Second Language Writing Pedagogy

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Second language writing pedagogy is ubiquitous. Unlike other types of pedagogies, it is not site-specific; it happens wherever second language (L2) writers are, including basic writing courses, first-year composition courses, advanced composition courses, professional writing courses, writing centers, and courses across the disciplines. Nor is it optional. L2 writing pedagogy is enacted whenever a teacher interacts with an L2 writer—and some teachers are more prepared than others to work with L2 writers. The goal of this chapter is to provide the background knowledge and resources to help all writing teachers enact L2 writing pedagogy with a greater degree of confidence and competence. To this end, we explore what it means to integrate an L2 perspective into various writing pedagogies, many of which are represented in this book. We begin with an overview of the characteristics and experiences of a wide variety of L2 writers. We then discuss aspects of those characteristics and experiences in detail. We also offer some strategies that teachers and tutors can use to address those issues. The discussion in this chapter focuses primarily on first-year composition courses, but many of the issues and strategies are also applicable in other types of writing courses.

FROM THE MONOLINGUAL NORM TO THE MULTILINGUAL NORM

The presence of L2 writers in U.S. higher education has become an undeniable reality. As the CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers points out, L2 writers “have become an integral part of writing courses and programs.” Most—if not all—writing courses are multilingual by default. In fact, it is unusual for writing courses other than first-year composition to offer separate sections just for L2 writers. Even when those sections are available, there may not be enough room to accommodate all L2 writers who really need the additional support and resources. In some cases, the number of L2 writers in each writing course may be
small, but that does not mean the presence of one or two students can be ignored; if one student suffers, that is one too many.

Traditionally, U.S. college composition courses have been designed primarily for monolingual native users of a dominant variety of English who share more or less similar cultural and educational backgrounds. In fact, the WPA Outcomes Statement—a set of guidelines articulating what first-year composition courses nationwide are to accomplish—does not seem to provide provisions for a range of issues, especially language issues, that many L2 writers face in those courses (Matsuda and Skinnell). The tendency to exclude from learning objectives those issues that are not relevant to the traditionally dominant student population—namely, first language (L1) writers—seems to reflect the "myth of linguistic homogeneity," the assumption that all students in those classes already possess the English language proficiency typical of monolingual users of dominant varieties of English (Matsuda, "Myth" 638).

The monolingual assumption, which was more or less accurate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is no longer tenable as L2 writers now enroll in U.S. institutions of higher education in large numbers. In order to provide adequate instruction to all students in writing courses of various kinds, all writing teachers—regardless of their previous training, experience, or interest—need to be prepared to work with a linguistically diverse student population (Ferris, Teaching College Writing).

CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES OF L2 WRITERS

In general, the term second language writers refers to individuals who are writing in languages they are actively learning. L2 writers in U.S. college composition courses can be classified broadly into two categories based on their immigration status, including international students, who are attending U.S. institutions of higher education on student (F-1) or exchange (J-1) visas, and U.S. resident students, who are permanent residents and refugees as well as naturalized and native-born citizens. The resident students are sometimes further divided into two subcategories—early arrival and late arrival—to reflect their differing needs related to the length of residency in the United States (Ferris, Teaching College Writing). The distinction can be important, because age and the length of exposure to the target language (i.e., the language being learned) often affect the process of L2 acquisition. Sometimes the term generation 1.5 is used in referring to a subset of L2 writers, usually late-arrival resident students (Ferris, Teaching College Writing). We choose to avoid this term, however, because it has been defined and used rather inconsistently, creating unnecessary confusion even among L2 writing specialists (Matsuda and Matsuda, "Erasure" 58–61). Instead, we provide descriptions based on relevant student characteristics, as needed.

