5 An Arabian Gulf: First-Year Composition Textbooks at an International Branch Campus in Qatar

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The two case studies presented in this chapter explore the cultural complexities of adopting American-authored textbooks and materials to teach first year composition (FYC) at an international branch campus in Qatar. Through surveys, observation and student writing, the authors investigate the extent to which their students engage with the American textbooks each has adopted—They Say, I Say with Readings (Graff, Birkenstein, & Durst, 2012) and Writing about Writing (Wardle & Downs, 2011). To foster culturally sensitive adaptation of FYC content and promote student-centered pedagogy, the authors posit guidelines for localizing the content of FYC courses for English as Additional Language students.

Keywords: pedagogy; composition; FYC; IBC; textbook adoption

As of March 2015, there were roughly 250 International Branch Campuses (IBCs) open or in development or planning scattered across the globe. Ninety of these are IBCs of American universities, over twice as many as the second most common home country, the United Kingdom (Cross-Border Education Research Team, 2015). In the Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region alone, 56 IBCs from various home countries currently operate, with the vast majority of these hosted by Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, a dozen of which are U.S.-based institutions. What is also noticeable is the flow of importing countries and exporting countries. Taken together with the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Ireland, Anglophone home institutions account for 60% of all IBC home institutions,

compared to zero for the GCC (Cross-Border Education Research Team, 2015). This is just one facet of the global inequality of the provider-consumer network in international education (Altbach, 2010; see also Hodges and Kent; and Miller and Pessoa, this volume, for additional studies on IBCs in the MENA region).

Along with this proliferation of IBCs of American universities in the MENA region in the last fifteen years, the American college curriculum requirement of first-year composition (FYC) has also been exported. Depending on the particular branch campus and the major/degree offered, additional FYC courses are sometimes added to the branch campus curriculum in order to accommodate English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners (for additional discussions of how required composition has been implemented, successfully and unsuccessfully, within MENA-based universities, see also Annous, Nicolas, and Townsend; Arnold, DeGenaro, Iskandarani, Khoury, Sinno, and Willard-Traub; Austin; Jarkas and Fakhreddine; Miller and Pessoa; and Uysal, this volume). At Texas A&M at Qatar (TAM-Q) where we teach, these prerequisite courses for FYC are frequently taught by TESOL-trained (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) teachers. Although the number of semesters of required FYC-type courses is extended to meet the needs of the learners of English as an additional language enrolled at TAM-Q, more often than not, the textbooks adopted for FYC remain the same as those of the home campus. This is not an unusual practice, as the lifting of an entire curriculum and its transplantation to an international branch campus is a common occurrence among the "crossborder curriculum partnerships" that include IBCs (Waterval, Frambarch, Driessen, & Scherpbier, 2014). Agreements for IBCs in Education City in Doha, Qatar dictate that the home institutions recreate programs at the host institution that replicate the curricula of the home campus as much as possible. The replication of home campus requirements includes the qualifications of the faculty, the standards for student admission, the sequence of courses required in the degree plan, and, sometimes, even the textbooks to be used. But adoption of particular textbooks endorsed by the home campus does not ensure a good fit for the students enrolled at the local host institution. In this chapter, each of us takes a closer look at the concerns raised by both teachers and students and share the conclusions we have come to based on our separate experiences of adopting Americentric textbooks to teach FYC to engineering majors at TAM-Q.

By reflecting on the usefulness of the textbooks we've adopted for our TAM-Q FYC courses, we hope to encourage FYC teachers across the MENA region to participate in examining both the value and the appropriateness of

adopting western textbooks to teach EAL learners in the Middle East. At the end of this chapter, we offer a set of questions MENA writing teachers might use to reflect on the textbooks and materials they use to teach FYC. We then share our developing strategies for localizing the content of our TAM-Q FYC courses. Our ultimate goal is to foster critical reflection among teachers and deep listening for students so that culturally sensitive practices are realized in the teaching and evaluation of FYC in transnational contexts.

