do while they are writing, not minding if others overhear the interview. Students explain to me the parts of the process they have represented so far. As a reader/

listener of their processes, I mirror back to them what I hear them saying, tracing the path of their diagrams with my eyes and finger as I try to paraphrase.

I notice that most of my students like to formularize their processes—this plus that turns into something else, as if they were throwing ingredients into a pot and then covering it while some mystery happens. At the same time, they may have a feeling for the evolution of a piece but less of one for their part in each transformation. For example, one student, Curlean, begins her diagram with a square patch of dark scribble in the top left-hand corner of the page. She labels this mass “Confusion.” In the next part of her sequence, she draws a rectangle with lines going across it, like lines of writing, with the word “Error” marking several of them. The next rectangle has the words “Beginning” and “End” atop and at bottom, with an arrow pointing to it that says, “Almost perfect paper.” She explains, “In the beginning I was doubtful and confused. As we met in class I learned how to set up drafts and write more. Now I am writing organized more and more.” I repeat, tracing her progression, “So you went from confusion to clearer and clearer drafts. Each one was more organized.” But her description, like her diagram, keeps her actual process hidden. I want to know: “Does what you have here represent separate drafts, each one a clearer one? Did you always start each new bit of writing as if you were beginning a new piece? What are some specific things you did—questions you asked yourself or decisions you made—in going, say, from the first to second draft?”

These questions direct Curlean’s attention back to the process in more detail, yielding a new diagram of circles strung along an oblong path. Heading the oblong is a circle labeled “freewriting.” The next circle, left of the path, is “reread, jot down questions.” Directly to the right of this second circle is one that reads, “expand on questions, freewrite.” Following the paths to the left again, she writes, “re-read, narrow down my thoughts.” Directly to the right again reads “write in more details, corrections, and conclude.” At the bottom of the oblong is the circle “Final draft.” She shows me her new version, this time better able to describe it to me. When I ask her why the circular arrangement, she says that it is to show how one step leads to another. Perhaps now she can abstract her part in shaping her essay. “What does all this tell you about what *you* did as a writer?” I ask her, tracing her circle in the air. She answers in personal terms: “I would do the same things over

and over—write, read, write, read. I kept the writing going by asking myself questions.”

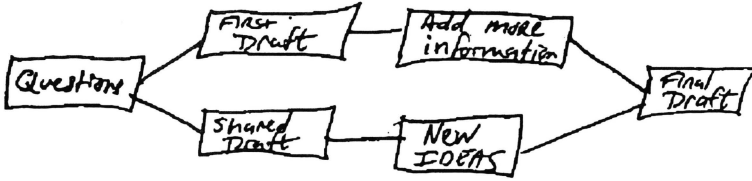
This student became a reader of her process after an opportunity to objectify it in detail. Much the same can happen when students share their diagrams. My classes encompass a range of abilities, mirrored in the variety of diagrams I receive. While the better writers usually are the better diagrammers, some students sell short their processes. One student, Maria, wrote a successful essay from journals, freewriting, and drafts. However, when asked to diagram, she was at a loss. Instead of diagramming, she drew an illustration of her piece:



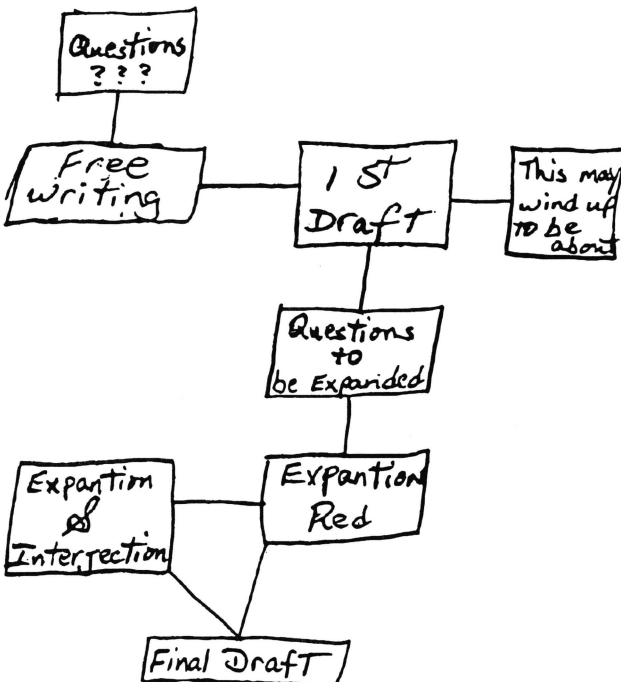
On the lines below it, she indicated only what the piece was about—a family get-together. “What I cannot explain in the diagram is all the good feelings, love, and joy that we felt there.” She needed to see the graphic representation of others’ processes in order to better think about her own.

In this particular class, students gathered to conference their diagrams much as they would a draft. As each group met, I moved among them, encouraging some students to fill in the details of what questions they might have asked themselves, what decisions they might have made, between steps. Roving, I catch only part of some explanations. “Talk about these steps,” I say. Or “Andrej, ask Joanne a question about something she *didn’t* explain.” He looks at her diagram, and points to an arrow that connects two drafts. “What does this mean?” he asks. Joanne scrutinizes the line. She tries to explain to me but I’m onto a different group. So she returns to him. By now many of the students are reexamining their diagrams, rearticulating them. They are finding more to say about their involvement in writing.

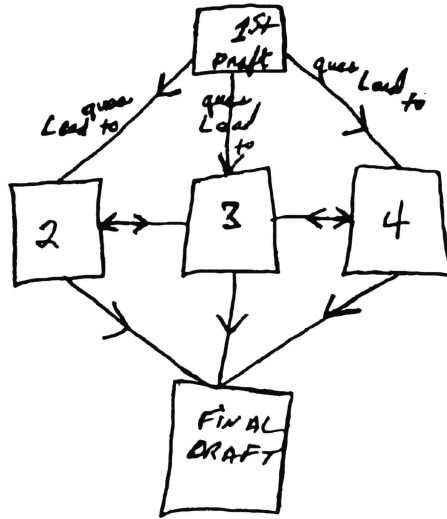
Like my class, the diagrams of Maria’s group show a range of facility and awareness. Charlie’s diagram is very different:



He narrates a straightforward progression: “First I asked questions about a decision I had to make. Then I wrote a first draft on the questions. Next I shared drafts and questions with two students which led to more ideas and more information which finally led to the final draft.” For Charlie, the variables in his equation stay constant; they simply “add up.” But they do account for the various bits and pieces of writing from which many students worked. In the same group, Dorian shares a diagram in ways similar to Charlie’s but speaks more to what happened between steps: “It all started with a few questions which were focused upon. Then I expanded upon the freewriting a bit which was then pinpointed to certain areas. Those key areas were then blown up to form the expansion [sic] and interjection piece. This was then molded together to form a final draft.”

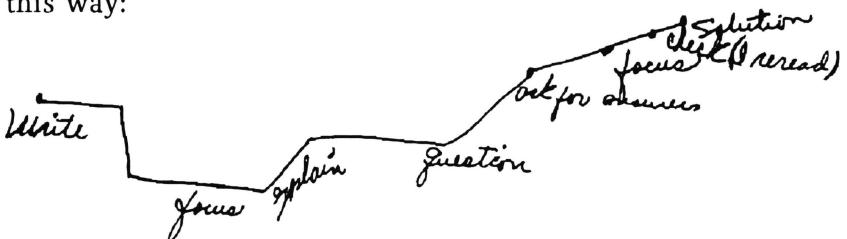


In both her verbal and written descriptions, Dorian gives the sense of a piece which depends for its focus on ideas that keep growing out of previous ones, determining and redetermining the writer's direction. It was much the same with Paul, a more advanced writer from another group, who wrote: "From the first draft, further questions arose that interrelated to the other pieces, which finally led to the final draft compiled of pieces from each." His diagram shows, in his words, the "interrelated[ness]" of one piece of writing to another:



Different questions or sets of questions lead from his first draft to three separate expansions. At mid-diagram, horizontal arrows indicate a dialogue among the expansions. Each of these pieces is encompassed or drawn upon to compose something different again, which Paul calls his Final Draft.

An overview of other diagrams helps Maria to realize that she has steps in common with her partners. After the conference everyone is given a chance to revise his or her diagram. For Maria, having the chance to consider her process in light of others' yields a new result. She reconfigures her process this way:



Here Maria, a basic writer, approaches an awareness of writing that comes close to how theorists and experienced writers characterize the composing process. Her diagram now includes peaks and valleys, moments of generating ideas and questions, and moments of standing back to evaluate them and begin again. She comments, "Focusing happens after writing, and explaining happens after focusing." At the same time, "question[ing]" is literally central. Like her partners, Maria comes to see writing as a continuum that self-duplicates even as it proceeds—a strong realization for a basic writer.

Asked to account for a process in steps and pieces, students are more apt to recognize or give names to those moments. Even when students seem to have followed similar courses of activity—e.g., starting out with freewriting or questions, then a first draft, peer conferencing, etc.—they do so while lending and maintaining different levels of attention to the various tasks of a project at different times. I would define diagramming's working principle like this: when classes of basic writers assume that they are more or less keeping together in their activities (although they may alternate between independent, small and large groupwork) and following a teacher's directions, asking them to then diagram their processes shifts the focus to the students' own input and self-direction. It is a moment for analyzing assumptions about learning in general, primarily that learning happens because of teachers' "instruction." To ask students to describe their experience of writing in detail, to account for their many acts of decision-making, focuses them on the complexity of *their* processes and *their* roles. It is a re-authorization, in a sense, that their growth as writers owes largely to *them*.

At the same time, if they ascribe little complexity to their processes, recalling, say, only a few steps, it is a chance for students to examine the process' interstices and invisibilities. Just as it is possible to diagram a full process, students can diagram part of a process—for example, what it was like to write a first draft, how they got from peer comments to a second draft, even how they found a focus. (I also like students to create and combine lists: "To find my topic, first I . . . then I . . . to do this I had to . . . then I . . .") Shifting the angle of the lens, students can find frames for many different aspects of their writing experience. Suddenly each one emerges in similar detail. They are all complex. When I have asked students to trace what they did to get to their first draft, their diagrams

reflect others showing an entire process. In groups or as a class, we compare our samples. Students draw their own conclusions: "Whether you are writing a first draft, a second draft, or something else, you must still ask questions and evaluate them." "Reading your writing always seems to change what you want to say next." "Getting to your first draft is just like getting to your final draft." Basic writers are capable of these insights when they start to own the processes they describe.

