

# A Dual Mission: Antiracist Writing Instruction and Instructor Attitudes about Student Language

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**Abstract:** This article presents the results of a 2021 survey and interview study of faculty teaching writing-intensive (WI) courses across disciplines at an urban research university. We emphasize the need to understand the complexities of instructors' ideologies about teaching writing and their attitudes about student language prior to engaging faculty development in antiracist writing instruction. Specifically, we demonstrate a "difficult dual mission" in faculty development in teaching writing: writing intensive instructors want to value non-standard forms, but they can't stop valuing the standard forms. We argue that identifying the nuance of this too-familiar argument is the first step in the research and relationship-building required to change university discourse such that the WI classroom supports linguistic diversity. In our summary of surveys and interviews with writing-intensive faculty, we emphasize three major focal points to illustrate the manifestation of this dilemma: instructors' profiles as WI instructors, specifically; their attitudes toward language [generally] in WI courses; and their attitudes toward students' actual language performances in WI courses.

I want these various students, wherever they're from, and whatever they come with, to get the education they need and want in order to be successful... but I don't want to, I don't know, smother, you know, their individuality, their personality, the things they're bringing from their various cultures, their linguistic backgrounds, you know, their ways of being, and, like, say, "You've always got to put a period at the end of the sentence. And you've always got to do this." And I mean, I do say those things, but I feel crappy every time, even though it was my way out.

—Interview participant, Winter 2021

At many institutions, like our urban research university, faculty development in writing instruction often happens in silos, with instructors spread apart on campus and beyond. While faculty participate in workshops, teaching circles, reading groups, seminars, and their individual study to develop actionable pedagogies, it is also common for faculty to work in isolation to refine and improve

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teaching practices, or to develop programmatic initiatives (García de Müller & Ruiz, 2017). This disjointed pedagogical landscape can make the development of unified, sustainable initiatives for teacher development in antiracist language and literacy practices seem especially challenging. As noted by designers of Syracuse University's Antiracist WAC Toolkit, integrating antiracist writing instruction across the curriculum requires a "supportive space" (para. 4) and "sustained conversations" (para. 5).

There is much to be gained from doing this work across disciplinary and departmental lines. Faculty collaborating across writing intensive (WI) courses can support each other's teaching practices and promote student engagement (Balfanz, 2015) and faculty development (Parrish, Hesse, & Bateman, 2016). This collaboration, between faculty and with students, can support rethinking distinctions between disciplinarity and departmentality, opening space to reinvent writing and languaging in the disciplines to move past monolingual ideologies (Horner, 2018). Additionally, it can help faculty in the disciplines empower students to make full use of their linguistic repertoires (Hall, 2018).

But developing sustainable collaborations is not as simple as having a shared goal. Jones, Gonzales, and Haas (2021) set the bar for engaging in antiracist work, saying that it, and "more specifically pro-Black and liberatory work, should be preceded by the necessary research to do this work" (p. 31). This article presents our attempts to attend to these qualifications for cross-curricular faculty development work in antiracist instruction by first understanding faculty attitudes toward language and literacy practices (see Miller et al., 2022). In this article, we draw from a small study of instructor experiences and attitudes we conducted in the Winter 2021 semester to ask the following questions:<sup>1</sup>

- How do instructors engage literacy instruction in their WI classrooms?
- What are their attitudes toward "standard" and "nonstandard" uses of English in the classroom context?
- And what are their perceptions of "good" and "poor" writing in their WI courses?

At our urban R1 institution, in Fall 2022, the most recent semester with available data, 54.2% of students self-identified in categories other than white<sup>2</sup>: 14.8% as Black or African American, 12.1% as Asian, 9.6% as Middle Eastern, 6.1% as Hispanics of any race, 5.3% as U.S. non-residents, and 3.8% as two or more races (2.2% of students marked that their race and ethnicity were unknown) (*Diversity Dashboard*, 2022). Understanding more about instructor attitudes toward students' language is critical because the dispositions that faculty bring to these diverse classrooms can affect their writing pedagogy (Baird & Dilger, 2018; Sharma, 2017). Moreover, these approaches that privilege solely a monolingual "standard" English leave out the linguistic resources of many students.

In the sections below, we position our research within our institutional context and scholarship on instructor ideologies about language instruction. Then we outline our study, detailing the results in a composite summary of survey and interview participants. Our analysis not only helps us begin to understand the ways our colleagues talk about teaching writing, but it also highlights a circular problem familiar in higher education: while faculty believe that students should be valued for their individual contributions to the university classroom, they also assume students require an unchangeable and necessary assimilation into a kind of standard academic writing for job market preparation (Inoue, 2019b). These ideologies pose a dilemma: writing intensive instructors want to value non-standard forms, but they can't stop valuing the standard forms. More pointedly, we often see instructors base their instruction *only* on the necessity of teaching "standard" forms and not on the power of supporting students with "linguistic options," though scholars have perennially argued for the latter (e.g., Logan, 2003; Delpit, 2006; Mao, 2018). We argue that identifying the nuance of this too-familiar argument is the first step in the research and relationship-building required to change university discourse such that the WI classroom supports linguistic diversity.

## Institutional Context

In our local context, the institution-wide work of teaching writing outside of general education composition courses is administered through individual departments as they determine WI course requirements for their majors. The administration of WI courses varies across departments: some, like Business or Communication, offer specific courses as their determined WIs, while others, like English or Global Studies, ask students and faculty to complete forms confirming the writing-intensive nature of a course. Students typically take their WI courses in their senior year, though in some programs, they may do so earlier. Students may take more than one WI course and they may encounter several upper-level courses in which writing projects are a central requirement.

Historically, WAC/WID initiatives at our university have developed through various institutional partnerships; for example, individual instructors, programs, and departments have coordinated with the campus writing center to develop and deliver workshops to support student writing in courses across the disciplines. To directly support the university's mission, recent initiatives aimed at inclusive and antiracist teaching have emerged through the Provost's Office and offices broadly supporting teaching and learning and diversity, equity, and inclusion. These trainings are offered as self-paced courses through the university's learning management system for faculty to complete asynchronously at their discretion. Our research team, composed of tenure-line faculty, non-tenure track faculty, and graduate teaching assistants from programs in English, communication, and learning design and technology, similarly emerged from collegial conversations and funding from a small working group grant offered by our campus humanities center. The team began during the pandemic as a reading group that coalesced through email and Zoom. Through early conversations around shared readings, we put together a research plan and pursued additional funding opportunities to support the research that is presented in this paper. The team's work is broadly focused on reading scholarship in antiracist writing instruction and linguistic diversity and taking research-based action in our local context, a body of work we view as essential due to the school's highly diverse student body.

In the Winter 2021 semester, when almost all courses were taught online during our university's third "pandemic semester," we focused our pilot study on WI courses to understand instructors' experiences with and attitudes about language and literacy practices both within and beyond our home disciplines. This was especially important because, as instructors of communication, writing, and education courses, and as teacher development experts, we were generally familiar with instructor experiences within writing courses and understood the scholarship emphasizing the necessity for antiracist language and literacy practices in our own teaching. However, we did not know whether and how these values for writing instruction were held outside of our home departments. We wanted to listen to instructors of the courses that follow our required general education composition and communication courses to learn about how they experience teaching writing.

This listening is supported and complicated by research team members' cultural and institutional identities. Regarding cultural identity, most of our research team members are white: authors one and two are white, author three is Latina, authors four and five are white, author six is Black (Gullah), and author seven is white. All are U.S.-born native English speakers. Similarly, most of the instructors surveyed (10 of 14) and interviewed (4 of 5) were white. Ultimately, these conversations about race and cultural identity were primarily happening between white people. In addition, existing campus relationships may have impacted the comfortability of some interview participants, negatively or positively, who may have worked with interviewers within departments or on committees. Both factors may have limited the range of experiences accounted for and the discourse used by both interviewers and participants.

## Key Terms Employed in this Study and Article

We provide a rationale for our selection and employment of terms in this study because of what these terms represent regarding systemic and ideological influences. In our survey items and interview questions, we elected to use terms that we understood as more commonly used in conversation at our institution. Thus, while we prefer to use Baker-Bell's (2020) term White Mainstream English (WME) to mark the values aligned with the United States' white supremacist foundations that underpin academic English, we used the terms academic English (AE) and non-standard English (NSE) in our interviews because we anticipated that our participants would be more familiar with these terms.