Methodology and Research Questions

To investigate the usefulness and appropriateness of the adoption of specific U.S. textbooks and materials to teach FYC at TAM-Q, we focused on the composition textbook that each of us has used for more than two semesters: Telafici has adopted the department-recommended *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing with Readings* (Graff, Birkenstein, & Durst, 2012), and Rudd has adopted *Writing about Writing* (Wardle & Downs, 2011). We address the following questions:

1. By focusing the FYC curriculum on U.S. authors, whose voices and what views are potentially marginalized? When preparing students to "find a way of entering a conversation with others' views" (Graff, Birkenstein, & Durst, 2012, p. 4), whose views and values are being privileged?

2. To what extent do our students engage with the readings and assignments included in the textbooks each of us uses?

As a framework for exploring these questions, we looked to the guidelines for teaching FYC as recommended by two U.S.-based organizations: the National Council of the Teaching of English (NCTE) and the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA). We relied on their descriptions of "best practices" in the field to determine to what extent we, as American instructors teaching at an American university in the Middle East, are following these guidelines and to what extent we should be following them. We also found several of the NCTE position statements (especially those on Second Language Learners and Second Language Writing) to be particularly useful frameworks for our case studies since these feature the perspectives of our EAL students. Many of the NCTE position statements argue for being inclusive of students' home languages and experiences, dating back to 1972 when the resolution that became known as SRTOL (Students' Right to Their Own Language) was first drafted by the Executive Committee of NCTE

(Larson, 1974). Consequently, NCTE's emphasis on making room for students' experiences and home languages in the classroom speaks to us as writing teachers who want to value and empower our TAM-Q EAL students.

Our methods foreground the voices and views of our former students as they respond to our questions about the reading and writing assignments promoted by the FYC textbooks we have each adopted. As teacher-researchers, we also draw upon our own experiences of teaching from these textbooks, observing our students' responses to assignments and engaging in informal discussions with former students about the usefulness of these texts. We have also conducted anonymous surveys on textbook satisfaction and reading preferences in our FYC courses. Through these venues, our students have made their voices heard. From the student perspectives gained from these data, we discuss the usefulness and appropriateness of adopting two textbooks, *They Say, I Say with Readings* and *Writing about Writing,* to teach FYC to engineering students at a Middle East branch of our institution.

Exploring the Local Context for Our FYC Courses

If the understanding and application of rhetoric are objectives in most FYC courses (Council of Writing Program Administrators, 2008), then FYC teachers need to practice what we preach. Engaging students halfway across the world, who may or may not ever study or live in the US, requires student-centered teachers to adapt both their materials and their strategies. Linguistic imperialism—a system in which "the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (Phillipson, as cited in Canagarajah, 1995, p. 591)—is not simply a case of uneven valuation of what is written and how, but also what is read and what students are allowed or encouraged to write about.

First, we provide some detail on the local context: We teach in Qatar, a country whose broader national goals include creating an "[educational] system [that] will also encourage analytical and critical thinking . . . [one that] will promote . . . respect for Qatari society's values and heritage, and will advocate for constructive interaction with other nations" (Qatar National Vision, n.d.). Qatar Foundation, our umbrella sponsoring organization at Education City, is considered a driving "engine" within this national vision (Qatar Foundation, n.d.). While our FYC courses seek to foster analytical and critical thinking, we use readings and writing assignments from U.S.-based textbooks to allow students to practice these skills, directly affecting what students think and write about—hence our concern with using American

texts in our branch campus in Qatar.

According to the Council of Writing Program Administrators' Outcomes Statement (2008), "Students should . . . integrate their own ideas with those of others . . . [and] understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power." Further, NCTE (2009) states that teachers of second language writers should:

> [reflect] on how writing assignments may tacitly include *cultural assumptions or tacitly rely on knowledge of culturally-specific information* [emphasis added]. Writing instructors should also gain experience designing writing assignments with second language students in mind, considering topics that are culturally sensitive to second language writers and including directions easily understandable to multiple audiences.

