

CHAPTER 14

GRADUATE WRITING WORKSHOPS: CROSSING LANGUAGES AND DISCIPLINES

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A Graduate Writing Workshop aimed at graduate students from various language backgrounds and disciplines is described. Taught in an English Department by faculty with second-language writing backgrounds, the workshop is structured around a student-created contract that is sufficiently flexible to accommodate a wide range of students' literacies. In the workshop, students work on writing required for their degrees, such as research reports, theses, and dissertations. The results of a survey of former students show that most students thought that working with peers from different language backgrounds and academic fields was beneficial. Because the university is situated on the US-Mexico border, most students are bilingual, which might have made students more receptive to the multilingualism of the course. Suggestions are given for developing a similar Graduate Writing Workshop at other colleges and universities, particularly those in which most students come from various language backgrounds.

In addition to serving the needs of undergraduate students, WAC/WID programs are increasingly playing a role in supporting graduate student writers, who are becoming more diverse every year. The number of international students enrolled in U. S. graduate schools jumped 11% from 2010-2011 (Fischer, 2011), and minority student graduate enrollment is increasing as well (National Center, 2011). To serve these diverse populations effectively, WAC/WID programs require resources, administrative support, and leadership, all of which may be in short supply in under-resourced institutions. Because our own university—the University of Texas at El Paso, or UTEP—has been unable to sustain a WAC program, six years ago one of the authors of this chapter, Mangelsdorf, who directed UTEP's Rhetoric and Composition PhD

program, was asked by the dean of the UTEP Graduate School to develop a writing course for graduate students across campus who needed assistance in completing their research reports, theses, and dissertations. The other author of this chapter, Fredericksen, has been the lead instructor for the course that was developed, which is housed in the English department and which has, since it was first offered, attracted English L1, L2, and bilingual students. In this chapter, we describe this course, called the Graduate Writing Workshop, and, using the results of a survey of former students who have taken the workshop, we analyze the benefits and drawbacks of the course, focusing in particular on the effectiveness of the course in offering writing instruction for students from different language backgrounds and disciplines. Finally, we offer suggestions for adapting this type of workshop course to other institutional settings, particularly those with students who have a wide range of language proficiencies and experiences.

GRADUATE WRITING WORKSHOP MODELS

A writing course for graduate students from a variety of language backgrounds and disciplines, with students who might range from new MA students to PhD students writing dissertations, is challenging to develop and teach. Frodesen (1995) has noted that such a course “must not only address writing needs across disciplines; it must adapt to students’ various stages of involvement in the larger academic community and in their specific disciplines” (p. 333). Further, the level of student engagement in such a course can be undermined if the students are not given course credit toward their degree. Another challenge of such a course can come from its location within the institution. A course that is housed in the English Department, for instance, can be isolated from students’ disciplinary homes, especially if the university lacks a strong WAC/WID program. This isolation can bolster the false notion that form and content are separate: English teachers are responsible for *how* students write while disciplinary faculty take care of *what* students write. Concerning writing in the disciplines, however, Bazerman et al. (2005) argue that “students are aided most by learning how to understand and participate in specific writing situations, including learning and responding to the local criteria and expectations, as well as strategically deploying task-relevant techniques” (p. 89). While we agree that teaching writing within specific disciplinary contexts is preferable, such a program was not on the horizon at our university. In this chapter we argue that in certain contexts and with appropriate curricula, a writing course that crosses disciplines and languages and that is taught by a writing specialist rather

than a disciplinary insider, such as the writing workshop that we describe here, can help students develop and improve as writers and raise their awareness of language-related issues.