- **Academic English:** The oral and written language of the university, viewed from a trans-disciplinary perspective, consists of a set of language practices rooted in European and American colonial history that remain closely aligned with middle and upper class white cultural groups. As described below in the literature review, other terms like White Mainstream English (e.g., Baker-Bell, 2020) or Standard Edited American English (e.g., Davila, 2016) have been used in other texts and contexts to capture the standard dialect of schooling. While we use these terms at points in our review and discussion, AE was used as the specific term in our survey and interviews as we asked questions about student writing in the context of the WI classroom. "Professional writing" is paired with AE in several survey items as a corollary to AE, as both represent variants of WME.
- **Non-standard English:** While much anti-racist pedagogy has been focused on Black English, we elected to use the term "non-standard forms" because we have observed that many students at Wayne State University come from families that use a range of named languages, including Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, and Spanish, along with English dialects such as Black English. Because our students bring a variety of language practices into the classroom, we adopted the phrase NSE to reference the range of named languages and dialects that our participants would likely have come across in their experiences with our university students. Acknowledging that the phrase implies these language forms and dialects are working alongside a "standard" English, and that we did not want to preclude the intersections of race and class in our participants' experiences, we felt the more general term NSE would be open enough for participants to respond with a range of experiences.

## Literature Review

As teachers and scholars in communication, composition, and learning design and technology programs, we believe that if our university's mission is to serve undergraduate curricula, a diverse student body, and the broader community, then we also have a mission to linguistic justice. As Baker-Bell (2020) defined it, linguistic justice is "an antiracist approach to language and literacy education" (p. 7). Within writing studies, a discipline in which we see much of the work of our programs intersecting, there are abundant arguments for linguistic justice (e.g., Baker-Bell, 2020; Young, 2019; Inoue, 2019b, 2021) and examples of antiracist writing instruction and assessment practices and strategies for investigating language ideologies in first-year writing courses (Perryman-Clark, 2012; Inoue, 2015; Slinkard & Gevers, 2020; Brown, 2021). However, because this literacy education is not limited to and does not end at first-year composition (see, for example, McKinney and Hoggan's [2022] discussion of approaches used in adult career preparation courses), our research and action need to extend outward. To plan faculty development only from a place of our own experiences and attitudes won't get us very far in working to systematically address the linguistic racism historically embedded in writing instruction in higher education. Here we briefly present discussion of

raciolinguistic ideologies and consider initiatives based on language and literacy instruction to understand how we might most effectively attune to our cross-disciplinary landscape.

Whereas much prior research has focused on rehabilitating the language practices of students, Rosa and Flores (2017) have urged researchers to look instead at the raciolinguistic ideologies that the listening subjects (i.e., teachers) bring to the classroom. Languages are not inherently racialized; instead, race and language are co-naturalized when the raciolinguistic ideologies of readers and listeners index the language and literacy practices of rhetors as belonging to social categories (e.g., identity, race, ethnicity, class, etc.) (Flores & Rosa, 2015). As Young (2010, p. 110) and McKinney and Hoggan (2022, p. 383) have emphasized, it is instructors' attitudes, not language practices themselves, that can either lead to prejudice and oppression or "honouring" students' diverse backgrounds.

Since language practices are not racialized until listening subjects mark them as such, the raciolinguistic ideologies (whether tacit or explicit) deployed by instructors in the post-secondary classroom represent important sites for research. Sharma (2018) pointed to the "prevalence of reductive views about language and writing" that exists across fields, noting how this is in contradiction, in the STEM fields the author is interested in, with the "border-crossing communication" required of faculty and students (p. 44). These (sometimes reductive, as Sharma and others have found) instructor attitudes and approaches toward language and literacy instruction can influence their design and implementation of writing assignments (Miller et al., 2022) and can be evidenced in their feedback on student writing (Szymanski, 2014). These ideologies thus can impact individual students and their selfhood, whether within the bounds of the single course, or extending beyond that. For instance, after interviewing writing instructors about a range of student papers, Davila (2016) found that instructors' standard language discourse constructed standard edited American English (SEAE) as neutral, normal, non-interfering in processes of meaning-making, and widely accessible, therefore positioning speakers as responsible for learning SEAE and resulting in victim-blaming of those who do not use SEAE (p. 142). Indicating that instructors may have "idealized" this particular discourse, Bacon (2018) used the term "monolingual ideologies" to emphasize this problematic preference (p. 173). Reframing SEAE as merely one dialect among many may overturn assumptions about its standardness and inevitability and make space for "linguistically diverse students" (Davila, 2016, p. 145).

This reframing must become an institution-wide project to overcome the siloing we acknowledged in our introduction—what students are assigned or allowed to do with their language in one classroom may be penalized in another—thus the need for communication across each writing and writing intensive course and instructor. Castillo and Kim explained that while students in college writing courses may demonstrate linguistic variation in their writing, instructors may "assume there is something wrong or incomplete in their use of language" (Vieira et al., 2020, p. 42). This is an assumption that evidences a narrow viewpoint of White Mainstream English (WME) or SEAE as the sole benchmark for successful linguistic expression. Through their research and collaboration on disciplinary statements, teacher scholars have outlined strategies for integrating literary analysis and practice with code-meshing as ways to work through and counteract these limiting and oppressive assumptions (e.g., Poe, 2013; Young, 2018; CCCC, 2020; Institute of Race, Rhetoric, and Literacy, 2021; Brown, 2021; McKinney & Hoggan, 2022). Poe has argued that we might better help students understand the ways that language works in specific contexts, including how linguistic conventions may be "broken or 'meshed'" with each other (2013, p. 100). Green and Condon (2020) have argued that teachers of writing across the university would benefit from training on using and integrating diverse and historically marginalized language practices with other forms, including WME.

However, engaging faculty development at an institutional level, and particularly in literacy instruction and writing-across-the-curriculum, is complex not only at the level of logistics, but more seriously, of ideology. Holdstein (2001) explored the limited critical examination of the effect of university initiatives on students and her concern about the dilution of literacy education; in an analysis of the 1997-98 WPA-Listserv, Holdstein cited Ed White and others who noted that the work of teaching writing in the disciplines often falls to faculty less experienced in teaching writing (p. 45) or “with almost no training or interest in the teaching of writing” (White, quoted in Holdstein, 2001, p. 49). As Donahue (2002) described, even WAC programs with long-term success can face sudden “strange resistances” (p. 34), where faculty find ways not to participate and administration relies on “lip service” (p. 40) rather than meaningful, sustainable action.

Scholarship on faculty ideologies about language uncovers the ways these ideologies are often steeped in habits of white language (Inoue, 2021) and white supremacist values (Baker-Bell, 2020). The marking of sets of language practices as racialized is a function of the ideologies or beliefs held by the listener/reader that are mapped onto the language practices; such markings are not intrinsic to the language itself (e.g., Young, 2010; Flores & Rosa, 2015; McKinney & Hoggan, 2022). Thus, as teachers of students using racialized dialects of English and other named languages, we have an obligation to value their language practices as legitimate modes of communication and knowledge-making in the classroom. Linguistic justice means that students have the right to use the languages they bring with them, and we are obligated to recognize the intrinsic value of those languages. As the authors of Conference on College Composition and Communication’s *This Ain’t Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!* (2020) emphasized, “teachers [must] reject negative perceptions of Black Language and no longer use racist linguistic ideologies that perpetuate hate, shaming, and the spirit murdering (Johnson et al., 2017) of Black students.” Attentive to the rich and diverse linguistic activity of our university’s many Black, Hispanic, Arab-American, and Asian students, we emphasize that this important argument should be extended to the range of groups who use racialized English dialects and other named languages.

Following Rosa and Flores (2017) and Poe (2013), current research must focus on the expectations, attitudes, and raciolinguistic ideologies that faculty bring into the rhetorical and discursive situation in the classroom as listening and evaluating subjects. The literature outlined above demonstrates that faculty attitudes affect curriculum and student success. Many of these studies of the beliefs about writing and language that faculty bring with them into writing instruction present in their findings significant contradictions unveiled by the research (e.g., Flores, 2020; Sharma, 2018). The study we describe below represents yet another familiar paradox: faculty both express that they value students’ linguistic diversity and hold tightly to the place of WME in teaching writing. This is a paradox that warrants deeper understanding. If our aim is to instigate sustainable, pedagogical change in support of linguistic justice, we need to turn this reflective critical lens towards ourselves, our colleagues, and the institutions that sponsor our authority as pedagogues (e.g., Kynard, 2020; Martinez, 2020; Jones, Gonzales, & Haas, 2021), work which we have only just begun through this study.