One sure mark of this happening is when students reach for descriptive language. Dorian used the term "interjection piece" to describe a kind of writing that emanated from her questions and re-readings but which could not be called a second draft. She also used the shorthand "This may wind up to be about . . ." to remind herself of a sentence-starter she used after her first draft to re-evaluate her focus. To negotiate these many aspects of her process was to "mold" them together. Beth spoke of using "the 'circling process,'" her own term, by which she meant that, after freewriting, she "gathered [together] similar ideas and numbered them in the order in which I wanted them to appear in my first draft." (Her diagram on getting to a second draft shows this same pattern of generation and selection.) Dong Yun talks of freewriting "possibilities," i.e., ideas for development, and then of "specifying each possibility." He divided these ideas each into "several pieces," and matched them to more "corresponding points" later "taken out of the freewriting." The juxtaposition of these "pieces" results in his first draft.

Jane, duplicating a similar write-and-patch approach, worked from what she called a "freewriting puzzle." Reading over her freewriting and grouping similar ideas, she singled out, or "cut up," those "segments" that did not seem to belong anywhere, and worked to integrate them into a first draft. (She in fact may have used scissors.) Like her, Jean also grouped ideas from her freewriting, calling them "tiny chunks" sectioned into "little blocks," which "were then fitted into a long piece," the first of three drafts. Even the poetic enters into students' descriptions: reiterating both Jane's and Jean's puzzle theme, one student describes his diagram-collage of ameba-like shapes floating and colliding in space. Miguel writes: "Puzzled pieces fall together like laughs in a long dark hallway, echoing together and off each other, forming new sounds and different languages." (Clearly, he was placed in my class to learn about academic discourse!) But notably absent from most diagrams and descrip-

tions are standard terms like “main idea,” “supporting details,” “introduction,” “body,” “paragraphs,” “conclusion,” “thesis,” even “topic.” Another student, Hilda, spoke not even of drafts, or of freewriting, but of “drafts of freewriting.” This grasp at language, when weighed with other indicators, suggests that students are making self-investments in their learning.

In truth, diagramming fits a classroom climate that involves students in their own learning as much as possible. To ask students to diagram their processes after many classes in which teachers have assigned topics, dictated their format, and/or lectured about writing would defeat the purpose of such an exercise, for students might well see it as a test. However, diagramming should only support an insight which students hopefully have begun to grasp: that learning anything involves bringing one's *fullest self* to the task at hand.

This implies a *set* of awarenesses, including not only what is required but also one's personal history, assumptions, past experiences with related tasks—in short, what one brings to learning. As learners, students constantly engage themselves in dialogue: “I can or can't do this.” “Is this what the teacher expects from me?” “Does this paragraph make sense?” In order to proceed from one place to another, students settle or complicate their queries, or suspend judgment. Diagramming assumes that teachers value giving students' inner dialogues an audible voice. It works in concert with other questions of self-exploration that can find occasion throughout a course, like: “Did you begin writing right away or did you wait? If you waited, what did you think about? What ideas, thoughts, assumptions allowed you to get started?” “As you wrote today, were you aware of a censor, someone or something criticizing your thoughts? Who or what was it?” “How did you use your freewriting in order to get to your first draft?” “Where are you in the progress of your piece—beginning? middle? near the end? How do you know?” “If all the thoughts you had while writing today, but didn't write, suddenly appeared in the margins, what would they be?” There are sub-texts moving within and among writers. How they meet and combine can create freedom or self-censorship. When students have the opportunity to explore what they bring to writing, they can better define the different ideas, questions, and decisions that impelled their writing through its various stages.

On a pragmatic level, students who can diagram their processes are those who are proceeding more easily to longer and

longer drafts, focusing more on form and discovery than lexical economy. Diagramming's best effect is confidence. Exactly how or whether it improves writing depends largely upon the mode of learning in the classroom, but in general it serves the Aha! effect for writers who already are taking more risks, especially as they take more time to find their topics. For students who have yet to make this transition, the sharing of diagrams can point to its horizon. Once students have diagrammed a whole or partial process, I am asked less about what to do with writing that students generate between drafts, panic-filled questions like, "Where do I put this new information?" "Do I have to answer all my group's questions in my piece?" "Hey! Writing that letter you made me write—the one on what I think I am really trying to say—I got some new ideas. Do I just stick the whole letter into my first draft?" Having shared their diagrams, students have multiple models, multiple scenarios, for how the writing of any piece can go. When any one student feels that he or she has generated too much writing, there is a sense that others have worked with comparable amounts of material and found a form, thus I can too.

Diagramming has also meant increased confidence for me. After the midpoint in my course, I feel freer to help students renew and evaluate their topics even more—e.g., to restate their topics in letters to me or notes to themselves, to rewrite their first drafts from memory, to qualify several points, to read others' writing and then reread their own. I can suspend the time between drafts without fearing students' impatience (or anxiety) about where their essays are going. Students see that maps back from chaos are devisable—by them.

Notes

¹Caleb Gattegno offers an optimistic perspective on self-involvement in learning and innate intelligence. His reflections on the untutored learning processes of small children speak to education psychology's recent interest in ways to encourage "learning to learn" abilities and better self-concept among low-achievers. See *The Universe of Babies* (New York: Educational Solutions, 1973).

²Roland Huff and Charles R. Kline, Jr. ask the relevant question, how can writing be taught as a recursive, multi-stage model without overwhelming the students conceptually? See *The Contemporary Writing Curriculum: Rehearsing, Composing, and Valuing* (New York: Teachers College P, 1987), 127-30.

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Akua Duku Anokye

ORAL CONNECTIONS TO LITERACY: THE NARRATIVE

ABSTRACT: Today's English language teachers face broad cultural and racial differences between themselves and their students which negate old assumptions about teaching and learning. Teaching is about choices, making them and giving them. This essay discusses the narrative as a means for establishing an environment where students ultimately will have choices. Narrative in the context of learning language in general and writing in particular opens the students to shared contexts and culture. A pedagogy based on storytelling encourages the students to understand and appreciate their classmates' cultural and racial diversity while helping them become active participants in the broader conversation of the literate community. In this way students develop practical skills in utilizing a variety of rhetorical styles and acquire intercultural understanding and appreciation. The three- to four-week exercise discussed here enables the teacher to achieve educational goals of interaction with the oral and written text, while achieving a sense of community in the classroom.

Today, more than ever, America's mainstream college classrooms are multicultural, multilingual, and multiracial, comprised of students from widely divergent cultural and ethnic backgrounds. One of the primary challenges to educators is to understand both the breadth of this diversity and how the new

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immigrant groups differ from many early 20th century traditional immigrant groups from which the educators' own families sprang. This acknowledgement would allow faculty to comprehend the broad cultural and racial differences between themselves and their students, thus negating assumptions about teaching and learning styles formerly so popular.

Much of what we learned as teachers has been based on implicit understanding of the cultures that nurtured us. These implicit, intrinsic notions are not the same as those with which our students operate. If we are to realize our commitment to educate all students, then we need to make those implicit, intrinsic notions and values explicit to those to whom we are committed while at the same time broadening our own knowledge. A. Bartlett Giamatti, former president of Yale University, said that teaching is about choices. The teacher chooses how to structure choice. He says, "Teaching is an instinctual art, mindful of potential, craving of realizations . . . engages every part in order to keep the choices open and the shape alive for the student, so that the student may enter in, and begin to do what the teacher has done; make choices . . . (1988)."

One contribution of the English teacher is to provide the student with certain attributes that allow choices to be made. According to Elaine Maimon, Dean of Experimental Programs at Queens College, CUNY, and well-known advocate of writing across the curriculum, these attributes are: the ability to talk to strangers and convey an idea; the ability to write; the ability to read and listen in active critical ways; the ability to read numbers and use symbol systems; and finally the ability to know that shared narration or shared knowledge of a community which concerns the evolving tales or stories of the community (1989). This final attribute, the ability to know the community story, is important in teaching our new students. They have to acquire a sense of the community or society which will open doors to the intrinsic values of that society. In this way the English teacher serves as a window on the world.

Language use always occurs in some context and is always context-sensitive (Schiffrin 1987). When the teacher uses familiar or personal contexts, it allows for a greater range in developing new contexts. Using the folk tale, for example, provides an occasion where speakers and listeners may incorporate contexts of shared meanings and world views. The contexts may be social through which definitions of self and situation are construed. Or the contexts may be cognitive in the sense that they

deal with contexts of past experience and knowledge. To speakers and listeners as well, meaning conveyed by a text is meaning which is to be interpreted by them invariably based on their inferences about the cultural, social, or linguistic cognitive propositional connections underlying what is said.

This cognitive propositional connection leads us to understand that it is a tendency of humans to see things chiefly in terms of their own existing categories and to classify data in their own terms. The phenomenon, culturally myopic, leads to distortions. To illustrate the distortions commonly made, Toelken (1969) discusses several features of Navaho culture about which many investigators have been naive, a naiveté that has led to misinterpretation. For instance the Navaho view of information and how it may be transmitted differs from that of American mainstream in that sometimes an attitude may be communicated in a statement which is technically false but which uses humor as a vehicle; other examples involve seeming aloofness or unwillingness to be impressed which is communicated by statements designed to make the listener seem stupid or to imply he has missed the point; while another example has to do with information which ritualistically must be specifically requested four times or it will not be given. One who fails to perceive these cultural differences will miss many opportunities to understand the use of language in that society and the society itself. The need to be aware of differences and to make them explicit to our students is important in teaching English which is the purveyor of our culture in America.