When Mangelsdorf created and developed this course, she drew on characteristics of successful English L1 and L2 graduate-level writing courses both in the US and abroad. In several of the courses she looked at, students studied genres of writing common to their various disciplines (Belcher, 2009; Cargill, Cadman, & McGowan, 2001; Delyser, 2003; Dudley-Evans, 1995; Swales & Lindemann, 2002), and some involved content-area faculty in the writing course (Barratt, Hanlon, & Rankin, 2011; Dudley-Evans, 1995). Peer review was a valuable component in many of the syllabi she used as models (Belcher, 2009; Delyser, 2003; Dudley-Evans, 1995; Frodesen, 1995; Heinrich, Neese, Rogers, & Farente, 2004; Steinert, McLeon, Liben & Snell, 2008). The course she planned, based on these models, featured peer review groups who were given time to work together at almost every class meeting (thus the name of the course, Graduate Writing Workshop). Because the dean of the Graduate School had emphasized that students needed help with their theses and dissertations, she was also particularly focused on allowing students to work on these projects in the course. She was also aware, however, that the course would attract students just beginning their graduate studies, so, to accommodate the different types of writing that students would be producing, she borrowed an idea from a course described by Frodesen (1995), in which students were given the flexibility of designing their own assignments. Following this model, she decided that most of the course curriculum would originate from contracts that students created at the beginning of the workshop in which they made their own assignments and set their own deadlines (see Phillips [this volume] for a description of a graduate writing course that became more effective when the graduate student was permitted to develop a similar contract.) The flexibility of the contract system would be especially useful for L2 students who needed more time to write. As will be explained later, the contract system became a key feature in the success of the workshop.

UTEP's local context also played a role in the course design. UTEP is a Research 1-aspirational university that draws much of its student body from the El Paso, US/Ciudad Juarez, Mexico region. In fall 2011, 60% of degree-seeking graduate students were Hispanic, 16% were White, 10% were Mexican Internationals, and 7% were "other International" (University of Texas at El Paso, 2012). Thus, the graduate student population is primarily Spanish-English bilingual, though students also come from the Middle East, East Asia, and China. While Mangelsdorf was unable to find a description of a graduate writing course that blended L1 and L2 students, the bilingualism of UTEP's

student body made it impractical to offer separate different sections of the workshop for L2 learners, or to separate L1 and L2 learners in the workshop curriculum. This range of language orientations, which is becoming a norm in many US universities (Hall, 2009), posed a challenge, however, because instruction had to be sufficiently differentiated to meet students' various needs. But the blended course also offered opportunities for students to communicate with and learn from students with different language backgrounds. As we've seen, the range and continuum of students' linguistic expertise, combined with the range of disciplines that they represent, has given this writing workshop a complexity and richness that, while challenging, has proven to be successful in our university setting, as we'll explain, and can potentially serve as a model for other institutions with multilingual graduate students with a variety of language backgrounds and proficiencies. (As a model, this course includes many of the pedagogical components of the year-long team-taught writing and language courses offered in the more resource-intensive ACCESS and Bridge programs that Mallett & Zgheib [this volume] describe.)

THE GRADUATE WRITING WORKSHOP CURRICULUM

Our Graduate Writing Workshop (ENGL 5316), a 16-week course that meets three hours a week, was developed in response to requests from the Graduate School, as we noted. Students enroll voluntarily, though they are often strongly encouraged by their faculty advisors, and receive three hours of graduate credit that count toward financial aid but that won't count toward degree credit. A standard grading system is used (A, B, etc.). Students can enroll in the course as many times as they want, and they can take the course at any time during their graduate studies. The course is structured so that students typically complete writing projects in their degree programs, from course assignments to theses and dissertations. Two sections of the course, capped at 15 students, are offered each semester.

The instructors for the course are full-time faculty with PhDs in Rhetoric and Composition and experience teaching second language writers. They teach in UTEP's doctoral program in Rhetoric and Composition, which has intercultural writing as one of its key focuses. At the time of this writing, all but one of the faculty who have taught the course have been English-Spanish bilingual or fluent Spanish speakers, a language background that is helpful but not required. The faculty's disciplinary expertise enables them to ground the course in rhetorical principles and research-based pedagogy, and their status as full-time faculty helps to give them *ethos* when discussing the course with

faculty across campus. The course counts as a regular part of the instructor's course load and is subsidized by the English Department as part of its service role in the university. Instructors are asked to follow the course curriculum and assignments (see below), though they might make minor adjustments according to their own preferences.

Because Mangelsdorf wanted to pilot the workshop curricula before handing the Graduate Writing Workshop over to other instructors, she taught the workshop the first two semesters it was offered. Subsequently, Fredericksen became the lead instructor for the workshop and over the years has refined the workshop components based on student feedback, as we'll describe.