Given these best practices, we wonder if the cultural assumptions and culturally-specific readings and writing assignment suggestions in our U.S. textbooks would be problematic for our student population, which at TAM-Q hovers at 50% Qatari nationals with very few U.S. students (Kent, personal communication, February 18, 2015).

As teachers with considerable combined experience working with international students, we are aware of the problems of teaching only an Americanized view. Yet as teachers who work without the security of tenure, we are also sensitive to program expectations for teaching from a departmentally sanctioned textbook. Thus, we both found ourselves teaching U.S. textbooks to our majority Arab FYC students, while steeling ourselves for the possibility that they might reject these books because they would not be able to relate to the views and topics. The students' feelings about these texts in response to our questions, however, proved complicated to interpret, as self-reported views can belie what lies below the surface. Our findings are described in the following case studies, the first narrated by Rudd and the second by Telafici.

Case Study #1 Conducted by Mysti Rudd
Rudd's Reasons for Adopting Writing about Writing (WAW)

When I first began teaching FYC at TAM-Q in Fall 2012, I was told that all of the English teachers in our department were expected to adopt the recommended common FYC text: *They Say / I Say: The Moves that Matter in*

Academic Writing with Readings (*TSIS*) (Graff, Birkenstein, & Durst, 2012). In addition to the recommended text, however, every teacher was allowed to adopt other textbooks alongside *TSIS*. I chose to assign the shorter edition of *TSIS* (245 pages rather than 701 pages) that did not include an anthologized section of readings. For the readings that students were assigned to summarize and respond to, I adopted *Writing about Writing: A College Reader* (*WAW*) by Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs (2011).

I chose *Writing about Writing* (*WAW*) because I had been intrigued by Downs and Wardle's (2007) article "Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning 'First-Year Composition' as an Introduction to Writing Studies" because I was familiar with many of the articles authored by American composition scholars; in addition, the suggested assignments, such as literacy narratives and discourse community ethnographies, convinced me that the *WAW* approach to teaching FYC would not be that different from other textbooks with readings. There were, however, some major differences in the genres, length, and reading level of the articles anthologized. A common criticism of adopting *WAW* is that the readings are too difficult for FYC students, particularly first-generation college students or students at open-access institutions. Yet I also knew that relying on a formal textbook such as *WAW* could add to my authority in the FYC classroom, since I was already familiar with the articles anthologized in the book. I was concerned about establishing my authority in the TAM-Q classroom because I sensed that I would need to make significant changes from being a teacher who had previously taught students in the US to becoming one of the few female professors (13 out of 81) teaching Arab engineering students in Doha's Education City.

Even though colleagues in my department cautioned me against adopting *WAW* because they believed it would be too difficult for the English academic language learners enrolled as engineering majors, I was determined to test this argument for myself. Rather than risk underestimating my students, I believe in holding high expectations for all of my students and then encouraging them to go beyond what they previously believed they could achieve. I hoped that the difficult reading level of the articles in *WAW* would cause my TAM-Q students to strive to achieve understanding. From the moment I decided to adopt *WAW*, however, I also planned to ask my students about its continued use in subsequent semesters.

It was not long before I began to receive feedback from students on *WAW*. After the reading assignment I gave the first day of the first semester, a conscientious student stopped by my office to exclaim, "Do you know how long it took me to read the assignment for tomorrow's class?" And before I could

venture a guess, he replied, "Eight hours! It took me eight hours to read the 30-page introduction to the textbook!" As a seasoned teacher of FYC, I had suspected that the assigned reading would be challenging to these first-year students for whom English was a second or even third language (after Arabic and French), but I had also been advised by our program chair to make the course as rigorous as if I were teaching it at the home campus in College Station, Texas. And, during faculty orientation, we were informed that Sheikha Mozah, the Emir's wife and the visionary responsible for establishing the group of branch campuses in Qatar known as Education City, had mandated that the curriculum for students at the host institution mirror the curriculum of the home institution. On the other hand, I was warned by my local colleagues that our Arab engineering students at TAM-Q did not like to read. But just because many of my students didn't want to read didn't mean that they didn't need extensive practice in reading academic articles. I reasoned that future engineers needed to be careful and analytical readers and so, for the first time in my 15-year history of teaching FYC, I expected my students to spend as much time completing their reading assignments as they would drafting their writing assignments.