While the distinction between international and resident students does not always accurately capture the different characteristics and needs, there are general characteristics that are often associated with these groups of students. In general, international students tend to have had limited exposure to English—especially
spoken English—compared to resident students. Resident students are more likely to be able to rely on their language intuition in addressing their own language issues (e.g., reading aloud to identify errors), whereas international L2 writers may resort to metalanguage in identifying and revising sentences (e.g., applying explicit knowledge of grammar and conventions). In contrast to resident students, international students tend to be less familiar with the U.S. educational system and classroom culture as well as pop-cultural references. Some international students might not have a problem being identified as “international” or “ESL,” while resident students may resist these labels in an attempt to maintain their identity position as U.S. residents (Ortmeier-Hooper, “English”).

Due to the differences in previous experience with the English language, some students have different levels of proficiency in spoken and written English. Some students who cannot communicate well face-to-face may be able to produce texts that seem much more advanced; the discrepancy between students’ spoken and written performance, therefore, is not necessarily an indication that the student has plagiarized. Conversely, students whose speech is indistinguishable from L1 writers may struggle in producing grammatical sentences. To make appropriate placement and instructional decisions, it is important to account for both spoken and written proficiency levels.

These descriptions are generalizations based on typical characteristics, but individual student characteristics vary widely. There are resident students who have had limited exposure to English (Fu); likewise, there are international students who have previously lived in English-dominant contexts. Some international students may also have attended English-medium schools. Some international students resist being singled out for their differences, while some resident students choose to highlight their linguistic and cultural differences as a coping strategy. It is important to keep in mind that these characterizations provide a general frame of reference for understanding a range of student characteristics; they cannot be used in predicting any individual student profiles, attitudes, or behavior (see Matsuda, “Myth”).

While L2 writers differ from their L1 counterparts to varying degrees, they are also similar in many ways to monolingual English users. In fact, even L1 writers—especially speakers of nondominant varieties of English such as African American English (AAE) or Appalachian English—often struggle with similar sets of issues, and texts written by L2 writers may resemble, at least on the surface, those written by L1 basic writers. Yet these similarities can be deceptive. Although L1 writers may also make errors similar to those made by L2 writers, the reasons for making those errors might be quite different (Leki, Understanding). While some scholars have argued that academic writing is a second language even in one’s native language, it is important to keep in mind that L2 writers go through the same struggle while literally learning another language (Matsuda and Jablonski). L1 and L2 writers’ background knowledge about subject matters, cultural contexts, and educational systems may be vastly different, and L2 writers may rely on a different set of linguistic or cultural resources to develop textual features, such as word choice.
(collocations), idioms, sentence structures, and paragraph organization, that are sometimes different from typical texts written by L1 writers (Silva).

One of the distinguishing characteristics of L2 writers in U.S. college composition courses is that they are in the process of developing communicative competence (Bachman) in English. Communicative competence involves not only the knowledge of grammar and discourse but also the awareness of appropriate ways of creating and maintaining social relationships with the audience as well as strategic knowledge, such as the knowledge of writing processes. While L1 writers also continue to develop their communicative competence, they have had a head start. In working with L2 writers, it is important to bear in mind that L2 development does not happen overnight—or by taking one or two semesters of intensive English courses or prerequisite writing courses designed to facilitate their language development. The process is also complicated by individual L2 writers’ language backgrounds, including their native language background, prior language learning experience, age of language learning, and the level of metalinguistic knowledge and awareness (Ortega).

Another important characteristic is the varying level of knowledge and experience with literacy practices in various languages. While some L2 writers have limited or no literacy in their native language, most L2 writers do bring some levels of literacy experiences and practices from their previous language learning and use—whether in their native language or other languages. While many aspects of literacy practices and strategies may carry over to English literacy, literacy practices in some languages are drastically different, and when they are transferred to English it may create miscommunication (Connor). Some of the differences are readily apparent—for example, many non-Indo-European languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Hebrew, Korean, and Russian, use different writing systems. Other differences are subtler, such as the extent to which written texts are valued and trusted. While some of the differences in student text can be evidence of a student’s developing competence in writing in general, it may also reflect the writer’s background in rhetorical education (Matsuda, “Contrastive”).

