

CHAPTER 6.

WRITING ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLONIALISM

Mathew Gomes

Research Problem: Recent writing assessment scholarship promotes the goals of fairness and social justice. As part of this aim, scholars and practitioners should more fully address colonial relations between U.S. postsecondary institutions and the effects of these relations on first-year writing programs.

Research Questions: How can writing programs—especially at institutions that specifically recruit international students—begin to investigate and accept shared responsibility for ameliorating colonialism, including linguistic imperialism?

Literature Review: Building on the social connection model of responsibility (Young, 2011) and its application to writing assessment methodology (Poe & Inoue, 2016), I argue writing programs have power and interest in decolonial projects, namely the project of redressing linguistic imperialism. Scholarship in Writing Studies demonstrates an interest and belief in our power to undermine linguistic imperialism, evidenced by a tradition of scholarship advocating for linguistic inclusiveness. This estimable history includes milestones in national language policy statements, as well as a rich body of scholarship that includes advocacy for linguistically inclusive writing pedagogies. However, recent trends in the internationalization of U.S. postsecondary education suggest a particular need to pay attention to the concept of “English language proficiency,” especially given that U.S. postsecondary institutions tend to increase internationalization in tandem with declining state support, and to use Intensive English Programs as sources of revenue.

Methodology: The overarching goal of this study is to produce knowledge that others can use to more fully share responsibility for the social justice problem of colonialism. The chapter presents

a thought experiment (Kuhn, 1964/1977) that draws from FYW placement data at a doctoral-granting university—Three Fires State University. To show how Three Fires State University can begin to accept responsibility for colonialism, this thought experiment provides a decision tree, which maps the complexities of FYW placement at Three Fires State University. After outlining the technical features of FYW placement, I provide a disparate impact analysis (Poe et al., 2014) using placement data Three Fires State University gathered in Spring 2015.

Conclusions: The thought experiment involving FYW placement at Three Fires State University reveals how the theoretical model allows English linguistic imperialism to flourish. Moreover, placement data suggested evidence of adverse impact for international students. Precisely mapping the technical details of placement, however, also reveals ways FYW programs can investigate and begin to share responsibility for colonialism.

Qualifications: The focus in this chapter is on possible colonial relations between writing programs in U.S. post-secondary institutions and international students. However, there is still work to be done addressing the colonial relations between writing programs in U.S. post-secondary education, and indigenous peoples as well as other colonially disenfranchised groups.

Directions for Further Study: Additional studies can help contribute to a larger, and more specific repertoire of research practices for decolonizing writing assessment research.

In her 2016 article, “Decolonizing Validity,” Ellen Cushman offers an important contribution to growing discussions on justice and ethics in writing assessment research. While the theoretical concept of validity is familiar to writing assessment researchers, Cushman examines validity from a decolonial perspective. As Cushman explains, as the term took hold in the sixteenth century:

. . . validity developed as a concept that totalized the Western imperialist reality. Validity identified what counted as authority in law and perfection in the church; as what became valued in well-founded arguments, proofs and warrants; and even as a person could be said to be “valid” if s/he was in good, sound, and robust health—or if not, the person was said to be an “invalid.”

According to Cushman (2016), validity was a technique of colonization that was both instrumental and meta-discursive. While individual techniques emerged as more or less appropriate “to manage peoples, knowledges, lands, governments, and institutions,” the discourse of validation also tacitly justified the philosophical, epistemic, and cultural bases for colonial management. The effect was the emergence of a discourse of validity, which “always already creates the social hierarchy that places itself at the top—differentiating, denigrating, dismissing, disrespecting, devaluing all other forms of law, religion, knowledge, and being as it does.”

Not just a mechanism for ranking differences but also for creating colonial difference, Cushman suggests that validity frameworks are frequently fated to reproduce colonial hierarchies. As a result, she argues that those doing writing assessment should, “see validity evidence tools, not as a way to maintain, protect, conform to, confirm, and authorize the current systems of assessment and knowledge making, but rather as one way to better understand difference in and on its own terms.”

Borrowing from decolonial writers Madina Tlostanova and Walter D. Mignolo, Cushman concludes by inviting writing assessment scholars to practice border-dwelling, that is, to dwell in the borders of validity by “[seeking] to identify understandings in and on the terms of the peoples who experience them.” In other words, border-dwelling can help decolonize writing assessment, because it provides the opportunity to understand its impact on those who are least advantaged within our programs and those who are marked as ontologically different within those programs.

Cushman’s argument represents a growing attitude that historical concepts like validity and reliability are useful, but insufficient for grounding writing assessment methodologies. Her argument describes the colonial underpinnings that haunt North American post-secondary education and invites scholars to consider how colonization affects the problems of writing assessment. If WPAs and institutions consider assessment situations through the lens of decoloniality, they may find that normalized and validated academic processes wind up rationalizing colonial injustices, thus causing harm to some students on campus.

In this chapter, I build on Cushman’s advocacy for a decolonial perspective and writing assessment agenda. First, I argue that North American writing programs should share responsibility for redressing the colonial inequalities that emerge in a globalized/colonized world. Building on the *social connection model of responsibility* (Young, 2011) and its application to writing assessment methodology (Poe & Inoue, 2016), I argue writing programs have power and interest in decolonial projects, namely the project of redressing linguistic imperialism. Linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) names the structural inequalities colonial

agents produce between English and other languages. Scholarship in Writing Studies demonstrates an interest and belief in our power to undermine linguistic imperialism, and this is evidence of responsibility under the social connection model. Writing programs at internationalized North American institutions have a special responsibility for redressing colonialism, because these institutions may have more direct power in creating colonial injustices and may benefit or gain privileges from colonial injustice.

The second portion of this chapter describes a thought experiment, which draws on data from a four-year, public, Midwestern doctoral-granting university that I refer to as Three Fires State University. An analysis of the Spring 2015 placement process at Three Fires State University revealed underlying theoretical problems within the placement model. Those theoretical problems consequently exposed international students to four particular risks: (1) dropping out; (2) marginalization of international student labor; (3) linguistic containment and linguistic imperialism; and (4) constrained student agency. The thought experiment also helps illuminate possibilities for sharing responsibility for colonialism. Considering these risks, I argue that writing programs can develop strategic alternatives to linguistic containment (Matsuda, 2006) that promote linguistic plurality. Such strategic alternatives will help WPAs and researchers decolonize writing assessments and writing programs.