Other research supports the belief that orality, for instance, is the fundamental mode of expression in the African American community. Nowhere is it better demonstrated than in the oral narrative style. The storytelling tradition is strong among African Americans and abstract observations about life, love, and people are rendered in the form of concrete narrative sequence which may seem to meander from the point and take on episodic frames. This is a linguistic style which causes problems with American mainstream speakers who want to get to the point and be direct. Nancy Ainsworth-Vaughn (1987) offers the observation that this style is in keeping with the African American verbal system. It is more "topic associative" in the language of Collins and Michaels. It takes on a broader chronological focus than American mainstream narrative style which is more "topic-centered."

The fact is that narrative in the context of learning language

in general and writing in particular can also open the window to shared contexts and culture. Certainly early in my teaching career I began to understand the power of the narrative to coagulate the diverse class. In class after class the story would emerge as a focal point from which all of the students could become involved. I soon began to use the narrative assignment to establish an environment where students ultimately would have choices that could foster their own empowerment and authority. The storytelling encouraged students to understand and appreciate their classmates' cultural and racial diversity and helped them become active participants in the broader conversation of the community through writing. By employing storytelling the English teacher can not only develop a practical comprehension of rhetorical styles, but can enhance intercultural understanding and appreciation as well.

There are three types of storytelling assignments that I have used. The first is the folk tale assignment. A second is ethnographic in nature, where students are asked to tell a story about one of their personal ancestors. The last is a fairly traditional assignment where students tell a personal narrative. Each of these assignments involves, first, an oral telling. To start the students in an exercise in analyzing and interpreting the world through story, I begin with a discussion of the question, "What is a story?" the types of genres, why we tell stories, and what makes a good story. We make a list of the various types of stories excluding very little: tall tales, fables, folk tales, fairy tales, ghost stories, parables, epics, myths, legends, slave narratives, even some personal experiences and lengthy jokes. In the discussion we talk about authorship versus anonymity and the basic category of folklore. We provide names of famous stories, such as Aesop's fables, *Peter and the Wolf*, and the *Prodigal Son*. In the discussion of why we tell stories, inevitably we conclude that storytelling is actually a way of recording history. *His story* and for those of us so inclined *her story*, (which also leads to further discussion).

We share secrets for successful storytelling and compare how stories are told in different parts of the world. In preparation for their own storytelling session I tell them to ask themselves: for whom is the story intended (audience)? what does the audience know about the situation or culture? what vocabulary must be used? what will need special explanation? what background information will be important to create the intended impression? what is the intended impression? and what is it

they want their audience to go away thinking, knowing, or feeling after the story?

If the assignment that semester is the personal or historical narrative, I tell them that having a shaping idea (purpose) will help them decide how to create the impression. I share with them a concept found in Ruth Elcan's *Elements of College Writing* which deals with aspects of an experience. Maureen McDonough-Kolb, a professor at NYU gave it the acronym PIESIP.

- P physical—actions, what you and other people do
- I intellectual—what you think
- E emotional—what you feel
- S social—what you share, how you interact with others
- I imaginative—what you fantasize or imagine
- P perceptual—what you see, hear, smell, taste, touch

When the students are preparing the story, distinguishing PIESIP details help them to review the experience systematically, to emphasize aspects of the story, and to recreate a vivid, descriptive narrative.

Following this discussion, I myself tell a story, either a folk tale, family history, or personal narrative that is especially vivid, humorous, and yet has a very distinct way of looking at some cultural belief. By telling the story, I succeed in providing a model for future storytelling sessions. Along with the story I give an obligatory introduction which gives background on the main characters, their personalities, the region from which the story comes, etc. After I tell the story, we review the important information from the story, and discuss the story's meaning and implications. Following a very lively discussion which can take unpredictable though welcome directions, we discuss how telling the story is similar to writing. We especially want to understand how what we are learning about storytelling can transfer into the writing process, whether we are using narrative style or not.

The folk tale assignment brings familiar folk tales from China, Russia, Haiti, Jamaica, Korea, Colombia, Greece, etc. (those areas from which many of my students come) and permits the students an opportunity to elaborate on the stories, explain the values and beliefs in their society, and enhance self-esteem. Folklore is a primary source of cultural knowledge. Livo and Reitz (1986) define storytelling as “. . . a prehistoric and historic thread of awareness, a way in which we can know, remember and understand.” For the heterogeneous non-native

class, stories from the students' homelands can be the key to promoting cultural appreciation and understanding while cultivating the individual student's feelings of self-worth. A setting where students are encouraged to share stories they know, love, and have heard repeatedly increases their willingness to tell their stories. Not only does telling the story bear fruit in refining oral skills, but the discussion of the story gives all the students opportunity to crystallize their analytical skills in an attempt to define the morals, values, and conditions of the society from which the story sprang. The result is that the students develop an esteem for the customs, culture, and beliefs of not just the target culture of America, but those of other cultures as well. This anthroliterary approach to cross-cultural understanding developed by Margaret Mead and Rhoda Metraux (1953) promotes understanding not only of others but of oneself as well. It is important for students to know that there are common themes from culture to culture; that the heroes of their country may have counterparts in other countries; that famine, greed, honesty, love, and brotherhood do not exist in their world only. Understanding the fortunes and misfortunes, the dreams and nightmares of other societies leads to a sensitive awareness of the people themselves. Folk tales can illustrate family relations, how food is gathered, the means of communication, and additional facts about daily life (Goodman and Melcher 1984). The themes that emerge represent the values, morals, and strengths of the people. Giving the students the opportunity to share their world view through their folk history and culture permits them to interact on familiar ground while expanding their ability to value others' roles in life and the skills and goals needed for the survival of the group (Shiells, 1986).

This experience is not only a learning one for the students, but should lead to our own increased awareness and appreciation of our students. Many of us have studied the languages of other societies, but there is still a tremendous insight to be gained in learning the culture via the folklore because this is the same way that many people of the native countries themselves learned their heritage, values, and customs (Goodman and Melcher 1984). In a study done by Goodman and Melcher in applied ethnographic monitoring in a bilingual classroom, it was concluded that "personal observation of social behavior and the working of a particular culture in terms as close as possible to the way members view the universe and organize

their behavior led to improved student-teacher relations, changed instructional strategies and teacher expectations, and improved performance.”

The benefits of storytelling in the development of oral skills are apparent. Because English is the one common language of the classroom as well as the target language for many, they have to incorporate careful vocabulary which will convey the central ideas accurately and in sufficient detail. In sharing the folk tale they must remain aware of the audience and its unfamiliarity with the story. The students need to choose a story that they feel is representative of some value they hold dear and communicate it with descriptions that will recreate the mood and intensity of the original story. Here they must both use vivid descriptions and make smooth transitions from one idea to the next. In the end, the story must excite the appropriate emotional response or the effort will have been wasted. The student has to prepare him/herself to answer questions which may be critical to the understanding of the story. As the students begin to share stories and their meanings, a variety of writing themes emerge. There are such themes as survival in the face of adversity, cultural values, politics, customs and religions, to name only a few.

An informal experiment I conducted with freshman composition students where they told folk tales from their ancestral homelands and cultures, followed by discussion, revealed that students not only became more aware of audience, purpose, description, explanation, analysis, illustration, and logic, but in the process they found themselves more tolerant of individual and cultural differences.

As the students become involved in the discussion, they become more aware of how important choosing the best vocabulary can be. They learn the necessity of preparation. They practice explaining concepts before being asked. They begin to initiate generalizations while becoming astute in using vivid description. The familiar and comfortable stories permit the students to lead more naturally into generalizations about people and life which illustrate values, and morals in America and their own homelands. Those discussions require that the students think in terms of defining, explaining, interpreting, and analyzing a wide variety of topics. Thus, the folk tale exercise becomes an excellent tool for prewriting while promoting awareness of cultural similarities and differences.

The second type assignment, the ethnographic narrative, is inspired by reading a story told by Alex Haley called "My Furthest Back Person." The students are asked to talk to elders in their families and to get a story about some person in their family as far back in history as they can go. This ultimately becomes a historical narrative and also fosters interest in history in general. The results are often exciting. Not only is individual family history learned, but frequently the history of various countries. One of my students turned out to be the grandson of a former Olympic Gold Medalist, another the great-granddaughter of an abolitionist. Discovering these pieces of information always leads to interesting discussions. Not everyone knows, for example, that there were free Blacks in New York in the 1600s, nor that slaves fought back. The discussion does not have to be contained since one objective is to sensitize the students to one another's differences while emphasizing commonality. These stories also provide a means by which students can observe recurring themes in every society and at every level.

The third type assignment, the personal life narrative, differs little from the traditional assignment given in the freshman composition class. They tell a story about some experience they have had in their lives and its impact.

The day of the oral telling is a big event. The students in fact develop a sense of camaraderie because they are all literally in the same boat. For many it is the first time they are making a public performance and while others are pros, they are willing to give needed encouragement. As the stories unfold there are always interesting situations which arise.

For example: Diana is a student from Ghana. She is an older woman maybe in her mid-thirties. She told a story about an experience when she was in high school in Ghana. She explained that her father had many sisters who were childless and her father had several wives (1st flag). She went on to say that her father, being the only male in his family, felt obligated to his sisters and therefore gave one of his children to each of his childless sisters (2nd flag). She explained she was living with one of her aunts and attending school. Her father gave her an allowance of \$20 per semester (3rd flag). But when she asked for an additional \$10 per semester he became enraged and felt she was ungrateful and abusive (4th flag). He was so angry that he would not speak or write to her and she not to him. Shortly after, her father died and she never had the opportunity to

make up with him. She learned not to hold grudges and to be forgiving with her loved ones.

Throughout her story there were apparent differences in cultural values that the students, without understanding the differences, interpreted in negative ways. Most of the class at first was irate with the father for his pettiness. It was not until discussion that Diana explained such concepts as the practice of polygamy in Ghana, the relationship of brother and sister and the brother's responsibility to his female relatives, the value of children in a Ghanaian family, the value of dollars twenty years ago and the economy in Ghana at that time, that her classmates were able to assimilate the story. In this telling, Diana began to understand the importance of anticipating audience and providing necessary background information and details in order to convey the impression intended.