Although the use of L1 literacy strategies can facilitate communication and learning in a second language, some of the genre-specific differences may detract from L2 students’ attempts to communicate. A well-known example is the contrast between Japanese and English business letters (Jenkins and Hinds). While English business letters often begin by stating the purpose of the letter (ostensibly to get the reader’s attention quickly), formal Japanese letters often begin with highly conventionalized salutations that include seasonal references. If students transfer these features to English business letters for a U.S. audience, it might be considered inappropriate, and the teacher’s job may include pointing out the expectations of the U.S. audience and explaining the rationale—keeping in mind that those conventions are not universally applicable. In fact, not all Japanese business letters these days include seasonal salutations, especially for internal correspondences or informal business letters. Conversely, some English business letters are supposed to be less direct—as in the case of rejection letters and other “bad news” letters.
While awareness of the possible differences is important, it can be problematic to attribute them solely to linguistic or cultural differences (Kubota and Lehner; Matsuda, “Contrastive”). One way to avoid overgeneralizing about L2 writers is to ask students during writing conferences to explain their rhetorical decisions in their own words, which can help teachers understand more about their students’ work without assuming that perceived differences are necessarily rooted in linguistic or cultural differences. New composition teachers also need to keep in mind that they are not solely responsible for raising students’ awareness of academic discourse conventions; L2 writers will also be learning these expectations through their disciplinary coursework. (See Thaiss and McLeod, this volume, for more discussion of L2 issues in disciplinary writing.)

L2 writers’ prior educational background also plays an important role in their experience in U.S. higher education. While some L2 writers have previously been exposed to U.S. educational systems, others may have been educated in different systems with different assumptions and expectations about educational goals, approaches to learning, appropriate classroom behavior, and the teacher-student relationship. Some students have been through school systems that do not encourage questioning, collaboration, or active participation by students; a student from Yemen once told us that even the idea of asking questions of a teacher seems socially inappropriate. Peer feedback, which can be a challenge even to U.S.-educated students, can also pose a particular problem for students from non-U.S. school backgrounds who are not used to the idea of talking to other students in class or criticizing other students’ work. In a mixed group of L1 and L2 writers, some L2 writers may not feel comfortable asserting themselves because of the social roles they had been assigned in their previous classroom experience (Zhu, “Interaction”). In order to facilitate learning among students from various backgrounds, it is important not to assume that students are familiar with any particular mode of learning or classroom interaction, and to provide explicit instructions (with examples) about the rationale, goals, procedures, and desired outcomes for classroom activities. (For descriptions of trained peer feedback for L2 writers, see Berg; Stanley; Zhu, “Effects”.)

The presence of students with these characteristics calls for a reassessment of pedagogical objectives, instructional practices, and assessment practices. It does not mean abandoning all the previous assumptions and practices. Teaching writing to second language writers is not fundamentally different from teaching writing to native English users (Leki, Understanding). Many of the pedagogical strategies that writing teachers use can help second language writers develop various aspects of their literacy. Yet there are particular challenges that L2 writers tend to encounter because of their linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. In the following sections, we discuss some of those challenges and ways of addressing them.

**CULTURAL ISSUES IN L2 WRITING**

L2 writers bring a wealth of diverse cultural backgrounds, values, assumptions, and practices into the composition classroom. Their experiences as language
learners and previous exposure to different cultural traditions can certainly be helpful in broadening classroom discussion. However, L2 writers vary in how they view themselves in relation to the different cultures they are a part of (Chiang and Schmida). For example, resident L2 writers may identify more with U.S. culture than that of their heritage culture (or vice versa). Teachers can provide opportunities for L2 writers to discuss cultural issues, but they should not assume students' cultural identifications based on their names, ethnicity, language proficiency, or length of time spent in the United States.