WRITING ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLONIALISM

Decolonization is part of the shared responsibility of writing programs at land grant colleges. In their introduction to a recent special issue of *College English*, Mya Poe and Asao B. Inoue (2016) argue that Iris Marion Young's (2011) social connection model of responsibility can help conceptualize socially just writing assessments. Similarly, I argue that Young offers a good starting point for articulating the collective responsibility to redress colonization that internationalized universities have.

Young's social connection model of responsibility elaborates the responsibilities of individuals and institutions for redressing structural social injustice. Given the complexities of structural injustice, Young argues it is often impossible to identify individual agents as blameworthy. Many people acting in socially and legally acceptable ways contribute to structural injustice. If people are to accept responsibility for structural injustice, Young argues that we need to move away from the concept of "personal responsibility" and accept that individual and institutional agents bear a shared responsibility when "they contribute by their actions to the processes that produce unjust outcomes" (2011, p. 105). We

should share responsibility for injustices according to:

1. the power we have to impact structural processes;
2. the privilege such processes afford us;
3. personal interests in dismantling unjust systems; and
4. potential to mobilize the resources needed to change an unjust situation.

According to Young, when people and agents share responsibility in this way, the outcome is opportunities for social justice.

Poe and Inoue (2016) argue that Young's discussion of the "personal responsibility" discourse of poverty echoes a common trope within assessment rhetoric. Assessments are designed to identify, manage, and in some cases, punish "failing" individuals. In contrast, writing programs might eschew the discourse of personal responsibility and share responsibility for helping solve social injustices. Instead, such assessments might focus on identifying the societal failures that creep into educational structures (e.g., patterns of racism), and maximizing the availability of learning opportunities and resources. Using Young's social connection model, Poe and Inoue argue that writing assessments and teachers should take responsibility for social injustices when they

1. have direct power to affect structural injustices;
2. gain privileges or directly benefit from structural injustices;
3. have interest in amending direct harms done to writing programs, teachers, students, and community members; and
4. have the potential to collect resources needed to challenge and change injustices (2016, p. 121).

Young argues that like poverty, colonization is a social injustice. Colonization involves the many ways in which agents of European and American culture exploit the land, resources, and labor of indigenous and non-aligned nations; rank people according to distinctly European ontological schema like race (Quijano, 2000), nationality (Mignolo, 2011), and gender (Lugones, 2007); manage communities according to an imperial will and deprive local communities of self-determination or sovereignty (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999); and assert the supremacy of European and American epistemologies, cultures, and literacies (Mignolo, 2003). Young writes that the US has "responsibilities toward people in Africa today in relation to the historic injustices of the slave trade and colonialism, and responsibilities toward American Indians in relation to the ravages of the North American conquest by Euro-Americans" (2011, p. 174).

While colonization is historical, it is also ongoing and continual. Mignolo (2011) argues that contemporary colonial projects often rehabilitate colonial supremacy. For example, *English linguistic imperialism* is an example of one con-

temporary colonial project. Robert Phillipson (1992) defines English linguistic imperialism as:

the dominance of English—asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural (material: institutions, financial allocations) and cultural (immaterial/ideological: attitudes, pedagogical principles) inequalities between English and other languages (p. 47).

Therefore, English linguistic imperialism is a specific colonial phenomenon in which colonial states assert their legitimacy through language. The effects of this colonial project are multidirectional—at once, English linguistic imperialism asserts upon non-Native English speaking nations and people a colonial exigency for learning English. Simultaneously, English linguistic imperialism has an inward ideological effect, giving rise to exclusive language ideologies, such as English-only language policies (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996).

It is not my intent to lay blame for colonization upon writing programs. However, writing programs are also not neutral agents. Young's (2011) distinction between personal responsibility and shared responsibility is again, instructive here: writing programs need not be personally responsible for perpetuating colonial outcomes to accept a shared responsibility for redressing colonization. It is certainly worth investigating if writing programs can share responsibility for ameliorating colonialism, and the conditions that might compel a writing program to do so.

Poe and Inoue's (2016) framework of shared responsibility (by way of Young), suggests that writing programs should share responsibility for colonialism when they have the power to impact structural processes that have identifiably colonial consequences, when colonialism creates privileges or an interest in mitigating colonial harm, and when they have sufficient potential to impact colonialism. When writing programs take responsibility for conditions of colonization that may manifest in North American post-secondary institutions, they can aim more precisely for socially just outcomes. For example, when writing programs at highly internationalized post-secondary institutions in North America take responsibility for linguistic imperialism, they can design curricular experiences that honor and represent linguistic diversity as an asset.

THE *POWER AND INTEREST* OF WRITING PROGRAMS

As others in this collection have argued, English language instruction can promote neocolonial agendas (Harms, Chapter 3, this collection), with English linguistic imperialism as one effect. I favor the term English linguistic imperialism because it

is a reminder that language policies and practices can contribute to a condition of colonial injustice when they privilege standardized forms of English.

While the term English linguistic imperialism appears infrequently in Writing Studies, our field has offered compelling arguments against and alternatives to English linguistic imperialism. Landmarks in this estimable history of resistance include national position statements, such as the Students Right to their Own Language (SRTOL) resolution, which famously affirmed first in 1972 “students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language” (CCCC, 2014a, p. 1). Additionally, the CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers, urges WPAs to “take responsibility for the regular presence of second language writers in writing classes” by offering professional training and coursework supporting the teaching of second language (L2) writers, and by conducting research about the efficacy of writing programs for second language writers that integrate perspectives of the participants (CCCC 2014b). The National Language Policy (CCCC 2015), similarly, affirms linguistic diversity and inclusivity, and rejects English Only ideology outright, describing it as variously as “unfair,” “educationally unsound,” “oppressive and dehumanizing,” and “dangerous.”

Beyond disciplinary proclamations, our field continues to have significant on-going discussions about how best to respect and honor linguistic diversity in our writing pedagogies and programs. Vershawn Ashanti Young and Aja Y. Martinez (2011), for example, have recently offered examples of “code-meshing” in action, demonstrating pedagogical alternatives to linguistic imperialism that promote linguistic equality. Similarly, Terry Zawacki and Michelle Cox (2014) have also edited a recent collection that urges WAC administrators and instructors to advocate for language difference as an asset, and to develop programs and classes that provide L2 students with equal opportunities to succeed in writing. The recent momentum of translanguaging scholarship, which includes a special issue of *College English* (Lu & Horner, 2016) reveals the growing excitement in our field about how to support pedagogies that honor and practice a wide range of literacies. This scholarship suggests that respect for linguistic diversity is a central value of the field, and have been for a long time.

