Multilingual Writers across the Curriculum

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When you ultimately succeed in writing is when you have your own accent. When I speak, my accent reflects who I am and where I come from. Well, I want my writing to reflect me in that way.

-- Tonka, student from Bulgaria (Zawacki & Habib, 2010)

ESL students can become very fluent writers of English, but they may never become indistinguishable from a native speaker, and it is unclear why they should. A current movement among ESL writing teachers is to argue that, beyond a certain level of proficiency in English writing, it is not the students' texts that need to change; rather it is the native-speaking readers and evaluators (particularly in educational institutions) that need to learn to read more broadly, with a more cosmopolitan, less parochial eye. The infusion of life brought by these ESL students' different perspectives on the world can only benefit a pluralistic society which is courageous enough truly to embrace its definition of itself.

--Ilona Leki, *Understanding ESL Writers: A Guide for Teachers* (pp. 132-133)

Contents:

Second Language Writing Processes[1]

	Invention	Revision	Editing
What this phase includes	Reading and note-taking, collecting and analyzing data, creating a plan, brainstorming, writing new prose (first draft material)	Reorganizing an existing draft or parts of a draft, further developing ideas, further developing the draft in relation to the audience, identify gaps	Fine-tuning the formatting and citation style, editing at the sentence-level
Common strategies for L1 writers	Freewriting, mindmapping, talking through ideas with others, outlining, focusing on developing ideas and concepts rather than fine-tuning language; start with the parts of the draft that are easiest to write and attempt other chunks later in the process	Seeking readers for feedback on the overall logic and development, using strategies like reverse outlining to analyze the structure of a draft, allowing for a cooling off period before revising	Seeking readers for feedback on style, reading a draft out loud, allowing for a cooling off period, checking for syntactic and punctuation issues that have been pointed out by readers or editors in the past
Additional strategies used by L2 writers	Writing in the L1, analyzing several samples of the genre to understand the overall structure and development as well as the ideas used, keeping a language journal that includes disciplinary discourse, sentence templates, linking terms, and other instances of "beautiful English"	Seeking readers for feedback on expression (whether all sentences communicate the intended message), reverse outlining a sample text to compare to own draft; color-coding signposting language or stance-taking language (in a sample text and own draft); analyzing the rhetorical moves used in sample texts	Seeking readers for feedback on word choice, grammar, usage, syntax, and punctuation; analyzing a sample text to answer specific language questions (e.g. verb tense patterns, usage of passive voice, variations in how particular ideas are expressed in the writer's discipline); using an online corpus to answer language questions (e.g. preposition use, article use, frequency of particular words)

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[1] This figure is from forthcoming chapter, "'Noticing' Language in the Writing Center: Preparing Writing Center Tutors to Support Graduate Multilingual Writers," developed for Terry Myers Zawacki and Susan Lawrence (eds.), *Re/writing the Center: Pedagogies, Practices, Partnerships to Support Graduate Students in the Writing Center*.

Characteristics of "ESL Ready" Courses[2]

Assignment design:
- Successful completion of assignments does not depend on knowledge of American history, pop culture, or media that was not part of the course content.
- On the assignment description, the instructor included clear goals (why the assignment was assigned), clear guidelines for completing the project, a clear description of the rhetorical situation, and clear criteria for how the project will be assessed.
- The assignment description is handed out well before the project is due, giving the student more lead-time.
- The assignments allow for the student to draw on knowledge learned in the L1.

Scaffolded writing:
- The writing assignment is presented as a series of discrete steps, which may include prewriting activities, research activities, due dates for early drafts or parts of the draft, and/or peer review sessions.
- Samples of student writing from the same assignment or published writing in the same genre are made available to the students.

Textual ownership:
- On the syllabus or course website, the instructor provided clear criteria for what counts as academic dishonesty in the course, including a clear description of what counts as plagiarism and consequences for plagiarizing.
- Students are given opportunities to practice writing about and with sources in low-stakes assignments.

Peer review and group work:
- Students are guided in giving peer review, so that, in early drafts, feedback focuses on holistic issues (i.e. idea development, focus, organization) before local issues (i.e. grammar and editing).
- Students are guided in giving editing feedback, so that they only point out errors for other students through minimal marking, rather than explain editing decisions
- Before oral peer feedback sessions and group work, the instructors explains the importance of each voice in the group being equally heard and respected, and tells the group that it is everyone's responsibility that every group member makes contributions to the discussion.
- Group work is structured so that there are clear roles for each group member.