WORKSHOP COMPONENTS

The different parts of the workshop include features frequently mentioned in the published descriptions of similar courses, including an analysis of discipline-specific writing, peer review sessions, mini-lessons, and final presentations and portfolios. The two major innovations are the structure of the peer review workshop and the student-created writing contracts.

Contracts and Evaluation

To make the course structure flexible and individualized and to enable students to communicate regularly with their major professor, the majority of the semester's work is organized according to student-created contracts. In these contracts (written during the first two weeks of the workshop), students specify the writing that they will complete each week. The contracts are created in consultation with students' major professors as well as the workshop instructor; students are encouraged to continue communicating with their major professors about their writing throughout the course. All of the writing comes from the students' required projects in their different degree plans. In their contracts, students explain the type of writing and the number of pages they will produce weekly. Generally, they are encouraged to write at least five pages of original text per week; at the same time, they revise work that has been commented on by peers and the workshop instructor, resulting in a total of up to 20 pages of writing weekly. Many students elect to increase the minimum goal, usually by dividing the finished project (e.g. articles, thesis, dissertation) into relatively equal parts spread out over the available class meetings. Students who are less experienced writing in academic English often need more revision time, so in their contracts they may specify that they will only produce two to four pages early in the semester with the goal of writing more as their skills improve. The

student, the student's major professor, and the workshop instructor sign this contract, which becomes the student's syllabus for the rest of the semester and is posted on the course website for everyone to see. For some students who are just beginning their graduate studies, the workshop instructor will act as the major professor and help the student design an appropriate contract; for instance, students might summarize a number of journal articles in their field (for more on the role of summary-writing in L2 learning, see Du [this volume]). (See Appendix A for the contract assignment sheet.)

We'll note here that, because students' linguistic and rhetorical awareness of academic genres and publications is essential to their success (Johns, 2002; Swales & Feak, 2011), the one assignment that all students must complete at the start of the workshop is an analysis of a major journal in their field and an analysis of an article in that journal that can serve as a model for their own writing. The journal and the article are treated as representative artifacts that can reveal how knowledge is created, communicated, and valued in their discipline. Topics covered are both broad (why the journal is important, what kinds of evidence are used, what is assumed about the audience) and specific (the level of style, the citation system, the organizational patterns). This analysis helps to make explicit the discourse conventions in the students' academic disciplines.

Students' course grades are based on successful completion of their self-designed contracts and on the grade they receive for their analysis of scholarly publications. In addition, they must attend class regularly, participate fully in peer-review sessions, make a presentation, and submit a final portfolio, as we explain further below.

Peer Review Workshop

In several of the writing courses described in the literature (i.e., Cargill, Cadman, & McGowan, 2001; Dudley-Evans, 1995; Frodesen, 1995), instructors were concerned that students in multidisciplinary peer review groups would not understand the content of their classmates' papers, and as a result the feedback would be limited to surface-level writing issues. To work around this problem, students in our course participate in two different peer review groups throughout the semester, each of which is mixed linguistically. In "content" peer review groups, three or four students in the same or a similar field focus primarily on the ideas, evidence, format, organization, and coherence in the writing. They are encouraged to consult with their major professors when they disagree with a group member's suggestion or comment. After each content peer review group session, they revise their writing and return the next class period to work with a "proofreading" peer review group, comprising three

or four students from different fields. These educated lay readers read these drafts for surface errors, conciseness, parallelism, and other local concerns, consulting with the workshop instructor when necessary. After the workshop, students revise their work for a second time and hand in their drafts to the course instructor, who provides the third reading. Students use the instructor comments to make a final revision that will appear, along with other substantive drafts, in the final portfolio. The portfolio draft is typically the one that goes to the major professor and thesis/dissertation committee.

This separation between “content” and “proofreading” in the peer review groups is necessarily artificial, and students don’t always separate their responses in this way. While discussing the appropriateness of a certain feature in a proofreading session, they might begin to discuss more conceptual issues. For instance, a student who corrects the formation of the passive voice in a classmate’s paper might initiate a discussion among members of the group about how different disciplines employ the passive voice in research reports. This kind of discussion illustrates how writing workshops can lead students to greater awareness of how discourse is embedded in particular rhetorical contexts.

