



Introduction to the Theme Section: US-Educated Multilingual Students and College Writing

Teachers of college ESL, Basic Skills, and 1st-year Composition face ever-growing linguistic and cultural diversity within their classrooms. The most complex, most diverse, and fastest-growing group of students is perhaps *US-educated children from immigrant families*: Some in this group are born in the US or arrive at a very young age, while others arrive shortly before college. Some quickly enter mainstream language arts classes, while others spend considerable time in English language–support classes. Some place directly into mainstream freshman composition in college while others are flagged as needing many additional ESL or developmental writing classes.

Unfortunately, college-level writing teachers are often ill prepared to meet the needs of these students. Most teachers have received their training in narrowly conceived graduate programs: TESOL graduate programs often focus heavily on pedagogy for international students and newly arrived immigrant students. Composition graduate programs focus on pedagogy for a broader range of students, but this training gives short shrift to bilingualism and biliteracy. And graduate seminars on teaching developmental or “remedial” writing tend to focus on academic under-preparedness rather than bilingualism/biliteracy per se.

Teachers must therefore seek out pedagogical scholarship for insights on working with this diverse student population. Unfortunately, such pedagogical scholarship is often scant, inaccessible, and/or tangential to teachers’ immediate classroom concerns.

Several edited volumes provide a rich “smorgasbord” of research, theory, and pedagogy focused specifically on US-educated immigrant students (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999; Kanno & Harklau, 2012; Roberge, Siegal, & Harklau, 2009); however, many chapters in these volumes focus on institutional issues or research rather than pedagogy per se. Several volumes do provide an overview of ESL writing pedagogy or selected topics in ESL writing pedagogy (Campbell, 1998; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2009; Matsuda, Cox, Jordan, & Ortmeier-Hooper, 2010); however, these volumes do not focus specifically on US-educated students. And some volumes provide general overviews of student characteristics and pedagogy but do not ground this information in particular institutional contexts (Byrd & Reid, 1997; Ferris 2009).

We have put together this theme section of articles that highlight more contextualized pedagogical scholarship focused specifically on teaching college writing to US-educated multilingual students. We hope that these articles add to the conversation about effective teaching practices and program design for this population.

Each of the articles in this theme section follows an approach to pedagogical innovation that begins with an understanding of and reflection on the needs of one's particular student population and teaching context, including the collection of relevant information if necessary. The planning for change in practice, curriculum, or program is based upon this reflection, one's expertise as a teacher-scholar, and available resources. Several articles also discuss the implementation of the change(s) and assessment of the outcomes, not just for the students but for the teacher(s) and other stakeholders as well.

In addition to illustrating a strong commitment to reflective practice, these articles highlight effective practices that can be adapted for use in different program and classroom contexts. Each of the articles in this special theme section also reflects, in one or more ways, characteristics of curricula found successful in a number of courses and programs designed for US-educated multilingual writers in the US. These characteristics include individualization, thoughtful use of culturally relevant materials, student-selected essay topics, academic writing instruction, critical reading instruction, TESL-trained grammar instruction, and an emphasis on metacognition (Losey, 2012).

These articles are part of a larger project that we have been working on for several years: gathering narratives in which teachers consciously reflect on their own pedagogical work with US-educated multilingual students. We plan to include additional articles on this topic in the next issue of *The CATESOL Journal*. And we expect to publish a full volume of exemplary contextualized pedagogical scholarship in 2014.¹

We begin the theme section with two articles focused on US-educated students' literacy practices. The articles illustrate the authors' deep understanding of their students and their careful reflection on students' needs in preparation for developing relevant teaching practices and curricula. The articles also suggest the importance of one-to-one interactions with students in the development of such practices.