Due to the *WAW* reading load, I anticipated resistance, and I did indeed receive some complaints about the workload on end-of-semester teacher evaluations. However, I was surprised by the number of positive comments that my students made on the textbook satisfaction survey I distributed at the close of each semester, which I share in the next sections.

Findings from the Textbook Satisfaction Survey

To gather perspectives from my FYC students on my adoption of *WAW* and whether I should adopt it for subsequent semesters, I conducted a textbook satisfaction survey in Spring 2014. I administered this survey during the last day of class in each of my FYC sections, asking students to fill the form out anonymously. Of the 25 students who were asked to complete the survey, 22 placed their surveys in an envelope in the back of the classroom, which was then sealed, handed to the department secretary, and not delivered to me until grades had been posted for the semester. The survey was intended to elicit narrative responses as it asked open-ended questions, beginning with "What was your impression of WAW at the beginning of the course?"

First Impressions of WAW: Boring, Big, and Scary!

The most common adjectives chosen by survey respondents to describe their general reaction to the adopted textbook were *boring*, *scary* and *big*. I per-

ceived these to be negative comments, as were the comments "not joyful" and "confusing," but these judgments were not as negative as the one by the survey respondent who simply had one word to describe the textbook: *dreadful!* Commenting on his first impression of *WAW*, another survey respondent wrote, "I thought it was very fluffy, but I hadn't even gone through it yet, just judging a book by its cover."

Some counted the pages of the readings and concluded that the articles were "too long" or "too hard." One student even admitted that her first response to *WAW* was the thought, "I am not going to read the articles." Not all of the survey respondents' first impressions of *WAW* were negative, however, as three respondents thought the book looked "professional" or "academic." One survey respondent claimed that *WAW* was her "first book that actually looks like a college book," adding, "And by first college book, I mean a black and white book with too many words and so little images." Only one survey respondent admitted to being curious about the contents of *WAW*.

Student Responses on the Usefulness of Assigned Readings from WAW

By the end of a semester, my students had been assigned to read as many as 20 *WAW* articles. When asked on the survey to name the articles that they found to be useful, nearly half of the respondents (10 out of 22) named the first long article assigned, "Helping Students Use Textual Sources Persuasively" by Margaret Kantz, originally published in *College English* in 1990. This finding is not surprising to me, as my FYC syllabus allots more class time for the study of this article than any of the other articles in *WAW*. Some of my students admitted to reading this article three times before they could understand it enough to write a coherent summary. But I wondered if it was not just the length of the article (16 single-spaced pages) but also the reading level that they struggled with.

But more than that, I suspect that Kantz's (1990/2011) proposition that texts (and by extension, authority) can and should be challenged is a radical concept for many of my Qatari students. In subsequent class discussions, at least one of my engineering students every semester has invariably brought up Kantz's (1990/2011) statement that "the only difference between a fact and a claim is how they are received by an audience" (p. 76). Many of my students find this claim unsettling, sometimes stating outright in the middle of class, for example, that "Gravity is a fact, not a claim!" At TAM-Q, I continue to assign Kantz's article because I believe that engineers, in particular, can benefit from questioning the bias of source material as they learn to question positivist approaches to the challenges facing us.