This three-step workshop structure (content peer review group, proofreading peer review group, instructor review) ensures that each writer has a wide audience. During each step of this process, students can accept the comments they find useful and reject those they do not. Based on our observations of the peer review sessions, we have found that the most productive peer review structure is to require students to share their drafts online before each class session. As a result, students come to class having read and commented on their peers’ writing and can thus spend the entire class session discussing, questioning, and expanding on the comments. This hybrid format (online reviewing plus in-class discussion) is especially helpful for students who are slower readers or who want to take their time commenting.

Mini-lessons

Almost every class day, the workshop instructor also conducts a mini-lesson, which lasts anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes and precedes the peer review sessions. The topics of mini-lessons change depending on the type of peer review sessions the students will engage in, and most apply to all of the students in the course, whether L1, L2, or bilingual. The mini-lessons are intended to provide instruction at the point of need and enable students to immediately apply what they have learned to their own (and their classmates’) writing. For example, on the days when the students will be in peer review groups that focus on content, the lessons focus on issues related to writing in specific disciplines,

such as different types of claims, patterns of organization, forms of evidence, documentation formats, and disciplinary lexicon, register, tone, and stance. On the days when students will be participating in proofreading peer review groups, the focus is typically on punctuation, grammar and usage, vocabulary, and other more local considerations. When discussing parallelism and conciseness, instructors take examples from students' writing. When topics are more specific to L2 students, such as word order, verb tense, articles, and prepositions, native English speakers learn more about the grammar of their own language and gain a greater appreciation of the challenges of writing in an unfamiliar language. When vocabulary is discussed, connections between languages are particularly emphasized as is the reality of world Englishes and how languages change according to particular contexts. (Students read about World Englishes in the handbook used in the course, Raimes and Jerskey's *Universal Keys for Writers*.) Thus while students are improving their ability to use standard written English, they are also becoming more aware that languages are always developing and changing.

Presentations and Portfolios

During the last week or so of the semester, students make oral presentations, supported by slides and handouts, about their class experience. They give a brief synopsis of the completed segments of their projects, present their electronic or paper portfolios for class perusal, and talk about their perceived progress as writers. The presentations are not graded, but do include questions and comments from the audience. These serve as invention material for the self-reflection statements that are included in the end-of-semester portfolios.

The portfolios, not graded but required for successful completion of the course, may be electronic or paper. They include the contract, the journal analysis, and all sections of the project that have been worked on in class, both final drafts and substantive preliminary drafts with peer and instructor comments. Perhaps the most important item in the final portfolio, however, is the self-reflection letter. Here students write about themselves as writers, rather than as scientists, engineers, artists, accountants, and so on. Many students comment that reading papers written by their classmates in a variety of fields made them more conscious of how each field has its own way of creating and communicating knowledge. Students often refer to the frequent discussions about language and culture in the workshop; these discussions appear to help the L2 students in particular become more motivated and write with greater confidence. (The survey results that we give in the next section of this chapter provide a fuller explanation of this point.) This rhetorical awareness

of language, audience, purpose, and context is one benefit of a course with a range of languages and disciplines represented; this mix can help give students the rhetorical flexibility and awareness that they will need as they “shuttle” (Canagarajah, 2006) between the languages and discourse communities that they will encounter.

The purpose of these different course components—the students’ individual writing contracts, the journal and article analysis, the two types of peer review sessions, the mini-lessons, and the presentation, portfolio, and reflection—is to give students ample writing support and feedback, while at the same time accommodating the students’ varied language backgrounds and making language difference an asset. The survey results, explained below, suggest that for the most part this goal has been achieved.

CROSSING LANGUAGES AND DISCIPLINES: A STUDENT SURVEY

Because enrollment was strong in this writing workshop, we believed the course appeared to meet the needs of students. However, every semester a few students missed too many classes. While the most common reasons for absences were either personal (such as illness) or professional (a professional conference to attend), we wanted to make sure that students found the workshop beneficial to attend. Student input would also help us to continue improving the course design, particularly as it pertained to the mixing of language backgrounds and disciplinary specialties within the same class. Using SurveyMonkey, we designed an 18-item survey (see Appendix B) that asked students about the course as well as gathered information about their fields of study and languages. Before distributing the survey, we piloted it by asking several students to take it and make suggestions for revision. Then, we emailed 71 former students to ask them to complete the survey; of these, 27 answered for a response rate of 28%. For the most part, the respondents were students who had taken the course most recently, in the last couple of semesters.