## Methodology and Methods

Here, we describe our methods for gathering instructor perspectives on language and literacy practices in WI classrooms, through surveys and interviews that we analyze as composite narrative summaries. As noted above, our research was influenced and impacted by the cross-disciplinary nature of our team, our remote work situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the immense need to address what it means to be teaching writing when we can no longer tolerate white supremacist perspectives of language as a kind of academic “norm.”



## Instructor Surveys

We developed a survey (Appendix A) of instructors teaching WI courses in the Winter 2021 semester. We used these surveys to gather demographic information as well as quantify participants' attitudes related to language and literacy practices in writing courses. We used questions that targeted participants' literacy practices, writing instruction, attitudes toward student writing, and assessing student writing. We hoped to gain insight into patterns of instructor attitudes and postures toward student writing, which could indicate instructor attitudes toward language and literacy practices. The survey also included a request for interview participants. The survey was distributed beginning at the midpoint of the semester (March 2021) and continued through finals (April 2021) to provide the opportunity for as many responses as possible. We distributed the survey via Qualtrics and our university email to 81 instructors, with a total of 14 completed responses (17.3%).

## Instructor Interviews

Our group collaboratively developed interview questions after meeting to discuss shared readings—including Baker-Bell (2020) and Flores and Rosa (2015) and others—and considering the implications these readings might have on interview conversations with our colleagues. Specifically, we developed questions to explore tacit racialized attitudes, asking how participants would describe the “value” of AE and NSE in their WI classroom, “ideal” students, students who “struggle and fail”, and “good” and “poor” student writing. While the survey explicitly references race, we avoided specifically invoking race in the interview questions with the expectation that responses would reveal racialized attitudes that the participants may have been unaware of.

We scheduled 60-minute interviews via Zoom with the five instructors who indicated an interest in participating. We provided these participants with the interview questions ahead of the interview to allow them time to reflect, and to be transparent about our lines of inquiry. Using our semi-structured interview script (Appendix B), one research team member facilitated the conversation with the other member primarily taking notes. We revised the order of the questions following the first interview, to better facilitate relationship-building within the bounds of the 60-minute interview. We used Otter.ai to transcribe video calls.

## Segmenting and Coding

For our initial readings of interview transcripts, we segmented interview responses by clauses to allow us to identify finer points of instructors' expressions about attitudes, experiences, and evaluations. Segmenting helped us focus on the smallest units of claims that are being made in the transcripts. Specifically, we used *in vivo* and values coding (Saldaña, 2016) to develop codes; this coding aided our categorizing of interview transcript topics that emerged outside of the direct questions we asked (Geisler & Swarts, 2019). Reading and coding the segmented transcripts supported our understanding of how spoken discourse in interviews often combines multiple topics and complex expressions into single interview responses. Once we built a codebook through extensive synchronous coding meetings focusing on a single transcript, we coded the remaining transcripts asynchronously. Three coders were assigned to each transcript; coders individually analyzed transcripts and then met synchronously to reach consensus.

## Composite Findings and Interview Representation

Composite character narratives have been used as a method to present empirical data while blurring the boundaries between individuals' identities to protect vulnerable participants in critical race scholarship (Baker-Bell, 2020; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and educational contexts (Clements et al.,

2020). Using composite narratives to combine interview data can strengthen participant anonymity when they may be easily identified (Willis, 2018) and in educational contexts where discussing faculty activity within an institution may still reveal their identities (Clements et al., 2020). Following Willis, we are well positioned to craft composites because we are writing instructors (whether in general education composition courses or in the disciplines) in the institution, and thus understand what teaching writing has looked like at our university in recent years. In our approach, we collapse distinctions between individual accounts—and participants' disciplines and departments—to prevent readers from linking specific passages across the arc of the presentation of data with discrete individuals, while creating an account that best reflects our understanding of the data and preserves participants' anonymity. While the primary audience for this article will be readers working in WAC/WID research and teaching contexts, we are also striving to build an institutional program and are concerned with keeping participants as fully anonymous as possible. Wertz et al. (2011) noted that creating composite narratives “is not a simple re-telling. It is interpretation by the researcher in several important ways: through her knowledge of the literature regarding the phenomenon under enquiry, through listening and hearing the stories told by the informants, and through her own reflexivity during the process” (p. 2). Therefore, we refer to participants without pseudonyms, using only “participants/they” to reference statements that reflect some shared agreement across informants and using phrases such as “one participant” or “a participant” to reference statements that are significant but are not widely shared by informants in our study.

We have not shared our representation of the interviews with participants for review nor have we invited participants to join as co-authors, as is sometimes the practice in qualitative research work. While these practices may allow a participant to “guide the researcher to a more accurate account” of the participant's experience (Souleles, 2021, p. 217), research on systemic racism is one example of the kinds of research in which participant feedback or member checking may not be preferable or meaningful, as “participants may not be aware of the many guises [systemic racism] can take because it is normalized in society” (Levitt, 2021, p. 73). Further, as Souleles noted, when working on ethnographic studies focused on “those who have and exercise power” (p. 207), “this level of openness can become a veto for participants” on issues they may “find embarrassing or irrelevant” (p. 217). Our project focuses on how our colleagues view dialects in the classroom, in order to work toward collaboratively creating a more expansive approach to language and power in the academy beyond just required general education composition and communication courses. But to do this we must first understand the attitudes towards language in classrooms across the disciplines. As Souleles observed, “there are situations in which it is inappropriate to share interpretive authority with our informants due to the power they have in our shared social worlds” (2021, p. 223). If we are going to face the hegemonic power in AE as one that is rooted in race and colonial history, then we will have to take ethnographic approaches that do not cede authority in representation of the data while maintaining commitments to informed consent, anonymity, and the collaboration inherent in qualitative research.

## Limitations

While below we present findings from our study such that it helps us begin to initiate local conversations about teaching writing across disciplines, we also note limitations. First, our study was affected by limited participation from faculty during an already overburdened, online, pandemic semester. While faculty participation in the survey is statistically acceptable, we ultimately only interviewed 6.17% of all instructors and surveyed 17.3% of all instructors teaching lecture sections of WI courses in Winter 2021 (i.e., sections not labeled “lab” or “directed study”). Second, three of our five interview participants come from humanities fields. This sample helps us understand the experiences and attitudes of faculty participants in highly enrolled programs and classes at our



university, however, without a better representation of faculty across disciplines, including engineering, medical professions, and business (see Inoue in Lerner, 2018), we risk engaging a humanities-centered echo chamber regarding language and literacy practices in WI courses. Further, while the ratio of white faculty to faculty of color among the interview participants closely reflects the demographic distribution among all Wayne State faculty, representation of faculty of color is still limited in our sample. As we continue our research and preparation for faculty development, we can do better to speak with instructors long engaged in addressing systemic racism as well as engaging with the voices of our BIPOC colleagues (Pimentel, 2021). Finally, though our research was designed to help us investigate and understand faculty attitudes toward students' language and literacy practices in anticipation of faculty development in antiracist writing instruction, our analysis of this small sample shows us how and where we might talk differently with participants in future interviews; nevertheless, the study reveals valuable tensions that can guide further research and conversations.

## Results

After approaching our analysis of the comprehensive transcripts and our coded segments with the three research questions listed in the introduction, we crafted summaries of our findings. These summaries serve as profiles of WI instructors at our university and identify important differences in their attitudes about and experiences with teaching writing and linguistic diversity that could help us further refine future collegial listening and research. We use conceptual congruence (Merriam, 2009) to organize three major categories for these summaries: experiences, attitudes, and evaluations. These concepts are present in the direct interview questions we ask as well as distributed in the weight of coded transcripts. However, as noted above, participants' expressions about these categorized large topics may emerge at any location in the interview transcripts. The "polyvocal, and sometimes contradictory" attitudes expressed by individual participants (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 581) begin to take interpretive shape in these summaries. In the summary sections below, we have categorized similarities between instructors' experiences and instructional approaches in paragraphs and displayed more nuanced differences in attitudes and evaluations of students' speaking and writing practices in tables. The topics of interview questions are represented at the paragraph level, with supporting details drawn from both interviews and surveys.

