5 Beyond Coping to "Natural" Language Work

Literature in second language writing points to a range of ways to theorize what Leki (1995) referred to as "coping strategies." In that study, Leki collected data around five student-participants' responses to writing tasks, which ranged from clarifying the demands of writing assignments to relying on their native/home languages to resisting teachers' demands altogether. In perhaps the most telling comment in Leki's study, her student "Ling" demonstrated her awareness of cultural/linguistic difference and her simultaneous desire to employ such difference productively:

> [T]he strategy that Ling used most effectively was taking advantage of first language/culture by relying on her special status as an international student. As the semester went on, she attempted to incorporate something about China or Taiwan into every piece of writing she did, saying, "I am Chinese. I take advantage." Thus, her term paper in Behavioral Geography became a comparison of Taiwanese and U.S. shopping habits. Her term paper in World History became a comparison of ancient Chinese and Greek education and this despite her history professor's direct request that she not focus yet again on China. In this case she used a combined strategy of resisting the professor's request and of reliance on her special status as a Chinese person, and it worked. (Leki, 1995, p. 242)

As Leki's term has circulated in scholarship, the concept of "coping strategies" has provided valuable insight into the creative ways students can exceed predefined limits imposed on them because of their putative language limitations. Maybe the most infamous cases of L2 students' running up against such limits are instances of so-called "plagiarism," a concept that writing scholars have critically questioned for decades in attempts to articulate various rationales for students' textual borrowing apart from unproblematic claims of "cheating" (see, e.g., Currie, 1998; Howard, 1995, 1999; Howard et al., 2010; Pecorari, 2016; Shi, 2004).

But while "coping" through imitation seems more positive and less academically or ethically fraught than "copying," the term risks reinscribing deficit-laden implications that second language writers act with agency primarily, if not exclusively, in response to intransigent faculty demands and rigid ac-

ademic and disciplinary expectations. In other words, the term suggests not only that students can perhaps *only* "cope," but also that instructors and faculty members can *only* create inflexible assignments and evaluation/assessment mechanisms that necessitate students' coping.

My study suggests that students can and do act with considerably variable competence, and it also suggests that the ground for that competence is extremely nuanced and capacious. Despite conventional and scholarly assumptions that Korean students demonstrate monolithic characteristics (including filial and social conservatism as well as a lack of spontaneous procedural knowledge of English), I have encountered students whose backgrounds, experiences, goals, and implicit awareness of the transnational campus' unique material and rhetorical affordances and constraints demonstrate surprising diversity. I have also encountered faculty informants who creatively negotiate their expectations, balancing a clear desire to support students' disciplinary understandings on one hand with engaged interest in how academic work is done under pressure in a transnational context on the other hand. Thus, incorporating student and faculty interview responses, information about writing tasks at both the Asia and U.S.-based campuses, and my own observations, I focus in this chapter on instances of "coping" that index not only students' adaptive responses to writing/speaking tasks in their majors but that also hint at broader entanglements of assigning and doing writing in a complex transnational ecosystem. I argue that instead of creating and simply reacting to staid academic literacy demands, faculty members and students alike aim for what one student participant describes as "natural" language work developing within their emergent shared context.

Campus Ecologies and "Natural" Language Work

The Asia Campus is a ripe site at which natural and artificial ideas about place, nationality, and conditions for education are in flux. As I related in Chapter 2, my university's campus, the larger shared campus, and the city all appear to compose a smooth site for transnational education at which what Wilkins and Huisman (2012) describe as "isomorphic" educational models might be transferred from the U.S. campus. On the ground, there is no such smoothness. U.S.-based cultures of higher education—ranging from administration to progress toward degree to our collective assumptions that "participation" in class can and should mean "individual speech"—interact daily with analogous Korean cultures that stress administrative distance from faculty and students, distance *between* faculty and students, and high national/collective investment in English language learning. The mix is visible and

otherwise sensible on a daily basis, and it has required students and faculty alike to adapt creatively.

Researching Comfortable Language: Alice's Adaptive Negotiations

I focus here on one student participant who demonstrated a range of perception and adaptation given her multimodal and multi-genre relationship with English. Alice was a Korean national in her late 20s who majored in communication from her enrollment at the Asia Campus in 2014 until her 2018 graduation. She attended Korean primary and secondary schools throughout her education and traveled briefly to Canada during high school. She has been and remains active on social media—especially Instagram and YouTube, where videos and images show evidence of her interests in travel, food, and differences in the ways Koreans and Americans interact. Like many of her peers, Alice found the dual adjustment from high school English courses (which emphasized grammar and routinized speaking over writing) into the required first-year writing courses at the Asia Campus—and *then* from those courses into gateway news- and magazine writing courses in the communication major—highly challenging. An additional course on public speaking prompted anxiety as well, despite Alice's clear comfort with English speech in person and online and despite the commonality of public speaking contests in Korean middle and high schools.[19] In this excerpt, Alice related her response to a speech assignment her professor clearly intended to be extemporaneous that shows evidence of what Leki and other scholars might well call "coping," including direct resistance to her instructor's admonition not to memorize. Beyond merely a reaction to that requirement, though, Alice's strategy appeared to be a productive example of her ongoing attempt to make her English speaking more natural:

> A: Ever since I took the public speaking class, it was Professor W's class, that one was a tough one. Cause he wouldn't give us an A if we tried to read from the paper. So I have to memorize the whole speech. I had to. To get an A. So I did it for every speech.
>
> . . .
>
> He made a speech competition, like [our] students, [another

---

19   Several other colleagues and I were asked to judge such a contest, hosted by Incheon Global Campus for local middle school students. We were directed to score and rank speakers on categories including English pronunciation and grammar.

university's] students, yes, and I had to go there to just get an A. And for that, it was also long, it was an eight-minute speech. So what I did was I wrote the whole script and then I read it several times and then without script, I started giving a speech with my, what, recorder? And I, of course I would make mistakes. Whenever I would do it, I stopped that, and I'd listen to what I say and I'd do it again and again and again and finally I memorized the whole thing. I think it's also because I hear a lot what I'm talking about. Myself.

J: So you say the speech into the recording, you listen to it, and then you

A: Yeah . . . So I don't think, cause even Professor W didn't know that I memorize the whole thing.

J: Really, he thought that you were

A: Nobody knew that I memorized the whole thing. People thought that I was actually doing it spontaneously.

Considering that the instructor had asked students to speak extemporaneously—not reading or memorizing—Alice's memorization was definitely legible as the kind of resistance Leki's student, Ling, showed. To be sure, Alice was highly motivated by assignment and course grades, and her perfect GPA at graduation was a clear symbol of her desire to, as Leki's student, Ling, put it, "take advantage." But Alice also showed complex awareness of and adaptation to other, less obvious considerations.

Several of the interviews I conducted with faculty informants (including a couple who would have been teaching public speaking) revealed that instructors are keenly invested in teaching students disciplinary conventions while simultaneously guiding them toward less formal academic and professional environments than students had perhaps been primed to expect. A graded extemporaneous speech is an example of that attempted balance. And Alice's response to it was to avoid the need to read the speech aloud by memorizing it extensively enough that she could credibly deliver it "naturally"—even seemingly extemporaneously. Her recursive recording, listening, and memorizing resembled a strategy Xiao Lei (2008) noted in studying advanced English majors in China: her student participant Henry described his tendency to "extract some beautiful sentences and words from literary works, keep them in [his] notebook, review, recite, and remember them," using them selectively in his own writing. He went on to relate that sometimes the expressions

"pop[ped] up in [his] mind" as he wrote (p. 224; see also Mu & Carrington, 2007). As Henry and Lei's other informant, Jenny, reported, they could feel "temporarily immersed in an English environment while living in a Chinese-speaking society" (Lei, 2008, p. 225). Like Lei's students, Alice created an English environment for herself comprising expressions she could repeat and rehearse to a point at which they seemed familiar—natural.

Indeed, Alice's awareness of the importance of "natural"-seeming comfort with English even in academic or professional environments inflected her tacit definition of "research," a term that my student and faculty participants may have mentioned more than any other. Reflecting some of the same emphasis on memorization that Alice discussed for her "extemporaneous" speaking, her research comprised material relevant to the topic at hand but also material that was generically and stylistically similar to her expected product. That is, Alice creatively used requirements/opportunities to do "research" as ways to expand her generic, stylistic, and lexical storehouse.

> A: I think that writing well is, for students who are using their second language, I think research skill is actually different. So when I try to write my paper, I try to read it, just read news stories that are, even though, I mean . . . that are related to or not related to the topic I'm about to write. So that I can be prepared with my writing. And I think that's, that's research. No? Because it's really hard for us to create our own expressions. Cause it won't be natural.
>
> J: OK. You mean written expressions.
>
> A: No matter how we try, yeah.
>
> J: Why do you think, you said that research is especially important for students who speak English as a second language. Why is it especially important for students like you?
>
> A: Because without research skills, um, you won't achieve the, you won't be able to write what you want to write. I think whenever I try to write something, I try to find similar writings. I mean, similar expressions.
>
> J: So similar to the type of writing you want to do?
>
> A: Not—even though when the writings are not related to my topic, at all, there might be similar expressions that I want to write.

> J: You're reading the sources that you feel you need to read in order to do the research. But then you also read other things.
>
> A: Other things too.
>
> J: And how do you find those other things if they're not related to the topic?
>
> A: I would maybe read textbooks or magazines. I don't know, and like, I just um skim through it and if I find similar expressions, that I want to write, I use that and after I do it like once or twice, it kind of, I can kind of memorize it so that I can use it again. It's not much problem later.