In this section, we focus on the survey results as they pertain to two fundamental characteristics of the workshop, the mixing of languages and disciplines. The 27 students who responded to the survey represented a cross-section of disciplines, with Engineering (6), Health Science (5), and Science (4) being the most common. Seventeen of the students were enrolled in doctoral programs and 10 in master’s programs. The students’ self-reported language backgrounds reflected UTEP’s location on the US-Mexico border to some extent. A slim majority of students (17 or 66%) self-reported as proficient in

speaking and writing in English and Spanish. Other languages represented by the students were Nepali, Hindi, Thai, and Telugu. When asked their countries of origin, eleven students indicated Mexico, eight said they were from the US, and the other students listed Nepal (2), India (2), Cuba (1), and Thailand (1). Only one student self-identified as monolingual English.

SURVEY RESULTS: CROSSING LANGUAGES

Because the mix of bilingual and monolingual speakers with English L2 speakers in the course is unique, we wanted to know the students' views about how well this mix worked for them. We asked, "Tell us your thoughts about working with students who had different language backgrounds. To what extent, if any, did this benefit you?" Twenty-three students had entirely positive views about working with linguistically diverse writers; three had some positive and some negative perspectives; and two were entirely negative about the experience.

The students who had only positive comments on this question wrote that working with students from a variety of language backgrounds helped them learn aspects of English that they could apply to their own writing, increased their metalinguistic awareness, improved their oral comprehension of English, and enhanced their appreciation of multiculturalism/multilingualism. Here are some sample responses from students who described themselves as Spanish-English bilingual:

I found myself meeting and talking to people with the same language issues as me, and helping each other in finding the correct words or order.

I need to hear accented Englishes more (that are different from Spanish).

It was supportive, enhanced the multicultural setting of UTEP, and my learning experience too.

This interaction helps in identifying other languages' writing styles.

We speculate that these bilingual English-Spanish students might have been more open about linguistic diversity because at UTEP and in the community at large, bilingualism is the norm. Almost half of UTEP's entering students report that they are equally comfortable speaking Spanish and English.

The two students who expressed problems with working with students from different language backgrounds focused on the time that it took them to read and comment on their fellow students' writing. These students, who spoke neither English nor Spanish as a first language, also expressed a strong preference for working with native English speakers:

A mix of students helps, but there should be enough English native speakers to help students whose first language is other than English.

As an ESL student it is better to work with monolingual students because sometimes I doubt other ESL students' corrections.

The assumption in these two comments is that native English speakers are better able to help writers edit their work, an example of what Kubota and Lin (2006), among others, have called "native speakerism." This assumption can occur even though non-native English speakers may have had more preparation and experience writing standard academic English than their native English-speaking counterparts (see Phillips [this volume] for an example of this dynamic in group work assigned at the graduate level). Perhaps these students were not as open to learning from students with different language backgrounds because they were not in the bilingual mainstream at UTEP.

Because so few students had negative responses to this question, we believe that the multilingual course approach is valuable. Throughout the course, instructors emphasize the value of multilingualism, in particular in mini-lessons that focus on correcting surface errors. For instance, when everyone in the workshop recognizes that *in* and *on* both translate to *en* in Spanish, they realize why native Spanish speakers have trouble with these prepositions. When everyone knows that articles seldom appear in Asian languages, they see the need to help native speakers of these languages use articles in English. Awareness of difference not only made the workshop proceed more smoothly, it also strengthened classroom relationships.

SURVEY RESULTS: CONCERNS ABOUT STANDARD ENGLISH CORRECTNESS

While students clearly valued the variety of language backgrounds in the workshop, the survey also revealed a persistent concern with writing correct academic English. In a question about the classroom activities that students found most helpful to them, the four most frequent responses were the

proofreading peer review groups, the grammar lessons, the vocabulary exercises, and the punctuation practice. Similarly, in a question concerning how students thought their writing had improved, the two most common responses were: “I know more about correcting errors” and “I make fewer errors in my writing.” When we asked students “What recommendations do you have for improving English 5316?”, the most frequent recommendation was for the course to include more lessons in grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation—this despite the fact that almost all students reported that their proficiency with surface-level correctness had improved as a result of the course.