Another story told by Yin Yin from Hong Kong illustrated how poorly we understand geography. She tells about a visit she made to a small village in Japan and the curious wall paintings and living arrangements she faced. Her classmates, however, had absolutely no understanding why everything was so curious and why she was unfamiliar with such a thing as wall paintings. After all weren't the same things in her own town? It wasn't until the questions session that they revealed they didn't know Hong Kong was not in Japan and she was not Japanese. From there the story really began to take shape. The discussion took many turns after this discovery, each turn a revealing and informative one for the storyteller and the listeners.

These two examples were stories which revealed customs, geography, and a way of looking at the world all in one lesson and one class. Italians and Greeks learning about Chinese and Africans, Haitians learning about white Americans: all a fascinating multicultural mix. Stories about adoption among Chinese, values in a West Indian home on a small island, goals and aspirations of third generation Germans from Elmhurst, and second generation Puerto Ricans from Spanish Harlem. Furthermore, each provided lessons about anticipating audience, supplying details, and clarifying shaping ideas. These lessons were transferred from the telling into the writing by nonthreatening means.

One time a student told a story/joke about a Catholic priest and a young man who he refused to marry. The priest did agree after being offered a large sum of money. This joke led to a

serious discussion about stereotypes, how they develop, how they may be used to discriminate against others, and even how they may be used in positive resourceful ways. Thus, even a story which started out as a joke can help develop the students' use of analysis. Each discussion seems to have endless possibilities for further exploration. After a series of storytelling sessions, students begin to show more awareness of the rhetorical styles: comparison, illustration, definition, cause and effect, description, explanation, and process.

Following discussions like these a writing assignment can be given that will reflect a great deal of interest and learning. The students can, for example, incorporate their stories into descriptive essays on stereotypes, compare negative and positive effects of a stereotype, or discuss the cause/effect relationship of a stereotype.

As the more interesting themes become apparent to the students, each is asked to keep a record in a journal. They are told to make notes about discussions that were especially exciting to them. We talk about how those themes vary from culture to culture and they keep a personal log of those that may serve as good source material in their future writing.

Discussion following a storytelling event enhances the students' understanding of style, and serves to focus their attention on the importance of audience in the telling. Having face to face reactions to the story, the student is more able to see that information is critical to the conveying of meaning to the audience. The demands of the audience in previous tellings provide guidelines for the writing of the story. The event has the effect of helping the student develop style and audience in pieces of writing as well. A crucial aim is to strengthen the student's ability to relate information in such a way that it will be clear to a variety of listeners or readers.

A personal experience of my own strengthened my conviction that storytelling has many purposes. A few years ago, a woman attempted to pick my pocket. I caught her; there was a confrontation, and I called the police. I told my story a number of times and each time the audience was different. The amount of detail conveyed was different depending on the audience. When I shared my experience with my classes, it became apparent to them how important details were and how the audience influenced how much or how little was shared. I was able to turn an unfortunate experience into a successful lesson because my students, too, were experimenting with the demands of

details and audience. Each assignment features certain consistent elements. The story must be told orally in a group of three or four and recorded on tape. The student may not write out the story, although each assignment requires planning and collection of details. The oral storytelling works as a prewriting device, cultivates critical thinking and analysis, and fosters self-esteem. This as a prewriting stage is creative and nonstressful once the process begins, and it assists me in cultivating a sense of community in the heterogeneous classroom. Following the oral story the students are instructed for homework to transcribe their own story including any interruptions, questions, laughter, or pauses. They are also cautioned **not** to edit. In the next class a discussion ensues about what structural observations were made. Their discoveries lead to a discussion about orality. For example they observe the repetition of words, sounds, and ideas is frequent. They notice the prosodic devices of pause, tone, and pitch changes as well as the verbal fillers such as "um," "uh," "well," "you know," etc. They recognize the incomplete sentences, the stops and the starts, the reliance on coordinating ideas rather than subordinating ones. With my help they also understand that in a face to face telling there is more shared knowledge and interpersonal relationship between the teller and the listener and the immediate feedback is a benefit in that setting. All of these observations are explained as acceptable and expected in oral situations. These are features of orality. Naturally we turn next to a discussion of literacy and what is acceptable, expected, and different from the oral tellings. While there is no adequate theory of how spoken discourse conventions are transferred to situated communicative strategies in written discourse, or how the transition process is affected by differences in communicative backgrounds (Gumperz, et al. 1984), the observations students make in the oral transcription serve as an excellent backdrop for developing some classroom practices. Given that different syntactic, lexical, and discourse features are appropriate to different discourse categories, even if the genre is the same the oral and written forms will follow somewhat different norms (Ainsworth-Vaughn 1987). These are the norms with which I attempt to familiarize the students. Since, both speakers and writers draw resources in communicating from: phonology, syntax, lexical alternatives, discourse phenomena such as repetition, titles, subheads, spelling, nonverbal gestures, paralinguistic phenomena, objects in the environment, a shared history of events

and discourse, and the obligations that accompany social roles when they communicate, we have a framework from which to operate.

In moving from oral to written texts there are sometimes examples of combining elements from the two genres. One might move from an oral version of the story to a written one by adding: a title, formulaic sentence, literary diction, features of detachment such as changing a direct quote to an indirect one (“I hate you, man” to “I used to look in the mirror and say that I hated myself”). There may be increased lexical density and a general change in lexical choice. The rhetorical devices used in the oral version—figures of speech, repetition, parallelism in the grammatical system, will be retained but the paralinguistics must show up in paragraphing and punctuation. In fact, Lakoff (1982) and Heath (1986) write about the trends in modern literature to use more oral strategies in creative writing. It is reasonable to suggest that details of intonation, rhythm, pause, and other paralinguistics perform the functions in speech that punctuation, capitalization, italicization, paragraphing, etc. perform in written language. Because the literate features may serve as devices to carry prosodic features over from the oral medium, I try to show the students how to match punctuation, paragraphing, and quotation marks with indications of spontaneous oral speech such as hesitations, ellipses, and repetitions while retaining some of the liveliness of the oral features.

They learn, then, some of the standardized notions about literacy and the expectations of a literate society. They come to understand that when the conversation is not face to face ideas must be stated in clear, precise language. They realize that punctuation and paragraphing are features of order and structure that replace such items as tonal shift and other prosodic elements. They learn the inappropriateness of fillers and stops and starts that lack coherence. They understand that the metaphors and imagery create vivid pictures where facial and body gestures were adequate in orality. They learn the temporality of literate stories as opposed to the oral recountings. They discuss subordination and sentence variety as well as sentence completion while admitting that repetition still has a place. All these strategies become the classroom standard for writing. Subsequent to this in-depth discovery, a sample of an oral story with a literate translation is practiced with on the board. The students are then instructed to translate/convert their oral stories

into literate ones. That means they complete sentences, subordinate some ideas, include punctuation and paragraphing, eliminate inappropriate words and fillers, organize around the shaping idea, and otherwise elaborate the language and vocabulary by including more PIESIP details.

Our obligation as “windows on the world” is extensive. One of the choices that we make that allows our students broader options is the use of word processing. I teach my students writing using the computer and Microsoft Word. Each subsequent draft is to be word processed following the initial oral transcription. For their translation drafts they are told to think carefully about what their intention is in telling the story and what they want the audience to go away knowing. I ask them to think about whether they want to make this a descriptive essay, a cause and effect analysis, an argument. From this decision they develop the shaping idea. That shaping idea is placed at the very beginning and end of the draft. In addition, they are told to highlight each type of PIESIP detail using boldface, underlining, and different font sizes depending on whether the detail reveals a physical, intellectual, or other aspect.

Once this is completed they bring the draft to a peer group for an audience analysis. The audience responds to questions such as: What is the shaping idea? How does the story affect you as a reader? How effectively has the writer used PIESIP? (Because the details have already been highlighted, it helps the group discover them more easily.) Has the experience/story been recreated for you? What are some of the best details? What details need more development? and overall, how should the paper be revised to fulfill the shaping idea? For revision they are asked to think in terms of adding, deleting, substituting, and rearranging details. Based on the audience analysis and teacher conferences, the students revise their essays and submit the final drafts.

Making connections between telling a story and understanding and interpreting that story helps the students feel confident about discussing and writing an informative, detailed, vivid, and intriguing essay using what has been learned.

The results are very encouraging. In a survey students revealed an interest in their classmates’ lives and their ways of thinking and feeling. They demonstrated an appreciation of the differences and a willingness to ask questions otherwise unanswered. Through this three- to four-week exercise I was able to achieve educational goals of interaction with the oral and writ-

ten text, while providing a means by which a sense of the community could be achieved. The choices I made were out of respect for the student as learner and a desire to broaden the multicultural students' conversation with the larger community. By the students' participation they become active members of the community through shared knowledge while developing skills in the writing process. My colleagues also notice a difference in the essays written by these students. In the portfolio readings, these essays are often selected as exemplary of good writing. The choices I make in teaching this lesson have long-term effects on the students and bring them into the multicultural, multiethnic American community as dynamic participants.

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Kelly Belanger

GENDER AND TEACHING ACADEMIC DISCOURSE: HOW TEACHERS TALK ABOUT FACTS, ARTIFACTS, AND COUNTERFACTS¹

ABSTRACT: *This article argues that the basic writing course described in Bartholomae and Petrosky's Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfactuals: Theory and Method for a Reading and Writing Course (1986) is a combination of what might be perceived as "masculinist" and "feminist" dimensions. Based upon self-descriptions given by ten teachers using a Facts approach, the teachers are classified into four gender-typed categories: "masculine," "feminine," "androgynous," and "undifferentiated." Interview data suggest that the teachers who perceived themselves in the most masculine terms emphasized the "masculinist" aspects of the course; the teachers who described themselves in primarily feminine or androgynous terms focused on what may be seen as the "feminist" aspects of the course. Finally, the self-described androgynous individuals took it upon themselves creatively to shape and reshape their interpretations of the course. These teachers describe a pedagogy that is difficult to classify as either "accommodationist" or "expressivist," "masculinist" or "feminist."*

David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky's *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfactuals: Theory and Method for a Reading and Writing Course* (1986) has a unique status in the field of composition studies. The book outlines a basic reading and writing course taught at the University of Pittsburgh, but it is also, as

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the authors say, "an extended presentation of the metaphors we have chosen to represent our subject" (4). The text is divided into three sections, the first of which outlines the philosophical and theoretical basis for this course which aims "to reclaim reading and writing from those (including our students) who would choose to limit these activities to the retrieval and transmission of information" (*Facts* 4). The second section, "Teaching Reading and Writing," describes the course in practical terms, presenting a semester-long sequence of reading and writing assignments designed as "a general introduction to the language and methods of the university" (48). The book concludes with research-based case studies and other scholarly perspectives on the course written by experienced teachers of "Basic Reading and Writing" at Pittsburgh.