Alice here related her adoption of an autodidactic method that foreign language teachers have long advocated—that is, reading whatever you can get your hands on in the target language. In studying Korean high school and university students, Kyoung Rang Lee and Rebecca Oxford (2008) noted similar approaches. Where their high school student informants memorized and/or dictated expressions they encountered in relevant language learning materials, university students apparently felt freer to use more entertaining content, such as music, film, and magazines, and they in some cases imitated favorite English-speaking actors or attempted to predict upcoming lines of dramatic dialogue.

Interestingly, in her own creative adaptation, Alice showed (as a university student) some of the material selection of *both* Lee and Oxford's (2008) high school *and* university students: among the "random things" at hand were secondary sources for class research, class texts themselves, websites, and quite likely, other textual and not-so-textual sources from social media, given her habits and interests. Alice's hedging around how she "kind of" memorizes was telling: while individual expressions may themselves be important as task-based demonstrations of language competence (much as creating real or virtual decks of flashcards can help language learners expand vocabulary), Alice's browsing practices suggested routines and habits consistent with her high level of motivation to learn English comfortably.

Alice further exemplified her broad approach to research in a formal paper, in which her browsing habit and her growing familiarity with newswriting directly informed her technical definition of a psychological disorder. Perceiving some room for creativity within her instructor's requirements, Alice motivated her own writing through personal interest combined with her use of detailed news articles as a storehouse of their own:

A: So uh, for the Abnormal Psychology paper [in a course with the same title], I focused on defining the actual and true meaning of sexual masochism and sadism disorder. . . . Cause if it's going to be called a disorder, it has to have like some characteristics, cause um, not all the sadists, sadistic and masochistic behaviors are disorders. And the textbook defined what it was, shortly. . . . I decided to use news articles, because I thought it was going to be easy for me to use real examples, like incidents that happened, with sexual harassment-

. . . J: Was that uh, how did writing that paper go, what was um, easy, hard, enjoyable, not enjoyable?

A: I chose it because I thought it would be fun, but actually it wasn't because it was harder for me to find like sources, scholarly sources, that was written about that. I mean, there were a lot of sources about that, but not many that I could actually use for the paper.

J: Why's that?

A: I don't remember exactly, but I think it was because it was too specific. And the textbook only defined the meaning, so to match with the textbook, I had to, yeah, I think that's why it was so hard, there wasn't a lot of sources.

J: So you thought it was going to be easy, it was not as easy as you thought it was going to be, how did it turn out? Like, how successful was it?

A: So, at first, I thought it was going to be easy, but then I realized that it wasn't too easy. But when I was using news articles, when I decided to use news articles, it became better. Because my idea was to first talk about the subject, sadists, sadistic disorder. The sadistic disorder, I define it first, and then um, sadistic disorder and sadistic behavior are two different things, and then I thought, what is actual incident that is a disorder? If it's on the news, and the person was caught by the police, that's going to be a disorder.

For Alice, the textbook definitions and descriptions of specific disorders, while technically useful, did not provide enough descriptive range to motivate her writing. While she read her professor's insistence on APA formatting as

a clear *formal* requirement, she also detected significant topical and evidentiary affordances beyond that documentation style, and she turned to news articles covering sexual assault to provide compelling heuristic detail. While her easy equation, "if it's in the news, it must be evidence of a disorder," was highly questionable, her strategy responded to the assignment's content flexibility, rehearsed her copious approach to identifying and repurposing diverse source material, and specifically used examples of newswriting—a collection of genres with which she had become familiar through other coursework and which she was motivated to learn to produce herself, owing in part to her already growing proficiency with and interest in social media.

As I related at the start of this chapter, a clear implication of describing students' abilities as "coping" is that faculty members tend to have rigid expectations. In her reflective comments about interactions with faculty members, Alice related her attempts to cultivate relationships that in turn afforded her not only additional opportunities to understand assignment and course expectations more explicitly but also to develop more "natural" language abilities. At the same time, her reflections revealed at least some faculty members' willingness to respond to the complex campus environment and negotiate expectations. During an interview in her third year at the campus, Alice recalled a shift in her approach to reading that suggested a connection between her perception of faculty members' relative flexibility and the campus' small size:

> A: Before, I think, I think writing took more time for me to finish. Cause, I don't think I knew exactly what professors wanted. And, I was focused on understanding all of the materials I had, but I, as time went by, I realized it's not about understanding everything, so I started using some tactics that I could write things faster, and for, to be able to like, satisfy professor's needs, I think.

> J: Okay, what kinds of tactics, you talked about tactics?

> A: For example, like I told you um, if I was, if it was my first semester in language and culture class [introductory linguistics course], I think I would have tried to understand all the things in the articles.

> J: If you had taken it during your first semester, yeah, okay.

