



Journal of Basic Writing

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Metacognition, and Qualitative Learning

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Promising but Struggling Multilinguals: A One-on-One
Intervention for Getting on Track in First-Year Composition

Misun Dokko

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CALL FOR ARTICLES

We seek manuscripts that are original, stimulating, well-grounded in theory, and clearly related to the complexities of providing writing support across contexts. All manuscripts must focus on basic writing and/or must situate settings of instruction or institutional agency in explicit relation to basic writing concerns. A familiarity with the journal and its readership should be evident through an introduction that engages with recent and ongoing debates, open questions, and controversies in and around basic writing.

We particularly encourage submissions that draw heavily on faculty voices, student voices, or student writing as supportive evidence for new observations; research written in non-technical language; and co-authored writing that provocatively debates more than one side of a central controversy. Recent *JBW* authors have also engaged more deeply with archival research. Work that reiterates what is known or that is mainly summative or overly practical will not be considered. Articles must work to substantively add to the existing literature by making explicit their central claims early on and by devising a clear and thorough methodology. Before submitting, potential authors should review published articles in the journal that model approaches to methodology and organization.

JBW scholarship reflects the full range of frameworks applied to composition and rhetoric, two-year college, and literacy studies. We invite authors to engage with any of the following methods or approaches: antiracist approaches; second-language theory; the implications of literacy; first-generation studies; discourse theory; just-writing and access studies; two-year college literature and student support; writing center theory and practice; ethnographic methods and program studies; program histories and critical university studies; and/or cross-disciplinary work. In addition, the journal is in active dialogue with the scholarship of translanguaging and multilingualism, multimodality, digital rhetorics, and justice studies. Authors should be explicit about their choice of framework and its appropriateness to the article's subject matter, including reference to how such choice models or revises a particular theoretical approach.

In view of basic writing history, we value submissions that help basic writing reassess its original assumptions, question its beneficence, and posit new and informed futures for writing support. We invite prospective authors to view the latest issues in our web archive at wac.colostate.edu/jbw.

Manuscript Submission Information

Submissions should run between 25 and 30 pages (7,500-9,000 words), including a Works Cited, and follow current MLA guidelines. To assure impartial review, include name(s), affiliation(s), mailing and email addresses, and a short biographical note for publication on the cover page only. The second page of the manuscript should include the title but no author identification, an abstract of 250-300 words, and a list of five to seven keywords.

Endnotes should be kept to a minimum. It is the author's responsibility to obtain written permission for excerpts from student writing, especially as this entails IRB review, which should be made transparent in an endnote for readers.

Contributions should be submitted as Word document attachments or Google links to jbwuncny@gmail.com. Authors will receive a confirmation of receipt. The next communication will be on whether the manuscript, if geared toward a *JBW* audience, will be going out for peer review. If so, review reports generally follow in six to eight weeks. The editors also welcome proposals for guest-edited issues.

EDITORS' COLUMN

We live in an era of unprecedented data compression and automation. AI systems seek out and incorporate data in slices of time so miniscule that we struggle to recognize distinct steps of the process. While data expands and transforms in the deep wells of machine learning, the tangible outcomes of cultural work and the professions seem to grow at further distances from anyone's actual doing of them. This absorption swallows, likewise, an intimacy of process that carried messages we relied on, reminders of efficacy and purpose. We watch the distances simultaneously shorten and lengthen between goals and endpoints, the possibilities now endless. It can feel like we are spending more time managing, less time making.

But instructors are makers: We create structures for learning, course outcomes, assignment sequences, and critical frameworks for reading. We create relationships to sustain student learning through a semester, a program, or a college career. We create communities. A challenge of increasingly product-oriented technology has always been how to adapt so that we continue to identify with the processes that define us. The entre of ChatGPT and AI into writing classrooms is a radical moment for freshly recognizing technology's power to reshape distances between teachers, students, and texts. And yet writing instruction has always been about these distances. Each of the articles of this issue prioritizes radical connections among instructors and students and support for spaces that are fully embodied by both.

In our first article, "Ungrading the Composition Classroom: Affect, Metacognition, and Qualitative Learning," Austin Bailey and Caroline Wilkinson acknowledge the teetering effects of traditional grading in writing instruction, as per grades' "tendency to dehumanize and mechanize the learning process, while drawing attention away from actual learning." Taking their lead from notable critics of standard grading practices, Bailey and Wilkinson ground their approach to alternative assessment, or ungrading, on values that return learning to its relational base, pedagogies "requir[ing] humility, flexibility, open-mindedness, and experimentation, even as they need not shy away from certain key commitments." These values are not new to this moment, but feel more current, and certainly more urgent, since COVID-19's own overturn of real-time, present learning. Ungrading aptly recognizes and transforms the many negative effects associated with grades, by which "student identities tie to grades" and map along an "axis of affect" that students bear with them through all interactions of the writing classroom. Narrative Self-Evaluations, or NSEs, become a distinct feature

here; NSEs invite students “to conceptualize themselves as individuals,” share their writing histories and learning goals for the semester, and shape their own “metacognitive framework for student self-assessment,” yielding a highly qualitative, affect-sensitive approach. And as they embody students’ voices situated within a much wider dialogue, NSEs help “attend [...] to the affective underpinnings circulating within assessment processes, and [...] reorient those affects” away from “the desiring economies (of precarious self-worth and institution-contingent approval),” toward validation and care.