Pressures to produce error-free writing (from a U.S. perspective) are still extremely powerful both in the US in general and in the academy in particular, despite the fact that non-native English speakers outnumber native English speakers at least three to one worldwide (Crystal, 2003). For example, Thaiss and Zawacki’s (2006) results from a faculty and student survey found that faculty valued grammatical correctness, some of them emphatically. The students they studied “gave no evidence of resisting this expectation” (p. 132). Grammatical correctness is often associated with positive attributes such as paying attention to detail, a view expressed in a recent article in the *Harvard Business Review* titled “I Won’t Hire People Who Use Poor Grammar. Here’s Why” (Wiens, 2012). Many studies (i.e., Fredericksen, 2006) indicate that spoken accents and accented writing (such as the misuse of prepositions or omission of articles) create problems for bilingual and L2 speakers when they apply for jobs, present papers at conferences, or teach in the US.

We have found that workshop discussions often function as a release valve for students to express their anxieties about language. Because language insecurities of some kind affect almost all language users whether English L2, bilingual, or English L1, these discussions tended to make the workshop students more supportive of each other. For instance, in one peer review group session, they complained about professors who told them they use too many commas, or not enough commas, or to never use commas at all. Teaching assistants in the course talked about freshmen who say that their accents are too thick. And all shared ideas about how to alleviate nervousness when giving presentations. They often requested mini-lessons on usage topics, such as the difference between *effect* and *affect*, that concern students from all language backgrounds.

SURVEY RESULTS: CROSSING DISCIPLINES

As we noted, students in this Graduate Writing Workshop come from a variety of academic fields, and they spend much of their class time interacting with peers outside of their own disciplines. To discover the usefulness of these

interactions, we asked: “What are your thoughts about working with students in different fields? To what extent, if any, did this benefit you?” Twenty-three respondents had positive comments in regard to working with students from various disciplines; three had mixed reactions.

The many students who said that they liked this aspect of the course wrote that working with students in a variety of fields taught them about other disciplines, increased their awareness of different discourse conventions, improved their reading and vocabulary, and helped them write more clearly:

A multidisciplinary approach not only increased my vocabulary, but also my knowledge of other fields.

It helps students write in a style easy to understand for everyone.

Working with students outside my discipline made me more aware of audience differences and writing style preferences across disciplines. I began to pay more attention to stylistic matters that I had typically shrugged off as being “just my way of writing.”

Our students’ responses to the mixture of disciplines were similar to the positive reactions by students in the graduate writing courses taught by Dudley-Evans (1995), Frodesen (1995), and Norris & Tardy (2006), who also found that working with peers from other fields can help students understand that there is no single way to conduct research or communicate knowledge.

We do acknowledge, however, that a generalist writing workshop cannot accomplish what writing instruction within a student’s discipline can accomplish even when the course instructor seeks assistance from the students’ faculty advisors. For instance, the workshop instructor can describe only in a general way the different sections of a research report, while understanding, at the same time, that there is no single research report genre as the genre is shaped by the actions it performs within a particular disciplinary context. So, while working across disciplines can add to students’ general rhetorical awareness, they still need instruction and feedback within their own disciplinary communities. We tried to accomplish this instruction in the content peer review groups, in which students from the same or similar disciplines were grouped together. These groups were not entirely successful, however; as one survey student noted, “Content groups often did not catch content errors.” Depending on who registered for the workshop, a few of the content groups also lacked disciplinary cohesiveness.

Even in mixed disciplinary groups, however, the feedback could still be helpful. In one class, for example, a group of students from communication, teacher education, and rhetoric and communication engaged in conversations on topics such as the difficulties of conducting qualitative research, the IRB process they each experienced, and the traditional IMRAD (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion) report format.

SURVEY IMPLICATIONS

As we've indicated, the survey elicited primarily positive responses from the students regarding the multilingual and multidisciplinary aspects of the course. Overall satisfaction was high as well; when asked if they would recommend the course to another student, all of the students reported that they would. In particular, the overall satisfaction with the multilingual aspect of the course—the wide range of students' language proficiencies and backgrounds—was a pleasant surprise given that a clear demarcation between L1 and L2 students usually exists in higher education (Matsuda, 2006). What facilitated this successful mixture of students from different language backgrounds?