> A: Yeah, and I would have cried or something, every day. But I knew that the professor didn't want me to do that. I mean, he would want me to do that, but he knew that it was difficult,

and what he mainly wanted was for us to focus on more important things that he taught during classes. Yeah, it's not, not um, it's not. Important things don't mean difficult things. . . .

J: Are there other tactics that you've used? It sounds like the tactic there is that you've learned to read, like if you're looking at really difficult articles, you read them, you choose what to read, you're being selective about what you read, rather than trying to like start at the beginning and go all of the way through?

A: I talk to professors. And I focus on what they say, because I think, if they're giving us what to write, like, assignments, they want something, I think. And I think the most important thing to focus on is to that, what they want. What they want to try to teach us, through the whole classes. Um, yeah, I try to think about that, and then I try to listen to what they say, and I try to talk to them personally, if I can. I could all the time, because it's a small campus here. That was really helpful, for me to understand what they wanted.

Alice's general approach is easy to characterize in terms she, herself, provided: give the professor what s/he wants—an approach that underlies many coping strategies. Beneath that superficial description, though, lies a more complex response rooted in Alice's ongoing language learning and socialization. Granted, even as an introductory course, the language and culture class Alice remembered typically included at least some examples of scholarly literature, which can overwhelm students with jargon and give rise to the kind of survival impulse ("understand all the things in the articles") Alice mentions. That impulse was visible to me on one of the first mornings of my first semester on campus: I walked into my assigned classroom to find the whiteboard covered with math terminology. Since Alice was in the class I was about to meet there, I asked her about all the terms, and she told me several students had been in the room late the night before writing and memorizing vocabulary for their online math course. So in relation to Alice's and other students' likely bleary-eyed attempts to gloss math terms, Alice's habit of regularly meeting faculty members in office hours appeared to be a ploy to determine what they really want. That is, it was a coping strategy.

But the motivations surrounding Alice's interactions with faculty members were nuanced—as were faculty members' own motivations for meeting Alice and other students. While Alice related, for instance, that the instructor for

her language and culture course may ideally have wanted her to learn "all the things in the articles," she suggested that his more pragmatic/daily attitude was that "important things don't mean difficult things." It is not clear from Alice's comments whether that phrasing came word for word from her instructor or whether it represented her pithy summary of what she was learning as she developed time/load management strategies through the language and culture course. However, her comment provided evidence of at least implicit negotiation of expectations between student and faculty, and it also pointed to a range of both academic and social rationales for individual meetings. Alice repeated her goal of learning more and more about "what they [faculty members] want," but she also expressed that she consistently tried to listen to them—in class and one on one. So read in a wider context of Alice's desire for more natural English language ability, that emphasis on listening reflected the specific goal of listening for evidence of assignment/course criteria, but it also reflected a broader goal of achieving more comfortable competence.

In addition, Alice's reported interactions with her language and culture instructor, and direct responses from faculty informants in my interviews with them, pointed to faculty members' understanding that their expectations may (need to) be in play. Again, considering international students' agency in writing-intensive courses in terms (solely) of "coping" positions them as learners who need to accede to staid, intransigent, and tacit faculty demands. But faculty informants directly and indirectly signaled that they were aware of the affordances of their relatively insular and culturally/linguistically complex context. Alice readily perceived that her linguistics instructor, for instance, had idealized expectations that were pitched high but that he was willing—at least in response to students who, like Alice, approached him individually—to make such expectations more apparent and approachable. In other comments, Alice expressed her perception that two other faculty members seemed both to comment on the "natural" quality of Alice's writing and to prompt her to office meetings in which they could elaborate on their responses to her:

> J: So those [comments by Professor W] are comments overall about the paper? What are the comments about?
>
> A: Overall about the paper.
>
> J: Okay.
>
> A: And the last comment he gave me was very simple because I don't know about other students actually. Because I drop by his office for every assignment. So I get his feedback verbally, in person.

J: So you get a lot of feedback ahead of time.

A: And it's mostly about my grammatical mistakes. And even when it's not wrong grammatically, it sounds unnatural because I'm not a native speaker. So he tries to correct that. And Professor M, he writes comments on paper. Yeah, on our paper. Like, next to paper, like Word.

J: On Word, so he uses the comment utility in Word to make comments okay.

A: And he comments on yeah, grammatical mistakes. Overall flow. And that's about it. I actually, I also visit his office every time. For every assignment.

J: When he's giving you verbal feedback, I mean, both of them are, is that also about grammar? Sitting down with you and noticing the places

A: Yeah, so main problem I have for my papers is mostly uh, grammatical mistakes. And unnaturally.

J: So unnatural. Is it words that you're using that seem unnatural?

A: Unnatural expressions. Words.