In our second article, “Terms and Conditions: Working with (and in Spite of) Our Multilingual Student Frameworks,” Charissa Che tackles another route by which students bear the effects and impacts of language systems that inscribe identity across students’ own authority for claiming who they are. Like Bailey and Wilkinson’s qualitative take on ungrading, Che’s project is another systemic digging out—from entrenched layers of labeling students of multilingual backgrounds, in a word, “ESL.” Acknowledging that the term has been contested for quite some time, Che insists on a fully translanguaging approach “to how we place, instruct, and refer to our linguistically diverse students.” To engender students’ “agency to linguistically self-identify, to flout conventional academic structures, and to mobilize their diverse language repertoires in their meaning-making” is the goal. To this end, Che’s study probes the effects of “ESL” among those directly limited by it. In surveys and interviews, Che queries students’ multilingual backgrounds and how students feel themselves positioned in the classroom and institution. Students also gauge their “ESL” association against what they understand to be their own linguistic competence, which makes space for students to recommend improvements to their programs and offerings of multilingual support. Instructors as well describe how the “ESL” identifier functions within their own teaching and how they regard the term, as they share key understandings of the “writing competences of . . . multilingual students, including the linguistic and cultural assets they bring to the classroom.” Not surprisingly, often what instructors notice of student competence belies the labels they at once acknowledge and problematize. Just like their students’, instructors’ perspectives prompt valuable suggestions for reform and additional support.

In our third article, “Explicit Language Instruction: Developing Writers Metalinguistic Awareness to Facilitate Transfer,” Tom Slagle calls out the ways in which writing instruction needlessly distances the first-year writer from grasping the purposes of academic discourse through insufficient approaches to writing for transfer. While Slagle acknowledges that Teaching for Transfer

and Writing About Writing pedagogies have moved the needle on making knowledge about writing itself a critical writing topic, he argues that students need more attention to what may be called “language-level choices, which may present additional barriers to transfer.” Slagle identifies our field’s lack of attention to language-level choices generally, “since postsecondary writing instruction . . . often precludes explicit instruction in the language-level features that characterize genres and likewise students’ awareness of these characteristic features.” Not only English Language Learners, accustomed to more fine-grained language instruction, but also native speakers and learners of English, might benefit from a functional language approach. Following Laura Aull and Anne Ruggles Gere et al. on building generic understandings, Slagle provides a set of lessons meant to foster metalinguistic awareness about sentence-level choices that convey expressions of conviction, concession, open-mindedness, problematization, and more. Discerning local discursive patterns, students build a metalanguage for describing the “connections between conventional language-level features and the related socio-cultural practices of academic discourse.” Slagle bases his research on 14 interviews of students enrolled in stretch and corequisite courses at two four-year institutions who took part in his functional grammar approach. Ultimately, these interviews substantiate that “By raising students’ awareness of the connections between language-level features and macro-rhetorical concepts, functional approaches to language instruction can also potentially aid students’ understanding of the ‘often tacit assumptions’ [citing Aull] of academic writing.” In brief, Slagle’s research pushes back on a variation of automation in writing instruction that is hardly new—the tendency to perceive good writing as standard and writing practices as universal.

Finally, in our fourth article, “Promising but Struggling Multilinguals: A One-on-One Intervention for Getting on Track in First-Year Composition,” Misun Dokko elaborates the need to widen our capacities for seeing students and our own teaching purposes more clearly. An individualized pedagogy honed especially for “promising but struggling” students, such as her own student Nico, responds directly to the distances we may feel arising in our classrooms in a “writing processed” era. Dokko first intuits, then observes, a “small but ever-present contingent” of students who “attend regularly, submit work somewhat consistently, and engage with potential.” But “their reticence is palpable,” as it manifests incomplete work, low participation, misunderstandings of assignments, and ultimately, students’ withdrawing from, failing, or hardly passing the class. Dokko determines such students could benefit from individualized instruction, though not through standard