Kim Huster presents a rich description of the biliterate voices of Hmong immigrant women that honors their words and experiences. Her study recognizes the importance of knowing one's student population, including their experiences with literacy—even beyond the classroom—and recognizes the diversity among her Hmong students. The article illustrates the importance of knowing and reflecting on the needs of one's particular population of US-educated multilingual writers in order to plan and implement appropriate and relevant teaching practices and materials.

W. Jason Stegemoller details a study of Mexican American students' literacy experiences, particularly in one-on-one conferencing situations such as a writing center. Like Huster's, his work reflects the importance of understanding

and reflecting on students' literacy experiences in an effort to develop effective learning experiences that build students' strengths. Programs that support multilingual student literacy outside the classroom also need to engage in careful reflection on the needs of their clients.

We then present three teacher narratives that focus specifically on pedagogy. These articles describe the teacher planning, implementation, and/or assessment process with details of each teacher's personal experiences that will benefit readers who wish to understand or possibly implement these approaches. They also illustrate effective academic literacy instruction in a variety of contexts using a variety of methods.

Eliana Santana-Williamson discusses how she implements task-oriented, content-based instruction. Her article provides an interesting example of how teachers can "problem-solve" their way to effective course design. Her description of her "backward-design" approach recognizes the importance of careful articulation between ESL courses and institutional constraints.

Ingrid K. Bowman and John Robertson discuss how they promote community student growth through sequenced peer response. Their article provides a detailed plan for developing knowledge and skills in a particular area—peer revision—during the course of a semester. Each step is carefully planned with objectives and activities sequences to appropriately increase the students' ability to perform successfully and independently.

Finally, Clara Vaz Bauler's discussion of how she implements online peer response illustrates the cyclical, reflective nature of pedagogical and curricular development, including the importance of assessment. She notes that the design process requires "lots and lots of trial and error" and she provides an excellent list of recommendations for teachers that reflect her experiences with her students.

We offer the articles in this theme section as illustrative of some common approaches and characteristics of contextualized pedagogical scholarship. We hope that you will find these teachers' accounts of their students and their practices to be useful and thought provoking.

Authors

Kay M. Losey is a professor of Writing at Grand Valley State University. Her research focuses on second language and developmental writers at the college level. Her work has resulted in numerous publications, presentations, and workshops nationally and internationally. Published in College Composition and Communication, TESOL Quarterly, and the International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, she is also co-editor of Generation 1.5 Meets College Composition: Issues in the Teaching of Writing to U.S.-Educated Learners of ESL (with Linda Harklau and Meryl Siegal). She has worked with native and nonnative writers at the middle school, high school, community college, and university levels and worked in writing program administration at three universities nationwide.

Mark Roberge is an associate professor of English at San Francisco State University. For 14 years he has taught academic reading and writing to international students, US-educated immigrant students, bilinguals, and native speakers. His research focuses on immigrant education, postsecondary ESL instruction, program administration, and teacher training. He has given numerous presentations and faculty-development workshops on teaching academic writing in linguistically and culturally diverse English classes at the secondary and postsecondary levels. For the past eight years he has served as co-editor of *The CATESOL Journal*. He is co-editor of the volume *Generation 1.5 in College Composition: Teaching Academic Writing to US-Educated Learners of ESL* (Routledge, 2009).

Margi Wald is a lecturer in the College Writing Programs at the University of California, Berkeley; director of UC Berkeley's Summer English Language Studies program; co-editor of *The CATESOL Journal*; and managing editor of *SLW News for TESOL*. Her research focuses on corpus-based materials development and academic literacy development among immigrant and international ESL students. She has given numerous presentations on working with multilingual student writers and is the co-founder and co-chair of the Symposium on Multilingual Student Writers at UC Berkeley. Her forthcoming textbook (with Jan Frodesen), *Exploring Options: Vocabulary and Grammar for Academic Writing*, will be available in 2014.

Note

¹The volume is tentatively slated to appear from the University of Michigan Press under the title *Teaching U.S-Educated Multilingual Writers: Practices From and For the Classroom*.

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