### Participants as WI Instructors

Participants come from departments and programs in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, and represent tenured faculty, non-tenure track faculty, and graduate student instructors. Most of the survey respondents (n=14) are instructors on either end of the experience spectrum: either 1-3 years teaching experience (n=4), or 15-20+ years of experience (n=7). White instructors (10) accounted for more than twice the number of Black or African American instructors (4) participating. Survey respondents come from disciplines in the humanities (n=6), social sciences (n=4), and sciences (n=3), and primarily occupy tenured/tenure-track positions (n=6) and full-time non-tenure track positions (n=4).

Most respondents report using only English on a regular basis (n=12); only two respondents report having (a) immediate family members who use languages other than English and/or (b) regularly using languages other than English themselves. When asked to describe the language they use at home, participants use phrases like "slang," "swear like a sailor," "conversational," and "informal." Participants describe the language they use at school as more complex and consisting of a "more extensive vocabulary" than the language they use at home. One participant notes that English was not their first language, another notes that they use British English phrases when speaking with

family on the phone, and another describes learning how to “code switch” because they “did not want to be isolated” or “ostracized for sounding weird.” Participants also struggle to describe their “home language”. One notes that they do not see a difference between the language used at home and the language used at school. Another remarks, when asked to describe the language they use at home, “I’ve not been asked this. I don’t know what to make about this question [...] I don’t know how to answer this.”

These instructors use a range of literacy learning practices in their WI classrooms, including modeling genre expectations, providing written feedback to encourage development and clarification of ideas, meeting one-on-one with students, and engaging grammar instruction descriptively and responsively. Their descriptions show us that, overall, students in WI classes read across genres and modes (e.g., fiction, non-fiction, scholarly articles, reports, documentary films) and compose a range of writing-to-learn tasks, multimodal assignments, and traditional academic texts, including research papers, analysis essays, and public genres. These instructors focus writing instruction and feedback on higher order concerns like development and organization of ideas, and they attend to lower order concerns in both classroom lessons and written feedback, believing that writing with good grammar is essential to students’ success. For some instructors we interviewed, their descriptive attention to grammar comes from their own experiences: in elementary and high school they spent time reading and writing about literature, but in college were faced with certain expectations for grammar and organization. Instructors express a responsibility to support students’ rhetorical success. They relate concern about students not being able to write paragraphs or sentences, with these problems getting “in the way of their message.” Instructors want students to “think about who they want to reach and what they want to tell them.”

Most instructors surveyed feel prepared to teach academic writing (9/14 agree or strongly agree) and to teach writing in their class (11/14 agree or strongly agree). There is a split among instructors on whether they read books/articles or attend professional workshops on teaching writing (5 disagree, 6 agree). Though they largely enjoy teaching, participants in the interviews express a range of feelings about what it means to teach writing, noting that it can “feel crappy” to have to provide tough feedback to students and that writing is “hard to teach.” For some the sudden transition to online instruction during the pandemic has lessened their ability to know whether they are teaching well, and for others, increased the difficulty of teaching writing.

### **Attitudes Towards Language in WI Courses**

In our survey, we asked participants to rate how frequently they used specific strategies for writing instruction that related to standard language and non-standard language ideologies (Table 1). Respondents reported supporting AE in their writing instruction by requiring students to use AE (the mode response was “always”) and discussing how to use AE (the mode response was “always”). While respondents generally support AE strategies, they show less support for NSE strategies, with the mode for all Likert items as “rarely/never” using each strategy. All respondents require students to use AE, and most discuss how to use AE in class. While some respondents allow students to use NSE, respondents generally reported rarely or never incorporating instructional strategies related to NSE, including supporting or allowing students to use NSE and other named languages.

**Table 1. How do you provide writing instruction to your students in writing intensive [WI] courses at Wayne State University? Rate each statement based on how frequently you incorporate the strategy in your pedagogy [Always, Often, Occasionally, Rarely/Never, Don't Know or N/A]**

	Always	Often	Occasion-ally	Rarely/ Never	Don't Know or N/A	Mode
I discuss how to use academic or professional or standard English	5	3	2	2	0	Always
I require students to use academic or professional or standard English	5	3	4	0	0	Always
I provide resources that support students' use of Black English and/or other non-standard forms of English	0	0	2	9	1	Rarely/Never
I allow students to use Black English and/or other non-standard forms of English	2	1	2	7	0	Rarely/Never
I support students' use of non-academic language	1	2	3	6	0	Rarely/Never
I allow students to communicate in named languages (e.g., French, Spanish) other than English	1	1	1	6	0	Rarely/Never

We also asked survey respondents to rate how strongly they agreed with several questions related to attitudes related to AE and NSE use in the student writing they respond to at Wayne State University (Table 2). Respondents showed the strongest concurrence in agreeing with the following attitudes: it is important for students to master AE; students often use language that is too informal; and students should be able to communicate to non-academic audiences. The remaining items show a split on whether respondents generally agree or disagree with each statement. It is important to note that respondents were split on the following: 7/13 respondents disagree that "When my students don't use academic English, it diminishes the quality of their ideas," and 7/13 respondents agree or strongly agree that "My students shouldn't use informal dialects (Black English, Spanglish, etc.) in academic writing." These findings suggest that respondents strongly value AE, and while they believe students should communicate with non-academic audiences, they do not believe students should use NSE in their writing.

**Table 2. Frequency table showing responses to a Likert scale, measuring faculty attitudes towards students as well as the mode for each Likert item. Respondents were asked: Consider your experiences responding to student writing at Wayne State University and rate the following statements based on how strongly you Agree/Disagree with them [Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree, Don't Know or N/A]**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Unsure / Don't Know	Mode
I often don't understand why students struggle with academic English	6	4	2	0	1	Strongly Disagree
When my students don't use academic English, it diminishes the quality of their ideas	0	7	3	2	1	Disagree
It is important for my students to master standard academic English	0	1	8	4	0	Agree
My students often use language that is too informal	0	2	6	5	0	Agree
It is important for my students to be able to communicate to non-academic audiences	1	1	6	5	0	Agree
My students shouldn't use informal dialects (Black English, Spanglish, etc.) in academic writing	2	3	5	2	1	Agree
The race and/or ethnicity of my students does not affect the quality of their writing	1	1	4	5	2	Strongly Agree

When asked about the value of “non-standard forms,” some instructors described the characteristics of benefits of classroom conversation, either the informal conversations that take place at the beginnings and endings of class sessions, or the more structured discussions on course subject matter. They note that “just getting students to communicate at all in the classroom is challenging because [students are] really trying to look at their technology as much as they can, no matter what their background is.” However, participants perceive that students are “comfortable” with them and know that instructors are “not going to judge them.” Instructors see differences between the ways students communicate when instructors are “lecturing and answering questions” on one hand, and, on the other, when students are “talking and joking” on their own, which is when they are “very free with their language.” The non-standard forms of language students use in the classroom are, as one participant describes, “very valuable”; this participant wants students to “feel confident” in using NSE

in the classroom and is “very intentional” that they do not stop students from using NSE because stopping them is “part of erasing the identity.” Instructors expect informal speech to be part of classroom talk, but “hate speech or anything else” is not allowed, and ground rules are important for class discussions: “you don’t interrupt others, and you’re not rude and abusive, or ‘we critique ideas, not criticize people’ sort of thing.” Instructors acknowledge that students talk through their ideas in class in different ways; for example, as one instructor notes, “And so, you don’t have to approach it like Plato or Socrates when you’re answering in my class. Because people tell their answers in different ways. It’s not always a linear process.” These attitudes suggest that participants feel/agree NSE can be important in classroom talk.

Instructors are also aware of how their informal classroom talk may be perceived by students: one notes, “maybe they see a lot of the, you know, the implicit biases that White people may have towards people of color.” Making course content approachable in these situations is important: “I don’t dumb it down, I don’t think, but I also don’t want to keep it ivory towerish and academic sounding. I try to put it in everyday language.”

