CHAPTER 7

NEGOTIATING "ERRORS" IN L2 WRITING: FACULTY DISPOSITIONS AND LANGUAGE DIFFERENCE

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This chapter reports on a study of faculty dispositions towards language difference, including the ways they talk about second language writers and the errors—actual and perceived—that they identify as well as how willing, or not, they seem to be to engage in negotiations around these errors. The authors describe the theory and research that motivated and informed their study, their interview methods, and their findings, which are organized by two primary concerns expressed by the faculty informants: whether the students comprehend the material they are writing about and whether L2 students are being fairly and adequately prepared for other courses and the workplaces they will enter if errors are not addressed.

My strength in Spanish is [my] personal style of how to write, and that's something that people like, and my grammar and vocabulary in Spanish are really good. In English, I would like to have more vocabulary. When I don't know a word, I just try to describe what I meant with [other words], so that makes my sentences longer or hard to read. Not good.

—Diana, international student from Columbia

At some point, you are going to have to take a position on second language writing errors. You can't give them special consideration, but you can consider alternative ways to grade that are fair. I do take points off for the writing in a paper, but, in ESL cases, for

DOI: https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2014.0551.2.07

> example, I tend to look for persistent errors, [which] I'll take as just one case of a grammatical error. There's some room I think to work with that.
>
> —Anthropology professor

> A translingual approach proclaims that writers can, do, and must negotiate standardized rules in light of the contexts of specific instances of writing. Against the common argument that students must learn "the standards" to meet demands by the dominant, a translingual approach recognizes that, to survive and thrive as active writers, students must understand how such demands are contingent and negotiable.
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> —Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011 (p. 305)

"Not good," Diana says about her efforts to compensate for not yet having found the right words to write in the academic style—correct, concise, appropriate vocabulary—she believes her US teachers expect, a style different from what her Spanish readers seemed to enjoy. This perception of her own limitations—a deficiency as she sees it—as a novice academic writer navigating a new linguistic terrain is echoed by so many international and/or multilingual students in study after study on English second language (L2) writers in postsecondary institutions.[1] Yet, despite this sense of their own perceived shortcomings, we see these L2 students, like Diana, as actively negotiating reader expectations for writing in a home language and writing in English in a new academic context.

For many faculty, there is "some room to work with that," as the anthropology professor we quoted above suggests. Both he and Diana are attempting to reconcile the "errors" that emerge in the translingual written product: she by writing longer sentences; he by minimizing points off for persistent errors rather than penalizing a student for repetition of the same error. While Diana, like many L2 writers, recognizes that her lack of vocabulary is causing sentence and syntax errors, many faculty may also be recognizing that linguistic struggle, just as the anthropology professor does, by "taking a position on second-language errors" that includes finding alternative ways to think about fair grading practices for L2 writers. For both teacher and student, however, error is the focus of their observations about L2 writing, just as it is for so many of the faculty and the L2 students we've encountered in our work as WAC and writing center directors and in the interviews we conducted for the research we're reporting on here.

Admittedly we purposely selected these quotes on error to highlight what we see as the most frequent and anxiety/frustration-producing point of contact for faculty and students when it comes to second language writing at the postsecondary level. While we endorse a translingual approach that sees "the standards" as "contingent and negotiable" (Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011), we also appreciate the dilemma faculty face in deciding what constitutes an error and when and in what contexts it should be "counted" in evaluating an L2 student's communicative competence. Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur (2011) believe that we—teachers and students—can take up a translingual approach by "changing the kind of attention we pay to our language practices, questioning the assumptions underlying our learned dispositions toward difference in language, and engaging in critical inquiry on alternative dispositions to take toward such differences in our reading and writing" (p. 313). In this chapter, we're interested in what those faculty dispositions are towards language difference, what kind of attention they pay to students' language practices, and how willing—or not—they seem to be to engage in negotiations around perceived and actual error[2] in L2 student writing.

We begin by describing our initial motivation for undertaking this research, including an interest in the translingual theories and World Englishes research that we'd been reading and that provide an underpinning for our work. Next we describe our interview methods and how we coded the transcripts, noting that "error" emerged as a recurring theme in the faculty interviews. To present our findings on faculty dispositions towards error, we've organized the data according to what errors seemed to be most disturbing to faculty in our interviews, echoing Leki's (2007) description of the anxiety many L2 students feel about writing for faculty already "disturbed" by their errors (p. 248)[3]. We categorize our findings according to two primary concerns expressed by our informants: Do the students understand the material and expectations for writing in the course and the major? And, following from that concern, are they, the faculty, adequately preparing students for their other courses and for the workplace if the students are not able to meet their expectations for the writing? For many, this latter concern was also bound up with a strong sense of fairness, i.e. the need to be fair to the L2 student, whatever form that took in grading the writing, as well as to be fair to the other students in giving equal grades for equal work. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, as we'll explain, several teachers mentioned reflective writing as a genre through which L2 writers experienced the most success. We conclude with implications of this research for faculty and writing program administrators to consider when deciding how to best serve their multilingual students.

OUR STUDY: MOTIVATIONS AND UNDERPINNING THEORY AND RESEARCH

In previous articles on this research, we've reported on the experiences of multilingual students with academic writing across the curriculum and the attitudes expressed by cross-disciplinary faculty about reading and evaluating the writing of these students. We undertook our initial investigation of second-language student writers several years ago, motivated by a desire to more deeply understand the students' concerns so that we could convey these in faculty development and tutor training workshops. While neither of us has a background in linguistics or TESL, we were becoming more interested in the intersections between second-language writing and WAC/Writing Center scholarship. At that time, Terry was directing the writing center, along with WAC, and Anna[4] was the associate director,[5] so we asked four graduate and undergraduate tutors, three of whom were multilingual themselves, to assist with our study. We called our first report on the student research *Valuing Written Accents* (Zawacki, Habib, Hajabbasi, Antram, & Das, 2007*)*,[6] echoing Tonka, a student from Bulgaria, who was insistent about wanting her writing to reflect who she is and where she comes from. Even as she defined "good writing" as "grammar-responsible," "well-structured," and "good flow," characteristics she'd no doubt learned from her US teachers, she finished her list with this observation: "When you ultimately succeed in writing is when you have your own accent." In our conclusion to the monograph, we expressed the hope that our research would help teachers value the diverse written accents they encountered in their students' papers and to see their L2 students as language resources rather than as writing challenges.