My decision to undertake a study of gender and teaching and to focus on this particular course grew out of the exigencies of a rather specific rhetorical situation. In the Fall of 1990, I was tutoring in a basic writing program in which experienced teachers were working within the theoretical frame of the *Facts* course, although they were free to experiment and to adapt it to suit their own teaching styles and pedagogical goals. Since I was impressed by the curriculum and the degree to which students seemed engaged in their writing, I was startled when a colleague visiting from another university described the course as "paternalistic." Her statement prompted me to reflect upon the implications that recent research and theories about gender and writing might have for understanding more fully the impetus behind much of the criticism that I had heard and was continuing to hear being leveled against the *Facts* curriculum. For example, some critics argue that in advocating that we initiate students—especially marginalized basic writers—into "the language and methods of the academy" (*Facts*) through an intensive read-to-write course, Bartholomae and Petrosky are promoting a "masculinist" writing course. In other words, in teaching students to compose informal responses within the conventions of academic discourse which have evolved out of the long, patriarchal history of the academy, the course can be seen as being as "masculinist" as it is conservative. This argument, although it has not to my knowledge been made explicitly in print, is most frequently set forth in discussions among teachers in which educators inclined toward what Berlin calls "expressivist" pedagogies take exception to a course which concerns itself, finally, with achieving an academic stance and

voice rather than a more purely personal one. The issue also surfaces frequently in forums such as CCCC's sessions on basic writing.²

The Bartholomae-Petrosky theory and pedagogy also have a more unconventional side, however, and it is this side that allows Susan Wall and Nicholas Coles to point out that *Facts* is not an “unambiguously accommodationist Basic Writing pedagogy, a return to a new set of ‘basics,’ conventions of academic discourse ‘written out,’ ‘demystified,’ and taught in our classrooms” (231). Rather, they claim, the course encourages students to “‘test and experiment’ not only with their own language but with the language of the academy, and to draw conclusions about its power and limitations” (234). In fact, in asking students to explore significant experiences in their adolescence, the course often elicits intensely personal writing and values a process of discovery as students are expected to make meaning rather than find meaning in texts. These aspects of the course seem quiet compatible with feminist pedagogies that make a point of valuing writing that is “exploratory, autobiographical, and an organic exploration of a topic in an intimate, subjective voice” (Caywood and Overing xiv).³ Specifically, I see the early assignments in the course encouraging students to learn what Peter Elbow calls the “intellectual practices” of the academy⁴ without concerning themselves (yet) with those stylistic conventions that—as Elbow notes—“tend toward the sound of reasonable, disinterested, perhaps even objective (dare I say it?) men.” Thus, because the *Facts* course can be seen as advocating that we teach students to gain access to conventional (and arguably masculinist)⁵ academic discourse through somewhat unconventional (and perhaps feminist) means, it lends itself especially well to a study of gender and teaching.

The Interviews

To gain insight into how the *Facts* course—with its combination of what might be perceived of as “masculinist” and “feminist” dimensions—is interpreted by teachers who are putting it into practice, I interviewed ten teachers who were working with this curriculum in the basic writing program where I was tutoring. I talked with five women and five men, among whom I could expect to find a range of orientations toward gender roles. These ten teachers' responses to a series of open-ended questions were tape-recorded and transcribed, and with the transcriptions in hand, I color-coded teachers' responses

according to question. However, because of the open-ended nature of the questions, the transcriptions make extraordinarily rich reading, and since looking at only isolated responses to questions would mean ignoring much of that richness, I did what Mary Belenky and her collaborators in the book *Women's Ways of Knowing* call a "contextual analysis," which involves developing a feel for each person's experience of themselves and their teaching through reading and rereading the transcripts. After many readings, and after a discussion with another reader who had studied the data independently,⁶ some patterns in the ways teachers defined the course's goals for themselves and adapted the curriculum for their own classes began to emerge.

One significant pattern is most readily recognizable when the data are considered with Elbow's distinction between two parts of academic discourse—intellectual practices and stylistic conventions—in mind. When I considered the degree to which the teachers' interpretations of the *Facts* curriculum emphasize one or the other, I found that, in general, teachers' descriptions of the course's purpose fall into three broad categories. In the first group, teachers emphasize the stylistic conventions of academic discourse;⁷ in the second, teachers help students make a transition from personal writing with little concern for stylistic conventions toward more distanced discourse which combines the intellectual practices of academic writing with its traditional stylistic conventions; and in the third, teachers focus on intellectual practices with little concern for traditional stylistic conventions.

Given these three perspectives, I sought to discover any significant connection between teachers, gender orientations, and their various readings of the *Facts* curriculum. If, as reader-response theories suggest, our interpretations of literary texts can be influenced by gender, why not our reading of texts that focus on composition theory and practice? With this question in mind, I looked at the transcripts with attention to how the teachers tended to talk about themselves and tried to categorize each of them into one of four possible orientations toward gender roles identified by the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI): masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated. Although I recognize that the act of categorizing people into only four groups is necessarily reductive, I chose Bem's framework because it goes beyond the still common practice of treating gender and sex as analogous terms. In fact, Bem offers a relatively complex view of gender which allows both males and females to fall into any one of four categories.

The BSRI lists twenty terms which masculine gender-typed people tend to use in describing themselves, including words or phrases such as self-reliant, forceful, dominant, assertive, independent, and acts as a leader. Feminine gender-typed individuals, on the other hand, tend to use terms such as yielding, cheerful, shy, affectionate, compassionate, and eager to soothe hurt feelings. For my process of categorization, I supplemented Bem's list of terms with an attention to the kind of concerns and orientations that Carol Gilligan's study *In a Different Voice* and Belenky et al.'s work describe as gender-specific. Based upon Belenky et al., and Gilligan, I considered an orientation toward the first items on the following list of dialectical pairs as "feminine" and a focus on the second items as "masculine": relationships vs. rules, rational vs. intuitive, means vs. ends, collaborative vs. solitary, personal vs. impersonal, listening vs. speaking, support vs. challenge, process-oriented vs. goal-oriented, and equity vs. hierarchy.

Throughout the analysis, however, I constantly restrained any impulses to characterize people simply as either "masculine" or "feminine," and I keep in mind Bem's other two categories. According to the BSRI, an "androgynous individual is someone who is *both* independent and tender, *both* aggressive and gentle, *both* assertive and yielding, *both* masculine and feminine, depending on the situational appropriateness of these various behaviors" (Bem 83). Undifferentiated individuals, on the other hand, tend to describe themselves in terms of relatively gender-neutral characteristics—neutral, that is, in the sense that Bem found that they were not consistently rated by both women and men to be "significantly more desirable in American society for one sex than for the other" (e.g., happy, conceited, truthful) (84).

Based on my interpretation and analysis of the interviews, I have located the ten teachers along a continuum ranging from the most masculine gender-typed individuals, who tended to privilege stylistic conventions over intellectual practices, to the most androgynous teachers, some of whom focus almost exclusively on intellectual practices. In general, I found—not surprisingly—that the teachers who perceived themselves in the most masculine terms seem to emphasize what I have defined as the "masculinist" aspects of the course; the teachers who described themselves in primarily feminine or androgynous terms focused on what may be seen as the "feminist" aspects of the course. As the interview data that follow reveal, however,

the self-described androgynous individuals took it upon themselves creatively to shape and reshape their interpretations of the course. As a result, these teachers describe a pedagogy that is difficult to classify as either “accommodationist” or “expressivist,” “masculinist” or “feminist.”

Voices of the Academy

Two of the men I interviewed, Brian and Mark,⁸ reacted similarly to their one quarter of experience in teaching a syllabus modeled after the *Facts* course. As masculine gender-typed individuals, who treated the course as what Wall and Coles call an “accommodationist pedagogy,” they represent one extreme on the continuum of positions where I have situated the teachers.

A graduate student with 13 years of experience teaching basic writing, Brian had a positive initial reaction to the *Facts* course: he especially liked the idea of teaching a course around a theme, and he identified the course’s goal as “trying to bring students closer to academic discourse,” which he defined exclusively in terms of stylistic conventions, describing it as a kind of writing that has a certain formality of language, tone, and style commonly found in scholarly discourse. For him, this discourse “places a premium on the abstract, the third person. It’s distanced,” he told me, “and uses the jargon of the field.” He felt at ease with the goal of teaching students academic writing and said that “ideally [his] basic writers would be able to do this by the end of the course, but it couldn’t happen in ten weeks, or even a year.” Similarly, for Mark—an Instructor with over five years of teaching experience—producing academic writing means reevaluating assumptions about what an academic audience expects, and thinking about how students’ register and persona will be received; therefore, he tries to help students move away from writing “discursive” and “talky” papers. He was attracted to what I have termed the masculinist aspect of the method—teaching traditional stylistic conventions—but was uncomfortable with what I have called its feminist emphasis on students writing personal experience essays, especially since, as he said, “There are certain risks I am unwilling to take in opening myself up and talking about experiences.” Basically, he wondered whether asking students to write personal experience essays is the most expedient way to teach academic writing.

I characterize Mark and Brian as masculine gender-typed in

part because they each described their relationships with students as being distant and hierarchical. As Brian commented, "I'm the teacher, they're the students. I ask them to call me by my first name but they don't call me anything." And according to Mark, the syllabus actually calls for a feminine teaching style, which he says causes him to be more "nurturing and supportive than he would be in another course," although he still sees himself as being less nurturing than most of his colleagues. He says that "because of the way the class is set up, you don't go in and pound your shoe on the table and come off as really authoritarian and dictatorial when you've got all these touchy-feely-caring-sharing discussions about papers going on." At the same time, though, he does see himself maintaining some distance, emphasizing the fact that "if students ask for help, I help. If not, I figure, 'I'm not your mother. You decide whether you need help or not.'" This example supports his description of himself as less nurturing than other basic writing teachers, a characterization that applies—to a lesser extent—to Brian as well.

