

# Workshop: Tutoring Multilingual Writers

Michelle Cox, Cornell University

[michelle.cox@cornell.edu](mailto:michelle.cox@cornell.edu)

## Agenda

- What does the writing process look like for multilingual students? How do multilingual writers' processes compare to those used by students who use English as a first or primary language?
- How can tutors support multilingual writers at different points in the process?
- Sample handouts developed for the graduate writing center at Cornell (included in this packet):
  - Writing-Responsible Text
  - The Language of Stance-Taking
  - Questions for Analyzing a Mentor Text
- List of additional handouts created for the graduate writing center (not included in this packet):
  - Academic Style: Active and Passive Voice
  - Academic Style: Writing with Sources
  - Bibliography of Writing in the Disciplines
  - Key Terms: Writing
  - On Writing in English as a Second Language
  - Resources for Oral Presentations
  - Peer Review: Prioritizing Our Feedback
  - Peer Review: Guidelines for Writing Groups
  - Proofreading for Errors
  - Strategies for Improving Pronunciation
  - Strategies Used by Second Language Writers
  - Writing Process Strategies

## Second Language Writing Processes<sup>1</sup>

	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)

- Do you have questions about any of these strategies?
- Are there any strategies that you would add to this list?
- How do you currently support multilingual writers with these writing process strategies?

<sup>1</sup> 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*.

## Academic Style: Writer-Responsible Text

Cultures differ on their expectations for the roles writers and readers take in relation to a text. According to John Hinds (1987), some cultures (like the US) favor “writer-responsible” writing, in which the writer has the primary responsibility for making sure that ideas are clearly communicated to the reader, while other cultures (like Japan) favor “reader-responsible” writing, in which the reader is responsible for making sense out of the writer’s ideas. While it is likely that all cultures use both styles in different contexts, it is undeniable that in US academic writing, writer-responsible text is preferred. In this handout, we share strategies for writing writer-responsible texts through the use of **signposting** (language that creates a route for a reader through a text, such as forecasting statements, topic sentences, and conjunctive adverbs) and **cohesion** (such as the movement from given-to-new information in sentences and the use of demonstrative pronouns).

### Signposting

**Forecasting statements:** These are statements that announce to the reader content that will appear in the text. Examples: “I will argue that ...”; “In this section, I will describe ...”; “In this essay, I first x, then y, then z.”

**Topic sentences:** Typically the first line of each paragraph, topic sentences are used to indicate to the reader the focus of the paragraph. One test to see if topic sentences are used effectively is to copy and paste all first sentences to another document, and then read through them to see if a reader could understand the direction of the paper just based on these sentences.

**Conjunctive adverbs:** Also called “linking words,” conjunctive adverbs are words and phrases used to show the reader how the idea in one sentence related to that in the sentence before it. Here are examples<sup>2</sup> (for more examples, go to the Academic Phrasebank: <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk>):

**Highlighting or emphasizing a point:** Importantly, Indeed, In fact, More importantly, Furthermore, Moreover, It is important to highlight

**Changing direction or creating a comparison:** However, Rather, In contrast, Conversely, On one hand, On the other hand, In comparison, Compared to, Another point to consider is

**Adding a similar point:** Similarly, Likewise, Again, Also

**Summarizing:** Finally, Lastly, In conclusion, To summarize, Overall

**Acknowledging something and moving to a different point:** Although, Even though, Despite, Notwithstanding

**Following a line of reasoning:** Therefore, Subsequently, Hence, Consequently, Accordingly, As a result, As a consequence, To this end

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<sup>2</sup> Examples are from “Signpost Words and Phrases,” developed by the Massey University Center for Teaching and Learning, <http://owll.massey.ac.nz/pdf/studyup-essays-2-handout.pdf>.

## Cohesion

**Movement from given to new information:** This sentence pattern creates a sense of “flow” for readers. Consider this example<sup>3</sup>:

Molecules are comprised of covalently bonded atoms. Molecules’ reactions are controlled by the strength of the bonds. Molecules, however, sometimes react slower than bond strength would predict.

Readers may describe these sentences as “choppy,” as there isn’t a clear relationship between them:

Molecules ... bonded atoms    Molecules ... bonded strength    Molecules ... bonded strength would predict

A → B    A → C    A → D

Now consider this revision:

Molecules are comprised of covalently bonded atoms. Bond strength controls a molecule’s reactions. Sometimes, however, those reactions are slower than bond strength would predict.

Now, the relationships between the ideas presented in the sentences are clearer:

Molecules ... bonded atoms    Bond strength ... reactions    Reactions ... bonded strength would predict

A → B    B → C    C → D

We can also use **demonstrative pronouns** (this/these) to move from given information to new information. A demonstrative pronoun plus a noun can be used to summarize or refer back to information given in a previous sentence, as shown in these examples<sup>4</sup>:

In recent years, the number of students applying for PhD programs has increased steadily, while the number of places available has remained fairly constant. **This situation** has resulted in intense competition for admission.