Participants articulate the value of NSE and tie the value of non-standard forms to race. Instructors are “comfortable” with the presence of students’ various languages in the talk and sometimes the writing of their classrooms. A participant describes listening to fifteen students “speaking Arabic in the back, if they don’t want me to know what’s going on, and laughing wildly and having conversations.” One participant notes, “there’s just so much linguistic diversity in my classes. A lot of them use it [non-standard language forms], their own particular ways of speaking with each other, in order to keep me or others out of the loop. So, for me, I like it. For me, it’s wonderful.” Participants describe good relationships with students who occasionally use Arabic sources in their writing but point to the difficulty in working with African American students, locating those problems in their writing and grammar. One participant further notes that as an instructor, they have had “more difficulty with African Americans as a whole than any of the other international students,” including Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi students who “all write English well” and “come from a different home culture where generally education has been really emphasized as a cultural norm and expectation.” While the vast majority of African American students at Wayne State University are not international students, they are nonetheless grouped here with south Asian students in what amounts to a racist stereotype of cultural groups’ attitudes towards education. Overall, we found that participants both support students’ use of NSE and yet also characterize the use of NSE in racist terms.

In our interviews, we also asked participants pointedly about their perceptions of the value of AE. In describing this value, participants turned to attempts at defining AE. AE is “more formal speech,” a “uniform standard” that is “changing” and sometimes that students need to understand, even if they don’t use it. It “allows you to develop your thoughts at a deeper level.” Understanding AE allows students to access scholarly literature and to broaden their reading and writing vocabulary. Participants tie AE to determining “appropriate” language; it is also tied to Whiteness. One participant asserts the need for our conception of AE to be broadened. Participants note that students will have to be able to write for their capstone classes. Beyond that, they will need to be able to write well for jobs. Some specifically express the value of AE for students’ careers, as “your writing will precede you” in professional situations. At times, participants express students’ ability to write as a kind of “ticket” to jobs and opportunities. “Great grammar skills” and “facility with language” are an “entree” to jobs. Without attention to grammar and mechanics, “you’re gone” from a position.

As noted above, when we surveyed instructors on their attitudes towards AE and NSE, we found more support for “academic and professional English” in the classroom and in student writing than non-standard forms. Instructors discuss how to use AE and require AE in writing assignments more often than not. Instructors also rarely or never allow students to communicate/use NSE in writing and

rarely or never provide resources that support using NSE. In our survey, one instructor stated, “I don’t encourage black english [sic] because students won’t land interviews and get hired for jobs if employers believer [sic] are incapable of writing and speaking in standard English.” Another instructor elaborated on this same theme:

I wish Black English, rural southern dialect, Spanglish, etc. were acceptable styles for publishing research articles, but they are not currently. I think this problem needs to be systematically addressed because if we teach these kids to write manuscripts with Black English, then their papers will be rejected by scientific journals and their grad school applications will be downgraded. If the problem is not addressed nationally, then we will likely be setting them up for failure, which would be a form of systemic racism because it would disproportionately harm racial and ethnic minority students.

Instructors present a valuing of both “student voice” and AE but cite systemic reasons for maintaining an emphasis on AE in their writing classrooms. They want students’ “authentic selves” to be present in their writing and use of AE. They hope for “creative” responses to writing assignments, for a student writing an assignment to develop their voice, to “express themselves,” and to “develop as a person” through the task of writing, with attention to mechanics. But they carry their own experiential knowledge about the role of writing and individual success with them as they teach, with one participant expressing that they are “taking the students where they’re at and recognizing where society will want them to be in the job world, because I know very well that my speaking and writing ability has gotten me far.”

The value of AE was clear for respondents and yielded an array of views that centered around the job market and how the language used by students will shape others’ perceptions of students. On the other hand, the value of NSE was not as uniformly defined and articulated by respondents. Some noted the importance of NSE in certain kinds of classroom talk and one remarked that it was closely related to identity. However, conversations about NSE also led to racist expressions about the purpose for using languages other than English and racialized/ethnic groups’ attitudes towards education. The ways participants described the value of AE and NSE vary in that their descriptions show they believe AE has a clear socio-cultural value as an essential tool in the job market while they believe NSE does not have any clear socio-cultural function in the WI classroom outside of creating a sense of classroom community.

### **Attitudes Towards Students’ Language Performances in WI Courses**

When faculty were surveyed about their attitudes towards students’ writing, participants were split among general issues like whether their students knew how to write, whether their students submit “high quality” work in the WI class, and whether their students were prepared to write at the level of quality expected for the instructor’s field or department (Table 3). Respondents showed strong consensus on general issues, such as “My students are not academically prepared for writing in the classroom”. Participants also showed strong consensus on items that relate to language, power, and equality. Again, we find tension in the attitudes towards language: faculty clearly support AE in the WI classroom, but also clearly believe it is important for students to communicate with non-academic audiences.



**Table 3. Frequency table showing responses to a Likert scale, measuring faculty attitudes towards students as well as the mode for each Likert item.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Unsure / Don't Know	Mode
My students are academically prepared for writing in the classroom	3	7	1	0	2	Disagree
My students don't know how to write	2	6	3	2	0	Disagree
Students submit high quality written work in my writing intensive courses	1	6	2	2	2	Disagree
My students don't write at the level required in my field/department	1	3	6	1	1	Agree
My students require too much individualized help to produce good academic writing	1	4	3	4	1	Strongly Agree

These language ideologies likely impact what instructors see as students' strengths and needs for writing in their courses. When we analyzed the concepts participants used to describe features of good and poor student writing, we found that participants used about the same number of unique higher order concern concepts (n=10) and lower order concern concepts (n=9) when talking about good student writing, but used almost twice as many unique lower order concern concepts (n=14) as higher order concern concepts (n=8) when talking about poor student writing (Table 4).

**Table 4. Unique higher order and lower order concerns concepts used to describe good student writing and poor student writing. When concepts were used multiple times by interview participants (e.g., organized, organized, organization, organization), one version was selected (i.e., organized) to represent the category of responses**

	Good Student Writing	Poor Student Writing
Higher Order Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get their point across</li> <li>• Is our method for getting this out really the best way to get the message to the person</li> <li>• Good content in terms of depth</li> <li>• Grabs the attention of people</li> <li>• Not repeating themselves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poorly expressed</li> <li>• Lack depth of thinking and analysis</li> <li>• Stay on the surface of things</li> <li>• Poorly conceived</li> <li>• Plagiarism is a big issue</li> <li>• Disorganized</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Not introducing new concepts in the conclusion or near the end of the paper</li> <li>• Organized</li> <li>• Cohere in general</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't cohere</li> </ul>
Lower Order Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A paragraph that develops one idea</li> <li>• A paragraph that they can transition to the next paragraph</li> <li>• A paragraph that's comprised of five to seven sentences</li> <li>• Readable</li> <li>• Concise</li> <li>• You hear their writing voice</li> <li>• Less sentence construction issues</li> <li>• Check syntax</li> <li>• Check grammar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't know how to paragraph</li> <li>• Two and three sentence paragraphs</li> <li>• Do not write sentences</li> <li>• Many sentences don't have verbs or subjects</li> <li>• Basic sentence construction</li> <li>• Confuse gender</li> <li>• Often have a very limited vocabulary</li> <li>• Do not have consistent verb tenses</li> <li>• Poor grammar</li> <li>• Make mistakes with syntax</li> <li>• Basic spelling</li> <li>• Make plural and singular words together</li> <li>• Carelessness</li> <li>• Don't know how to cite properly</li> </ul>

However, when we look at participants' descriptions of giving feedback on writing, participants refer to 13 unique higher order concepts, 13 lower order concepts, and 11 general concepts that relate to vague feedback, such as "excellent work." This finding gives more weight to the fact that participants use more lower order concern concepts to describe poor student writing.

Likewise, we found that participants referred to higher order concerns and lower order concerns in about equal measure when talking about good student writing but referred to lower order concerns three times as often when talking about poor student writing (Table 5). This finding also contrasted with the overall number of segments used by participants to describe the feedback they give on student writing. We found in that case that participants' segments were distributed about equally across three categories: higher order concerns (43 segments), lower order concerns (49 segments), and general descriptions of giving feedback (49 segments). Without a more robust model of the higher order features of poor student writing, this data suggests that faculty in WI courses may be paying more attention to lower order concerns when marking poor student writing than higher order concerns.