As a follow up to the student research, we began interviewing faculty across the disciplines to hear their perspectives on L2 student writing in general and to share the students' concerns, an action research project we'll say more about shortly. At the same time, we were also following arguments in the literature about the "English Only" bias implicit in writing instruction (Horner & Trimbur, 2002; Matsuda, 2006) and the need for a new translingual paradigm that sees "difference in language" not as error but rather as evidence of a writer negotiating meaning across fluid and heterogeneous linguistic boundaries (Canagarajah, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2009; Horner et al., 2011).[7] This reframing of "error" fit well with our appeal to faculty to value students' written accents, as did a translingual approach that encourages teachers to ask "not whether the language is standard but what the writers are doing with language and why" and to read "with patience, respect for perceived differences within and across languages, and an attitude of deliberative inquiry" (Horner et al., 2011, pp.

304-305). In our interviews with faculty, we were interested in comparing what they said about the "standards" and their expectations for "good" writing, in general and in their disciplines, to the perceptions of good writing and teacher expectations expressed by our multilingual student informants. But we were also interested in the genres the faculty informants regularly assign; their sense of the challenges, if any, that L2 students face with the assignments; and the advice and assistance they might give to help students improve as writers.

As we conducted the interviews, we noted that faculty kept coming back to their concerns about the errors they saw in their "ESL" students' writing and their inability to diagnose the cause of the errors or even explain how to fix them. While most acknowledged that they couldn't be sure if a student was ESL, they explained that the kinds of errors they saw in the papers and/or the student's identity and accent generally led them to believe this was the case. The issue of "error" thus emerged as a common theme throughout the interviews, leading us to become interested in looking closely at the language the faculty used to talk about L2 error and how open they seemed to an interpretation of error as translingual code-meshing or, to use Canagarajah's (2006) formulation, "the learner's active negotiation and exploration of choices and possibilities" (p. 593).

Theoretically, we were interested in the wider contexts in which negotiations around language difference occur. If error, in Canagarajah's terms, can, depending on the context, be seen as a "refusal to negotiate,"[8] we wondered what the grounds for refusal might be when it comes to L2 students' academic writing, along with who has a stake in the negotiations. We mapped out the stakeholders present at the scene of writing, placing the L2 student writer and the instructor at the center with each bringing his/her own individual, cultural, and school writing lessons-learned to the rhetorical encounter. At the same time, both the student writer and instructor are also influenced by and/or accountable to the stakeholders in the background, actual or perceived, representing "the standards"—other faculty and administrators, institutional policies, accrediting bodies, and interested publics, including those driving mandates for writing assessment. The negotiations, in other words, are never just between the student and the instructor but include a whole host of interested others who populate the contact zone where error is negotiated, with the student writer, whether English L1 or L2, having the least power but the highest stake in the negotiations.[9]

The classroom is a "powerful site of policy negotiation," Canagarajah (2006) argues in his much-cited "The Place of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued." In this space, "standard" English policies are reconstructed from the "ground up" through the "pedagogies practiced and texts produced" (p. 587). If we can see our way to allowing students to use vernacular English or World Englishes, he argues, their and our academic texts will be enriched. Yet, he also admits that he himself has been so "disciplined" into using standard English in his own academic writing that he has trouble extending his "pluralizing" argument into deeper structures of grammar and syntax (pp. 612-613) where error is most often read. There *is* such a thing as "error," Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur (2011) agree, "[All] writers make mistakes, and all writers are usually eager to remove mistakes from their writing" (p. 310). Like Canagarajah, however, the authors urge teachers to "reserve" the "possibility of error ... as an interpretation of last resort" (2006, p. 304) and to be more humble about what constitutes a mistake (and about what constitutes correctness) in writing, rather than assume that whatever fails to meet their expectations, even in matters of spelling, punctuation, and syntax, must be an error (p. 310).

Given our own position on valuing students' written accents, we find these translingual arguments theoretically persuasive, as we've said. Theoretical is the operative word here, however. To enact theory, in our pedagogy and writing program administration, we needed to first understand teachers' attitudes towards L2 errors and the kinds of errors they described as most troublesome or problematic or "disturbing." Without that understanding, it would be difficult, not to mention presumptuous, to suggest that they consider other possible interpretations of the mistakes they reported students making. We were not as much interested, then, in looking at *what* errors they found most "disturbing," but rather *how* they described the errors and *why* they seemed to be "disturbed" by particular kinds of errors. Based on what we were seeing as we analyzed the faculty interview transcripts, we also wanted to consider other possible causes, apart from the translingual explanations we've just described, for the errors they said they noticed, including the difficulty L2 students face in learning to write not only in English as an additional language but also in the unfamiliar genres and discourses of a discipline.

The complexity of learning to write in a discipline has been well documented in both the L1 and L2 literature; to write like an insider, in addition to knowing the subject matter, students need to acquire knowledge of the genres, discourse conventions, and rhetorical contexts typical of the discipline, along with effective composing and research processes (see models of discourse/genre knowledge in Bean, 2001; Beaufort, 2007; Tardy, 2009). Whether they are English monolingual or multilingual, students are bound to make missteps and mistakes in the process of acquiring these skills and knowledges. With experience and opportunities for practice in courses across the curriculum, student writers will become more fluent in the target genres and also learn appropriate voices and styles for the writing tasks. It is the accumulation of general writing process knowledge along with local knowledge of the genres and conventions of the discipline that leads to fluency, Carter (1990) explains in "The Idea of Expertise: An Exploration of Cognitive and Social Dimensions of Writing." For second language writers, however, the acquisition of expertise departs in significant ways from Carter's formulation, with writing processes much more constrained and difficult for L2 writers as they search for the correct and/or appropriate language with which to express what they know[10] (see, for example, Silva's (1993) "Toward an Understanding of the Distinct Nature of L2 Writing: The ESL Research and Its Implications"). With sufficient writing practice across the curriculum and time to acquire the necessary language skills and genre and writing knowledge, however, L2 students will likewise develop fluency and accuracy even though their writing may still be marked by some language differences. (See, for instance, Phillips' [this volume] discussion of the successes of a multilingual graduate student in an interdisciplinary master's program despite enduring language proficiency concerns).