To Alice, Professor W's most recent comments were "simple," plausibly because both he and she were acclimated to frequent individual office visits, during which both could further discuss problems or questions in more detail. But even Professor M, who provided more verbose and interlineal comments, seemed to anticipate and prioritize individual conferences. In an interview Professor M had with me separately, he noted his belief that students at the Asia Campus were "more humble" than the primarily native English-speaking students he had taught at the U.S.-based campus—that the Korea-based students "know that they are speaking in a foreign dialect . . . [and] are understanding when you correct them." But that corrective expectation (whether in person or through the learning management system) was inevitably complicated when students such as Alice visited Professor M's office not only after receiving feedback but at early/intermediate stages of assignments. And specifically for Alice, those visits created opportunities to reinforce/clarify corrected errors but also to work that much more on "naturalizing" English expression through conversation.

Cutting Two Ways: Faculty Adaptation and Ambivalence

Additional faculty interviews reveal further details about the context in which "natural" language work can develop, including a shared understanding of advantages and challenges of the small campus, the proximity of faculty members and students, and the comparative effects of new versus returning instructors. While the Asia Campus is self-consciously an English-medium institution *academically*, it is highly multilingual on a social and otherwise day-to-day basis. The mix of an increasingly diverse international student body and faculty, staff, and administrators who speak English and Korean at widely divergent levels of proficiency and comfort—all at a campus embedded in a rapidly growing Korean city—means that faculty encounter cultural and linguistic differences as quickly as they walk out of their offices/apartments, if not before. The amount of English that colleagues and I encountered around the self-consciously international campus and city we occupied was increasing as the product selection in local stores I mentioned in Chapter 2 was westernizing. But campus-wide early morning announcements about heating, air conditioning, and/or other residential services continued mostly in Korean only. That kind of complex daily mixture inevitably informed adaptations in teaching at the Asia Campus, where teaching and other quotidian activities co-occurred in close quarters. Professor W relates that

> one of the biggest things is obviously the language barrier. Because not in terms of, I mean we understand each other fine. I will say that I find myself constantly, and I had no idea I do this as much as I do, that I use like idioms all the time. Sayings. And when I say them I think that they have no idea what I'm saying. Nobody says anything, but then I have to say, do you understand what that was?
>
> J: Great, that was a football metaphor. I gotta walk that back.
>
> W: So that's something that I didn't realize that I do all the time, and I do.

In the same interview, Professor W relates his on-the-spot reflection in the face of student responses to an unexpectedly challenging assignment. In a class focusing on communication law, he had assigned students to present on some *ethical* (not technically *legal*) considerations of free speech. While Professor W had facilitated classroom discussions about the different scope of law versus ethics, he noted that

they [the students] were talking about all the things that have legal repercussions. And, and in the, in our assignments, I put you know, everything was coming from this particular chapter, and it was on free speech theories, and so that was clear. But no one came in to me and said, hey, I don't understand what this is about. They just prepared it. And I thought, in the US, if there was this problem, my students would have come to me and said, I'm not sure I understand exactly what you want us to cover.

J: Right.

W: And here they prepared it, and they just did it. And I was sitting there thinking, I've got to change this. I've got to like, require that they come up with an outline and then bring it in to me, and we'll sit down with it and we can go over if it's on the right track or not. And that's not something that I've had to do in the past. But I feel like it's something that I'm going to have to do here. And unfortunately, I'm kind of figuring this out a little, but this that has happened repeatedly, right? Where you figure certain things out a little late in the game. And you're like, that's something that next time I can clearly repair.

Professor W thus responded to students' misunderstanding by doubling down on his felt responsibility to do more to adapt to them. Additionally, he recognized in this 2016 interview that he was just at the start of this stay at the Asia Campus—and in many ways at the start of the life of the campus overall. Again, comparative campus size and the proximity of student and faculty working and living space prompted Professor W to understand that, while he felt a need to adjust his up-front pedagogical strategy to include more formative feedback, he had some built-in structural support for such adjustments.

By 2018, Professor B of the psychology department could detect that the small size and close quarters of both faculty and student cohorts indeed remained a persistent factor, creating a kind of student-faculty ecology that was variously sustained and perturbed. Most significant for her was the mix of students' growing familiarity with continuing faculty members through successive courses and their uncertainty about new faculty. That mix appeared to create an interface at which students' strategies to adjust to writing expectations were thrown into relief:

I think one of the unique aspects of [the Asia Campus] is that students are very in tune to, because they're more likely to take the same faculty across multiple courses, right? That happens of course in [the] home campus as well, but not to the same extent, where you see the same student for two or three years running. So I think students here tend to be slightly more sensitive to newer faculty, because they're not sure what to expect. So even when the course you know, [Psychology] 1010 [an introductory course] versus statistics, they're very different courses, in terms of the content. But I'm sort of the steady factor. So they have some sense of my expectations or standards. Or even like, classroom policies. So when I was first here, there was a lot of at least I picked up on a lot of anxiety about what I was looking for in writing assignments—really any type of assignments, group projects—so I've gotten into the habit of having pretty thorough expectations on Canvas, so I post that under the assignments. So if you have this paper due, I try to describe the skills that they will be practicing, the learning objective, as a broad idea, and then I talk about specific points that I am going to be looking for. Usually, what I am looking for, a couple of different things. One is, and I struggle with this here, students often assume that the audience knows a lot more than what they do. So it's like they're writing to me personally. So they'll introduce a concept or a critical study, and it's just referred to in this broad way. . . . And so, what I am always telling them is, you are writing as a form of communication, and you should imagine this is going out to an unknown audience. You don't know what their background with the material is. Don't write to me.

For Professor B, relatively consistent and tight student-faculty interactions afforded by the Asia Campus' size and by the cohesion of its faculty cut two ways. Students had opportunities to cultivate familiarity with course expectations through continuous contact and through recursion—even if such expectations were not necessarily made explicit. However, that familiarity is easily disturbed by the arrival of new faculty members, who may unwittingly be sources of student anxiety not only in the campus' early stages but in years to come. Realistically, while administrators, the governing Foundation, and other authorities have wanted to attract faculty members to the Asia Campus for long terms, much of the faculty complement has been transitory com-

pared to U.S.-based colleagues. But while students can build steady and productive relationships with persistent faculty, that steadiness can prompt them to write arguments that appeal too personally, reflecting students' sensitivity to faculty members' idiosyncrasies over other disciplinary or broader public readers' needs and expectations.

After students' transition to the U.S.-based campus, their natural language work continues, coupled with their desire to continue building both academic and social capital and the challenges of squaring their academic and personal lives. As much as students and faculty members at the Asia Campus focused on academic preparation to work with other major faculty members and to take advantage of wider-ranging opportunities afforded by the much larger and more established U.S.-based campus, it was also clear that students faced some additional challenges that prompted the university to appoint a recently returned Asia Campus student affairs administrator to oversee students' transitions. At times, the academic and social domains of those transitions can seem to diverge. Another psychology faculty member, Professor E, related as much in a 2018 interview:

> E: I had another Asia campus student in that ["Brain and Behavior"] class, and I think she, she struggled with writing a little bit less, but similar errors in her writing. I was noticing that on one of the exams, she just decided not to do any of the short answer questions, I mean, potentially because of how I structure the exam.

> J: Right.

> E: So perhaps, making an adaptive decision. One thing, well, she came to office hours one time, and I was struck by the fact that she bowed when she left, I had never had a student do that. And she actually, actually volunteered to work in my lab for a little while. . . . She was working in my lab, and because she had had a grandparent who developed Alzheimer's disease, and she was very interested in the impact it had had on the other spouse, on the other grandparent. She was in my lab, which is an EEG lab, but she's really interested in a social psychological kind of question. So anyway, in the course of talking to her about this, she was kind of somewhat typical of many undergrads, in not really having a sense of the level one needs to get at to be competitive at graduate-level studies, relative to your depth in the field. But also, she was talking to

me about life in Korea as a young woman, and all the pressures that she would be facing—

J: Wow, okay.

E: To be married, and to be at a certain point in her career, and so it was clear that on the one hand, she was very invested in staying in the US and getting into a doc program. But that— you know, in this conversation I think it was very hard for her to hear how much further she needed to get to be competitive for that kind of thing. So you know, so I just sort of empathized with her situation. . . . I think she communicated at one point with me, that she was feeling pretty isolated socially, I think that was, oh yeah, that was one of her motivations for joining my lab. We had talked about her interests, and I was like, I don't really know if my lab is the best thing. And she was like, well, I'm really just looking for a way to meet some other students, and have some more connections.

It is perhaps telling that Professor E characterized this (unnamed) post-transition Asia Campus student's avoidance of written short-response questions on an exam as an "adaptive decision." For this faculty member, the student's still-emerging language/writing proficiency and subject matter knowledge prompted her to respond to a testing situation in a way that maximized her possibility to succeed. Professor E's ambivalent response to the student's strategy extended to the student's volunteer work in his neuropsychology lab. While the student articulated a personal motivation to learn more about Alzheimer's disease, and while her presence and work there were apparently not unwelcome, Professor E remained uncertain about her fit as a function of her disparate interests and her aptitude. However, the student's perseverance seemed to have won over Professor E to some extent. While, as he relates, the student was not taking the strong hint that she would not likely create a successful application for graduate study, Professor E recognized that the student's lab work represented both a deeply felt tie to her Korean family and an equally felt motivation to create social connections on the U.S. campus—evidence, I argue, of ongoing natural language work.

A "Natural" Role?: From Learning to Teaching

This student's strategy to inhabit premium and highly interactive academic space may, to Professor E at least, have promised little academic payoff.