Final Impressions of WAW: "It Made Me a Better Reader"

When asked, "In what ways did your impression of the textbook *Writing about Writing* change by the end of the course?" only three students responded negatively, stating that their views hadn't changed, and that they found the textbook "still hard and the wording is difficult." The majority of students (16 out of 22), in contrast, shared mostly positive comments about their changed perceptions of the text, saying, for example:

- [The textbook] was not as boring as I thought, and it still impresses me and is not like an ordinary textbook.
- At the end of the course, when I have read most of [WAW's] articles, I had really important concepts that would influence my writing.
- I felt the hard words and complexity of [WAW] really made me a better reader. Sitting for two hours reading through a complicated text had to do something to my reading abilities.
- I stopped viewing this book as something difficult to comprehend. I began to understand that by multiple readings the concepts become comprehendible.
- My impression of the book changed when I saw my writing and reading skills improve.
- At the beginning of the course, I didn't think that the concepts of the book will stick in my mind and will change my writing. But now that I studied it, I believe that this book taught me about writing more than I learned in my 12 years of school. I also believe that I'll use this book as a reference for my writing in the future.

Because many of my students seemed burdened by the reading load plus the level of difficulty of the assigned readings, I expected the survey respondents to overwhelmingly recommend that I discontinue teaching from this text. Instead, the survey results showed the opposite to be true. Of the 22 survey respondents, 15 recommended that I adopt WAW for future sections of the course. Only one student registered an unequivocal "no," another two said they didn't know, and four fit in the "yes, but" category, qualifying their response with advice for adapting the curriculum for the subsequent semester. Here are the suggestions of those who responded with a qualified yes:

- I think there should be an explicit introduction of the book itself and what it contains.
- Yes, but it should be relied on less, where some articles are somewhat useless to me."
- Yes, but the content of the book could [be reduced]; you could pick

some articles and give them as handouts.
- Yes, it is a challenging book to get around; however, with addition to the research journal and in-class discussion, everything will become clear.

Based on these answers, it is clear to me that if I do persist in adopting *WAW*, I must introduce the purpose of the book better, reduce the readings assigned, and maybe even invite previous students to talk about the course with current students in order to allay their fears of a text that most label as *big*, *boring*, and *scary* at first glance. But I am also wary of adhering too closely to the results of the satisfaction survey. More than anywhere I have ever taught, learning in the classroom in Qatar seems to be dependent on the relationship created between teacher and student. If students come to respect me and my teaching of FYC and believe that I deeply care about their learning, then they are likely to accept any text I adopt. But with that respect comes a responsibility to keep listening and learning from my students. If I expect my students to be open-minded and adaptable, then I too must leave my "comfort zone" of Americentric readings. Why, after all, should my students at IBCs have make most of the cultural accommodations?

Case Study #2 Conducted by Michael Telafici

Telafici's Considerations for Adoption of *They Say, I Say with Readings (TSIS)*

In Fall 2013 I taught my first FYC course at TAM-Q. While Rudd assigned *WAW* in addition to *TSIS*, I assigned the longer version of *TSIS* only. During the summer previous to that term, I obtained a copy of *TSIS* to begin planning my syllabus. What I found (not surprisingly, and quite reasonably, considering the text's intended audience) was a potentially useful book that contained cultural allusions well beyond what my previous four years of teaching experience in our English Foundation Program had taught me regarding what our TAM-Q students know about American culture and socio-economics.

I also noted that of the 44 readings in *TSIS*, only one reading was about the Middle East ("Reforming Egypt in 140 Characters?" by Dennis Baron), and even that one was not written by someone from the Middle East. In an attempt to remedy the lack of Arab-authored readings provided by *TSIS*, I consulted with Arab faculty at other Education City branch campuses to get ideas for sources. Sources offered included *qifanabki.com* (a Levantine site), *arablit.wordpress.com* website (also almost exclusively from Egypt, Iraq, the

Levant—i.e., the traditional literary form). I was also pointed towards *jadali-yya.com*, an ostensibly pan-Arab news/commentary site, but whose Arabian Peninsula page front matter contained the goal "to provide an open and collaborative space for the production of knowledge *on a region that has largely escaped critical engagement*" (Jadaliyya.com, n.d [emphasis added]), so even local open source material seemed to be sparse.