A Self-Reflexive Voice of the Academy

Like Mark and Brian, a third teacher, Ben, taught the *Facts* course for one quarter and seemed to be a predominantly masculine gender-typed individual. However, when he talked about the course it became clear that he was more than simply a "voice of the academy." While he saw the *Facts* course as emphasizing students' accommodation to what he called "academic discourse" and he focused on both stylistic conventions and intellectual practice that he associated with academic writing, he did not accept that goal unquestioningly.

A teacher with four years of experience working with basic writing students, Ben described his relationship with his students much as Mark and Brian did, that is, in terms of separation rather than connection, referring to that relationship as "congenial" and "rewarding to the extent that he gets to know them, which is pretty limited." He told me he saw students as being purposefully distant, too willing to capitalize on the college setting where you can keep distance from your instructors. He also viewed his authority as a real issue in the classroom and in conferences, where he often sensed that students were not at ease.

Interestingly, although he didn't consider himself to be uncomfortable with personal topics as Brian and Mark did, one

change Ben did make in the *Facts* course was to substitute a theme he calls “Aims of Education” for that of “Growth and Change in Adolescence,” the more intensely personal topic of inquiry described in *Facts*. This change still allowed students to participate in what he saw as the most valuable part of the course—the chance for students to be part of an extended academic inquiry. However, he wondered what the implications of that approach might be because of the problems he sees in academic discourse and in the academic community. He noted that he is concerned about the “inevitable trade off—students will have to give up something to get the academy’s ways of writing and knowing in return.” He saw Bartholomae and Petrosky as more willing than he is to accept such a trade-off and told me that he saw a possible solution to this problem in making discourse itself part of academic inquiry, a step which would allow students to do more than blindly emulate academic discourse. Students would be asked to use language to reflect upon and question itself, just as he himself does so relentlessly.

Accepting the Academy’s Voice of Authority

Next to Ben’s continual questioning and problematizing, a fourth teacher—Nancy, who had taught the course for a year—stood out for her willingness to accept the authority of the Bartholomae-Petrosky text unquestioningly. She just didn’t seem as concerned with considered issues related to the course in a theoretical sense; she struck me as someone simply trying to do her best to teach the syllabus she has been given. When I asked her about her initial reaction to reading *Facts* it seemed difficult for her—at least in the context of this interview—to talk about the course in specific and unambiguous terms. For instance, she said, “I think some good things happened here besides the things we are trying to make happen. I mean those things we are trying to make happen too, but those aren’t the things that I would know how to make happen . . . but the students make that happen by experiencing the reading, the writing, the discussing, the sharing of ideas. And then, something happens within their own cognitive process.” This response, full of unspecified “things,” is typical of numerous times when she seemed unable or afraid to make a point—her point. (Notice how often she talks in terms of “we” instead of “I”). Although she refers to her students taking on the authority to make meaning from what they read, she seems, like the

“received knowers” that Mary Belenky and her coauthors describe in *Women’s Ways of Knowing*, reluctant to speak out of her own authority and perhaps even unable to see herself as having any authority.

When I asked Nancy specifically about her definition of academic discourse, her responses were still quite general, making it difficult to situate her in terms of Elbow’s distinctions between intellectual practices and stylistic conventions. She mentioned students “starting to enter into the university mentality” and alluded to Bartholomae’s article “Inventing the University,” ultimately defining an ideal student paper in her class quite generically—as one with a clear thesis that is supported coherently by the rest of the paper. But when I asked her if she thinks these things characterize academic discourse for the university or for David Bartholomae, she seemed to retreat and answered laughingly, “I have no idea. I mean I don’t know. When Bartholomae came, you know, I heard him talk last spring. I thought I was thinking along the same lines as he was, but to speak for the whole university and what people want academic discourse to be, I don’t know.”

While her emphasis on the “things” students learn through reading, writing, and discussing suggests a tendency to focus more on intellectual practices than on stylistic conventions, her pedagogy seems ultimately to be driven not so much by any awareness of a particular kind of discourse she seeks to teach her students, but rather by a desire to nurture her students’ growth as people. In fact, when she responded to the more personal questions on my list, she herself became visibly more at ease, her voice taking on the clarity and authority it had lacked earlier. As she spoke, she described herself and her background as being in many ways stereotypically feminine.⁹ With over ten years of teaching experience ranging from college to junior high to nursery school, she described her relationships with her students and her style as a teacher in terms almost opposite of those used by Mark, Brian, and Ben. Describing herself as maternal and caring, she talked about how she simply cannot teach without really connecting with students. Although she was careful to point out that she always sends students to a professional counselor when they need it, she was very comfortable with the personal nature of the course assignments and saw writing those kinds of assignments as being a potentially therapeutic way for her students to resolve personal

problems. She is always ready to accept student's feelings because, as she reminded me, "It's mom you go to when it hurts." Perhaps more clearly than with the other teachers, Nancy's feminine gender orientation seemed to be powerfully and obviously connected with the ways she teaches some version of academic discourse in her classroom.

Dissenting Voices

Whereas Nancy had taught basic writing for five years and the Bartholomae-Petrosky course several times, when I interviewed two graduate students, Joan and Charles, it was the first time they had taught basic writing or the *Facts* course (although both had taught a "modes" approach to first-year composition for several years). Both of them reacted negatively to the course, and—interestingly—Joan objected to it because she wanted it to go further in "demystifying" academic discourse for students before asking them actually to produce it.

Joan's initial reaction to seeing the standard syllabus was that she didn't like it, primarily because she considered it "monotonous to deal with the same general topic for ten weeks." Like Ben, she wanted to make the aim of the course more explicit to the students; she even labeled the *Facts* course "covert" as she asked me this question:

[How can students value an assignment as academic writing] if the teacher doesn't come out and tell them the purpose behind it, which some people say destroys the whole thing? It's built into the theory. Bartholomae and Petrosky would say "no" don't tell them. Let's let them become aware of it themselves, but when you get through week ten and they're still not aware of it, what do you do, tell them the last day of class? I'd be angry if I were a student.

In fact, Joan did go ahead and make what she saw as the goal of the course explicit to her students. For her, the goal is a "task-oriented" one: students need to write something abstract and give concrete details to support that point. They must "show us that they can go back and forth between two things. Some people would say it grooms a way of thinking—of abstract thought." In her view, this goal is just one part of academic discourse, and if students were just simply told what it is, "we could deal with it and devote more time to other issues that are important in their writing and in academic writing—their voice,

for one.” All in all, though, Joan did seem to accept the necessity of “indoctrinating” students into the intellectual practices and the stylistic conventions of academic discourse as long as students know what is happening to them. She recognized that in academic writing “your individuality is often censored, but, you know, there’s reality and there’s what would be nice.”

In terms of gender orientation, Joan was difficult to classify, but she falls most readily into the “undifferentiated” category. She described herself in terms that Crawford and Chaffin call “neutral with respect to gender roles” (14). For instance, she called herself “not superficial” and “honest,” as opposed to using gender-typed terms such as Nancy’s “maternal” and “emotional” or Ben’s “heavy-handed” and “egomaniacal.” Furthermore, she pointed out that she could not separate her perspective as a feminist from her womanhood, believing that her feminist consciousness affected her way of looking at the course more than any other factor.

Just as it did for Joan, the *Facts* pedagogy posed some serious problems for Charles, but he reacted to it much differently than she did. Instead of working to modify the course, Charles chose instead to give up on it completely. He described his problem as follows:

As the course went along, I felt like I was lost, out of my element. In the first place, I don’t normally do the kind of reading and discussion that people need to do to get this thing to work. I admit I have a hard time with discussions as a teacher.

A reason for his problems in leading discussions may, in fact, be related to a revealing comment Charles made about himself as a person:

I like getting things done, often at the expense of being nice about it. I’ve had to learn to be a lot more willing to let things be not necessarily right, but not hurt other people along the way. Not that I was walking around trashing other people, but to be more sensitive to other people’s feelings.

This comment is one of several which suggest that he is a masculine gender-typed male, typically more concerned with rules (i.e., with getting things done right) than with relationships (i.e., people’s feelings). Although he considered himself to be in the process of changing, Charles’ self-described tendency to be concerned with “getting things right” may have

created a conflict for him when faced with a curriculum such as *Facts* that calls for collaborative group discussions in which the teacher is ideally silent. In any case, when he became frustrated, he replaced the discussions with conferences, which he said he favored because they are one-on-one. One way of interpreting this move is that it gave him increased control; as Carol Stanger argues, “using the one-to-one tutorial, the instructor judges the paper against an ideal text, a composite of the male canon, and bestows authority on the essay as well as controlling its interpretation” (36).

Along with the conferences, another strategy Charles used to try to regain control of his course was, he said, to “junk the last paper and let [students] write anything they want as long as they base it on what they’re doing in their journals.” This sort of assignment is compatible with his goal for any beginning writing course: to give students a good attitude about writing. He saw the *Facts* approach, on the other hand, as being aimed at making students “cognitively enhanced,” and therefore serving best those students who “need help on certain cognitive skills” and who are “unfamiliar with academic conventions and how to read a textbook.” In all likelihood, the fact that Charles, like Joan, was teaching the course for the first time accounts for some of the difficulties he had with feeling free to interpret the course’s aims in ways that might be compatible with his own evolving teaching style and ideas about teaching basic writing.

Redefining Academic Discourse

A final group of teachers, like Joan and Charles, had problems with what they perceived to be the central doctrines of the Bartholomae-Petrosky method. Unlike Joan and Charles, though, they found ways to make it work by innovating within its framework. Most significantly, they composed for themselves and their students definitions of academic discourse that differed significantly from the fairly traditional ones offered by Bartholomae and Petrosky and the teachers discussed so far. The first of these teachers, Douglas, was a graduate student teaching the course for the second time. He said that his students were experiencing something that would help them as writers, but it was not explicitly writing for the academy. Specifically, he saw the goal of the *Facts* course being to raise the confidence level of writers—to find a voice and realize they have something to say and then to say it in Standard Edited

American English. Interestingly, he consistently emphasized what I have called the feminist aspects of the course, explaining, for example, that writing as a process, getting students to write about their own experience, and encouraging students to find their own voices are central to the course.