In considering the intersections of language knowledge, writing expertise, and genre knowledge in his review article, "A Biliteracy Agenda for Genre Research," Gentil (2011) adds "strategic competence" to Tardy's (2009) integrated model of the components of L2 genre knowledge, which itself closely resembles other L1 models (Bean, 2001; Beaufort, 2007). As Gentil explains, "strategic competence" involves being able to evaluate the task or communicative situation and the correctness or appropriateness of the response, deciding how to respond and "what elements from language knowledge and background knowledge are required," and "retrieving and organizing the appropriate elements" to carry out the task (2011, p. 12). In short, he says, "What distinguishes so called skilled and less-skilled writers is precisely this ability to assess the writing situation, set goals in responding to it, harness language and conceptual resources, and monitor their uses while composing" (2011, p. 13).

A daunting task for most students, as we noted above, and even more daunting for L2 writers for whom, as Leki (2007) found, writing was often a process fraught with anxiety and fear that their "language deficiencies" would be exposed to teacher audiences "already disturbed by them" (p. 248). In *Undergraduates in a Second Language,* Leki (2007) notes that one of the "most neglected" areas in the L2 research has to do with L2 students' interactions with faculty, faculty attitudes towards these students, and the students' perceptions of faculty attitudes and expectations.[11] Similar to the faculty we interviewed, her faculty informants generally expressed admiration for the L2 students' motivation to study in another language with some being willing to accommodate the student learners and others not (pp. 270-274). As we looked at our faculty interview transcripts, however, we could see that the language a number of them used in talking about student error—which included such phrases as "zero tolerance for error," "a 'take no prisoners' approach," "blast students on errors," "no broken English," and "no scatter shot writing, just one bullet at the target"—seemed to belie their good intentions and also made us think again about the aptness of the "contact zone" metaphor. While this kind of language suggests that errors are non-negotiable—and will certainly inspire fear in their students, whether English L1 or L2—we'll note that some of the faculty using these expressions were among the most generous with their time and attention to struggling L2 writers.

OUR METHODS

For all of the reasons we've described above, in interviewing faculty across disciplines we wanted to understand their experiences with L2 writers, their perceptions of the writing challenges faced by these students, the kinds of language differences in students' written work that they found most troublesome or problematic, the kinds of errors they were willing to overlook in a paper, and the strategies they used, if any, to help these students succeed (see interview questions in Appendix A). We conducted hour-long semi-structured interviews with eighteen full-time faculty from sixteen different disciplines. In choosing faculty to interview, we focused, for the most part, on those teaching required writing-intensive (WI) courses in majors enrolling the largest numbers of international students, according to 2011-2012 George Mason *Factbook*: engineering/computer science/IT, business (with largest numbers in accounting and finance), economics, nursing and social work, and biology. We interviewed four faculty from engineering (electrical, civil, systems, bioengineering); three from business (marketing and management); two from sociology, and one from each of the following: math, geology, psychology, economics, nursing, social work, anthropology, art and visual technology, and English. Five of our informants are English L2 writers themselves.

One limitation of our research, as we noted earlier, is that our faculty informants didn't know how many of the student writers they were describing in their interviews were, in fact, second-language (or third, fourth, etc) writers of English. While most assumed that the students with the most pronounced language difficulties were L2 writers, they sometimes told us when they had other ways of knowing the backgrounds of the students they were describing. They didn't, however, always share with us these other identifying markers or the racial or ethnic backgrounds of their students, so we don't know how those identities may have contributed to their attitudes on error or why certain errors may have disturbed them. Some said that many of their struggling writers were likely immigrant students given their idiomatic speech or writing, and many also pointed out that some of the most error-filled writing was often produced by their English L1 students. While faculty may not necessarily know whether the students they are working with are L2 or immigrant students with second-language needs, we do know that many of our institution's students are multilingual and that they are often being sent to the university writing center to "fix their errors" because faculty either do not know how to help them or do not have the time to work with them individually.[12]

With the exception of one joint interview with three faculty members from business where the paper had been provided in advance for all of us to look at, we did not read or have access to students' papers to see what kinds of errors the teachers pointed out nor the feedback they gave to students about those errors. While these limitations meant that we weren't able to do any first-hand error analysis or an analysis of the teacher's written feedback, we were, as we said, chiefly interested in their perceptions of L2 students' errors and the language they used in talking about those errors and about the L2 student writers themselves. The business teacher who sent us the paper in advance, for example, wanted us "to see for ourselves" the kinds of "frustrating" language errors she was "dealing with." (In our discussion of our findings, we include a passage from the interview related to this paper.) Regarding these limitations, L2 writing scholars have recognized the complexity of defining error in student writing. Leki, Cumming, and Silva (2008), for example, find in their synthesis of research on L2 error that "error" is difficult "to define precisely, identify reliably, and relate directly to writing or language development" because more fluent writers produce different types of errors while "the perceived severity of errors varies by aspects of language or texts as well as the situations or interests of people assessing them" (p. 84). Ferris (2004) critiques studies on teacher response to error, finding that the researchers frequently fail to operationalize what they are calling "error" or use ambiguous or vague definitions.

All of the interviews were transcribed by the student research assistants who also participated with us in coding and analyzing the transcripts. While our coding yielded a range of L2 writing themes around which we could organize a research report, for this chapter we're going to focus on passages where they seemed to be negotiating with language difference—or refusing to negotiate—as they talked with us about the "errors" they noticed in the writing of their L2 students. We also noted the language they used in talking about the L2 writers/writing and whether their dispositions toward error seemed to be related to disciplinary contexts and/or to their own individual preferences and/or writing and language backgrounds, a theme identified by Thaiss and Zawacki (2006) in their faculty interviews.