The enduring necessity of this scholarship, however, also reveals the deep entrenchment of linguistic imperialism in the various locations of writing U.S. post-secondary education, and embedded in their assessment artifacts (Inoue, 2009). Bruce Horner and John Trimbur (2002) have argued that, despite scholarly opposition, tacit English Only policies have long shaped U.S. writing instruction, research, and program administration and continue to do so. Horner and Trimbur’s history helps illuminate linguistic imperialism as one of the most persistent consequences colonialism has in relation to writing instruction.

Linguistic imperialism is a problem, historically, internationally, domes-

tically. The volume of knowledge that scholars in Writing Studies have produced about this reality suggests the considerable *interest* Writing Studies has in changing the reality of linguistic imperialism. Moreover, the orientation of scholarship toward pedagogical action and programmatic change demonstrates a general belief that teachers, administrators and scholars also have the *power* to build linguistically inclusive writing programs.

THE POWER AND INTEREST OF INTERNATIONALIZED INSTITUTIONS

Janice Gould (1992) has written that “there is not a university in this country [the US] that is not built on what was once native land” (p. 81). This passage is a reminder that all of us working in North American writing programs continue to occupy and operate on indigenous land, and continue to *benefit* from the colonization that, for example, makes public universities fundamentally capable of receiving public funding.

However, increasing globalization in the latter half of the twentieth century has driven *internationalization*, producing opportunities for new forms of colonial injustice. According to Phillip Altbach and Jane Knight (2007), the structural forces of globalization have compelled post-secondary institutions to create “academic programs, institutions, innovations, and practices . . . to cope with globalization and to reap its benefits” (p. 27). Internationalization comprises both outward-facing projects—like study-abroad programs as well as inward-facing projects, like international student recruitment. Internationalization can bring incredible diversity to institutions and traditionally, can also enhance their “competitiveness, prestige, and strategic alliances” (p. 29). However, internationalization also raises a host of social justice considerations, including financial exploitation, and linguistic and epistemic imperialism.

Scholars have also questioned the economic motives of universities participating in internationalization. While Altbach and Knight (2007) describe profit as one motive of internationalization, they also caution against treating internationalization as “simply a profit center” (p. 35). Frances Vavrus and Amy Pekol (2015) have also noted that the rise of internationalization coincides with declines in public funding for post-secondary education in North America and Europe. Consequently, many universities have been under pressure to restructure financially, and turned to internationalization as one solution. The excoriation of “profit-driven” internationalization however, also suggests that exploitative economic arrangements can and do emerge in global post-secondary education.

These exploitative conditions may affect the conditions surrounding writing instruction. In our own field, Paul Kei Matsuda (2006) has argued that interna-

tionalization gave rise to strategies of linguistic containment, in which institutions quarantine linguistic difference and promote the “myth” that U.S. colleges are linguistically homogeneous, English Only spaces. Matsuda (2006) argues that policies of linguistic containment have been historically part of post-secondary education but are especially apparent beginning with the early influxes of international students in U.S. colleges after World War I. Matsuda writes that despite an increasingly multilingual population of students and scholars on U.S. campuses, “the dominant image of students in the composition class,” remained overwhelmingly as monolingual (p. 648). The same is true today, Matsuda argues, and an increasingly diverse linguistic landscape means that the impacts are felt by second-language writers, both international and domestic, as well U.S.-born multilingual students and speakers of unprivileged dialects of English. I argue that the myth of linguistic homogeneity is a colonial myth, to the extent that it exerts linguistic imperialism, and shores up the legitimacy of the colonization of the US.

As Matsuda notes, some varieties of linguistic containment run counter to our field’s belief in the value of multilingual and multimodal literacies. Nevertheless, North American universities have occasionally profited from “containing” international students for additional writing and English language instruction. For example, Rubin (1997) has reported that institutions pursuing internationalization can treat Intensive English Programs or English as a Second Language (ESL) writing programs as a valuable source of additional revenue. Eaton (2015) has also written about the profitability of IEP and ESL programs, arguing that their profitability may come at the expense of students, instructors, and administrators. Eaton identifies specific exploitative conditions that can emerge from the general marginalization of IEP and ESL programs, including:

1. failing to offer academic credit when students take ESL and IEP courses;
2. undervaluing ESL and IEP instructors’ labor relative to their colleagues; and
3. holding program administrators to inappropriate labor expectations (p. 176).

These are forms of exploitation when universities seek revenue as a primary aim. Moreover, when institutions create IEP and/or ESL programs to enact the “linguistic containment” Matsuda describes, they can produce the false notion that our universities are linguistically homogeneous, or that international students enter in with language deficits, thereby promoting linguistic imperialism.

To the extent that curricular experiences facilitated by ESL programs contribute to the local discourses around writing instruction, the outcomes of those ESL programs should be of interest to all writing programs at institutions pursu-

ing internationalization. Writing programs at institutions pursuing internationalization must be aware and capable of identifying when students with domestic and international citizenship encounter differences in their broader curricular experiences with writing.

Both financial interest and the politics of teaching writing to international students can, unchecked, reproduce colonial relationships. In the worst cases, these two exigencies can lead toward financial exploitation and reinforce an epistemic hierarchy that uncritically promotes the supremacy of colonial epistemologies, for example, in the form of linguistic imperialism. To ensure such outcomes do not happen, writing programs at North American institutions pursuing internationalization should share special responsibility for cultivating educational environments that are conscientious and respectful of the financial commitments international students make, cultivate non-exploitative economic arrangements, and communicate with writing professionals across campus to build curricular experiences that reject English linguistic imperialism and treat language difference as a learning asset, rather than an obstacle.