In classrooms using cultural studies pedagogy (see George, Lockridge, and Trimbur, this volume), it is important to keep in mind that L2 writers may not be familiar with or identify with U.S. popular culture. Notions such as the "culture of everyday life" and "the larger culture" (George and Trimbur 82), which implicitly refer to the dominant U.S. culture, may be elusive for students who grew up in other cultural contexts. Tapping into the knowledge base of the dominant student population—such as in the analyses of pop culture or social issues—can be particularly challenging to students who have been living in other cultural contexts. The gap may be narrowing with the global spread of pop culture and the rise of the international youth culture; yet the ways in which the same pop culture is experienced, interpreted, and discussed could be drastically different from one cultural context to another.

For cultural studies pedagogy to work with L2 writers, it is important to provide all the background knowledge necessary to succeed. Yet students who are already familiar with the dominant culture may find the background information unnecessary. One of the strategies for keeping all students engaged may be to ask students to articulate the assumptions of their own cultures during class discussions. Doing so can help heighten students' cultural awareness while also benefitting those who are not familiar with those assumptions. In addition, L2 writers may find it helpful to have access to supplementary background readings in the forms of articles, websites, and such.

Asking students to talk about their "home" language or culture may be a good way of encouraging some students to tap into their resources (Ortmeyer, "Project Homeland"), but it can also backfire. Some students may not like being singled out or may feel that the teacher has come to a conclusion about their identity prematurely. U.S. resident students tend to want to identify with the U.S. culture rather than being constructed as perpetual foreigners. Other students are eager to share and may even foreground their "foreign" identity as a coping strategy (Leki, "Coping Strategies"). Yet other students, particularly refugee students, may have had traumatic experiences in leaving their "home" countries, and they may not want to remember—much less write about—them. Teachers should also keep in mind that "sensitive topics, such as sexuality, criticism of authority, political beliefs, personal experiences, and religious beliefs, are subject to differing levels of comfort among students of different cultural and educational backgrounds" (CCCCC Statement). However, new writing teachers should not feel intimidated by working with L2 writers because of these complex cultural issues. If students are willing to write or speak about culturally sensitive issues out of their own initiative, then teachers can support these efforts.
TAPPING INTO LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

As U.S. higher education becomes increasingly diverse, and as the need for all students to develop global literacy becomes clear, another important challenge—and opportunity—for writing teachers is to tap into the rich linguistic and cultural resources that L2 writers bring to the classroom. One of the most obvious resources L2 writers have is access to their native language—and perhaps additional languages they may have learned. They may also be experts in language learning strategies because they have learned at least one language (i.e., English) at a level that is far more advanced than the foreign-language-learning experience of many U.S.-educated native English users. Students who have learned English through explicit instruction may also have extensive meta-knowledge of the English language that native English users do not often have. Since students who are native English users do not often believe that people who are learning English as a second language could possibly know more about the English language than they do, it may be useful to point it out explicitly in a general discussion of language learning (rather than in reference to a specific student or specific incidents that have already happened in class).

Another important resource is the lived knowledge of various cultural values, assumptions, and practices. L2 writers have lived in language communities with different sets of values and practices, and learning about them can be interesting and beneficial for other students. Because of their experience outside the English-dominant communities, they may also be able to understand and analyze the cultural values, assumptions, and practices from different perspectives. In addition, they can read and comment on texts written by monolingual English users from a different perspective. In classes where students write for international or multilingual audiences, they can serve as cultural and linguistic informants.

Tapping into these strengths requires some effort and care on the part of the teacher. While some students consciously and sometimes strategically use these resources, others may be reluctant to do so. Some students do not speak up simply because they are not sure if their perspectives would be valued by the teacher or their peers; other students, however, may prefer not to share information that might call attention to their differences. Without singling out specific students, the teacher can create opportunities for students to speak up—if the students so choose—by choosing topics for reading, discussion, and writing that are related to various languages, cultures, and places around the world. This practice can also contribute to U.S. students' development of global competence. It is also important to keep in mind that students can contribute individual perspectives but not, in most cases, a comprehensive understanding of any given topic—or speak for others. (For an example of pedagogy that taps into L2 writers' linguistic and cultural resources, see Matsuda and Silva.)