While one goal of this research is to contribute faculty and L2 student perspectives to the scholarly conversation on translingual approaches to writing and teaching with writing in US postsecondary institutions, our research, only part of which is included here, also aims to help faculty appreciate the wealth of linguistic diversity our students bring with them, a point which is sometimes easy to forget when we're in the throes of grading papers. As one of our faculty interviewees recalled,

> A student from Vietnam came to my office to rework something in her paper, and she burst into tears and said another teacher had written on a paper that she was linguistically deficient. And I said "How many languages do you speak?" and she said "Vietnamese and French." And I said, "And you've only been here six months and you already know so much English!" You are just the opposite of linguistically deficient.

Still, we can't ignore the fact that this linguistic diversity, albeit enriching, raises important questions for faculty about how best to evaluate L2 students' writing and what is "fair" in relationship to the other students and to the L2 students themselves. By sharing our research with faculty, we hope to stimulate conversations among them about what constitutes "good" writing as it mirrors the conventions and genres of their disciplines and fits with the professional goals of their students, the workplaces they want to enter, and the variety of Englishes people are using there. In the process, we may all learn to hear and value the written accents our L2 students bring to our classrooms.

OUR FINDINGS

Content-knowledge and Comprehension: Does the Student Understand?

For many faculty, as we could see in the interviews, decisions about whether to ignore errors, correct them, take off points, or fail the paper became much more complicated when the errors involved lexical choices that raised worrisome questions about comprehension. These also tended to be the kinds of errors that were most frustrating for the faculty we interviewed as well as, for some, non-negotiable. Our interview with the three business faculty who'd sent us the student's paper in advance illustrates not only the frustration the faculty felt about the mistakes but also their sense that the student "was missing the boat entirely," as one complained.

For this assignment, the students were asked to develop a "job recruitment strategy," to incorporate a "sufficient overview of the job, including *essential* duties, *skills*, knowledge, etc. and "evidence-value added *research."* We've italicized the words "essential," "skills," and "research" since it appears the student may have been echoing these words from the assignment without having a clear sense of what they might mean in the context of a recruitment strategy she was describing.

> **Speaker 1**: In the second paragraph, this is where I said, "What are they talking about? This student chose to recruit for a job as a singer in a restaurant, so the first sentence of the second paragraph says, "One of the research essential skills is an audition."
>
> **Speaker 2:** She's definitely a second language writer, and she's not using the right terms "research" or "essential" or "skills."
>
> **Speaker 3:** What she wants to say is that we would make candidates audition.
>
> **Speaker 2:** Or one of the essentials is ... I know what she wants to say but she's not using the right word. She wants to say part of the research in finding a good singer is to have an audition, you know if you think of research in that way ... which we don't.
>
> **Speaker 1:** No, the term research is not even close to being right. [Nor is] describing skills as an audition. The audition is the way to measure skills. I was so frustrated [by this paper] because I could see the ideas throughout were not completely bad [but] they are not doing their job if they can't explain this to me.
>
> **Speaker 2:** This is a perfect example [of a paper that] conveys a lack of understanding of what they think the audition is in regards to human resource management. It's like I'm just

> throwing words out there, but I don't really understand what I'm saying.

Clearly, these teachers feel the student understands the material, even if imperfectly—"I know what she's trying to say, but she's not using the right words"—but were unwilling to negotiate with his/her wrong word choices. Rather, as speaker 2 says, "It's like [the student] is just throwing words out there" but doesn't understand what s/he is saying. And yet speaker 1 admits that she could "see the ideas throughout were not completely bad" and both speaker 2 and 3 are able to rephrase the student's sentences ("what she wants to say," "she wants to say"). The problem, then, seems to be that, while the student may generally understand what is being asked, s/he is expected to be able "to do the job" by using the "right" words. Here we see an opportune learning moment for the student and a place for negotiation for the faculty (after all, they *are* negotiating the lexical errors in the passage above) if they are willing to spend time talking with the student about the expected vocabulary and why the "right words" matter to them and to others in the field.[13]

What struck us about this discussion, however, is not only how obviously concerned the faculty informants were about their student's misuse of the course vocabulary, but also their own lack of a vocabulary to talk about the writing at the sentence and word-choice level—at least as they analyzed the passage with us—which, in turn, made them dismiss the writing as unacceptable. It seemed to us, as we discussed the passage later, that, while the word choice errors they pointed out might well be rooted in the student's difficulty in accessing the content, it's also likely that the error is rooted in the student's lack of discourse knowledge, that is, how to go about writing what seems to be the hybrid genre of a "job recruitment strategy." Even English L1 undergraduate students might be challenged by this assignment, given that it calls for a "social action" (Miller, 1984) that seems quite specific to a particular course with even the name sounding like a teacher's idiosyncratic phrasing rather than a writing task that is an accepted "way of doing" (Carter, 2007) in the management major. If the business faculty had a way of thinking about the cause(s) of the word choice errors, they may have been more patient with the student and better able to help him/her find the appropriate terminology to use. (See Lancaster [this volume] for another possible explanation related to stance-taking as the cause of the error and the teachers' reaction.)

As students become more experienced with the genres and conventions of their majors, their fluency and accuracy can be expected to improve. How long it takes them to improve, however, often depends on how frequently they are asked to write and whether they are writing in the same or quite similar genres or in widely variant, even idiosyncratic, genres, e.g. a "job recruitment strategy" from course to course in the major. We know, for example, that students writing in "template forms," as our psychology informant called the lab report, achieve accuracy and fluency more quickly than those writing in varied forms to varied audiences (see Leki, 2007; Tardy, 2009; also Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006). The psychology professor we interviewed said that she finds all of her students "share the same challenges" with the format of the scientific report, and once the L2 students learn the format, they generally do as well as the English L1 students in presenting the content. If the conventionalized forms of the lab report are easier to learn than, say, the socially negotiated genres students might encounter in business, the scientific audiences for empirical research are also generally easier to imagine than those diverse potential audiences for, say, a management report or a marketing strategy. While English L1 students may also find it hard to acquire the right voice and style to write for business professionals, L2 writers have the added challenge of finding not only the right words to use but also the culturally appropriate ways to address US business people in writing while also figuring out what the teacher thinks is appropriate.