THOUGHT EXPERIMENT: THE COLONIAL RISKS OF FYW PLACEMENT AT THREE FIRES STATE UNIVERSITY

In this second portion of the chapter, I turn to a thought experiment, utilizing data from the first-year writing (FYW) placement process at a university, which I refer to as Three Fires State University. Kuhn (1964/1977) has argued that thought experiments can help refine theories, and are particularly helpful when theories fail to adequately explain observed phenomena. By compelling researchers to identify both explicit components of a theory, thought experiments can help researchers identify specific “ways in which both expectation and theory must henceforth be revised” (p. 261). In the case of writing placement, a thought experiment is instructive, because writing placement processes exhibit and manifest aspects of underlying theories of placement. Moreover, this example adds to a body of thought experiments about writing programs, which have recently been used to work out the legal and ethical aspects of writing program assessment and administration (Elliot, 2016; Poe et al, 2014). In this case, the thought experiment reveals several ways that the Three Fires State University writing program can share responsibility for colonialism, through the writing placement process.

I begin by describing the structure and assessment processes that impacted students’ FYW placements during one semester. Next, I describe how such a process and structure contributed to an environment in which international students were exposed to risks that included financial exploitation, marginalization

of labor, linguistic containment, and deprivation of agency. Finally, I identify options for specific interventions this program could make, that reflect a shared responsibility for colonialism. Like Cushman's (2016) notion of "dwelling in the borders of validity," these interventions contribute to a growing repertoire of strategies for decolonizing writing assessment.

FIRST-YEAR WRITING AT THREE FIRES STATE UNIVERSITY

Three Fires State University is a large, four-year, public land-grant doctoral university in the Midwest. As with many institutions, the school has recruited more international students, and has subsequently seen substantial increases in the international student population. For the semester in question, Spring 2015, international students comprised about 15% of the total undergraduate population. Three Fires State University has many resources and programs to support international students. Many of these students were multilingual, and some, but not all, were English language learners (ELL).

The data used in this thought experiment is from Spring 2015. At that time, it had been many years since the Three Fires State University program had revisited its FYW placement mechanism. During that semester, students in the university's writing program could place into two general kinds of FYW experiences: Students could place into a one-semester "mainstream" FYW experience, that carried four credits toward graduation; alternatively, students could also place into a two-semester sequence, which included a three-credit basic writing course, as well as a no-credit lab, taken before the mainstream course. Students enrolled in this experience were required to attend and pay for more credit hours than they received toward graduation. This arrangement was stipulated under the university policies on "remedial-developmental-preparatory" courses. The essential difference between these two experiences was that the "basic writing" sequence was longer, and required students to pay for courses that did not count toward graduation, while the "mainstream" experience was shorter, and all courses counted toward graduation.

PLACEMENT AT THREE FIRES STATE UNIVERSITY

When Three Fires State University began to inquire into the effects of FYW placement for international students, they found that public information about placement was sometimes outdated, and that communication about FYW placement lacked coordination across institutional units. Therefore, the program needed to understand how placements were affected by multiple institutional units. The process of untangling and mapping the decision points that impacted

FYW placement required speaking to administrators and representatives from within the FYW program, as well as the Admissions Office, the Registrar, and the Academic Orientation unit.

Figure 6.1 organizes all the salient details that impacted placement into the FYW program at Three Fires State University during Spring 2015. This decision tree illustrates the two major assessments that impacted students' placements: the FYW program guidelines for FYW placement, and the English Language Proficiency examination.

When a domestic student applied to Three Fires State University, they were assessed only in accordance with FYW placement guidelines. Using cutoff scores recommended by the FYW program on the ACT English and/or the SAT Critical Reading, the Registrar automatically enrolled students into either the "mainstream" sequence or the "basic writing" sequence. The cut scores according to FYW program guidelines in Spring 2015 were 16 on the ACT English and/or 390 on the SAT Critical Reading. Students who attended academic orientation programs were also advised about appropriate placements by advisors from the Academic Orientation unit and subsequently had the opportunity to challenge their placements by taking a timed writing exam.

When international students enrolled, the factors that affected their FYW placement multiplied. This was because international students were subject to an English Language Proficiency requirement that was outside the purview of the FYW program.

For the English Language Proficiency requirement, international students could submit scores on a range of tests, including ACT English, SAT Critical Reading, TOEFL, and IELTS tests. After submitting scores from one or more of these tests to the Admissions office, students received either "regular" or "provisional" enrollment status.

When international students submitted test scores above the cut scores on qualifying tests for English Language proficiency, they received "regular" status. These students were then placed into FYW courses based on ACT English and/or SAT Critical Reading scores and according to placement guidelines for students with domestic citizenship. However, the scores necessary for students to establish English Language Proficiency with the SAT Critical Reading (480 or higher) or ACT English (18 or higher) were both higher than those domestic students needed to place into a credit-bearing, "mainstream" FYW course. Regularly admitted international students without SAT or ACT scores automatically placed into the "basic writing" sequence.

However, when international students' test scores were below the English Language Proficiency cut scores, they were admitted with "provisional" status and redirected to an Intensive English Program (IEP), for further assessment.

The IEP then evaluated this subset of international students again, using a home-grown test that included multiple-choice listening and reading comprehension sections as well as a writing section with a 35-minute timed writing assignment. This test was used to place students into IEP coursework or determine that a student had met the institution's English language requirement. Students with IEP coursework transitioned into FYW depending on exit examinations—graded, timed writing tests. When students received high enough grades on their essays, they were then read and placed by ad hoc committee from the FYW program. At this point, unless the student took it upon themselves to produce evidence of high ACT English or SAT Critical Reading scores, readers' decisions were final.