However, there can be some advantages to using an American text, such as compensating for the limited number of Gulf/Qatari sources in English. American sources can also help students avoid politically difficult topics such as the volatile situation in many Arab countries during the Arab Spring as well as heightened political tensions even between Gulf States. The difficulty I faced in choosing topics or sources for student essays was informed by my past experiences with Qatari students who were explicit in their desire to portray their government and culture only in a very stable and positive light. Adopting *TSIS* could allow me to avoid topics that students in previous semesters were clearly uncomfortable discussing in class, often to the point of non-participation.

As a result, I decided to adopt *TSIS with Readings*. One potential difficulty avoided, but another created: in this context the NCTE (2009) dictum mentioned previously creates a tension between, on the one hand, reading materials that contain "cultural assumptions or tacitly rely on knowledge of culturally-specific information" (i.e., Americentric topics) and, on the other hand, "consider[ation] of topics that are culturally sensitive to second language learners." The latter rules out topics that may be perceived as not respecting local cultural and religious norms.

However, I also felt it important to gauge students' receptiveness to the text's readings, without prejudicing them either toward or against western or Arab sources, and to inquire into their previous reading material/habits. In my section of 16 students, all but one were native Arabic speakers, all had attended secondary school in Qatar, eleven were Qatari nationals, and five were residents of Qatar but nationals of another country. All were functionally bilingual. An in-class questionnaire, given at the beginning of the term, posed questions regarding their secondary school reading texts as well as their favorite books and authors. Based on their survey answers, I made two allowances regarding their first assignment:

1. Students would be free to choose topics and sources for essays (either from TSIS or not)

2. Students would analyze their chosen source for essay one (a rhetorical analysis).

Of all 16 sources selected by students for essay one, only one was written by an Arab author. This could, of course, be due in large part to the preponderance of English information on the internet, but data shows that even in the MENA region, most locally produced information is in English (Graham, Hogan, Straumann, & Medhat, 2014). Throughout the remainder of the semester, students were free to choose their own sources for the remaining two major essays, but we used the readings in *TSIS* for class exercises and discussions, along with some open-source materials.

Findings of Survey: Student Reactions to TSIS

Toward the end of the semester, I administered a brief anonymous survey of students' perceptions of the class as a whole, containing three statements regarding the readings in *TSIS*, which the students rated on a five-point Likert scale (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Results from survey questions on reading selections (n=16 students)

I find the essay topics in the book interesting	
Strongly Agree	15.4%
Agree	38.5%
Neither Agree nor disagree	23.1%
Disagree	23.1%
I wish we used the readings from They Say / I Say more	
Strongly Agree	7.7%
Agree	38.4%
Neither Agree nor disagree	30.8%
Disagree	23.1%
I wish the book had readings by authors from the Middle East	
Strongly Agree	15.4%
Agree	38.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	38.5%
Disagree	7.7%

It is noteworthy that while just over half agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I wish the book had readings by authors from the Middle East," an equal percentage found the essay topics in the book interesting," and nearly half "[wished] we used the readings . . . more." Even though I surveyed a

small sample of students (N=14), only one was not a native Arabic speaker, so I was surprised by the lack of interest in Arab sources.

How much of the predominance of English/western sources (of which *TSIS* is one example) are the students even aware of? Again, not wishing to prejudice my students, I gave them 10 minutes in class to look through the readings list in the table of contents in *TSIS*, then look at the readings themselves, confer with their peers in small groups, and develop a list of "noticeable patterns" in the readings and/or authors. During our class discussion, all student groups noted patterns of education/expertise in authors, which may suggest their interest in the rhetorical ethos of these sources. However, I was struck by the fact that not a single student in a classroom of local students on the Arabian Peninsula mentioned the fact that only one reading was about the Middle East.