However, in at least one other case, social and academic strategies and goals seem to have aligned much more closely. In a 2018 interview, Alice related that she had petitioned to retake an upper-division grammar and stylistics course. Rather than permitting her to re-enroll, the campus' Chief Academic Officer negotiated the addition of a special topics course to the schedule, permitting Alice to take credited hours and to work as a teaching assistant for a newly activated foundational English language development class. Thus, Alice gained an opportunity for some more language learning—this time combined with teaching experience. The combination seemed to create not only some immediate English reinforcement for Alice but also additional intellectual and social dividends for her and for the non-native English-speaking head instructor.

> A: I teach basic grammar to the students, and yeah, it's, I [also] do weekly reflection, weekly writing reflection assignments, like a page, one page sample reflection about anything that's related to second language learning.
>
> J: Okay, your own second language learning?
>
> A: Mm hmm.
>
> J: Okay.
>
> A: And what else? Oh, actually I gave a 40-minute presentation, like I taught a class like twice.
>
> . . .
>
> J: So who, the reflections that you're writing about being a second language learner, are you writing those in, are you submitted them to [Professor O, the course instructor] or to—
>
> A: To her.
>
> J: To her, okay, so is she responding? Are you guys like writing back and forth?
>
> A: She's not like correcting my grammar, but she would comment, for example, I think the last time, I wrote about how Koreans use some words, English words differently from a native speaker. Like, we would actually use "sexy," like, the word "sexy" in a very like light way. Like, we would have like a hash up, with the name is like "sexy dog."

J: Yeah, sexy dog, we saw that.

A: And that's exactly why, we don't think that like sexy is some like actual sexual word.

J: Right.

A: We think it's like cool or charming, so yeah, I wrote about that and Professor O said, "Oh yeah, I saw that too. It was bizarre, thanks for the information."

Through reflective writing technically assigned in the special topics course (which was effectively a directed/independent study), Alice engaged with Professor O about language acquisition—a topic both were apt to find personally as well as academically relevant. In fact, the response Alice recalled here concerns idiomatic and nonidiomatic uses of the adjective "sexy," various uses of which can cause confusion if not outright embarrassment among diverse English language speakers. Alice and Professor O thus shared similar questions about related "hash ups" as they shared the experience of teaching newly arrived students whose own English proficiency was developing.

Alice also related in more specific terms some of her contributions to course material, including conducting two class meetings and creating related videos. Both activities, it turns out, would prove to be professionally and personally relevant, further exemplifying "natural" connections between academic and nonacademic practices. As I related earlier, Alice had, before and during her enrollment at the Asia Campus, created a series of videos about topics ranging from intercultural communication to living in Canada to food, and she shared them, mostly via YouTube. She maintained at least an occasional online presence on YouTube and through other domestic and international social media. After a post-graduation internship in Spain with the International Olympic Committee, Alice returned to Korea, where she began applying for highly lucrative positions in Korea's white-hot private teaching sector. Perhaps true to her multimodal composition experience, she aspired to become a so-called "star teacher," a TV- and online media-based instructor-entertainer mashup of English tutor and K-pop celebrity. I noticed one morning on Instagram several months ago that she had posted an anime-style pencil drawing of herself with oversized eyes and a high collar and necktie with the caption, "pretty happy about my career decision now." In response to an Instagram direct message, Alice wrote that she was starting work for a large Seoul-based language training provider and that she was "getting lots and lots of brutal criticism" because she had little previous teaching experience before her hire. A couple of months later, I exchanged Insta-

gram messages with Alice, observing that she had talked a lot with me about wanting to become a more "natural" English speaker and asking whether she thought she had. She responded that she thought so but that friends of hers (whom she had known since they all entered the university in Fall 2014) told her she sounded the same. She went on to write that "people seem to make judgments based on accent unconsciously," a belief that continued to prompt her to emulate natural/native speakers.

Discussion

Writing teaching and learning at the Asia Campus inevitably interanimate with other activities and phenomena at many scales. Writing and language development across both the Asia and U.S. campuses exemplify what Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), in the context of human development, termed "a system of nested eco-systems" subject to perturbing or ripple effects from one scale/level to another. Thus, students' "coping" is more appropriately understood as a range of actions that account for ecological complexity, and teachers' expectations are more appropriately understood as negotiations within the ecosystems that nest and overlap at the Asia Campus. Additionally, the effects of that complexity extend to student and faculty interactions at the U.S.-based campus, at which traditional linear narratives of students' progress are, again, disrupted by ecological considerations. Across both campuses, students' and faculty members' expectations, anxieties, projections, and responses demonstrate the emergence of "transnational social space" (Faist et al., 2013), in which student-faculty negotiations arose interstitially, influenced by the "export" model of international education that the university had ostensibly established but also responding to local campus and city conditions and exigencies.