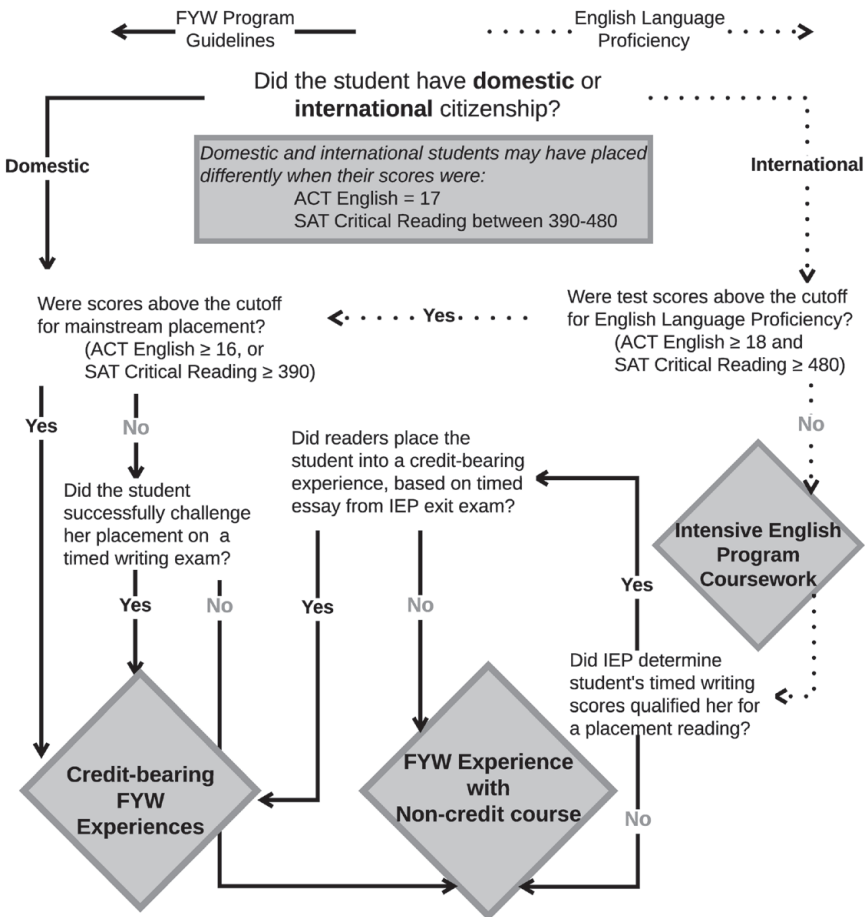


Figure 6.1. Decision tree of assessments that affected FYW placement in Spring 2015.

THEORETICAL PROBLEMS IN FYW PLACEMENT

The decision tree in Figure 6.1 reveals several areas of theoretical concern including: (1) the distinctions made between domestic and international students; (2) using admissions exams for the purposes of writing placement; (3) the difference in actual cut scores used for domestic and international students on the ACT English and SAT Critical Reading.

The first important area of theoretical concern is the initial distinction between domestic and international students and the different assessments these different groups encounter. The initial theoretical distinction presumes language proficiency differences between domestic and international students. However, at Three Fires State University in Spring 2015, it was not explicit or clear that differences in national origin necessarily signified differences in language proficiency. This assumption does not account for multilingual students with domestic citizenship, nor does it recognize that some international students came from primarily English-speaking educational environments.

Moreover, Figure 6.1 reveals a second theoretical concern: students' final placements were the consequence of either ACT English and SAT Critical Reading scores, or, for some international students, a timed writing examination administered by the IEP. What was the relationship of these artifacts to the program's writing construct? While many postsecondary institutions use admissions exams for placement purposes (Breland, Maxey, Gernand, Cumming, & Trapani, 2002), those in Writing Studies have argued that these admissions exams often do not meaningfully represent FYW, as it is taught in U.S. postsecondary education (Isaacs & Molloy, 2010). Furthermore, some international students who took IEP courses were placed based on a timed writing exam, developed and scored by the IEP faculty. To use admissions tests and timed writing exams for the purposes of placement, the Three Fires State University writing program would need a strong argument, validating the appropriateness of these procedures. Additionally, that validation argument would need to address why different techniques are appropriate for IEP students, compared to domestic students and regularly admitted international students.

The differences in the actual cut scores is another area of theoretical concern. As Figure 6.1 indicates, a comparison of FYW placement guidelines and the English language proficiency requirement shows that the cut scores on the ACT English and SAT Critical Reading were different. Domestic students who submitted ACT scores needed to score a 16 or above on the ACT English to place into the credit-bearing, mainstream course. However, international students who submitted ACT scores needed a score of 18 or higher on the ACT English to demonstrate English language proficiency. Because this assessment

pre-empted the FYW placement procedure, the effective placement cut score on the ACT English was two points higher for international students.

Similarly, domestic students who submitted SAT scores needed a score of 390 on the SAT Critical Reading section to place into a credit-bearing FYW experience. However, international students who submitted SAT scores needed a score of 480 on the SAT Critical Reading to demonstrate English language proficiency. Again, the *de facto* placement cut score for international students was higher on the SAT Critical Reading, since they needed a higher score to just pass the English language proficiency requirement.

Consequently, in Spring 2015, there were different effective cut scores for domestic and international students, and, a range of scores where students might have placed differently, depending on their national origin. If a domestic student submitted a score of 450 on the SAT Critical Reading, she would place immediately into the credit-bearing FYW course; if an international student submitted the same score, she would receive “provisional” admission, and to place into the same course as the domestic student, she would have to demonstrate English language proficiency on the IEP’s homegrown exam; or take IEP courses and perform sufficiently well on timed exit exams.

Therefore, this third theoretical concern involves the rationale for applying different effective cut scores to domestic and international students. In the case of Three Fires State University writing program, the difference in cut scores emerged because requirements for FYW placement and English language proficiency developed independent of one another, and had not been coordinated. However, it became clear that the English language proficiency requirement had the potential to impact international students’ FYW placements. Aware of this potential, an important theoretical question emerged for Three Fires State University: what should be the relationship between the English language proficiency requirements and subsequent IEP courses, and the FYW placement process and its courses? Figure 6.1 reveals how the combinations of these requirements at Three Fires State University throttled international student enrollments into credit bearing FYW courses.

The placement model, then, manifested three problematic assumptions. The first problematic assumption was that U.S. citizens were proficient in English, whereas students with international citizenship were not, to such a degree as to warrant additional testing. The second problematic assumption was that the subtests from admissions examinations were valid instruments for placing students into FYW courses. The third problematic assumption was that higher cut scores on these tests should apply for international students, than should for domestic students. The combined effect of these three problematic assumptions, was that they reproduced the colonial myth that the

linguistic landscapes of U.S. postsecondary education are primarily or ideally English-speaking, and monolingual (Matsuda, 2006). The higher volume of assessments and higher cut scores that international students experienced propelled them toward the basic writing experience, setting the stage for a localized form of English linguistic imperialism.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATIONAL ORIGIN AND PLACEMENT

After finding that the FYW placement process applied extra scrutiny and higher standards to international students, the Three Fires State University FYW program wanted to learn if there was evidence that the process impacted international student FYW placements. Three Fires State University modeled an inquiry on Mya Poe, Norbert Elliot, John Aloysius Cogan Jr., and Tito G. Nurudeen Jr.'s (2014) disparate impact method for investigating unintended discrimination. While the authors offer disparate impact analysis as one method for investigating unintended racial discrimination, they also maintain that the approach "may be applied to any discrete, nonmajority group" (p. 592). The first step of a disparate impact analysis is to identify adverse impact, for which the authors recommend tests of statistical significance. Such tests furnish evidence as to whether differences in outcomes are likely to be a matter of chance or an effect of the assessment itself. Therefore, the Three Fires State University FYW program sought to determine if there was evidence of adverse impact for students with international citizenship.