In accounting for his success in teaching the course, Douglas made a point of contrasting himself with Charles: "Think of Charles Spencer who doesn't like this syllabus, okay. I think the differences between him and me have nothing to do with gender characteristics. I think it has something to do with creativity and ingenuity. He was constantly asking me what I was doing in my syllabus, and I could see he was kind of baffled; he wasn't sure what he would do." Significantly, though, whereas Charles was masculine gender-typed, Douglas characterized himself as more androgynous, if not feminine. Like Nancy, he saw a teacher's role as parental, and he thought that most teachers would see themselves as caregivers in relation to their students. He simply considered it a natural part of the teacher-student relationship. Clearly, though, it was Douglas himself who was a natural caregiver. And he turned out to be remarkably well-informed and articulate when it came to discussing his own gender:

I read Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*, and after I looked at the first chapter, where boys are concerned about rules, whereas girls are concerned with relationships, I saw that as a kind of gender characteristic. It was then that I decided gender characteristics could transcend sexual separation. I noticed in myself I had more feminine characteristics than masculine, or I had very many feminine characteristics. I would value relationships over rules. That really hit me hard because I realized I was not a typical male. At the same time, it wasn't threatening my masculinity. Somehow it supports a self image of myself that I don't mind having. I mean I don't feel trapped into this role as some women do.

Along with Douglas, three women fall into this final group. Like Douglas, they all described themselves as being relatively androgynous, feeling ambivalent about academic discourse, and as having found ways of adapting the *Facts* course to make it their own. The first of these women, Patty, was both a writing teacher and the assistant director of the basic writing program. Having taught in the program's pilot project, Patty was one of the most experienced teachers of the *Facts* approach, and she

taught a ten-credit-hour version of the course using the “Growth and Change in Adolescence” theme. She told me:

The goal of the course is to get [students] to find validity in their own opinions, to see that they can make research. They don’t just have to copy down ideas. Those are specific goals. Bartholomae and Petrosky talk about that . . . conventions of academic discourse, yet I am . . . I don’t like that language. Those terms send up red flags to me. [My colleague] and I have a running joke that whenever I don’t agree with him I say he doesn’t really mean that—because I don’t like to think that I’m indoctrinating them. For lack of a better term, I guess it does make them feel a little more comfortable with the conventions of the academy. I think I’m teaching them the conventions according to how I want the academy to be. I’m indoctrinating them in that sense.

In particular, I was struck here by what I see as Patty’s willingness to give David Bartholomae as much credit as possible—even, perhaps, to the extent of giving him credit for saying what she thinks. When I responded by asking her why the words “academic discourse” send up flags for her and not for him, she continued:

I don’t know, Kelly, because I think he’s just great, and I don’t know why he uses those words. I guess they must not have the same kind of red flags for him as they do for me. I think that on some level he must feel that that’s a good thing to do but I don’t think for a minute that he wants them to be little research robots. But I think when he uses those words his focus is on something else, on general theories of the course, and maybe that’s an easy way to approach it. Maybe he is just more concerned with that than I am. I think that’s true in some sense.

Perhaps Patty’s reluctance to call what she’s doing something other than teaching Bartholomae’s method is connected with the tendency she sees in herself to be self-deprecating, but in any case, she was certainly innovating within the framework of the approach to teach her own version of academic discourse. Significantly, like Douglas, she described herself as androgynous, observing that she “tends to have close male friends.” She told me, “If there is such a thing as a male point of view and a female one, then I probably am as much or more of a mixture than other people might be.”

Deborah, too, characterized herself as an androgynous (or in some cases, undifferentiated) person who tended to redefine academic discourse for her class, but unlike Patty, she was less concerned with giving Bartholomae credit for what she had done. Deborah was an instructor teaching the course for the first time, and when I asked about her teaching style she talked—in marked contrast to Charles, for instance—about her tendency to hang back and listen, an ability she attributed to being a woman: “I think [being female] makes me sit back more. Some people might call it passivity. I think of it as me letting the class be in charge of what’s going on.” Deborah, though, did not talk about herself in the stereotypical terms that Nancy did; instead, she used mostly gender neutral terms such as “stubborn and shy and well-meaning.” Like Joan, she claimed that her feminist consciousness affected how she taught more than simply being a woman did: “I find myself and I find the class talking more about—not only growth and change in adolescence—but what happens when you are an adolescent that makes you realize social injustices and how they are connected with how you fit or don’t fit in with certain groups.” She told me that she wasn’t sure how she would define academic discourse because it is all wrapped up in what she thinks it should be, and not how other people think it is. For her it should be a creative, intelligent discussion of whatever subject you are talking about, not as formal as some people see it. Overall much less ambivalent and more defiant than Patty, she told me bluntly, “I don’t think [students] are really writing academic discourse in my class, and I don’t think I really want them to!” In this comment, I heard the same kind of relief and freedom that Jane Tompkins expresses in her article “Me and My Shadow” when she takes off the straitjacket in which she must write academic articles and says “to hell with it” (178).¹⁰

The final teacher, Brenda, was an Instructor with over two years of experience in teaching the *Facts* course, and she shared this enthusiastic rejection of traditional academic discourse with its emphasis on stylistic conventions. However, she also shared Patty’s tendency to locate the basis for what she is doing in the Bartholomae-Petrosky text. The academic discourse that she wanted students to strive for, she said, is personal and creative, yet clear and controlled; her notion of the ideal academic discourse is writing with a clear sense of purpose, writing which answers questions that we as readers might have along the way (except where the writer wants us to remain

open-minded). Also, “the writer would demonstrate control in that paper through all kinds of tools, asking questions, using dialogue,” whatever the content of that paper dictates. In reading it, the reader should discover something, and the writer should also have “a sense of discovery and a really powerful sense of self. We would know that somebody is there talking to us and sharing . . . something new.” She noted that there are “many ways of engaging readers at the college level. You don’t do the same thing for your biochemistry class that you do for freshman English. I don’t think that biochemistry paper has to be dull and lifeless, without meaning, no sense of discovery. I think it can be just as engaging.” Yet at times, she said, her students’ discourse does become distant, lacking a sense of voice or audience. At those times, Brenda is disappointed, but she realized that it would probably be okay for “the kind of writing they are going to do in college.”

Between Brenda’s search in her students’ writing for a “voice that doesn’t just copy ideas into a notebook and turn it in” and Bartholomae’s sense that “leading students to believe they are responsible for something new or original, unless they understand what those words mean with regard to writing, is a dangerous and counterproductive task” (142), there is—I think Brenda would say—some tension. Yet, despite any differences between Brenda’s philosophy and Bartholomae’s, she still insisted on emphasizing their basic commonalities. She concluded the interview by saying: “I realize today that there is a lot of individual interpretation with this course, and I realize that that’s part of the course. I don’t think that [David Bartholomae] would argue with the way I teach the class, and I think that’s one of the greatest gifts of his course, his book.”

Conclusion

Brenda’s words suggest that the *Facts* course has the sort of richness we usually ascribe to literary texts, a richness that invites or allows interpretation. Yet fewer than half the teachers interviewed saw an invitation to creative interpretation in the Bartholomae-Petrosky text. Most of them, rather, talked confidently about what the goals of the course were—as though the course’s goals and Bartholomae and Petrosky’s authorial intentions were transparently clear to them. This study suggests that when some teachers—in this case, especially the masculine gender-typed individuals—read *Facts* they tend to focus on the authors’ comments about teaching students “our language and

about helping them compose a reading within the conventions of the highly conventional language of the university classroom" (*Facts* 5). They take such phrases as advocations for teaching a distant, analytical, objective-sounding, and relatively voiceless prose; they bring these ideas to their classrooms, and they never look back.

Other teachers—mostly those people in this study who described themselves in androgynous terms—look beyond such phrases to make other meanings. Most of these teachers referred explicitly to meaning-making processes as interpretation, as reading that might even go against what others see as the "grain" of the text. These teachers reminded me in some ways of the women readers whom Susan Schibanoff describes in her article, "Taking the Gold out of Egypt: The Fine Art of Reading as a Woman." There, Schibanoff tells of Chaucer's Wife of Bath, a woman who sometimes censors and destroys but often just *misreads* texts that do not serve her needs, that do not seem relevant to her values or experiences. Like the Wife, teachers such as Patty, Deborah, and Brenda were resisting readers, and they offered interpretations of the *Facts* course that pushed—sometimes defiantly—against those readings most readily available to other teachers in this study.

I want to contend, however, that not only the instructors who fell into the androgynous group but all the teachers were taking their "gold" out of the *Facts* text, for, to varying degrees and in different ways, each one of them appropriated the parts of the Bartholomae-Petrosky theory that spoke to their experiences and values and reread the parts of it that did not. And these experiences and values have, of course, been shaped by numerous factors, not the least of which being the fact that they are gendered individuals. As for my own "reading" of the course, it may at some point have been influenced by what the BSRI identifies as my feminine gender-type, but at this point, I think it has been formed even more significantly by the powerful voices of the teachers in this study. I originally tended to envision the course as a linear process, moving from personal writing permeated with what Bartholomae calls the "idiosyncrasies" of students' own language to more academic writing characterized by traditional stylistic conventions. The comments made by the group of androgynous gender-typed teachers in particular have complicated that vision for me, and I have come to see the course as more recursive, more fraught with tension between the language practices students bring to the college

classroom and those practices by which academic writers seek to establish an authoritative rhetorical stance.