**Table 5. Number of comments used by interview participants to describe features of good student writing and poor student writing based on whether the concepts used relate to higher or lower order concerns.**

	Higher order concerns	Lower order concerns
Good student writing	15 (54%)	13 (46%)
Poor student writing	7 (25%)	21 (75%)

When we ask participants to describe the ideal student, they emphasize students' abilities to express their perspectives. For example, students "should be able to articulate what they're thinking or articulate what they're trying to say." Further, students should be able to "Follow directions and they're thinking about the material, so you can actually engage in a conversation that's thoughtful." Ideal students "come fully equipped [and] they've got that whole skill set ... [they] don't talk when they're not supposed to, and they answer questions, and they raise their hand." Yet, "The ideal student is not necessarily the smartest student or the hardest working student, but the ideal student is the one who listens" so instructors prefer working with students who "are trying to get something ... out of the classroom, especially ones that come from shitty backgrounds."

When participants are asked to describe the student who struggles and fails to complete acceptable forms of work, some participants racialize students and perceive students as disengaged. Students who struggle and fail are often described as first-generation students from "poor white families" and "African American students, too, who have come out of [Detroit] Public [school district]." Yet others say, "there's no ethnic/cultural way to describe them." A participant notes, "somewhere between 10, 15%" of the students are struggling. College education is expensive, and students take costly loans: "if we're going to open the doors, then we have to be prepared to help those people who are coming in who don't have the necessary skill sets." Participants note that "it's really criminal" that Wayne State University has "admitted students who don't have the necessary skill sets" because the students now have student loan financial debt "and they don't graduate." These students need individual help, including tutoring, but "I feel like there hasn't been enough resources and efforts to help the students." There are transfer students and students with undiagnosed learning disabilities who "don't want to admit they have a reading/writing problem" and "don't want to get help." One participant wonders if students who say they don't like to read "can't read very well," further noting, "[S]ometimes it's not really struggling, sometimes they just don't want to apply themselves." One participant describes the student who struggles and fails as one who isn't prepared for class or "who comes whining to me" that they "bombed one of my tests." This participant explains that students come to class expecting it to be easy because "they heard some rumors somewhere" about the course. The participant notes that students are "not engaged," suggesting students must show engagement to get support.

Participants' evaluation of students' uses of language suggests that they have a model of strong writing that balances content with features of the language. On the other hand, models of poor student writing are overwhelmingly couched in terms related to lower order concerns. When we consider these models of good/poor student writing in relationship to the racialization of students who struggle and fail by participants, it suggests that students who use NSE or do not demonstrate mastery of the surface features of AE are more at risk of being characterized as poor writers or as struggling in coursework.

## Analysis

It was clear to us from our conversations with participants that they have rich experiences with teaching writing which we only began to capture through our survey and interviews. They work to model genre expectations to students, hold conferences to discuss writing, and attend to both higher and lower order concerns in their instruction and feedback. These instructional strategies are enacted alongside deeper, sometimes problematic, ideologies about language and students. Through the surveys and interviews, we begin to understand this writing instruction in a more complex and summative way, hearing significant faculty attitudes and perceptions that may influence how they teach in WI courses and, therefore, how we might begin to approach conversations in collaborative faculty development scenarios. Here, we consider three major implications of our study: participants' conflicted attitudes toward NSE, their emphasis on the perceived need of AE for job market

preparation, specifically, and their confidence in the cross-contextual value of AE. These analyses may not be surprising considering the deep integration of the habits of white language (Inoue, 2021), the supremacist nature of WME (Baker-Bell, 2020), and the findings of previous studies and accounts of instructor attitudes and language ideologies (i.e., Davila, 2016; Perryman-Clark, 2016; Bacon, 2018). Further, they highlight the complicated ways that faculty may be working to hold conflicting attitudes together and the possibility of an ideological split (or multiple and varied ideological splinters) both within and between WI instructors at our university.

Instructor attitudes towards NSE are marked by dichotomous ideologies of student support and colonial racism (Inoue, 2019a). Instructors are supportive of students using diverse languages in conversation in the classroom space, which signifies an appreciation for linguistic visibility (e.g., Dobinson & Mercieca, 2020); however, they are also generally in agreement that it is not a priority for them to support students' inclusion of NSE and other languages in writing in the WI course. Whether the participants are aware of or intend to frame NSE in racist terms (i.e., when their identification of students' use of languages other than English serves as a tool of exclusion), this framing nonetheless emerges in several interview responses and survey comments (see Flores & Rosa, 2015; Horner et al., 2011; Lu & Horner, 2013). For example, while African Americans are generally not international students (except for students who have emigrated from Africa or whose homes are in Africa), it is notable that, in one participant's statement, included above, Black students are equated with students who grew up speaking a named language other than English and the participant suggests that Black English dialects might not be considered as English dialects at all. Moreover, this participant's statement suggests that African American families do not value education as a cultural norm and expectation the way that Arab, Asian, or other cultures do, in line with racist cultural stereotypes.

While participants may express an interest in supporting diverse language and literacy practices, their own teaching practices seem primarily motivated by a commitment to the skills and abilities they recognize as being aligned with the job market. This motivation is overt in descriptions of AE as a "ticket" to job opportunities and statements like a survey participant's comment that students will not get interviews or jobs if they use Black English, aligning with several seminal works in the field arguing for the importance of teaching AE to BIPOC students for such purposes (Delpit, 2006; Mahiri, 1998; Moss, 2002). Further, this motivation represents a specific and narrow perspective of what literacy training is for, an idea that we are supporting students in WI courses in the major for something like writing in professional genres, rather than for daily writing in the workplace or writing as community-engaged citizens. While some participants describe classroom instruction in rhetorical approaches to composing public genres, they emphasize writing in AE. With a few exceptions, this motivation may not wholly lend itself to supporting students' practice with writing in a complex public sphere (e.g., Wan, 2014), an emphasis which could more fully incorporate students' linguistic diversity (e.g., Lovejoy et al., 2018).

Participants' emphasis on AE as a critical key for access to the job market and thus economic security should be viewed as a raciolinguistic ideology (Flores & Rosa, 2015). As Rosa (2016) noted, such perspectives, grounded in "cultures of 'monoglot standardization'" frame "structural inequality as a linguistic problem requiring linguistic solutions, rather than as a politico-economic problem requiring politico-economic solutions" (p. 165). Baker-Bell (2020) put this same idea in another way: "If using White Mainstream English cannot protect Black people from losing their lives, why are we telling Black children that code-switching is a strategy for survival? Black students understand that while they can switch their language, they cannot switch the color of their skin" (p. 31). Even as Young (2018) observed that "code-meshing is observable and common in many professional sectors" (p. 67), AE cannot be viewed as an un-problematic ticket to economic mobility, at least not for students who (along with their language practices) are racialized. Thus, whether students of color use AE or

not, they cannot escape their racial positioning within a society that continues to be premised on a white colonizer politico-economic system (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa, 2016; Baker-Bell, 2020).

Still, research on the impact of linguistic diversity in the workplace is limited (Dale-Olsen & Finseraas, 2020). In a study of almost all white managers, Coffelt, Grauman, and Smith (2019) found that “much of what employers understand about communication skills matches what communication professors teach,” but caution these findings are limited by the lack of diversity in the participants’ attitudes that largely reinforce White cultural norms. In addition to a need for further research on diverse language practices in the workplace, Coffelt, Grauman, and Smith (2019) argued that perceived gaps between employers and communication faculty may actually be a problem of transfer of learning (p. 434). While we understand the historical contribution of both mythical and actual job markets to the teaching of writing in the university (Strickland, 2011), and while we acknowledge the arguments for teaching AE to BIPOC students made by scholars in the field (Delpit, 2006; Mahiri, 1998; Moss, 2002) as well as by participants of color in our study, we also emphasize, along with Inoue (2019b), the role that university discourses (specifically the discourse of the writing [intensive] classroom) play in either maintaining or dismantling this dilemma. As Inoue (2019b) pointed out about white faculty: “You can be a problem even when you try not to be” (p. 356).

This motivation is also present in instructors’ attention to lower order concerns and in their emphasis on issues with lower order concerns and the racialization of writers in descriptions of “poor student writing”. As outlined above, while instructors provide instruction and feedback for both higher order and lower order concerns in student writing, their descriptions suggest that they attend more to lower order concerns in the writing of students they have racialized and categorized as struggling and failing. The connection instructors may make between racialized students and lower order issues in writing is long cataloged as a problem in the history of scholarship on composition pedagogy going back, perhaps most famously, to the original language of the *CCC Statement on Students’ Right to Their Own Language* (1975).<sup>3</sup> Both the ideological and practical impact of this connection may be that in some classes, students who are racialized are more at risk of having their writing characterized as “poor.” Another way to think about this is that instructors dwell on the surface features of poor student writing, or at least they bring more conceptual resources to bear on the lower order features of what they consider to be “poor student writing” than higher order features.