LEARNING STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

Although most L2 writers come to U.S. college classrooms with advanced proficiency in the English language—enough to graduate from high school or to obtain
certain scores on proficiency tests—they will likely continue to develop their English proficiency throughout their college years. Writing courses play a particularly important role in L2 writers' overall language and literacy development. In order to achieve these goals, L2 writers need to maximize their use of effective learning strategies and resources available to them. Writing teachers may not be experts in language learning strategies, but we can direct students to useful resources and teach them how to use them responsibly.

Many L2 writers use learner's dictionaries, which provide language learners with grammatical information, usage guides, and example sentences that are more useful for them than those found in traditional dictionaries written with native speakers in mind. Commonly used dictionaries include the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, and the *Cambridge Learner's Dictionary*. These days, many students prefer to use learner's dictionaries accessible through their cell phones or other portable devices, which will put them at a disadvantage if classroom policies forbid the use of such devices. L2 writers also benefit from developing their own self-editing skills by using resources such as *Grammar Troubleshooting: A Guide for Student Writers* (3rd ed.) by Ann Raimes and *Problem/Solution: A Reference for ESL Writers* by Patricia Byrd and Beverly Benson.

L2 writers may use translation as a strategy for drafting. Traditionally, translation was frowned upon by English teachers because it was considered to slow down the development of L2 fluency and to encourage negative transfer from their L1. Yet translation can also be a useful strategy in generating texts, especially for less advanced students (Kobayashi and Rinnert). Even for advanced writers, translation can be a handy tool, especially if they already have substantial knowledge of the subject matter in another language. Translation at the word level is especially helpful for technical terms that are defined more or less the same way across languages. At the level of idiomatic phrases or sentences, however, translation may not produce appropriate results that suit the particular context.

Students can use their first language as a resource to be used strategically in their process of developing their English writing proficiency. It may be helpful for some L2 writers to work through the process of invention in their first language, especially if they are writing about a topic of their own choice or based on their knowledge or experience gained in their L1. Of course, teachers may not be able to understand the languages that students use to perform these tasks; if this is a concern, asking students to provide a brief summary in English might be appropriate. Some L2 writers may prefer to write only in English; not all L2 writers are comfortable using their L1 in the composition classroom.

Writing centers can be a helpful resource for L2 writers; however, writing centers should not be seen as a place to send L2 writers to get their papers "fixed" (see Lerner's chapter on Writing Center Pedagogy in this collection). Rather, it is an additional resource that can be incorporated into students' repertoire of learning strategies.
TEXTUAL BORROWING PRACTICES

In U.S. higher education, plagiarism is considered a serious violation of academic integrity, and the penalties for students can be severe. Universities have explicit policies about the penalties and consequences students will face, but it is not always the case that students understand the line between plagiarism and legitimate textual borrowing. Composition teachers are tasked with teaching students to use and cite sources according to the standards of U.S. higher education. However, L2 writers from diverse cultural backgrounds may bring different beliefs and attitudes to the composition classroom about plagiarism that may conflict with U.S. cultural norms.

While L2 students’ cultural backgrounds may affect their intertextual practices to some degree, it is important to avoid cultural stereotypes about plagiarism. While plagiarism has sometimes been explained in terms of certain cultural backgrounds, others have pointed out that plagiarism is not culturally acceptable in those cultures (Ha; Liu). Composition teachers should also be aware of how textual borrowing can facilitate the learning of language usage that is specific to the rhetorical context. Patchwriting—the copying of words and grammatical structures from source texts—can be a useful transitional strategy that students use to mimic and learn the practices of a target discourse community (Howard 788–806).

When learning a second language, social interaction is crucial, and learners are rarely penalized for incorporating others’ spoken language into their own linguistic repertoire. However, when L2 writers use similar strategies in writing—such as seeking help from their roommates and friends—it is sometimes viewed as a form of academic dishonesty. Some L2 writers may see getting their work checked or rewritten by a native speaker as an important learning strategy, if not a coping strategy. To avoid unnecessary conflicts, it would be useful to establish clear guidelines regarding what kind of help is appropriate under what circumstances. Most teachers probably have these guidelines in their syllabi already, but it would be useful to review those guidelines with L2 writers in mind.