Their comments also raise the interesting question of what, more specifically, “androgynous teaching” of writing might involve. If forced to choose between the extremes of a purely accommodationist pedagogy (a relatively “masculinist” approach) and a pedagogy which nurtures students’ voices (a more “feminist” approach), I would probably choose the latter. The choice, however, would involve a weighing of risks—the risk of stifling students’ potential for creative self-expression versus the risk of nurturing students into a position of relative powerlessness in the academy. Yet I can imagine another option which, at least in the context of this study, might most aptly be called an androgynous writing pedagogy. Just as I categorized several teachers as androgynous gender-typed because they described themselves in terms that were sometimes stereotypically masculine, sometimes feminine, I envision androgynous teaching as a kind of instruction which encourages students to stretch their current notions of good writing to include features of discourse that might be seen as typically masculine and those that might be constructed as feminine. Of course, such features are not easily identified and the act of labeling can lead toward what I see as the problematic essentialism at the base of essays such as Thomas Farrell’s “The Female and Male Modes of Rhetoric.”¹¹ Still, I believe instructors should challenge both male and female students trained to produce the traditional, analytical, voiceless academic discourse to experiment with alternative styles. Similarly, students who tend to write in a more personal, informal, or anecdotal mode should be encouraged to “try on” more traditional features of discourse, to make them part of their repertoire of choices. Such an “androgynous” approach would, at least, train students to become flexible writers who can adapt their writing as they see fit for various rhetorical situations. At most, it would give them the ability to challenge knowingly traditional notions of what kind of writing is appropriate and persuasive in a particular context. I see such a pedagogy as far more empowering than either a purely accommodationist or a purely expressivist approach.

Having taken such a position, however, I want to qualify my stance to the extent that it reflects any kind of judgment upon the teachers I interviewed, their readings of the *Facts* course, or their teaching styles. These teachers, after all, either are or have

been my colleagues. Having come to know most of them much better in the period of time since conducting these interviews, I am constantly reminded that each one of them is much more than the gendered subject positions into which they have, necessarily, been objectified in this project. Each one of them, for example, holds views of the *Facts* course and their teaching which are far more complicated than they could express in one interview. Certainly by virtue of the fact that they teach in basic writing programs, they all understand in a concrete and personal way what it means for themselves and for their students to be on the margins of the academy, issues of gender aside.

Much of what this project has taught me, finally, is not directly related to the specific individuals I interviewed or the terms in which they talked about the *Facts* course. It has been the experience itself of talking with these teachers about issues of gender and teaching that has affected me most strongly. Although many of the people I interviewed spoke thoughtfully and articulately in response to my questions, it was clear that none of them had previously given much thought to the implications of relationships between their own gender and the way they interpret and teach a particular curriculum. But because their thoughts on the topic were nevertheless so rich and provocative, I am convinced that all teachers of writing would benefit greatly from the unfamiliar process of looking as closely and carefully at ourselves as gendered teachers as we do at the pedagogies of our choice. If we are truly committed to examining critically our composition theories and pedagogies, acknowledging and exploring our identities as gendered individuals is an important step toward understanding fully the factors that most powerfully shape us as readers, learners, and educators.

Notes

¹I would like to thank Andrea Lunsford and the members of her "Gender and Writing" seminar for encouraging this project and the teachers I interviewed for making it possible. I also appreciate the responses that Mindy Wright, Patricia Sullivan, and Linda Strom gave to drafts of this essay.

²In a 1990 session on "Gender-Related Problems in Academic Discourse—and Solutions," for example, Derek Owens argued that the *Facts* course is masculinist.

³In the introduction to their book, Caywood and Overing mention the following characteristics of feminist pedagogies: (1) treating writing as a process; (2) valuing writing that is

exploratory, autobiographical, and an organic exploration of a topic in an intimate, subjective voice; (3) validation and expression of a private and individual voice; and (4) “recognizing the equal value of the public and private, of personalized experience and detached abstraction” (xiv). Of course, many definitions of what constitutes a feminist pedagogy differ from the one offered by Caywood and Overing, and simply giving students writing about personal experience does not necessarily make a pedagogy feminist. Nevertheless, in this context, where such writing is juxtaposed with traditional academic discourse, it can be seen, *at least*, as relatively feminist.

⁴In *Facts*, Bartholomae and Petrosky point out what they see as the positive aspects of academic discourse—its concern with “counterfactuality,” “individuation,” “potentiality,” and “freedom.” These characteristics seem analogous to what Elbow calls the “intellectual practices” of the academy’s discourse. In these practices, Elbow too sees positive qualities that he values highly: learning, intelligence, and sophistication. However, I see Bartholomae and Petrosky as being more comfortable than Elbow with the stylistic conventions of the discourse, although all of them claim these conventions should at some point be taught. I have made a point of describing my reading of Bartholomae and Petrosky’s viewpoint on this issue since I use it as a touchstone for taxonomizing the teachers I interviewed for this project.

⁵I am somewhat uncomfortable with using the terms “masculinist” and “feminist” since they may suggest essentialist assumptions that I do not hold. I use these terms for lack of better alternatives and trust that my later insistence on distinguishing between gender and sex is convincing evidence that I do not intend to suggest that traditional academic discourse (which I have labeled “masculinist”) necessarily comes any more naturally to males than to females or that “feminist” aspects of the *Facts* course are somehow inherently feminine.

⁶Michele Selig, a colleague from psychology, was especially helpful in coding people’s responses in terms of gender types.

⁷In “Inventing the University,” Bartholomae talks about stylistic conventions in terms of helping students use “common places, set phrases, ritual and gestures, and obligatory conclusions” and teaching them to “take on a persona of authority” (146).

⁸The names of all the teachers are pseudonyms.

⁹According to Belenky et al., for women in our society, being

a “received knower” usually means adherence to sex role stereotypes (134).

¹⁰Deborah’s version of the *Facts* course resembles the women’s writing groups that Celia Lury describes in her essay “The Difference of Women’s Writing: Essays on the Use of Personal Experience,” *Studies in Sexual Politics* 15 (1987): 1-68. Like Deborah’s students, women’s writing groups often use autobiographical writing, and “what unifies these groups is their relations to texts, which are no longer seen as things on their own, but as a link in a chain of communication, learning, and political and personal development” (20).

¹¹Farrell’s essay appears in *College English* 40 (1979): 906. For a critique of its method and findings, see Isaiah Smithson, “Introduction: Investigating Gender, Power, and Pedagogy” in *Gender in the Classroom*, ed. Susan L. Gabriel and Isaiah Smithson (Urbana: Illinois UP, 1990) 1-27.

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NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

March 10, 1995: The Seventh Annual CUNY Writing Centers Association Conference with its theme, "Embracing Change: New Investigations of Writing and Writing Centers," will be of interest to anyone in writing programs of elementary and high schools, colleges and universities. Kingsborough Community College, CUNY, will host the event on their spectacular campus overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. The keynote speaker, Peter Elbow, will explore the current approaches to basic writing and our options. The CUNY WCA is affiliated with the National Writing Centers Association. For information, contact conference co-chairs Lucille Nieporent (718) 369-5405 or Kim Jackson (212) 650-7348.

April 17-19, 1995: The Regional Language Center (RELC) will hold its **Regional Seminar**, "Exploring Language, Culture, and Literature in Language Learning," in Singapore hosted by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO). The Seminar aims to examine how approaches to language, culture, and literature are reflected in language classrooms; to survey recent developments in the areas of language, culture, and literature, and consider their relevance to language learning; and to report on and discuss research into the roles that language, culture, and literature play in language learning. The deadline for proposals, November 15, 1994, is no doubt untimely for readers of this issue of *JBW*. For more information, contact: The Director (Attention: SEMINAR SECRETARIAT), SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, 30 Orange Grove Rd., Singapore 1025, Republic of Singapore. Phone (65) 737-9044, Fax: (65) 734-2753, Telex: RS 55598 RELC, Cable: RELCENTRE SINGAPORE, E-mail: GBORELC@NUSVM

New Journal: *Assessing Writing*, that made its debut in May 1994, is described by its publisher, as "A Bi-Annual Journal for Educators, Administrators, Researchers, and Writing Assessment Professionals . . . the first publication to offer focused, consistent coverage of all writing assessment issues—in classrooms, theory, research, and professional contexts." Its annual subscription rates are \$29 for individuals and \$45 for institutions. For information, contact Diana Walsh, Ablex Publishing Corp., 355 Chestnut Street, Norwood, NJ 07648, (612) 829-0708.

New Journal: *The AEPL Annual*, the journal of the NCTE Assembly on Expanded Perspectives on Learning, invites submissions for its inaugural issue to be published during Winter 1995-96. The theme is *Beyond the Boundaries of Traditional English Education: What It Means to Explore Learning and Teaching in Contemporary Language Education*. Contributions may take the form of reflections essays, research, theory, personal accounts of teaching experience, professional articles, or bibliography. Possible topics include (but are not limited to) intuition, inspiration, insight, imagery, meditation, silence, archetypes, emotion, values, spirituality, body wisdom and felt sense, and healing. References should conform to the fourth edition of the Publications Manual of the American Psychological Assn. Maximum length of articles: 10-12 double-spaced pages. Send contributions in triplicate by February 28, 1995 to Alice G. Brand, Editor, *AEPL Annual*, 217 Brittany Lane, Pittsford, NY 14534. Phone: (716) 232-1828. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped manuscript-sized envelope and stamps sufficient for mailing two copies to reviewers.

Call for Papers: Scott Lloyd DeWitt and Kip Strasma invite submissions for a collection of essays that explores the issues of hypertext, empirical research, and writing pedagogy entitled, ***Empirical Inquiry into Hypertextualizing Composition***. Submissions should describe empirical research studies that investigate the influence of hypertext on students' writing processes. Of special interest are papers that represent diverse teaching strategies and sites (K-12, two-year college, university, etc.). Writers should submit a two-page, single-spaced proposal that reveals the study's focus, its research methodology, and its current status. Send two copies by February 1, 1995 to: Scott Lloyd DeWitt, The Ohio State University—Marion Campus, 1465 Mt. Vernon Ave., Morrill Hall, Marion, OH 43302-5695, or E-mail one copy to dewitt.18@osu.edu and to kstrasma@heartland.bradley.edu

CORRECTION

In Spring 1994 *JBW*, "Mina Pendo Shaughnessy" by Janet Emig carried an incorrect copyright credit at the bottom of page 92. The original copyright for this piece is held by NCTE and was reprinted in *JBW* by permission, as correctly cited in a Note on page 94 of that issue.

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