No doubt part of this success was that at UTEP, Spanish-English bilingualism is the norm. As the demographics of our survey indicated, a little over half of the students surveyed self-identified as bilingual, which accords with the UTEP's student body as a whole. A smaller but still sizeable percentage of students self-identify as Spanish dominant, with monolingual English speakers a clear minority. And, as mentioned earlier, all but one of the workshop instructors has been either Spanish-English bilingual or a fluent Spanish speaker. The faculty's personal understanding of the challenges of learning academic English has added to the overall openness about language differences that has permeated the course.

We believe that the structure of the course, in particular the contract system, also has contributed to the workshop's effectiveness regarding the range of student language backgrounds. In the survey, we included a question about the effectiveness of the contracts that students created in which they set their own assignments and deadlines. The responses to the contracts were almost uniformly positive. To the open-ended question, "What did you think of the contract grading system in which you decided on the projects you would complete for the course?" Twenty-four of the 27 students gave entirely positive responses that often focused on how the contracts helped the students with time management. We suggest that a contract system might be particularly helpful for students less experienced with writing in academic English than their peers. Leki's (2007) case studies of L2 writing students, for example,

documented the students' struggles to meet deadlines more appropriate for L1 students. The contracts gave all students both flexibility and a sense of control over their writing development. (For further evidence of the importance of allowing multilingual graduate students develop their own plan for graduate writing seminars, see Phillips [this volume]).

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF OUR COURSE AS A MODEL FOR OTHERS

The sustained popularity of the Graduate Writing Workshop, the number of students who choose to repeat it, and the students' positive comments about the course in our survey, albeit based on a relatively small response rate, demonstrate that such a course can be valuable in helping graduate students from a variety of language backgrounds and disciplines develop as writers. In particular, our survey suggests that a flexible and individualized contract system, combined with structured peer review sessions, can give students from different language backgrounds the time and feedback necessary for them to progress. The workshop also addresses students' anxieties about not being able to write "correctly"—an important part of helping students gain the linguistic capital they need to feel confident enough to succeed in their disciplines.

We believe that this workshop model can be adapted for other institutional contexts, in particular institutions with a significant number of bilingual and multilingual graduate students. Based on our own experiences, we suggest the following as essential components of such a course, including the first in this list that we would do were able to revisit the planning phase of our course.

1. Make systematic connections to disciplinary faculty. When the Graduate Writing Workshop was in the planning stages, several faculty across campus were contacted informally for their suggestions. However, connections with these faculty were not systematically maintained, and as a result feedback from faculty across campus has been sporadic. In order to maintain faculty input and support, we recommend that early in the planning stages, faculty across the disciplines who have voiced concerns about student writing be invited to join a committee that will assist in gaining institutional buy-in, designing the course curriculum, and assessing the course's effectiveness for graduate writers. These faculty will also likely be the ones to suggest the course to their students, which will help facilitate communication between the workshop instructor, students, and supervising professors.

2. Ensure that course instructors understand language acquisition and appreciate language differences. While it is not necessary that course

instructors be L2 or bilingual writers themselves, it is important that they know the challenges of acquiring standard academic English and view multilingualism as an asset to the overall learning in the course.

3. Structure the course around student-created contracts. Organizing the writing course around student-written contracts can ensure that students are producing writing that is part of their degree plans. The contracts also give more time to students who are less experienced writing in English, help to promote time management, and allow students to feel more in control of their writing progress. This individualized course structure can be especially effective for students with a wide range of language backgrounds and proficiencies.

4. Provide students with the linguistic capital that they need to succeed in their graduate programs. Give students the instruction and resources they want to feel competent in producing correct standard language forms. At the same time, allow students to express their anxieties about writing “correctly” and point out that language differences and varieties are strengths rather than weaknesses.

Traditionally, graduate students have not been a major part of WAC and WID programs despite the rising number of graduate students in higher education in the US who need writing support. A multilingual and multidisciplinary graduate writing course, such as the Graduate Writing Workshop that we have described in this chapter, can close this gap by offering writing instruction that can help a variety of students in a setting that affirms and values language diversity.