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[2] The term "ESL-ready" comes from Matsuda, P. K. (2006). The myth of linguistic homogeneity in U.S. college composition. College English, 68(6), 637-51.

Responding to and assessing student writing:
- Before giving feedback to early drafts of L2 student writing, the instructor reads the entire draft without a pen in hand, to understand the draft on its own terms before responding.
- The instructor gives feedback appropriate to the stage of the draft, focusing on holistic issues in early drafts and local issues in more developed drafts.
- Rather than editing for the student, the instructor highlights the areas that require editing. To assess the student's language proficiency, the instructor asks the student to edit all marked areas and to note areas where they don't understand why the text was marked.
- The instructor writes an end comment on the draft, summarizing what the student did well and no more than three areas the instructor would like the student to focus on in the next draft or when writing the next paper.
- The instructors uses a rubric to evaluate papers. The rubric is designed by the instructor and is focused on the paper's learning outcomes, with editing counting for no more than 10% of the grade. When assessing the editing portion of the grade, the instructor only marks down for errors that get in the way of reader comprehension and for errors that had been marked in early drafts by the instructor or peer reviewers as requiring editing (to assess this, the instructor asks all students to turn in marked up early drafts along with the final draft).

Scaffolding reading:
- The instructor provides plenty of lead-time for reading assignments (so that students know what readings are due well ahead of time and the readings are made available to them early on).
- The instructor provides guiding questions, so that students have a sense of what they should be getting out of the text.
- The instructor provides writing-to-learn activities to support the reading process, such as a double-entry journal, annotating the text, or writing in response to a prompt on the reading.

Drawing on multiple language skills:
- The instructor provides opportunities for students to process information through multiple modes, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and visual representation.
- The instructor provides opportunities for students to showcase knowledge through multiple modes, such as incorporating oral presentations and the creation of digital videos.
- The instructor makes it clear in the syllabus that multilingualism is valued in the class, by inviting multilingual students to write in their first language in in-class writing, notes, pre-writing, and early drafts. If the instructor welcomes use of multiple languages in more formal projects, the instructor gives students guidelines and examples they can draw on in order to do so.

Statement from my syllabus:

Multilingual Writing: In this section, a range of linguistic backgrounds and levels of English proficiency will be represented. You are invited to use all of your languages as resources in this course. You are welcome to write in a language other than English whenever it is helpful (such as in first drafts and notes), to draw on words and phrases in final drafts of essays that do not have translations in English, to use print- and web-based sources that are written in languages other than English, and to conduct primary research in languages other than English. In this class, I expect "written accent" (missing articles, incorrect prepositions, incorrect verb tenses) to be treated with respect. While all students in this course are expected to challenge themselves to become more effective and accomplished writers in English, we will not spend time worrying too much about the aspects of English that take many years to acquire (i.e. articles, verb tense, prepositions), but instead focus on expression of ideas, communicative competence, and rhetorical savvy.

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Zhu, W. (2001). Interaction and feedback in mixed peer response groups. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 10*(4): 251-276.

Useful Resources on Multilingual Writing

Bruce, Shanti and Ben Rafoth, Eds. *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors 2nd ed.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2009.

Though written for writing center tutors, this is the book I most often recommend to faculty. The chapters are clear and concise, and focus on different aspects of reading and responding to second language writing.

Conference on College Composition and Communication. *CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers*. 2010.
http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/secondlangwriting

Written by the CCCC Committee on Second Language Writing and Writers and endorsed by Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), this useful statement provides an overview of second language writing and guidelines for writing programs and instructors.

Cox, Michelle, Ed. "WAC and Second Language Writers." *WAC Clearinghouse.*
http://wac.colostate.edu/slw/

On this WAC Clearinghouse page, I provide information about working with second language writers and a bibliography of useful resources.

Cox, Michelle. "WAC-WID and Second Language Writing." WPA-CompPile Research Bibliographies, No. 8. *WPA-CompPile Research Bibliographies.* 2010.
http://comppile.org/wpa/bibliographies/Bib8/Cox.pdf

In this annotated bibliography, I provide abstracts for scholarship focused on second language writers in contexts outside of first-year composition.