The Use and Utility of TSIS: Notes from the "Field"

Americentric writing can affect student interactions and general comprehension. While exposure to new vocabulary is obviously encouraged in college, exactly what vocabulary students are exposed to and to what degree this exposure can be generally useful is a concern. During a class reading, only two of my students understood references to *The Sopranos* and *American Idol* contained in *TSIS*' introduction; such references are not only lost on our students, but these texts could be potentially insulting to Muslim and Gulf mores.

While I have taught students who have written about the popular U.S. television series *Breaking Bad* and violent video games, other less globalized facets of U.S. culture are not as well known, or even understood at all, or not even relevant to the majority of our students, especially the roughly 50% of all TAM-Q students who are native Qatari citizens. As a result, using the given *TSIS* readings for an all-class discussion involved more priming and vocabulary checking than would normally be required. In other words, I often found that when using American texts, we spent more class time attending to the cultural awareness and vocabulary needs of my students before we could begin "the meat" of teaching composition and rhetoric.

To give one example, a reading cluster in *TSIS* is titled "Is Higher Education Worth the Price?" Qatari students receive sponsorship from a Qatari company that includes full tuition payment and guaranteed employment upon graduation, so interest rates (forbidden in Islamic banking practices anyway) and Pell Grants are both unknown and irrelevant to these students' experiences or interests. It might not be surprising, then, that several students incorporated a much safer reading cluster, "Is Fast Food the New Tobacco?"

into essays on fast food and its effects on youth and adolescent health both worldwide and in Qatar. After all, Qatar has Burger King, but not Pell Grants.

What is the argument, then, for the overall utility of *TSIS* at TAM-Q, regarding both chapter content and readings? Other items in the previously mentioned survey (see Table 5.1) also revealed that fewer than one in three students reported having ever analyzed an essay, which argues *for* using the chapters of *TSIS*, as their coverage of both analytical and writing skills and the rhetorical "moves" are maybe even more useful for second language learners than for native speakers. For example, in several student conferences, students had difficulty determining which views were an author's and which were widely held or opposing views, a technique which is covered in chapter five of *TSIS*. I cannot definitely determine whether in all these instances an EAL issue caused the problem, but in one case, a student's misunderstanding was found to be based on an idiomatic difference between Arabic and English phrases that the student and I discussed in detail. In this case, since *TSIS* deals with explicit templates and signal phrases, the book could be at least as useful to EAL students as to native speakers, if not more so.

On the other hand, an over-reliance on templates/formulae is often cited as a *bête noir* of our English faculty in both formal and informal meetings. Students who have learned to introduce successive body paragraphs with a simple "firstly, secondly, thirdly" formula in our English Foundation program have been noted to struggle in developing more particular and relevant transitions between paragraphs. Adherence to templates and formulae do not necessarily prepare students to develop arguments or analyze sources. Criticism of using *TSIS* to teach FYC in American contexts has been published in *CEA Forum* by Amy Lynch-Biniek (2009) as she points out that adherence to templates can encourage students to bypass critical thinking, but the scholarship on using *TSIS* to teach FYC at IBCs is nonexistent.

The Verdict on Using TSIS to Teach FYC at an IBC: Some Answers, More Research Questions

Altogether, the ambivalent survey responses to the existing readings, the limited desire for more Middle Eastern readings, and the students' own selections of almost exclusively non-Middle Eastern favorite authors in the survey beg several further questions:

1. Do our students want to resist our textbooks and assignments but decide it is simply easier to accommodate? The only documented resistance in the three successive sections of FYC I have taught has been

four student essays arguing that Arabic is under attack by the empha-
sis on English in Qatar.

2. Are they accommodating because they are in an English class in
    an American university and therefore expect texts to be written by
    western authors in English rather than by Middle Eastern authors in
    English?

3. Does using western sources and topics allow Qataris to avoid writing
    and discussing delicate local social and political issues?