While at the surface, students' wrong word choices might be overlooked as part of a language acquisition process and not necessarily a lack of comprehension, what the business faculty's discussion suggests is that it's not always possible to differentiate between the two. If the teacher evaluating the paper can't be sure if the student is getting the content and understanding the writing expectations, s/he also can't be sure that the course objectives are being met and is therefore at a loss for how to move forward with the grading. A second language professor from bioengineering, a Brazilian with a doctoral degree from a German institution who told us that she expects her students, no matter what their first language is, to produce error-free writing, explained the problem this way:

> I'm sort of upset by the grammatical mistakes, but, if I can't understand half of [what is written] I feel like I'm losing so much. I have to trust the writer completely understands and ... it's like watching TV, but half of the pixels are gone. So, if on this screen half the pixels are gone, you could see the image, but it's not clear. You could make some other image. [So] I cannot understand their study unless the channel is transparent.

As an example of the problem, she pointed to a sentence from a student report she had shown us: "'Since the concentration of NA which is sodium increases it causes the brain to polarized'." "At that point," she said, "I don't even know if it's right or wrong, you know, because I can't understand it." In this case, it seems to us that the student writer has acquired the disciplinary lexicon, what Johns (2001) calls the "bricks" but is struggling with the "mortar"—the syntax and even the punctuation—that would hold the sentence together. With some work on her part, the teacher might see that the sentence could be corrected to read as follows: "Since the concentration of NA, which is sodium, increases, it causes the brain to become polarized." Whether the point itself is correct, we can't say; however, she would be able to comprehend what the student is attempting to say once the correct syntax and punctuation are inserted.

Another L2 faculty informant from geology told us about her process of learning to write "correctly" for graduate school in the US. While she was able to learn the scientific vocabulary and genres relatively quickly, she realized that she was still using the constructions of a typical Italian sentence. "I go back and review that," she said, "and now, when I read it with an English mindset, it sometimes doesn't make sense even to myself." When she submitted the first draft of her dissertation, her committee told her it sounded like she was telling a story and that it was not scientific writing. And yet, she said, "No one ever told me we don't understand what you're talking about." Instead, the comments were on the style of the writing, and these helped her to negotiate her way through to more standard sentence structures, syntax and word choices.

While errors that disturb the sense of a sentence or the whole piece of writing aren't easy to negotiate and certainly demand time and patience from the reader, the geology and bioengineering professors, like a number of the faculty we interviewed, are willing to spend extra time with the L2 student writers to help them succeed. In reflecting on why she's so tough on errors, especially in the writing of her L2 students, the bioengineering professor said, "I frequently ask myself why is this bothering me so much? Is it because it's also my mistake? This could be." Although her own L2 writing experiences may be informing her expectations for correctness, she also seemed to feel a strong sense of obligation to her multilingual students, meeting with them outside of class on their papers, helping them to read course texts, and giving them the books she herself read to acquire fluency, e.g. *Great Expectations,* and asking them to summarize chapters and meet with her to discuss them. (We can't resist pointing out the appropriateness of this title, if not the novel itself, for the aspirations of most L2 writers.)

With her, as with a number of our other informants, the goal was to push the students to higher levels of accuracy, so that they would be better prepared for their other classes and/or the workplace. The greatest challenge for L2 students, the psychology professor told us, is not at the idea level, once they learn the expected format, but rather at the sentence and word choice level. So "it's not correctness per se," she explained, "but those sorts of unwritten rules about the words that are appropriate to convey a particular point. Maybe other words would work, but they aren't conventional, and readers will have to stop and say 'What do you mean?' rather than flowing through the logic." Yet, she added,

> Personally, you know, I think that those mistakes are part of what makes the world so interesting. I don't see those as flaws. However, I worry for the students that that will prohibit them from succeeding in the [major] and the field. So there is a standard way of communicating and should they not learn and apply that standard then they'll have a harder time succeeding. And so ultimately that's sort of my concern for them.

Academic and Workplace Writing Expectations: What Is Fair?

Concern about what would happen for their L2 students when they wrote in other courses in the major or entered the workplace was repeated by a number of the faculty we talked with.[14] While many of the students' lexical and discourse errors could potentially be negotiated, the faculty questioned what might be an acceptable level of error, if any, in their discipline as well as what was in the best interest of their L2 students. We know from much of the L2 research on response to student writing (see Ferris, 2003, for example) and from our own interviews with L2 students that most students do want error correction to help them acquire academic language proficiency.[15] For both the students and the faculty, then, there is a strong sense that L2 students need to acquire communicative and strategic competence (Ferris, 2003; Gentil, 2011) to succeed in the university and in their chosen fields. While we have been arguing, based on our research, that determinations of "competence" are often dependent on the context and readers' dispositions, the data we report in this section indicate that these faculty felt that it would be remiss and unfair of them to expect less of their L2 students than they do of their English L1 students.

Careful, error-free writing is *the* key to success in systems engineering, according to the professor we interviewed. For a requirements engineer, the hardest part of the job, she said, "is finding out what everyone is doing and getting the problem down accurately and correctly [so that] the user is happy. The easy part is the quantitative stuff." Clear communication is critical, so, when she grades the papers, she applies the same standards to everyone, although she, like the bioengineering professor, spends a great deal of time working with all of her students to help them meet the standards she sets. In grading papers, she told us, she makes it a practice not to even look at the name of the writer until she has given the grade because "No one's going to give them a break when they're working because they're from wherever. You just get left behind, so why not get told that now when you're a student rather than get hit in the face with it when you get out there working." For much the same reason, faculty and administrators in the School of Management expect all students to be able to produce writing in standard English with few mistakes, based not only on workplace expectations but also on the accreditation requirements for the field. They are firmly supported by the dean who speaks and writes Spanish as his first language.

While questions about "fairness" emerged as a real concern for our faculty informants (as it did for the faculty interviewed by Ives, Leahy, Leming, Pierce, & Schwartz [this volume]), what's interesting is that the way they talked about fairness didn't seem to revolve around being equitable in their grading, but rather about doing all they can to best prepare their students for future success. Although negotiating meaning may be their preferred approach, they feel pressure, as we said, to help their students meet standards for writing academic English. If the stakes are perceived to be high for L2 writers as students, there are also real stakes around correct usage in the fields some of the students will enter. A faculty member from social work, for example, explained that, although there may be "minimal mistakes," if students

> are going into health care, they have to make sure that what they are writing is exactly what they are meaning to say; any case records that they do and any communication has to reflect exactly what they mean. So people aren't reading between the lines for those kinds of things.