An effective strategy for promoting a more nuanced understanding of plagiarism and how to avoid it is showing students examples of intertextual practices in different genres and rhetorical contexts, including texts written by students. Students can then understand the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable intertextual practices, and how writers successfully navigate these boundaries. Teachers can also discuss how collaborative writing in social media contexts, professional writing, and journalistic writing differ from traditional academic writing in terms of citation practices and notions of textual ownership.

THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR IN L2 WRITING DEVELOPMENT

One of the key differences between first and second language writers is the extent to which the structure of the target language (English in this case) has been internalized. (For overviews, see Lightbown and Spada; Ortega.) Native users of dominant varieties of English have an internalized sense of the language structure; this
knowledge enables them to compose grammatical sentences and to judge the grammaticality of sentences intuitively—without studying the rules of the language explicitly. In contrast, second language writers are in the process of actively acquiring the grammar of English as a second language. Since most measures of writing quality assume grammatical competence that L2 writers do not necessarily have, it is important to facilitate grammar development as part of composition instruction.

This is not to say that L1 writers do not make “mistakes” in grammar. *Mistakes*, as S. P. Corder put it, are “errors of performance,” while “errors” are reflections of internalized structures of the English language that deviate from the dominant form (167). While performance errors can also happen to L2 writers, many of the L2 errors reflect the internalized structures that are different from those of native English users. The evolving grammar in the L2 user’s mind is often referred to as an *interlanguage* (Selinker 214). For L2 writers whose mental grammar is still evolving, it is not possible to produce sentences or evaluate their grammaticality the way highly proficient L1 and L2 writers can. For these reasons, L2 errors are sometimes considered to be “windows” into L2 users’ minds (Raines, “Errors”)—an opportunity to assess where students are and where they need to go.

The situation is somewhat different for users of underprivileged varieties of English, such as African American English. While features of those varieties are sometimes treated as “errors,” they are not *interlanguage* features but reflections of a different grammar; in fact, those features are perfectly grammatical to users of those varieties. The issue of language differences for users of nondonominant varieties of English requires different explanations and different responses, which is beyond the scope of this chapter.

For L2 users of English, some of the common issues include word choice, incorrect usage of count and noncount nouns, transitive and intransitive verbs, verb tenses, number agreement, prepositions, and articles. Dana Ferris has suggested that some errors that students make in these areas are rule-governed (such as subject/verb agreement and the simple past tense) and therefore “treatable”; other errors (such as word choice, idioms, and prepositions) are idiosyncratic and thus “untreatable” (*Treatment*). For the latter, Ferris suggests providing the answers rather than having students self-correct. Some researchers have suggested that some error correction and reformulation (i.e., rewriting parts of students’ texts) may be helpful for students, in that it serves as useful *input* (Krashen) as well as providing opportunities for *noticing* (Schmidt), which occurs when learners perceive gaps in their intended meaning and their actual language output.

Despite the best effort on the part of the writing teachers to provide feedback, however, the same set of errors may persist from one writing project to another (Truscott and Hsu). The persistence of these errors is not necessarily due to the lack of effort on the part of the students; rather, it reflects the recursive and complex nature of L2 development. For college-age L2 writers, the process of developing the mental grammar of the target language is a slow and incremental one. Working with language development takes much patience.
The efficacy of error correction has been a point of contention in recent years among L2 writing researchers. In 1996, John Truscott published a controversial synthesis article that echoed the prevailing argument among mainstream composition teachers—that error correction was not only ineffective but also harmful to L2 writers. Ferris and others have replied to Truscott’s challenge and have produced a growing body of scholarship devoted to the effects of various types of error correction and written feedback. While the debate is still ongoing, Ferris makes the case that teachers should continue to provide feedback on errors because students expect it and it is likely to be beneficial for their language development (Ferris, “The Case for Grammar Correction”; “Grammar Correction Debate”). More recent research has begun to amass some evidence showing the long-term efficacy of error correction and language acquisition (Bitchener; Bitchener and Knoch). (For an overview of research on error feedback and practical suggestions for providing feedback, see Ferris, Treatment.)