A final related finding is the perception of the ubiquity of AE as a cross-context tool. In our study we see participants’ assurance that AE will be the tool that helps all students succeed across contexts potentially in tension with instructors’ stated valuing of rhetorical concerns. Additionally, this perception of AE is certainly in tension with our understanding of students’ linguistic practices as viable and legitimate public practices in their own right. Further, while they express certainty that AE is ubiquitous, our White participants struggled to describe or define the language they use at home. They largely referred to this language as informal, conversational, and consisting of more swearing than AE, which is itself a set of language practices that are inseparable from White cultural values (Bonfiglio, 2002; Baker-Bell, 2020; Flores & Rosa, 2015). The apparent transparency of home language practices and inability of participants to demarcate these practices as distinct from AE represents a critical site for engagement and relationship-building with instructors across the disciplines. It suggests that we need to learn ways to talk about this discourse more broadly, including in our conversations with faculty.

These complex, sometimes contrasting perspectives presented within and across transcripts and survey responses reflect the tensions highlighted in other scholarship. Young (2019) described the problem of teachers saying they value linguistic diversity but holding tight to the values of White language supremacy in their insistence that students learn to write in certain ways for work or school. He expressed, “The feat here is that the teachers want to present themselves as antiracists,

while at the same time they are the ones enacting the very prejudice on the student they say the student will experience outside” (p. xi). Inoue (2019b) reiterated this tension, acknowledging, “Yes, the ways we [“colleagues of color”] judge language form some of the steel bars around our students—we too maintain White supremacy, even as we fight against it in other ways. We ain’t just internally colonized, we’re internally jailed” (p. 353). Further, interview participants draw frequently from their own experiences as students to inform their expectations of student writing, and this experiential knowledge may largely inform these attitudes. Miller et al. (2022) suggested that instead of developing a deep understanding of their students’ experiences with writing assignments, instructors may be drawing on their own experiences as academics (p. 239). The interviews themselves do not allow us to fully see whether either of these feats is being enacted in these writing intensive classrooms, which would require our own immersion into those classrooms and deep listening to students, alongside further conversation with faculty.

## Conclusion

This initial study helps us consider where we see beliefs, attitudes, practices, and experiences related to language and literacy as either ready for the development of antiracist practices or needing more research and relationship-building. In one sense, on their own, the complex and contradictory findings explored above are not surprising, even for an institution that has a mission statement that emphasizes its commitment to the urban community in which it is situated and that serves a highly diverse student body of Black students, Hispanic students, Arab-American students, and students from Asian backgrounds. The pernicious nature of white supremacy and neoliberal logics that guide academe is well documented in the literature. Although the substantial racial diversity of our university student body is celebrated and consistently referenced by the university, instructors, and students alike, evidence of racism and discrimination based on language practices persist, as shown in the above summaries. A difficult dual mission, demonstrated in this article’s epigraph, emerges as we look at survey and interview data: students’ “individual ways of being” matter—but maybe not more than mastering AE for the purposes of the job market. We can see how the guiding ideology of standard English continues to dominate in classrooms, even as confusion over so-called “proper” language use is intertwined with vague, partial support of diversity of language practices.

Understanding the attitudes that our colleagues bring into the classroom is necessary for us to develop responses at the programmatic and institutional levels needed to make space for linguistic justice in writing instruction across the disciplines. To begin addressing the structural racism that constrains our university, we must understand and build productive relationships with our colleagues to envision a different, more just academy and do the collaborative work necessary for those changes to take place. We have begun building these relationships by holding a community-wide online event on coalition-building, facilitating teaching workshops on supporting students’ work with their diverse linguistic resources, and joining university-wide teaching circles to engage in conversation with more faculty.

The investigation we have done so far helps us read scholarly approaches to research, faculty development, and teaching in a new light. For example, the work of relationship-building may be bound up in the discourse of our conversations with participants; as Gast et al. (2022) revealed, researchers can be better at “anticipating colour-blind narratives” and other archetypes of discussions about race, employing multiple available strategies to structure these discussions (p. 291-292). To move into planning faculty development initiatives, we are scaffolding discussions with colleagues that allow us to identify and reflect on the language architectures (Flores, 2020) and ideologies (Athanasios et al, 2018) that are employed in scholarly discourse, in students’ writing, in our own classroom discourses, in various sites on our campus, and in the rest of our work and home lives. These conversations can prepare us to collaborate with our colleagues across the university on



rhetorically focused and socially just writing instruction that centers the diversity our university aims to promote.

## Appendix A. Instructor Survey Questions (Abridged<sup>4</sup>).

1. Age
  - a. 20-30
  - b. 30-40
  - c. 40-50
  - d. 50-60
  - e. 60-70
  - f. 70+
2. Racial/Ethnic Identity
  - a. Arab-American or Middle Eastern
  - b. Asian
  - c. Black or African American
  - d. Latino or Hispanic
  - e. Native American or Alaska Native
  - f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - g. Race and ethnicity unknown
  - h. Two or more races
  - i. White
3. Job Title
  - a. Assistant Professor (Tenure Track)
  - b. Assistant Professor (Non-Tenure Track)
  - c. Associate Professor (Tenure Track)
  - d. Associate Professor (Non-Tenure Track)
  - e. Professor (Tenure Track)
  - f. Professor (Non-Tenure Track)
  - g. Lecturer
  - h. Senior Lecturer
  - i. Instructor
  - j. Part Time Faculty
  - k. Graduate Teaching Assistant
4. How long have you been teaching in higher education?
  - a. 1-3 years

- b. 4-6 years
  - c. 7-10 years
  - d. 11-15 years
  - e. 16-20 years
  - f. 20 + years
5. What is your primary area of study?
  6. What language(s) do members of your immediate family typically use on a regular basis?
  7. What language(s) do you use on a regular basis?
  8. Please list any writing intensive (WI) courses that you taught at Wayne State University in the last five (5) years.
  9. Consider your experiences responding to student writing at Wayne State University and rate the following statements based on how strongly you agree/disagree with them [Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree, Don't Know or N/A]:
    - a. My students don't know how to write
    - b. I pay close attention to the arguments and evidence in student writing
    - c. I pay close attention to the grammar and sentence structure
    - d. Many of my comments address organization of ideas
    - e. Many of my comments address sentence structure
    - f. I often don't understand why students struggle with academic English
    - g. My students often use language that is too informal
    - h. My students often use texting language
    - i. When my students don't use academic English, it diminishes the quality of their ideas
    - j. I often penalize students' grades for problems with spelling, grammar, and mechanics
    - k. I often penalize students' grades for problems with argument structure of their written work
    - l. I often penalize students' grades for problems with evidence/support for claims
    - m. I often penalize students' grades for problems with the logic/organization of content
    - n. I use rubrics to guide my grading of student writing
    - o. The race and/or ethnicity of my students does not affect the quality of their writing
    - p. My students shouldn't use informal dialects (Black English, Spanglish, etc.) in academic writing

- q. My students require too much individualized help to produce good academic writing
  - r. I avoid teaching writing intensive courses because of the poor writing ability of our students
  - s. Students submit high quality written work in my writing intensive courses
  - t. There's no time to teach writing
  - u. My students don't write at the level required in my field/department
  - v. My students are academically prepared for writing in the classroom
  - w. It is important for my students to master standard academic English
  - x. It is important for my students to be able to communicate to non-academic audiences
  - y. I feel prepared to talk with my students about how to write in my classroom
  - z. I read books/articles and/or attend workshops on how to teach writing
  - aa. I feel well prepared to teach academic writing
10. Thinking about your students' writing for academic/classroom purposes, which of the following writing process do they typically struggle with? (Select all that apply.)
- a. Coming up with an appropriate and workable topic
  - b. Locating and evaluating sources
  - c. Organizing the information and presenting it in a logical sequence
  - d. Generating the first draft of their paper
  - e. Writing the introduction and/or conclusion
  - f. Sticking to the topic; identifying or omitting extra or unnecessary information
  - g. Creating smooth transitions between paragraphs and sections
  - h. Incorporating and citing figures and tables in their text
  - i. Incorporating and citing borrowed information in their text
  - j. Revising their draft after instructor/peer, and/or self review
  - k. finding and correcting grammar and spelling errors within their text
  - l. using an appropriate tone, writing style, and level of complexity for their target audience
  - m. following the assignment specifications for format, length, style, audience, etc.
  - n. establishing and maintaining a research and writing schedule that gives them enough time to produce the best paper that they can
  - o. other struggles