She also described, however, what we would consider a translingual approach to negotiating meaning around the misuse of terms tied to cultural differences. "I try not to be too hard on students," she said, "if they're using words that we wouldn't necessarily use here, but the usage is based on their culture." As an example, she mentioned the word "abuse," which, she said, is sometimes "overused relative to what we mean by it here and what it means in other countries where it can be perceived differently based on how children are disciplined in other countries or how elderly people are treated in the US." For that reason, she spends time in class talking about culturally different perceptions of key social work issues, while cautioning *all* of her students to take great care in the choosing the terms they use to describe the social conditions they're writing about given the diverse populations they will be working with if they remain in the US.

The math professor we interviewed provided a different kind of insight on the reasons correct word choice is important in his field. "English allows for a degree of vagueness, which is generally bad in communicating mathematical ideas," he told us. In math, correct article usage is crucial, he said, even though, as we noted to him, most language specialists would generally recommend not spending too much time on this relatively minor grammatical feature. As he pointed out, however,

> Math is a precise discipline, so if we say that there is "a" solution, we know that there may be another solution, but if we say "the" solution, that means there cannot be another solution. So in this case knowing the articles is very important and this goes back to how they translate their thinking to English.

For the faculty we've described in this section, there is a strong sense of the stakes involved in students being able to produce writing that is mostly free of lexical errors and reflects an understanding of the importance of correct usage in the fields and workplaces they plan to enter. While they do penalize students for making errors, most are also willing to help students by conferencing with them on their writing or by requiring them to go to the writing center. In contrast, a civil engineering professor, also multilingual, told us that he takes off only a small percentage for poor writing even though he cares about and expects standard written English. In describing his reasons, he explained,

> I want to talk about engineering not writing. [As much as writing is important,] there's not much bang for the buck to work with undergraduate writing. They can learn on the job. They need a certain level of intellect to survive the rigors of engineering. An engineering major who can't write still has the job. The English major doesn't.

For this professor, then, being fair to his students means preparing them to be engineers, not writers. Worrying about errors in their writing takes attention away from worrying about their ability to succeed as engineers.[16]

Readerly Dispositions and Reflective Writing

In our interviews, several faculty mentioned assigning reflective writing tasks, and it was interesting to hear how the reflection genre itself seemed to evoke a different readerly disposition towards error on the part of the faculty we talked to, generally because they saw the stakes involved as being very different for students. As the management teacher explained, "It's not really like right and wrong; it's more like a self-discovery process." As she described it, the goal of the "non-academic" reflective paper she assigns is "to give students practice thinking through a challenge or problem for which there is no easy answer, [one that] is inherently meaningful to them ... and that might help them think through an issue they're confronting right now or might confront in the future." All of the students, including the L2 writers, generally do very well on this assignment, she noted, partly because

> they definitely feel that the reigns are looser. I don't go in there with any expectations. And it's not such a technical piece, although some students are very technical, it can be very personal. I tell them I want to hear your voice come through if possible in this paper. I don't want it to be so formal.

As we see it, the "looser reigns" seem to free up the space for the faculty member to stop worrying about perceived external pressures and expectations, and to focus on *how* the students are learning the material and on their processes for writing about that learning. Teachers read with a different disposition, in other words. The social work professor told us, for example, that reflective writing is a regular part of social work assignments and noted that students are even better at reflection than at their other writing, while also adding "or at least [reflective writing] is easier for me to assess because I don't worry about the grammar and sentence structure as much. And I think because of that too, they're more free to just write what they're thinking." She continued, however, that, while reflection is easier for students to write and for her to grade, "it may be harder for ESL students in terms of language translation." We're particularly interested in that observation given that much of the second-language writing research indicates that drafting and free writing may be painstaking for L2 students who are also struggling with word choice and phrasing in English.

And yet, just as with English L1 writers, reflection on learning and writing plays an important role in L2 students' language and writing development. In discussing the components of specific-purpose language ability, Gentil (2011) explains that learners need not only the ability to choose appropriate responses for a task, but they must also be able to reflect on and evaluate their choices (p. 13). Tardy's (2009) model of genre knowledge includes "process knowledge," which involves not only the ability to use appropriate processes but also an awareness of one's own and others' composing processes for written genres. Still, the concept of reflection may feel foreign to many L2 students who may be uncomfortable and even resistant to writing about themselves as learners, writers, or as individuals with a literacy history to bring to their learning and writing. For many, just as with English L1 students, reflective writing can also appear to be a "waste of time," as Leki (2007) notes was the case for some of the L2 undergraduates she studied (p. 247) and as we found in some of our L2 student interviews, suggesting, we think, that the students also understand the stakes to be lower. They reason that if the work isn't going to be graded, then why expend the effort? As with any writing assignment teachers give, students need an explanation of the learning goals for the task and even, perhaps, an opportunity to reflect on the value of reflection. Both the faculty and student informants in our research, for example, commented on how the interview itself had led them to reflect on themselves as teachers and writers in ways they hadn't before.

CONCLUSION

We opened our chapter with Diana's self-perceived deficiencies, her "not good" feeling about her writing in English. This feeling is understandable when multilingualism itself is perceived as a deficiency rather than a strength. We must actively resist this perception by helping faculty learn how to read with patience, respect for language difference, and a deliberative attitude (Horner et al., 2011) that seeks to understand the causes for perceived error and is open to the possibility of negotiation. As Shaughnessy reminds us, "English has been robustly inventing itself for centuries—stretching and reshaping and enriching itself with every language and dialect it has encountered," so this "battle" *is* "worth waging" (1979, p. 13). Our goal in this translingual encounter should be to move students from feeling "not good" to a place described by Ayesha, a Pakistani student at the end of her undergraduate studies:

> When you are given a topic, the more you read about it, and the more research you do about it, the more it broadens your vision. And I really enjoy that everything is so new to me ....

> I get so excited. I'm like, okay, I am going to learn something new today .... And it feels so light when I have done my research properly and then I write something down. And I just feel so good.