To be sure, student participants' language acquisition continued through their time at both campuses, and faculty members noted and attempted to adapt to evidence of that acquisition. But as Leo van Lier (2004) argues, language learning is emergent: it arises from a collection of elements in ways that, even if the elements can be counted, exceed that sum. Using the metaphor of young children learning the game of soccer/football, van Lier notes that basic rules eventually give way to young athletes' development of a "feel for the game" in which "the game reorganizes itself from 'running after the ball wherever it rolls' to 'moving the ball around collaboratively in strategic ways'" (p. 81). Elsewhere, van Lier argues that "teaching does not cause learning" (2004, p. 196) any more than rules "cause" the game. While the "rules" of the "game" remain consistent, the ways players orient themselves certainly

evolve as play continues so that knowing the rules however well does not directly translate to effective play. As Christine Pearson Casanave (2002) argues in describing the "language games" of graduate students in her study, the game metaphor, while seeming to be an unserious way to describe the importance of language work in multinational/transnational settings, accurately captures the tenuous balance of rules, boundaries, and creativity inherent to language acquisition. Indeed, Diane Larsen-Freeman (2014) presses on the term "acquisition" itself and argues for a shift in applied linguists' thinking from *acquisition* to language *development* because she understands the former term to be inaccurate. Acquisition for Larsen-Freeman implies that there is a stage at/beyond which a person developing language competencies may "have" the language, while development suggests precisely the kind of emergence "through use in real time," evolution, and synergy that is more typical of ecologies (p. 494; also see Marshall & Marr, 2018; Marshall & Moore, 2013).

If the contexts in which Alice, her peers, and their faculty members/instructors taught, learned, and worked were nested ecosystems, it is perhaps no surprise that "natural" emerged as a way to describe desirable language development. Underlying such development is what Lei (2008), following van Lier (2004), described as an approach to ongoing language learning that "potentially involves the whole world" (Lei, 2008, p. 219). Indeed, it seems clear that some of Alice's, other students', and instructors' work responded to a very wide set of academic, social, and material considerations—though not always consciously. To be sure, students and instructors have strategized within course, curricular, and disciplinary expectations. Alice's memorization-for-extemporaneity approach to composing and delivering a public speaking assignment was strategic, and even resistant. Her academically purposeful research and frequent office visits were clearly also socially inflected opportunities to habituate to what she considered natural expression and interaction. Professor E's unnamed student's maneuvering into a lab for which she had little academic expertise but significant social motivation was also highly purposeful, and it demonstrated the student's knowledge that interactions in the lab were as important to her development as to the lab's explicit function. At the same time, Professor W and Professor B separately related different ways that the complex overlapping context of the Asia Campus prompts actions not necessarily conscious but certainly adaptive. Professor W's teaching and responses have been affected both by students' encounters with his expectations about writing and by his sensitivity to the local linguistic scene—in which he himself was surrounded by unfamiliar language practices. Professor B observed that the small size of the campus and its relatively high staff turnover meant students were apt to create and solidify relationships with faculty when they

could—a peculiarity of the Asia Campus compared to its better-established U.S.-based counterpart. For that matter, Alice's work with Professor O, while formally a teaching assistantship and independent study in one, created opportunities for both student and teacher to adapt to and learn from each other in a multilingual context while both of them continued their English-language development.

Reconceptualizing students' coping as a range of "natural" adaptations to a nested ecosystem should prompt wider awareness for teachers, students, and researchers. The "linguistic environment immediately increases in complexity when we envisage a learner physically, socially, and mentally moving around a multidimensional semiotic space" (van Lier, 2004, p. 93). So the shift from seeing "coping" to detecting "natural" language work is a way to recast multilingual composers in terms that foreground their agency and also the agency and adaptability of instructors, who are often considered in composition literature in terms as limited as those used for students themselves.

However, given the concentric contexts for this transnational educational experiment, which I outlined earlier, it is important to note that students' agency may lead to outcomes many educators may not prefer or may critically question. In Alice's case, for instance, her experiences in major coursework, as a teaching assistant, as a social media user, and as a media intern led her to an initial career choice as a so-called "star teacher" in Korea. Korea's overheated English education market makes such a choice indeed seem to be a natural one: the most famous teachers in after-hours "cram schools" (called *hagwons* in Korea) and/or on television can earn millions of dollars annually (Fifield, 2014). Thus, Alice's own awareness of Korea's educational ecology prompted her to act in a way responsive to available resources not only within her transnational campus but within the whole transnational educational and social scene she inhabited. Just as there is no way to disentangle the educational experiment from the nested university, national, and neoliberal/international ecologies, there is no way to disentangle students' and instructors' interactions and reflections from the affordances and constraints that enable and help direct them. That dense connection is a critical lesson for instructors, programs, and campuses as they encounter the limits of advanced international planning.