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APPENDIX A

COURSE CONTRACT

For English 5316, you will design most of your writing assignments. You will list these assignments along with due dates in a contract that you will create. In this contract, you will spell out what you are assigning yourself to do each week. **Unless I tell you otherwise, you must produce at least five pages a week.** This is to help you write continuously and without procrastination; substantive revisions count toward that five page count, so you might turn in a five page revision one week of the same content you submitted the week before. Your documents should be word-processed, using 12 point font, and standard 1-1 1/2 inch margins.

You will produce two copies of your contract, with the same assignments but addressed to two different readers.

Contract I: For your major professor to sign. This is an agreement between you and that professor outlining what you hope to accomplish this semester.

Contract II: For your English 5316 writing team members and professor. This contract will be signed by team members and by me and will help us ensure that you stay on track.

You will turn in a copy of both contracts to me **and will upload a copy of your contract to Blackboard by _____**.

Please do not give a copy to your major professor until I have approved it.

Your writing assignments should be based on what you want to accomplish this semester. For example, if your goal is to revise your thesis/dissertation, then you will assign yourself ten or more pages of revision a week. If your goal is to write a journal article for publication, then you'll assign yourself part of the article to draft (or revise) each week. If you are new to your field, you might want to work on summarizing and analyzing journal articles, so your contract assignment could be to summarize several articles a week or write one analysis a week. If you are doing research, you might choose to prepare an annotated bibliography and a literature review.

Your contract should include opportunities for you to write and rewrite (revise, proofread, and edit). Challenge yourself when you design your contract. Know that the harder the work, the more you will gain from the experience. If you need to adjust your contract later in the semester, you may do so by discussing revision with me and then submitting a revised contract to me and your team members. You do not have to resubmit the revision to your major professor.

At the end of the semester, you will compile your finished work into a portfolio and present all or a portion of your portfolio to the class. Your portfolio will include all of your contract assignments plus all of the prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing you do in the course of the semester. You may produce either a paper portfolio or an eportfolio—or some combination of the two. You will have models of each form to use as guidelines, but you are free to innovate as well.

APPENDIX B

STUDENT SURVEY

Thank you for agreeing to answer these questions about English 5316, Graduate Writing Workshop. Your answers will help us describe this course to

other students and faculty around the country. As a result, other universities may begin offering their own Graduate Writing Workshops.

1. What degree are you seeking at UTEP?
2. What is your major field of study at UTEP?
3. How many times have you taken English 5316: Graduate Writing Workshop?

In the following questions, please give us feedback about this course.

4. What did you think of the contract grading system in which you decided on the projects you would complete for the course?
5. What classroom activities were useful to you? Check all that apply.
 - Content peer review groups
 - Proofreading peer review groups
 - Journal analysis
 - Vocabulary exercises
 - Punctuation practice
 - Grammar lessons
 - Readings on style differences in various fields
 - Readings about World Englishes
6. If there were other activities that you found useful that were not mentioned in the previous question, please list them here.
7. What are your thoughts about working with students in different fields? To what extent, if any, did this benefit you?
8. Tell us your thoughts about working with students who had different language backgrounds (some monolingual English, some who learned English as a second language, and so on). To what extent, if any, did this benefit you?
9. What improvements, if any, did you see in your writing as a result of English 5316? Choose all that apply.
 - I have a better understanding of the types of writing done in my field.
 - I know more about what my audience expects from my writing.
 - I improved my ability to understand academic material in English
 - I can organize my writing better.
 - I know more about how to discover and gather ideas.
 - I know more about how to revise my ideas.
 - I can do a better job of giving feedback on my peers' writing.
 - I have a better vocabulary.
 - I make fewer errors in my writing.
 - I know more about how to correct errors in my writing.

10. If there were other improvements in your writing that weren't listed in the previous question, please list them here.
11. What drawbacks, if any, did you find with English 5316?
12. What recommendations do you have for improving English 5316?
13. Would you recommend English 5316 to another student?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
14. What is your language background? Choose all that apply.
 - I am monolingual English.
 - I can speak in two languages (including English).
 - I can speak in more than two languages (including English).
 - I can write in more than two languages (including English).
15. In addition to English, what other languages do you know?
16. Do you consider yourself totally bilingual in two languages? If so, which languages?
17. What is your country of origin?
18. How long have you been in the US?

Thank you for helping us with this project!