As we think about faculty expectations for their students' writing and their attitudes towards errors, as well as students' expectations and attitudes, we're reminded of Shaughnessy's (1979) words: "In a better world, it is true, readers might be more generous with their energies, pausing to divine the meaning of a writer or mentally to edit efforts, but it would be foolhardy to bank on that kind of persistence except perhaps in English teachers or good friends" (p. 12). While we found many of the faculty we interviewed to be generous with their energies in helping L2 writers succeed and more than a few willing to try to divine the students' meaning, we could also see that, for many, their expectation of standard written English is driven by a strong sense of the stakes involved, whether perceived or real, e.g. accrediting agencies, state mandates, future job performance. When required to evaluate the students' comprehension of the course content, our informants, like so many teachers, feel pulled in two directions—wanting to respect the multilingual expression because they recognize the challenge of writing about difficult material in a language still being acquired, while simultaneously wanting to ensure that they are best preparing their students for the perceived less-forgiving expectations of readers in other contexts. Further, for many teachers, the possibility of negotiating with lexical and domain-specific errors may not be practical if they don't also have some understanding of the causes for the errors. When a teacher has to evaluate a piece of writing and is faced with errors that could originate from a wide range of possible causes, the diagnosis of the error becomes less important than a consideration of how to give a grade that is fair to the student, fair to the system of grading devised for all of the students in the class, and fair to stakeholders in the courses and fields the students will be entering.

As we see it, then, there is not so much a "refusal to negotiate" with translingual writing on the part of faculty, at least those we talked to, but rather that their willingness, or not, to negotiate derives from a complex mix of motives, including their learning and writing goals for students, their sense of what's fair to L2 students along with the other students, and their understandings—and misunderstandings—of L2 error. WAC practitioners thus emerge as stakeholders who can facilitate the process of negotiation through informed faculty development, focusing on inclusive practices for teaching with writing, including recognizing the strengths L2 students demonstrate in their writing and fairly evaluating the students’ communicative and strategic competencies. (See Lancaster [this volume] for an examination of stancetaking in L2 writing—one element of writing that faculty often mistake as error—and approaches for working with faculty to recognize it. See Cox [this volume] for a range of strategies that can be used in faculty development workshops, on websites, and in newsletters.)

There should, of course, be institutional incentives for faculty who are “generous with their energies” and willing to engage in inclusive pedagogies. Haifeng from China, a student in public policy, noted that what helped him learn to write according to the “American” conventions of his field was “getting feedback on his writing and suddenly [understanding] that all my sentences could be expressed in a better way.” The professor who gave him this feedback was

> very responsible and just [did] all the things he thinks can benefit [his students.] Besides grammar and writing mistakes and [highlighting] awkward English, he definitely [gave] us suggestions on topics. Before we start to write the paper, the professor tells us how to write an academic paper with the introduction, background, the methodology. He already showed us how to do this from scratch.

The approach Haifeng’s professor takes with his multilingual students is time-consuming, but necessary if we want to be fair to all of the students who enroll at our institutions. Here too WAC programs can serve an important role not only as resources for faculty who strive to support multilingual writers but also by working at the institutional level providing research, data and evidence that allows universities to rethink resource distribution that supports multilingual students. In addition to the kinds of funding often allotted to international initiatives, i.e. funding for travel and classroom technologies, institutions must reconsider how faculty are rewarded for engaging in inclusive pedagogies that successfully retain and teach the international populations being targeted. Faculty workloads might accommodate particular curricular and pedagogical work; curriculum may be reconsidered in light of multilingual support and the affordances such changes also bring to L1 students negotiating an international future. In each case, the rewards will be tailored to the local context, but that can only be realized if research, such as that engaged in here, and as represented in other chapters in this collection, becomes part of the institutional culture.

NOTES

1. In our interviews with second language writers, for example, in addition to Diana, a student from Pakistan, Ayesha, lamented, "I do have ideas, and I do want to put something down, but I am really short of words." Another, Sri, who writes in Telugu and Hindi, told us, "It all comes down to vocabulary; it's not your thought because everyone who does even a bit of schooling has some thought in his or her chosen field ... but you have to know which words to use to express your thoughts."
2. Not all errors are "invented" by readers, Bitchener and Ferris (2012) point out; rather, linguists take a "theoretically and empirically grounded view of error," seeing errors in writing as "lexical, morphological, or syntactic deviations from the intuitions of a literate adult native speaker of the language." Such errors may be caused by "interlanguage" interference as well as L2 acquisition stages of development (p. 42). Ferris and Roberts (2001) used the following error categories as codes in their research on actual errors teachers marked: verb errors, noun ending errors, article errors, wrong word choice or word form, and sentence structure, including sentence boundary errors, word order, omitted words or phrases, unnecessary words or phrases, and other non-idiomatic structures (pp. 161-84).
3. In their review of research of second language writing in English, Leki, Cumming, and Silva (2008) show that, while faculty responses to L2 writing vary according to a range of factors, e.g. age, gender, content area, the errors that cause distraction, disrupt meaning, or seem "the most 'foreign'" are apt to elicit the most "irritation" or "cranky responses" (p. 30).
4. Anna's interest in this research also stems from her personal experience as a multilingual writer and speaker herself from the post-colonial, multilingual context of post-war Lebanon. After her family fled Beirut, she grew up as a refugee in Cyprus where she attended a Lebanese school that followed the French Lycee system and where English and Greek were taught as third and fourth languages. Her personal experience as a code-mesher/switcher informed her contributions to our linguistically inclusive research team.
5. During the course of our research, Anna became the interim writing center director when Terry stepped down to devote full attention to directing WAC.
6. The full title of our short monograph is *Valuing Written Accents: Non-native Students Talk about Identity, Academic Writing, and Meeting Teachers' Expectations*. The research was published under the auspices of the Office of University Life and the Diversity Research Group. University Life subsequently funded the creation of a website to present this research; it can be found at writtenaccents.gmu.edu.