In Spring 2015, the program at Three Fires State University surveyed students internally about their placements, their awareness of the placement process, and their course experiences. Due to a lack of immediately available, disaggregated data (which Casie Moreland, Chapter 5 this collection, identifies as its own justice problem), the program used these data to disaggregate students by citizenship.

Survey participants were recruited by their Three Fires State FYW instructors between Week 13 and Week 16 of the Spring 2015 semester. Of the 3,157 students enrolled in FYW that semester, 790 responded to the survey (25% response rate). Thus, for the purposes of calculating possible adverse impact, there was a sufficiently robust sample of participants at the 95% confidence interval with a margin of error of 3.02%. Survey participants reported their ethnic origin as well as the FYW courses they had placed into.

Results from this survey were used to investigate whether statistically significant relationships existed between students' national origin and their FYW placements. Table 6.1 indicates the findings from this survey.

Table 6.1. Chi-square analysis of placements for domestic and international students

Reported Citizenship	(NC) ¹	(CR) ²	% NC	% CR	Expected NC	Expected CR	χ^2 / p
Domestic	20	540	3.6%	96.4%	127.6	432.4	403.596 $p < .0001$
International	160	70	69.6%	30.4%	52.4	177.6	

¹ Non-credit basic writing experience

² Credit-bearing writing experience

Note: Because simple chi-square models require cell counts of five, the sample for this survey was adequate for this analysis. This analysis includes the relatively small number of domestic students who reported placing into non-credit, basic writing courses

The results of a chi-square test showed a statistically significant difference in placements among FYW students with different citizenship identifications ($\chi^2 (1, n = 790) = 403.596$). Meeting the 95 percent confidence interval, these results indicated that, for the sample of students surveyed in Spring 2015, placement differences were not the result of chance but were instead related to the placement process itself. These results also suggest that one consequence of the additional scrutiny placed on international students was a greater likelihood of placing into the basic writing course.

According to Poe and her colleagues (2014), these results suggest there was *adverse impact* for international students enrolled in Spring 2015. The next steps in a disparate impact analysis of the Three Fires State University FYW placement process would be to identify an educational *need* for international students to enroll in the non-credit, basic writing course. Finally, a full disparate impact analysis would compel the program to consider whether there existed alternative placement options with less burdensome consequences for international students.

However, the Three Fires State University writing program was not able to locate a validation argument supporting their placement model. While validation arguments may have existed that supported the university's English language proficiency requirement, the program did not find evidence of recent programmatic validation argument explaining why international students should take the remedial FYW sequence more frequently. Rather than try to establish the educational need for international students to take remedial courses, the Three Fires State University FYW program had the opportunity to do as Cushman (2016) advocates, and "dwell in the borders created by the colonial difference." In other words, the findings from the FYW program's investigation into

placement outcomes for international students offered an opportunity to contemplate and imagine more precisely the nature of the differences the placement process created for students.

THE COLONIAL RISKS OF FYW PLACEMENT

Following Cushman's advice, "dwelling in the borders" of the placement situation illuminated four colonial risks the process posed to international students. These risks included: economic exploitation of international students; marginalization of international student labor; linguistic containment and English linguistic imperialism; and suppressing student agency.

EXPOSURE TO DROPPING OUT

When students enrolled in the basic writing experience, they paid money and spent time in courses that did not carry credit toward graduation. The burden would be on the program to justify why such an arrangement was necessary. Failure to justify this arrangement would constitute negligence at best, and could predispose international students to increased rates of dropping out. The Complete College America project (2012) has documented the problems of over-remediation, which include much lower graduation rates. Good justifications may exist for international students to spend more time in FYW than their colleagues; however, in the absence of those justifications, Three Fires State University risked over-remediating international students, and exposing them to higher dropout rates.

MARGINALIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT LABOR

Marginalization of student labor happens when students fail to receive credit for their courses. Again, students enrolled in the remedial sequence took courses that did not count toward graduation. This marginalized the labor that was happening in the basic writing course sequence. Such labor marginalization is common in remediation programs (Eaton, 2015), however, it minimizes students' educational opportunities: specifically, the opportunity to move through their coursework in a way that is timely, systematic, and justifiable. In the worst cases, Three Fires State University risked distributing this harm unequally to international students, thus marginalizing international student labor. Such a risk is colonial to the extent that it reproduces historical patterns of marginalizing the labor of non-U.S. citizens.

LINGUISTIC CONTAINMENT

The remedial structure of FYW and its disproportionate effect on international students, suggests Three Fires State University was also practicing linguistic containment by submitting international students to additional language assessments prior to FYW placement. Analysis of the FYW placement process showed the program ran the risk of “containing” international students regardless of the specific nature of their linguistic differences, given evidence of extra scrutiny and adverse impact.

Moreover, because the institution conceptualized the course as remedial, it treated the linguistic distinctions between remediated students and their peers as “deficiencies,” structuring inequalities between English and other languages. A further colonial risk of attempting to validate the FYW placement procedure is linguistic containment, propagating the ideal of English only, thus structuring English linguistic imperialism.

CONSTRAINING STUDENT AGENCY

Finally, the Three Fires State University saw that their placement process operated almost entirely independently of students’ perceptions of their rhetorical needs. Instead, the placement process was what Blakesley (2002) calls an “expression of power and a symptom of the institution’s normalizing desire” (p. 12). As an expression of such power, the placement process modeled a hallmark of colonial administrations, wherein the institution assumed authority to make placement decisions on students’ behalf. This act also denied students their sovereignty and self-determination, important hallmarks of decolonial practice (Spurr, 1993; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Christie Toth (Chapter 4) in this volume, documents well the risks that this can create for vulnerable populations, which include under-placing students of color (Bailey et al., 2010).