Cox, Michelle and Terry Myers Zawacki, ed. "WAC and Second Language Writing: Cross-Field Research, Theory, and Program Development." *Across the Disciplines* (8): 2011.
http://wac.colostate.edu/ATD/ell/index.cfm

This special issue of *ATD* responds to calls for WAC and L2 writing professionals to engage in cross-field scholarship and program building to better understand and address the complexities of writing across languages, cultures, and disciplines, as we strive to support multilingual writers across the curriculum.

Currie, Pat. "Staying Out of Trouble: Apparent Plagiarism and Academic Survival." *Journal of Second Language Writing* 7.1 (1998): 1-18.

This article reports on a study of a second language writer who resorted to plagiarism when pressured to write in Standard Written English, and was rewarded for doing so, as the instructor didn't catch on. This is a useful article for considering the reasons L2 students may plagiarize.

Ferris, Dana, John Hedgcock, and John S. Hedgcock. *Teaching ESL Composition: Purpose, Process, and Practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005.

This useful book pulls together scholarship on second language writing development and pedagogy to guide instructors in planning curricula, designing assignments, understanding the features of second language writing, and responding to and assessing the writing of second language students. Though written for instructors of ESL sections of first-year composition, this book is applicable across a variety of teaching contexts.

George Mason University. *Valuing Written Accents*. http://writtenaccents.gmu.edu/

> This website provides data from an ongoing investigation into the experiences of second
> language students and their instructors at George Mason University.

Harklau, Linda, Kay M. Losey, and Meryl Siegal. "Linguistically Diverse Students and College
> Writing: What is Equitable and Appropriate?" *Generation 1.5 Meets College
> Composition*. Ed. Linda Harklau, Kay M. Losey, and Meryl Siegal. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence
> Erlbaum, 1999. 1-14.

> This landmark article introduces the term "generation 1.5" to writing studies, and discusses
> the unique characteristics of this group of second language students.

Land, Robert E. and Catherine Whitley. "Evaluating Second-Language Essays in Regular
> Composition Courses: Toward a Pluralistic U.S. Rhetoric." *Second-Language Writing in the
> Composition Classroom: A Critical Sourcebook*. Ed. Paul Kei Matsuda, Michelle Cox, Jay
> Jordan, and Christina Ortmeier-Hooper. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006. 324-32.

> This provocative article challenges instructors to rethink how we evaluate writing by second
> language students.

Leki, Ilona. *Understanding ESL Writers: A Guide for Teachers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann-
> Boynton/Cook, 1992.

> Though dated, this concise book provides useful guidance for instructors working with
> international second language students.

Matsuda, Paul Kei, Michelle Cox, Jay Jordan, and Christina Ortmeier-Hooper, Eds. *Second-
> Language Writing in the Composition Classroom: A Critical Sourcebook*. Boston:
> Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006, 2010.

> This collection of previously published articles pulls together scholarship on second language
> writing useful to instructors of first-year composition. This book is free – simply contact your
> Bedford / St. Martin's representative.

Robertson, Wayne, dir. *Writing Across Borders*. Oregon State University, 2005.

> This valuable film features the voices of second language writing scholars, instructors,
> and second-language students from across the curriculum, and provides a useful
> overview of several issues relevant to second language writing, such as cultural notions
> of textual ownership, contrastive rhetoric, and responding to and assessing the writing
> of second language students. The short film can be ordered for a nominal fee from
> Oregon State University, or viewed through YouTube.

Saenkhum, Tanita and Paul Kei Matsuda. "Second Language Writing and Writing Program
        Administration." WPA-CompPile Research Bibliographies, No. 4, *WPA-CompPile
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        This annotated bibliography provides abstracts for scholarship focused on second language
        writers in first-year composition

Severino, Carol. "The Sociopolitical Implications of Response to Second Language and Second
        Dialect Writing." *Second-Language Writing in the Composition Classroom: A Critical
        Sourcebook*. Ed. Paul Kei Matsuda, Michelle Cox, Jay Jordan, and Christina Ortmeier-
        Hooper. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006. 330-50.

        In this article, Severino discusses the implications of different approaches to responding to
        the writing of second language students.

Zawacki, Terry Myers and Michelle Cox. *WAC and Second Language Writers: Research toward
        Linguistically and Culturally Inclusive Programs and Practices.* WAC Clearinghouse and
        Parlor Press, 2014. http://wac.colostate.edu/books/l2/

        This edited collection not only reports new research but also shares a wealth of
        pedagogical, curricular, and programmatic practices relevant to second-language
        writers.