7. In "Towards a Multilingual Composition Scholarship: From English Only to a Translingual Norm," Horner, NeCamp, and Donahue (2011) explain how a translingual model is different from both monolingual and traditional multilingual models. A multilingual model, they argue, sees languages as "static" and "discrete," with "fluency" determined by the user "achieving an 'appropriate' target," and with "bilingual" users "imagined as two monolinguals in one person." In contrast, a translingual model opens up these language "confines" to see languages as "fluctuating" and "in constant revision"; fluency as the ability to code-switch, borrow, and blend; and "bilingual" as "a unique and shifting blend of practical knowledge and language use." In this model, "mutual intelligibility" is the goal, not appropriate usage in one language or another (p. 287).

8. The view of error as a "refusal to negotiate" comes up in much of Canagarajah's work on Lingua Franca English (LFE), mainly in his research on the professional writing of South Asian English writers/speakers. In "Lingua Franca English, Multilingual Communities, and Language Acquisition" (2007), for example, Canagarajah writes, "Breakdown in LFE communication is possible only in rare cases of refusal to negotiate meanings—which is itself a form of communication as it conveys the participant's desire to cut off the conversation" (p. 929).

9. Here we're echoing Canagarajah, who takes up Pratt's idea of the contact zone in much of his work on English Lingua Franca, recognizing the power differences and unequal roles of those involved in negotiations around "native 'norms'" and sociolinguistic change. See, for example, "The Place of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued" (Canagarajah, 2006).

10. There is abundant L2 research (and debate) on cognitive, social, and academic processes involved in the acquisition of fluency and accuracy and most effective approaches to teaching both. See, for example, Casanave's (2007) chapter "Paths to Improvement" in *Controversies in Second Language Writing,* Ferris's *Treatment of Error in Second Language Student Writing (2002)* and *Response to Student Writers: Implications for Second Language Students (2003).*

11. She addresses that gap in the research in "Negotiating Socioacademic Relations: English Learners' Reception by and Reaction to College Faculty" (2006) in which she looks at the kinds of accommodations, if any, faculty made for L2 students, their comments about L2 students, and the L2 students' comments on their experiences with faculty.

12. Writing center usage data consistently indicate that almost half of all students making appointments come from first-language backgrounds other than English and that 60% of all users were referred to the writing center by a teacher.

13. The business teachers, in fact, talked about how they try to help multilingual students negotiate unfamiliar terms on essay exams by giving them permission

to ask about idiomatic usage that is not specific to course concepts, e.g. "harness energy," a word that one L2 student asked them to explain. At the same time, the college has a "zero-tolerance" policy on errors, and, in the assessment rubric they use for their accreditation, they spell out the numbers and kinds of errors that are grounds for failure, which, as Terry has found in working with them, is enormously problematic for a number of reasons, including their own failure to agree on how serious certain errors really are or even to identify accurately the errors they see or don't see, as the case may be.

14. While we would like to argue that teachers' concerns about what other imagined readers and rhetorical contexts will require should be put aside to focus on their own priorities and expectations for student writers, the responses of many of our "take no prisoners" informants indicates that their concerns are not unwarranted.

15. In her breakdown of academic language proficiency, Ferris (2009) includes, among other proficiencies, *sociolinguistic* proficiency, i.e. an understanding of register and the ability to carry out both social and academic tasks, and *discourse* proficiency, i.e. how to introduce, conclude, and organize texts; how to present and balance ideas in texts (p. 27).

16. His comment brings to mind Leki's critique in "Is Writing Overrated?" of compositionists' assumptions about the role of writing in learning and the arguments we make for requiring writing-intensive courses in the disciplines.

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APPENDIX A: INVITATION TO FACULTY PARTICIPANTS AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Terry Zawacki, director of George Mason University's Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program, Anna Habib, English and CISA faculty member, and other WAC/writing center co-researchers, have been conducting HSRB-approved research on the experiences of faculty when working with second-language writers in courses across the disciplines. This research is intended to add faculty perspectives to an earlier research study, also HSRB-approved, on the experiences of international and immigrant students with writing in the academic disciplines both in the US and in their countries of origin. Our research findings will serve as a resource for both second-language writers and for professionals interested in how best to teach or tutor these writers.

Following is a list of the questions that will be used to guide our semi-structured interviews:

Questions on disciplinary genres and the performance of L2 writers:

- What courses do you usually teach? Approximately, what percentage of your students are L2 writers as far as you can tell?
- What kinds of writing are most typical of your discipline? Do you expect undergraduates to be able to write in these typical ways?
- What genres of writing do you typically assign? What assignments do you typically give undergraduates? Do these differ depending upon the level of the course?
- What are your expectations for this writing in terms of general academic and more specific disciplinary standards? In your discipline, what things are valued in writing?
- What advice do you/would you give undergraduates about writing in your discipline?
- Do you require students to write in e-spaces? If so, how do you see L2 students performing as writers in these spaces?
- Do you assign collaborative projects? If so, what, are your goals for writers? If you assign collaborative projects, what, if anything, have you noticed about L2 students' participation in these projects?
- What characterizes good and poor writing for students in your discipline?
- What are your principal concerns when grading the writing of non-native students?
- What similarities and/or differences, if any, do you see in the areas that need improvement in the writing of L1 and L2 students?
- In your experience, are there areas where L2 writers tend to have significantly more difficulty than L1 writers? Do you find that L2 students do better on some genres than on others? If yes, which of those areas are most significant to student learning or meeting your classroom objectives?
- How is credit given to sources in your discipline? What difficulties, if any, do you see L2 students having with citation and documentation?

Questions on faculty practices for teaching with writing:

- When giving feedback on student's papers do you tend to focus more on the global (i.e. thesis, conclusion, organization) or local (i.e. grammar) concerns in a paper? Is there a specific reason you focus on one over the other?
- How much error and what kinds of errors are too much error in your view?
- How do you respond to sentence level errors in the writing of your L2 students?

- What, if any, kinds of adjustments have you made in your instruction and materials to address the needs of a diverse classroom?
- What advice would you/do you give to L2 students who are trying to learn to write in the major and/or your courses?

Questions on faculty reading and writing experiences:

- What is your native language? Can you read and write in that language?
- Do you speak, read, and/or write in a language (s) in addition to your native language? What language (s)?
- If yes, do you recall how you learned to write in English?