RISKS, BENEFITS, POWER AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This brief analysis of FYW placement at Three Fires State University reveals some of the privileges and harms that can emerge within writing programs located in the context of internationalization. While universities perhaps stand to accrue the privileges or the benefits of internationalization, there also may exist processes that risk harming these students considerably. Universities risk harming international students when they exploit them for their resources, devalue their labor, articulate their linguistic differences as “deficiencies,” and constrain

their abilities to make their own educational choices. While my focus has been on international students at one university, all students stand to benefit from interventions the program makes to mitigate these colonial risks.

I argue the program could take this as an opportunity to share responsibility for redressing the colonial consequences of internationalization. Again, the program need not be personally responsible for these colonial consequences to share responsibility for redressing the colonial consequences of internationalization. Per the shared responsibility framework (Poe & Inoue, 2016; Young, 2013), the FYW program at Three Fires State University would have a charge to redress the colonial consequences of internationalization, based on the privileges it accrued from internationalization, the interest it had in mitigating harm to international students, and the direct power it had to impact potential colonial injustices.

How, then, would a FYW writing program like Three Fires State University begin to take responsibility for the colonial risks its placement model posed to international students? In the final section, I describe some possible strategic interventions that emerge from the analysis I have presented in this chapter.

SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLONIALISM

As others in this volume and in the writing assessment scholarship have argued, we can pursue fairer and more just ends when we maximize opportunity structures and occasions for learning (Elliot, 2016; Perryman-Clark, 2016; West-Puckett, 2016). To this end, Elliot (2016) argues that writing assessments should identify the opportunity structures created through maximum writing construct representation. What would the basic writing course look like, if Three Fires State University imagined the course not as a place to contain linguistic difference, but to promote linguistic diversity as an asset? What would it mean to refuse the colonial pressure to remediate students with language “deficiencies” and, instead, systematically privilege language differences? This process would also fulfill the final step in a disparate impact analysis in compelling the Three Fires writing program to consider whether there existed alternative placement options with less burdensome consequences for international students.

POSSIBLE INTERVENTIONS AT THREE FIRES STATE UNIVERSITY

First, the FYW program at Three Fires State University could eliminate the remedial status of the lower-level basic writing course and revise its content. In the context of significant diversity, a remediation policy predicated on linguistic “deficiencies” echoed the rhetoric of linguistic imperialism and containment. Moreover, the marginalization of international student labor and heightened

risk of dropping out was a problematic, colonial risk of the remedial structure. Therefore, Three Fires State University could work to change the institutional designation of the basic writing course. Such a course would more fully honor linguistic diversity and could operate as a strategic alternative to linguistic containment and linguistic imperialism. Additionally, such a course could better honor students' labor by allowing the program to offer credit toward graduation for this course.

Additionally, this course could be more responsive to the increasingly international and multilingual populations of students who are pushed toward this course by its placement procedures. Such a course could be oriented around the principle of multiplying, rather than restricting educational opportunities for multilingual and international students. This course could treat linguistic and cultural difference as a genuine asset.

Imagine, for example, a distinct, non-remedial experience within the FYW curriculum that assumes students are linguistically diverse, rather than linguistically homogeneous. This course could:

- Treat prior cultural and rhetorical knowledge as an asset for learning and a resource for writing;
- Recognize students' experience and expertise with culture and language;
- Create a diverse community of writers who engage and support their colleagues' development as writers;
- Treat students' educational and rhetorical needs as culturally situated; and
- Articulate affordances and challenges of using writing to manage cultural transition.

While Three Fires State University revised the overall placement process, it could also maximize opportunity structures to better serve multilingual and international students and develop the basic writing course into FYW class productively oriented around language difference.

Next, the Three Fires State University FYW program could take further responsibility for the colonial risks its placement process posed to international students by addressing the theoretical problems of the placement process. In the short term, Three Fires State University FYW program could work with institutional partners to articulate a more meaningful basis for assessing English language proficiency and better coordinate the cut scores for FYW placement and English language proficiency requirements. This could begin to ameliorate some of the inequalities between international students and their domestic peers.

In the long-term, however, Three Fires State University's writing program

should consider using instruments other than admissions test. Specifically, a Directed Self-Placement (DSP) process could produce more socially just outcomes for international students. Elsewhere in this volume, Toth (Chapter 4, this collection) argues that DSP models can produce socially just outcomes, especially when administrators foreground social justice in their validation of DSP. Daniel J. Royer and Roger Gilles' (1998) claim that part of DSP's value is in its "restoration of interpersonal agency" (p. 61) is especially persuasive, and a DSP model could restore at least in part students' self-determination. As Three Fires State University FYW writing program found, the placement process manifests the colonial administrative practice of managing people and deprives them of self-determination. DSP might be an effective option to ameliorate this problem. While using a DSP model alone cannot solve problems of equity (see, for example, Ketai, 2012; Schendel & O'Neill, 1999), a well-implemented and validated DSP model, such as the diligently documented process at the University of Michigan (Gere et al., 2010; Gere et al., 2013; Toth & Aull, 2014) could contribute to a decolonized FYW program by restoring an element of informed agency in FYW placements.

CONCLUSION

The case of Three Fires State University shows how structured institutional processes like placement can unintentionally prop up or reproduce English linguistic imperialism, which can adversely affect international students, or other groups susceptible to colonial disenfranchisement. Moreover, this case also reveals how writing programs may be affected by assessment processes beyond their direct control. Writing programs, therefore, can and should share responsibility for colonialism without necessarily having or needing to establish personal responsibility. North American writing programs at institutions participating in internationalization, especially, can and should share this responsibility, especially when they have the power and resources to do so, or, stand to accrue benefits or harms from internationalization.

The interventions above represent a larger aim, which I would like to offer to the growing repertoire of techniques for decolonizing writing assessments. Writing programs may decolonize writing assessments by developing strategic alternatives to linguistic containment that promote linguistic plurality. In contrast to policies, course structures, and assessments that structure "inequalities between English and other languages" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47), these strategic alternatives can include policies, course structures, and assessment procedures that thoroughly integrate an ethic that recognizes and values linguistic heterogeneity, rhetorical flexibility, as well as multilingual, multimodal, and translingual

capacities. This aim could have more just outcomes for the multilingual international students in the Three Fires State University Writing Program. However, more broadly, this aim is a concrete direction writing programs might pursue, as they begin to share responsibility for colonialism.