Perhaps to take advantage of this "safe distance" created by writing about
western topics, one student wrote an essay on the hijab in the western world
(not its use in the Muslim world), and another student wrote about wom-
en's rights without a single direct mention of Qatar. Another FYC student
wanted to write about wasta (nepotism or favor-giving in Arabic) in Qatar,
but did not find enough sources in English. So, his choices were to use the
Arabic sources (which I can't read) and possibly have them translated (web
translation is notoriously inaccurate—I have even taught lessons using dou-
ble-translation and Google Translate with my students to prove this point to
them), or switch topics. It is interesting to consider how many accommoda-
tions and/or adaptations like this may be happening as students choose their
writing topics—or for that matter—how long accommodations like this have
been happening.

Another measure of the possible hegemony of English sources was evi-
dent in the in-class questionnaire item that asked students to "name [their]
favorite books and/or authors" without mentioning English or Arabic specifi-
cally. While two students answered that they had neither favorite authors nor
books, of 22 authors named, only one was Arab—the great Egyptian Nobel
laureate Naguib Mahfouz—and of the 25 books mentioned, only two were
by Arab authors. It should be noted that the Arab author and books were
mentioned by the same student (who also offered eight of the favorite book
mentions). Leading the list of favorite authors (tied at three mentions) were
Charles Dickens and J. K. Rowling, followed by William Shakespeare (two
mentions). Based on the survey results, our students displayed a decidedly
Anglophone /Anglophile bent in their reading before they even encountered
FYC and *TSIS*.

Navigating the Gulf of Local Language and Content in Our FYC Classrooms

In order to approximate the best practices (as outlined by NCTE) of local-

izing and contextualizing the practice of teaching FYC to English Language Learners in a global context, each of us individually and then together have considered the following reflective questions:

- How can I adapt materials to the local context?
- How can I meet curricular requirements and respect local notions of ethos?
- How can I be more inclusive of local voices in the readings I assign in FYC?
- How can I inform myself about local voices and views, considering many of these can be unwritten or published in different languages?
- How can I use western readings/texts as opportunities to encourage mutual intercultural curiosity?
- How can I invite the students' home cultures into the FYC classroom?
- How can I be an advocate for localizing the teaching of FYC at my university?
- How can I create consensus among my colleagues in moving towards a more inclusive and culturally sensitive FYC curriculum?
- How can I privilege the voices and views of my students in the FYC classroom?

By pondering these questions that have neither permanent nor finite answers, we aim to critically reflect on our current FYC practices and to constantly strive to be responsive to our local context and the needs of the students who populate our classrooms.

Although a reflective practitioner is never finished with the work of localizing and contextualizing the teaching of writing, we have made a few "baby steps" in our endeavors to create culturally inclusive classrooms at TAM-Q. To counter the absence of Middle Eastern texts and sources and to invite the home cultures of our students into the FYC classroom, we have begun to adapt our FYC teaching practices in the following ways at TAM-Q:

- We allow students to use non-translated Arabic sources for their researched papers.
- We encourage students to conduct and record oral histories and ethnographies of their family and friends in their mother tongues.
- We expand our notions of texts to include non-print formats such as photographs, interviews, videos, commercials, and advertisements, inviting students to bring examples of these texts to class.
- We incorporate more discussion of assigned readings and invite students to contribute to the curriculum by suggesting class readings.

- We address the confluence of power, language, and identity by assigning and sharing digital narratives that chronicle students' various journeys, both academic and otherwise.
- We encourage students to share their projects with the larger community via websites and journal publications and to invite friends and family to their presentations.
- We encourage students to invite friends and family to their presentations.

As we make room for these practices and widen our definition of "texts," there will necessarily be less time in our courses and room in our FYC curriculum for the Americentric readings we have previously been assigning. Only by moving out of our comfort zones of relying solely on teaching with American texts will we as FYC teachers be able to more effectively localize our practice, better serve our students, and follow the rhetorical principles that we teach.

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