According to a recent survey, 26% of all American adults, down from 38% 30 years ago, now smoke. **This decrease** can be partly attributed to the mounting evidence linking smoking to fatal diseases, such as cancer.

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<sup>3</sup> Examples in this section are from Schimel, J. (2012). *Writing Science: How to Write Papers that Get Cited and Proposals that Get Funded*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 125-6.

<sup>4</sup> Examples in this section are from Swales, J. and Feak, C. (2012). *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*. University of Michigan Press, p. 43.

# Academic Style: The Language of Stance-Taking

Stance-taking refers to indications of a writer's attitude toward a certain idea or position on an argument. When a writer does not indicate stance, the writing can come across as being writer-less. When a writer handles stance-taking language ineffectively, the writer can come across as being either too hesitant or too assertive in their claims. This handout provides guidance in using language in writing to effectively establish one's stance.

**Hedges**<sup>5</sup>: a softening of a statement

Scientists and industrialists disagree about the health hazards of dioxins, the latter stating that the risks *may be exaggerated*.

**Boosters**: a strengthening of a comment

Scientists and industrialists disagree about the health hazards of dioxins, the latter stating that the risks *are clearly exaggerated*.

**Attitude markers**: indications of the author's attitude toward a proposition or idea by indicating surprise, disbelief, understanding, or "interestingness"

- *It is surprising that* a relatively small amount of doping (say 10% F doping for O) does not preserve the magnetic ordering.
- With such vague and circular notions, *it is hard to accept* the author's later conclusions.
- *It is interesting to note that*, at least to my knowledge, no such comprehensive book has ever been published.

**Engagement markers**: attempts to establish a connection with the reader and bring them into the text, by using personal pronouns (e.g. *we* and *you*), questions, commands, or directly addressing *the reader*

- If *you* are an experienced dc motor engineer, *you may* enjoy reading Chapter 6.
- *Readers* may be pleasantly surprised to note that the case examples, provided throughout the text, begin within the very first chapter.

**Self-mentions**: places where authors insert themselves into the text

*I think that/in my opinion* the discussion about institutions, cluster policies and relations that bridge and connect clusters with external agents deserves more attention.

**Evaluative adjectives**:

Positive: *useful, important, interesting, detailed, up-to-date, insightful, significant*  
Negative: *inconsistent, restricted, misleading*

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<sup>5</sup> The material on this page is taken from Swales & Feak, 2012, pp. 240-241.

### Moderating or qualifying a claim<sup>6</sup>:

#### Stronger



Word-of-mouth advertising *influences* a consumer's purchasing decisions.  
Word-of-mouth advertising *can influence* a consumer's purchasing decisions.  
Word-of-mouth advertising *could influence* a consumer's purchasing decisions.  
Word-of-mouth advertising *may influence* a consumer's purchasing decisions.  
Word-of-mouth advertising *might influence* a consumer's purchasing decisions.

#### Weaker

#### Stronger



It is clear that ...  
It is rather clear that ...  
It is very probably/highly likely that ...  
It is probable/likely that ...  
It is possible that ...  
It is unlikely that ...

#### Weaker

#### Stronger



There is a definite possibility that ...  
There is a strong possibility that ...  
There is a good possibility that ...  
There is a slight possibility that ...  
There is little possibility that ...

#### Weaker

### Distancing to indicate stance

Health education *seems to* have a positive impact on a patient's quality of life.  
*It would appear that* health education has a positive impact on ...  
*Based on the limited data available ...*  
*According to this preliminary study ...*  
*Based on previous studies ...*

### Softening Generalizations

- Children living in poverty *appear to/seem to/tend to* do poorly in school.
- *A majority of* children living in poverty do poorly in school.
- *In many parts of the world,* children living in poverty do poorly in school.
- *With the exception of/apart from/except for* those enrolled in specialized programs, children living in poverty do poorly in school.

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<sup>6</sup> The material on this page is taken from Swales & Feak, 2012, pp. 159-162.

## Questions for Analyzing a Mentor Text

### About the genre:

- What would you call this type of writing?
- How common is this genre in your field?
- Have you written in this genre? Will you write in this genre in the future?
- How is this genre used? What is this genre's role in your field?
- What makes this genre different from other genres used in your field?