REFERENCES

- Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3-4), 290-305. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1028315307303542>
- Bailey, T., Jeong, D. W., & Cho, S. W. (2010). Referral, enrollment, and completion in developmental education sequences in community colleges. *Economics of Education Review*, 29(2), 255-270. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2009.09.002>
- Blakesley, D. (2002). Directed self-placement in the university. *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, 25(3), 9-39.
- Breland, H., Maxey, J., Gernand, R., Cumming, T., & Trapani, C. (2002). *Trends in college admission 2000: A report of a survey of undergraduate admissions policies, practices, and procedures*. [Sponsored by ACT, Inc., Association for Institutional Research, The College Board, Educational Testing Service, and National Association for College Admission Counseling].
- Complete College America. (2012). Remediation: Higher education's bridge to nowhere. Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/files/CCA%20Remediation%20ES%20FINAL.pdf
- Conference on College Composition and Communication. (2014a). Students' Right to Their Own Language. National Council of Teachers of English. Retrieved from <http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/righttoownlanguage>
- Conference on College Composition and Communication. (2014b). Teaching second language writing and writers. National Council of Teachers of English. Retrieved from <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/secondlangwriting>
- Conference on College Composition and Communication. (2015). CCCC Guideline on the National Language Policy. National Council of Teachers of English. Retrieved from <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/nationallangpolicy>
- Cushman, E. (2016). Decolonizing validity. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 9(1). Retrieved from <http://www.journalofwritingassessment.org/article.php?article=92>
- Eaton, S. E. (2013). The administration of English as a second language (ESL) programs in higher education. In Y. Hébert & A. A. Abdi (Eds.), *Critical perspectives on international education* (pp. 165-180). Rotterdam, NY: Sense Publishers. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-906-0_10
- Elliot, N. (2016). A theory of ethics for writing assessment. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 9(1). Retrieved from <http://journalofwritingassessment.org/article.php?article=98>
- Gere, A. R., Aull, L., Green, T., & Porter, A. (2010). Assessing the validity of directed self-placement at a large university. *Assessing Writing*, 15(3), 154-176. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1028315310383542>

- org/10.1016/j.asw.2010.08.003
- Gere, A. R., Aull, L., Perales, M. D., Escudero, Z. L., & Vander Lei, E. (2013). Local assessment: Using genre analysis to validate directed self-placement. *College Composition and Communication*, 64(4), 605-633.
- Gould, J. (1992). The problem of being "Indian": One mixed-blood's dilemma. In S. Smith & J. Watson (Eds.), *De/Colonizing the subject: Politics of gender in women's autobiography* (pp. 81-87). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Horner, B., & Trimbur, J. (2002). English only and U.S. college composition. *College Composition and Communication*, 53(4), 594-630. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1512118>
- Inoue, A. B. (2009). The technology of writing assessment and racial validity. In C. S. Schreiner (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Assessment Technologies, Methods, and Applications in Higher Education* (pp. 97-120). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
- Isaacs, E., & Molloy, S. A. (2010). SATs for writing placement: A critique and counterproposal. *College English*, 72(5), 518-538.
- Ketai, R. L. (2012). Race, remediation, and readiness: Reassessing the "self" in directed self-placement. In A. B. Inoue & M. Poe (Eds.), *Race and Writing Assessment* (pp. 141-153). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1977). A function for thought experiments. Reprinted in T. S. Kuhn, *The essential tension* (pp. 240-265). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Lu, M. and Horner, B. (2016). Introduction: Translingual Work. *College English*, 78(3), 207-218.
- Lugones, M. (2007). Heterosexualism and the colonial/modern gender system. *Hypatia*, 22(1), 186-209.
- Matsuda, P. (2006). The myth of linguistic homogeneity in U.S. college composition. *College English*, 68(6), 637-651. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/25472180>
- Mignolo, W. (2003). *The darker side of the renaissance: Literacy, territoriality, and colonization*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mpub.8739>
- Mignolo, W. (2011). *The darker side of western modernity: Global futures, decolonial options*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/9780822394501>
- Perryman-Clark, S. (2016). Who we are(n't) assessing: Racializing language and writing assessment in writing program administration. *College English*, 79(2), 206-211.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). Linguistic imperialism. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Phillipson, R., & Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1996). English only worldwide, or language ecology. *TESOL Quarterly* 30(3), 429-452. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3587692>
- Poe, M., Cogan, J.A., Jr., & Nurudeen, T. G., Jr. (2014). The legal and the local: Using disparate impact analysis to understand the consequences of writing assessment. *College Composition and Communication*, 65(4), 588-611.
- Poe, M., & Inoue, A. B. (2016). Toward writing assessment as social justice: An idea whose time has come. *College English*, 79(2), 119-126.
- Quijano, A. (2000). Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America. *International Sociology*, 15(2), 215-232. <http://dx.doi.org/>

- org/10.1177/0268580900015002005
- Royer, D., & Gilles, R. (1998). Directed self-placement: An attitude of orientation. *College Composition and Communication*, 50(1), 54-70. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/358352>
- Rubin, A. M. (1997, December 12). Intensive English programs are lucrative for universities. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Schendel, E., & O'Neill, P. (1999). Exploring the theories and consequences of self-assessment through ethical inquiry. *Assessing Writing*, 6(2), 199-227. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1075-2935\(00\)00008-8](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1075-2935(00)00008-8)
- Spurr, D. (1993). *The rhetoric of empire: Colonial discourse in journalism, travel writing, and imperial administration*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Toth, C., & Aull, L. (2014). Directed self-placement questionnaire design: Practices, problems, possibilities. *Assessing Writing*, 20, 1-18. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2013.11.006>
- Tuhiwai Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous practices*. New York, NY: Zed Books.
- Vavrus, F., & Pekol, A. (2015). Critical internationalization: Moving from theory to practice. *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education*, 2(2). Retrieved from <http://preserve.lehigh.edu/fire/vol2/iss2/2>
- West-Puckett, S. J. (2016). Making writing assessment more visible, equitable, and portable through digital badging. *College English*, 79(2), 123-147.
- Young, I. M. (2011). *Responsibility for justice*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Young, V. A., & Martinez, A. Y. (2011). *Code-meshing as world English: Pedagogy, policy, performance*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.
- Zawacki, T. M., & Cox, M. (2014). *WAC and second-language Writers: Research towards linguistically and culturally inclusive programs and practices*. Fort Collins, CO: WAC Clearinghouse/Anderson, SC: Parlor Press. Retrieved from <http://wac.colostate.edu/books/12/>