Although some L2 writers have developed some level of metalinguistic awareness through prior experience with explicit grammar instruction, composition teachers who are L1 users (or L2 users who did not receive formal language instruction) may not be able to explain the rules of English grammar to these students in ways that build on their prior knowledge. Knowledge of pedagogical grammar—a set of teachable and learnable rules—allows teachers to describe and explain common language errors to L2 writers who are still in the process of developing their linguistic proficiency (e.g., Azar and Hagen; Celce-Murcia, Larsen-Freeman, and Williams; Swan; Thornbury).

Even without extensive background in pedagogical grammar, composition teachers can facilitate L2 writers’ grammar development using a number of strategies. For example, focusing on the effects—rather than the rules—of particular errors (e.g., “I got confused here” or “Who are you referring to with ‘they’ here?”) may be effective in developing students’ sense of how a reader might respond to their work. This can help students focus their attention on both the form and function of language, which is crucial for developing their linguistic and rhetorical knowledge (Matsuda and Cox).

Another strategy is reading aloud. Some L2 writers with a high level of oral proficiency (often resident L2 students) may be able to identify and correct their errors by reading aloud. For students lacking the intuition of what “sounds” right, however, having them read aloud will not be helpful. For some L2 writers, reading aloud may cause them to focus too much on their own pronunciation, which detracts from their ability to work with the text itself. In those cases, the teacher can read aloud the text while the student pays attention to places where the teacher seems to lose his or her understanding of the writer’s meaning and purpose.

Collaborative activities can provide L2 writers with opportunities for interaction that will help facilitate their language development. Meryl Swain has argued that collaboration allows L2 learners to engage in discussions that promote metalinguistic awareness, notice gaps in their linguistic knowledge, and negotiate their own roles and objectives in a communicative setting, all of which will be beneficial for L2 writers’ overall development of language proficiency (see also Storch,
"Collaborative"; "Two Heads"). Online feedback and other activities using various forms of technology, such as e-mail, discussion board posts, blogs, and wikis, can also be beneficial for L2 students, who may require additional time and resources that cannot be provided during regular classroom sessions.

NEGOTIATING LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES

While it is important for L2 writers to develop the knowledge of grammar in order to function in English-dominant communicative contexts, they also need to develop strategies to negotiate language differences to capitalize on their multilingual resources that can enrich their own writing. How can writing teachers help students balance the seemingly conflicting goals of learning the dominant language use, on the one hand, and learning to use their multilingual resources, on the other hand? Aya Matsuda and Paul Kei Matsuda have articulated the principles of teaching writing that could guide writing teachers as we help students develop strategies for negotiating language differences. They include the following:

- Teach dominant language forms and functions.
- Teach nondominant language forms and functions.
- Teach the boundary between what works and what does not.
- Teach the principles and strategies of discourse negotiation.
- Teach the risks involved in using deviantional features. ("World Englishes" 372–73)

The first three principles can be realized by providing examples of dominant uses and alternative uses of language and discourse, and by engaging students in the discussion of what is effective, what is not effective, and why. The fourth principle is somewhat more challenging, but the principles of discourse negotiation include rhetorical appropriateness, ethos, and intentionality. Rhetorical appropriateness and ethos are already familiar to those who use rhetorical pedagogy.

The last principle is especially important in creating space for student agency. In exposing students to dominant and nondominant forms and functions, it is important to keep in mind that students are the ones who have to make the decision to adopt those resources. The teacher’s job is not to decide what is best for them but to provide a wide range of discursive resources and to guide students in making sensible decisions. Although the “choice” may not seem like a real choice in academic contexts where students are being evaluated by the teacher, it is possible to help students make informed decisions.