11. How do you provide writing instruction to your students in writing intensive [WI] courses at Wayne State University? Rate each statement based on how frequently you incorporate the strategy in your pedagogy [Always, Often, Occasionally, Rarely/Never, Don't Know or N/A].
- a. I assign rough drafts in addition to final drafts of major written projects
  - b. I spend time talking about developing ideas in class
  - c. I write comments on student drafts that address their arguments and/or evidence
  - d. I write comments on student drafts that address their logic and organization
  - e. I write comments on student drafts that address their word choice and/or grammar and syntax
  - f. I share sample student writing with my students
  - g. I provide links to web resources related to writing issues in their written work (Purdue OWL, APA/MLA citation guides, etc.)
  - h. I talk about how to find appropriate sources for written work
  - i. I provide students with time and support to locate effective research
  - j. I hold one-on-one conferences with students to talk about their written work
  - k. I assign scaffolding assignments to help develop major projects (ex., identify a topic, develop an annotated bibliography, draft an outline, etc.)
  - l. I hold small-group conferences with students to talk about their writing
  - m. I write formative in-line comments throughout the draft that identify and/or discuss specific issues in a specific sentence and/or paragraph
  - n. I write summative comments at the end of the draft that discuss the overall quality of the writing
  - o. I correct errors like word choice, spelling, and grammar
  - p. I suggest alternative arguments, evidence, and/or other resources for students to consider
  - q. I discuss how to use academic or professional or standard English
  - r. I require students to use academic or professional or standard English
  - s. I support students' use of non-academic language
  - t. I allow students to use Black English and/or other non-standard forms of English
  - u. I allow students to communicate in named languages (e.g., French, Spanish) other than English
  - v. I provide resources that support students' use of Black English and/or other non-standard forms of English

12. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your experience teaching language and literacy practices with undergraduate students in Wayne State University classes?

## Appendix B. Interview Protocol (Abridged)

*Facilitators: Please download and print this document to take notes during the interview session. You may elect to add more white space between questions to allow room for notetaking. A task checklist and script is integrated into the document. "Must ask" questions for each session are in bold. Follow-up questions and probes are also listed.*

**Time:**

**Date:**

**Interviewer:**

**Participant:**

- \_\_\_ **Make sure both interviewers are co-hosts**
- \_\_\_ **Designate a researcher to monitor chat**
- \_\_\_ **Say "I am going to hit the record button"**
- \_\_\_ **Tell participants to consent to participate by clicking "Continue" after recording begins**
- \_\_\_ **Remind participants that they can leave at any time**
- \_\_\_ **Hit record**
- \_\_\_ **Interviewers introduce themselves**

**Discussion facilitator [please read verbatim]:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to understand your thoughts and experiences related to instruction about language and literacy. I have an interview script with a series of questions on it, which I will use to facilitate this discussion. However, I may also ask follow-up questions to help you elaborate on your responses. While I am recording the discussion so that I may work from a transcript later on, I will also jot down notes in my interview script while we are talking. [INSERT RESEARCHER NAME] will facilitate the chat and technology and may also ask follow-up questions. I anticipate our conversation will be about forty-five minutes long, however it may be a little longer or shorter. In the upcoming weeks, you will be emailed a \$25 Amazon gift card for your participation in this interview. What questions do you have for me?

[Pause to allow for questions. After answering any emergent questions, state the following] If you have additional questions, please contact [PI], or [Co-PI] [Put those email addresses in the chat for participants.]

### A. Good Writing

1. **Tell me about your teaching experience so far. Do you follow certain pedagogies? What has/hasn't worked for you in the classroom?**
2. **What are your expectations for student writing in the classroom? What does good student writing look like?**
  - a. How would you describe poor student writing?
  - b. How do you respond to poor student writing?
  - c. How would you describe good writing in your discipline?
  - d. How do you typically write or generate written texts for your discipline?

## B. College Students

1. **Describe the ideal college student. How would this ideal student use language and/or literacy in the classroom?**
  - a. How frequently would you say you have students who meet this description in your classroom?
  - b. Describe how you typically work with these types of student language and literacy in the classroom.
2. **Describe the type of college student that typically struggles or fails to complete acceptable forms of written work (of all genres from summary and response to argument and analysis)?**
  - a. How frequently would you say you have students who meet this description in your classroom?
  - b. Describe how you typically work with these types of student language and literacy in the classroom.

## C. Personal Language Use

1. **What was your first college class like? Did you feel comfortable or prepared to use language in an academic setting? Why or why not?**
2. **How was your writing evaluated, judged, etc. as a student? High School? College? Grad School?**
3. **How would you describe the kind of language you use at home? In your community?**
  - a. Do you use informal or what is perceived to be nonacademic language (e.g., slang) in your everyday life?
  - b. How do you use informal language in your everyday life?
  - c. Do you see differences between how language is used at home/community and how language is used in the college classroom? Why or why not?

## D. Classroom Language Use

1. **Let's talk about student language in the classroom. What's the value of non-standard forms of English in class?**
2. **What's important for students to learn about using language/literacy in college?**
  - a. How do your students use those languages in class? Do you create space for these language forms in class? How so? What's the effect?
  - b. What's the cultural value of academic English?
  - c. Do you think it is important for students to use academic English?

## E. Writing Instruction

1. **Tell me about the kinds of writing you typically assign in your courses.**



- a. How do you prepare students to complete these assignments?
  - b. Do you teach students how to develop their writing? If so, how? If not, why not?
  - c. Have you ever sought out additional support (training, mentoring) for your writing as a professional? For how you teach writing?
- 2. Talk a bit about how you respond to student writing.**
- a. What kinds of comments do you typically make?
  - b. How do you respond to or evaluate grammar? What's the effect?
  - c. Do you use 3rd party resources like Grammarly, turn-it-in, etc. in teaching? How do you use those resources in teaching/response to feedback?
  - d. Do you use the blind grading feature in Canvas? What's the effect?

## F. Classroom Language Use

- 3. Have you ever changed the way you use language in class?**
- a. What are some examples of how you typically change the way you use language?
  - b. Why do you change how you use language?
  - c. How do these language shifts affect you?
  - d. Do you find it easy to change up your language styles? Why or why not?
- 4. Have you ever felt that your students judge you based on the kinds of language you use to express yourself (oral or written)?**
- a. Can you describe a typical example?
  - b. How did the students comment on your language use, if at all?
  - c. How do those types of comments make you feel?
  - d. Do you think they affect your ability to satisfactorily teach the class? Why or why not?

## G. Closing

- 1. Is there anything else you would like to add?**

**Discussion Facilitator** ([read verbatim](#)): Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. The research team's next steps after completing interviews will be to transcribe the audio-recordings and to use the interview questions to analyze the transcript for patterns and themes. Do you have any questions for me about the study? Is there anything else you would like to add to your statements today?

\_\_\_ Jot down summary thoughts: what did you learn from this interview?

\_\_\_ Contact [Co-PI] at the close of the focus group session to confirm participation for participant compensation.

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## Notes

1 This study was approved by our university's Institutional Review Board: IRB-21-01-3186.

2 We include statistics about students' self-identified races and ethnicities because the university does not include Middle Eastern as a specific category in its formal collection of demographic data.



- 3 Academic gatekeeping on the basis of dialect use has been part of the fabric of higher education at least since the academy shifted from Latin to English as the core language of instruction in the 17th century. While Scottish universities at this time were interested in broad access to education (i.e., access for non-aristocratic students) and developed writing instruction in the vernacular (Horner, 2009, p. 39), this instruction quickly served the ends of excluding regional dialects in favor of a standard (p. 44). These attitudes form the bedrock of how we have historically treated language, access, and education, as they were picked up by Harvard and the American system (Douglas, 2009; Fitzgerald, 2009).
- 4 Demographic options include terms used by our institution. Survey items are presented without matrices.

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## Complete APA Citation

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