### Rhetorical situation and approaches:

- Who is the writer's target audience? Who are the writer's secondary audiences? How can you tell? How do these audience affect how this piece is written?
- What is the writer's main goal in this text? How do you know? Where do you see this goal most clearly stated?
- Why would a reader read this text? What would his/her goals be? What conditions would this reader read under? How does the readers' goals and reading conditions affect how the text is written?
- How does the writer connect not only to specialists in his/her specific research area but also to scholars in related research areas?
- Look up the journal or publisher through which the piece was published. What are the publication guidelines for this venue? How do these guidelines impact the writing of this text?
- What is the larger conversation this text is contributing to? How and where is this larger conversation addressed in this text?
- How is the text responding to exigencies present at the time of the publication (or, if this is an unpublished text, at the time of writing)? How is the text responding to trends, hot topics, or buzz words in the field?
- How present is the writer in the text? (are personal pronouns used? Opinions given? Is the style unique?)
- Does the writer come across as credible? If so, how does the writer assert his/her credibility?
- Does the writer put forth any claims that would be seen as controversial or that challenge accepted ideas in the field? If so, how would you describe the writer's strategy for doing so?

### Structure/organization:

- Examine the title: how representative is it of the focus of the text? Does it have a colon? If so, how would you characterize what appears before the colon and what appears after it? Which words in the title are capitalized? Are qualifiers used? (i.e. "a preliminary study") Are questions used? Does the title make you want to read the article? How does the title relate to the target audience? Find titles of other samples of this genre: how does the title of your mentor text compare?
- What does the writer do in the opening? What kind of information is presented?
- What does the writer do in the closing? What kind of information is included?

- What are the different sections? (look at subheadings, if they are present) What percentage of space is given to each section? How does each section further the writer's overall goal?
- Are endnotes or footnotes used? If yes, how and why are they used?
- How many references are included in the reference list?
- Are acknowledgements included? If so, what kinds of information are included and why?
- Are images included? If yes, how and why are they used? To what extent are the images discussed within the surrounding text?
- What is the overall length of the piece?
- How long is the shortest paragraph? How long is the longest paragraph? What is the average paragraph length? How do you see the writer making choices about paragraph length?
- How long is the shortest sentence? How long is the longest sentence? What is the average sentence length? How do you see the writer making choices about sentence length?
- How are first sentences of paragraphs used? How are last sentences used?
- Copy and paste subheads and the first sentences of each paragraph to a Word document. When you read just these subheads and sentences, are you able to get the gist of the paper as a whole?
- Scan the text for signposts (subheads, forecasting statements, and conjunctive adverbs). Where and when are they used? What kinds of things do they signal?
- Choose a few paragraphs and analyze how they are organized. Is there a recognizable pattern? Does the paragraph move from general-to-specific? From specific-to-general? If there is a claim, it is placed at the opening or the closing of the paragraph? Why do you think the writer chose specific patterns of organization?

### **Style/discourse/language:**

- What is the name of the citation system used in the text?
- Where, in the text, does the writer cite sources? Does the writer tend to use direct quotes, paraphrases, or summaries more often? Why do you feel the writer may have chosen to quote vs. paraphrase vs. summarize?
- To what extent does the writer use everyday language or figurative language (i.e. similes or metaphors)? What is the effect of this stylistic choice?
- Disciplinary discourse
  - What disciplinary terms or phrases are defined for the reader? Why do you think the writer chose to include these definitions?
  - What acronyms or abbreviations are used without explanation? Where? Why?
  - What disciplinary terms or phrases don't have synonyms (i.e. they get repeated again and again)?
  - What terms/phrases have synonyms, and are interchangeable with these synonyms?
  - What terms/phrases require citation?



- What terms/phrases refer to common knowledge in the field and thus do not require citation?
- What terms/phrases are used to signal that the writer is referring to a particular school of thought or theoretical framework?
- Choose a section to focus on:
  - What verb tenses are used in this section? Why are particular verb tenses used at different points? Can you see a pattern?
  - Where does the writer provide more detail and where does the writer pull back the lens and why?
  - If citation is used in this section, how is it used? Does the writer cite a text to establish the lineage of an idea, provide evidence for a claim, establish a gap in the field's knowledge, etc.? Does the writer simply point to the source, summarize the source, paraphrase the source, quote from the source, or discuss the source? What patterns do you see for the ways in which citations are used?
  - How often is passive voice used? In the section you chose, about what percentage of the sentences use passive voice and what percentage use active? When passive voice is used, can you tell why it is used?
  - Examine the writer's use of stance-taking language. Where and to what extent does the writer use hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers, self-mentions, evaluative adjectives, modal verbs, and distancing language? What is the effect of the writer's use of stance-taking language?
  - Within a paragraph, how does the writer establish flow (i.e. move the reader from one idea to the next)? Does the writer use the old-to-new information pattern? Conjunctive adverbs? Demonstrative pronouns (to point back to an idea from an earlier sentence)?