ASSESSING SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

Assessment is a challenging issue for any writing class, but it may pose a special challenge in classes that include L2 writers because their texts often include features that are different from those found in texts written by L1 writers. Assessment is another area in which the monolingual assumption in the writing classroom
becomes problematic because of the various differences that L2 writers bring, such as interpersonal styles, organizational strategies, rhetorical appeals, and language structures. While it is important to help students develop repertoires that are appropriate for the English-dominant audience, writing teachers also need to keep in mind that the audience—faculty across the disciplines, editorial boards, and participants in online interactions—are becoming increasingly international and multilingual.

While some of the differences that are found in L2 writers' texts may add to the richness of the text, other differences, especially differences in grammar features, may distract the readers from focusing on the meaning and the overall strengths of the text. We have even seen cases in which teachers fail students for not being able to eliminate all grammar errors, despite obvious strengths in other areas of writing.

If there are clear and reasonable course goals and objectives, and if appropriate instructions are provided to help all students reach those goals and objectives, it would be appropriate to hold all students accountable. In most cases, however, assessment criteria for U.S. college writing courses are based on what L1 writers should be able to accomplish at the end of the semester—or even the beginning of the semester. Furthermore, most writing teachers are not professionally prepared to teach the English language to L2 writers. Even when the teacher has a background in language teaching, it is not possible to guarantee language development because language learning, unlike learning basic facts, is a slow and incremental process. For these reasons, it would not be advisable to punish L2 writers by failing students for grammar errors.

If grammar has to be part of the grade, it would be important to set a reasonable level of attainment in the course objectives, to provide appropriate instruction that facilitates language development, and to establish clear criteria for assessing language development—not just by counting the number of errors. To do any less would be to fail the students unfairly for conditions that are beyond their control. One way to safeguard against failing students unfairly would be to assign a certain percentage of the grade to language issues. The grammar portion of the grade should be proportional to the amount of attention given to grammar issues in the course goals and objectives stated in the syllabus and in the actual instruction. (For more detailed discussion of the importance of aligning learning objectives, instruction, and assessment as well as strategies for fair assessment practices for L2 writers, see Matsuda, "Let's Face It."

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

To work effectively with a growing and shifting population of L2 writers in the writing classroom, writing teachers need to tap into various resources. Here are some of them. The CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing provides a succinct statement covering various aspects of second language writing instruction, assessment, and program administration. The *Journal of Second Language Writing*, established in 1992, publishes research on various issues related to second language writing and writers. In addition, the *Journal* also regularly publishes annotated
bibliographies of publications on second language writing. Parlor Press’s series on Second Language Writing publishes cutting-edge, state of the art books that advance the knowledge of second language writing, and the Michigan Series on Teaching Multilingual Writers (published by the University of Michigan Press) provides overviews and syntheses of various topics in second language writing instruction. Leki, Cumming, and Silva’s A Synthesis of Research on Second Language Writing in English provides a comprehensive overview of research insights into L2 writers and writing, and Leki’s Undergraduates in a Second Language provides an intimate account of undergraduate L2 writers’ experiences in learning to write in U.S. higher education. Dana Ferris’s Teaching College Writing to Diverse Student Populations provides excellent resources in understanding various types of L2 writers and how to work with them.

There also are a number of conferences where writing teachers and writing program administrators can gain additional insights. The Symposium on Second Language Writing, an annual international conference that began in 1998, provides a forum for the discussion of various issues related to second language writing theory, research, and instruction (http://sslw.asu.edu/). Presentations and workshops on instructional and research issues can also be found at conferences such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication, American Association for Applied Linguistics, and TESOL: An International Association (formerly Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages). In addition, an increasing number of graduate programs are beginning to offer coursework on L2 writing theory, research, and instruction. Other courses that might be relevant include second language acquisition and pedagogical grammar.

L2 writers already are an integral part of U.S. higher education, and the number will likely continue to rise, posing challenges to the monolingual assumptions behind existing composition pedagogies. To respond to this major shift in demographics, all composition teachers need to be prepared to integrate second language writing pedagogy into their existing pedagogical practices. We hope this chapter provides an entry point into this ongoing and collective effort.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