options, such as tutoring or academic coaching, as generally made available by trained personnel apart from the classroom. Dokko ventures to provide an individualized intervention herself, modeled on a thorough review of approaches, such as English for Academic Purposes, appropriate to multilinguals but not “promising but struggling” students, and on individualization for primary and secondary students supporting rich dialogue and connection. Student Nico agrees and, in the course of their six week-long, biweekly 30-minute sessions, achieves more confidence, less struggle. Together Dokko and Nico brave the distance between Nico’s reticence and conventional tutoring. Dokko “encourage[s] Nico to feel confident and comfortable through conversations about his interests, use[s] a yellow legal pad to visualize concepts, point[s] at areas of text, number[s] key words, punctuate[s] lessons with Spanish, clarify[s] concepts that [Dokko had taken] for granted, and restrain[s] [her]self from interrupting.” Further, Dokko becomes part of her own research to discover a true kinship with Nico and other multilinguals leading from her own language learning history. “In [these] ways,” Dokko writes, even “10-minutes of conversation” can effectively “develop rapport and highlight Nico’s funds of knowledge.” Their partnership models a uniquely personalized, and humanized, bridge to success.

Certainly we are not alone among users, makers, and professionals questioning the distances we see arising among ourselves across tables (and desks) where the eyes of “the other” were once more visible. Our current era signals little to assure us that we can always know whose voice we are actually meeting on the page or our devices for much longer, and soon students may even come to doubt the voices they meet in their feedback from us, or in our emails. We must assure them it is really us and find ways and “time to know them” as Marilyn Sternglass presaged in a quite different time. The articles of this issue remind us that this endeavor is—and will be—the one that continues to define us.

--Hope Parisi and Cheryl C. Smith

A Note of Acknowledgement from *JBW*'s Incoming Editors

We did not want to conclude this Editors' Column, the last by Hope Parisi and Cheryl C. Smith as *JBW*'s Editors, without acknowledging their exceptional stewardship and longstanding leadership. Hope stepped into her position as *JBW* editor in 2008, taking over for Bonne August, her colleague at Kingsborough Community College (CUNY), and sharing the editor's role with Rebecca Mlynarczyk. In 2011, Cheryl took over the editorship from Rebecca. Together, Hope and Cheryl have been galvanizing and guiding the conversation on basic writing for well over the decade through a period that has been defined by critical shifts and developments in attitudes towards "basic writing" as a field.

Careful studies of students and faculty, of pedagogy and policy, are a hallmark of *JBW*. As editors, Hope and Cheryl have approached each manuscript as a conversation in progress, a line of questioning to be nurtured. They have showcased authors, both new and established, who tell the stories of basic writing faculty, students, and programs with respect and attention to detail. They are well known by authors in the journal and in the field as meticulous, careful editors who prioritize mentoring up-and-coming faculty and graduate students.

The solid foundation laid by Hope and Cheryl has allowed *JBW* to take on new challenges and possibilities. New co-editors Dominique Zino and Lisa Blankenship, along with the rest of the editorial team, have been re-imagining what this historic journal has to offer as the concept of "basic writing" evolves and shifts in our current chapter. Dominique and Lisa will continue to prioritize collaboration within the journal while also diversifying and enlarging the editorial team in the coming year. As we look forward to *JBW*'s 50th anniversary in 2025, this is a moment to recognize how far Hope and Cheryl have taken the journal and the field, to conceptualize the values inherent in this concept we have known as "basic writing," and to carry those values into our future work.

Ungrading the Composition Classroom: Affect, Metacognition, and Qualitative Learning

Austin Bailey and Caroline Wilkinson

ABSTRACT: Responding to growing interests in alternative assessment practices, this article examines ungrading in two composition courses at a public university classified as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, detailing its implementation by two instructors in an Accelerated Learning Program composition class and a standalone composition class. Utilizing ungrading in our classes and highlighting student responses in their writing and interviews, we argue that ungrading serves as an assessment strategy that promotes radical student inclusion in the basic writing classroom. Ungrading, we suggest, has the potential to transform learning processes and relations by centering and transparently prioritizing affective dynamics of trust, care, and mutual recognition. In addition, ungrading couples these affects with a metacognitive framework for student self-assessment. For these reasons, ungrading—which we here aim to distinguish from other alternative assessment practices—is a valuable and highly implementable practice for writing pedagogy in the context of diverse university settings.

KEYWORDS: affect; assessment; alternative assessment; basic writers; basic writing; contract grading; metacognition, pedagogy; ungrading

As an assessment practice whose purpose is to decenter grades, ungrading has gained increasing interest among educators of late. Susan Blum notes in the introduction to her recent anthology *Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)* that those who undertake the task of ungrading “are troubled by some of the consequences of and reasons for grades,” such as their tendency to dehumanize and mechanize the learning process, while drawing attention away from actual learning (2). Those who ungrade argue that in a fundamental sense, grades trade in extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation, encouraging student engagement through fear and competition rather than authentic interest, all while failing

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Ungrading the Composition Classroom

to accurately assess genuine learning and growth (Blum 3). What's worse, grades replicate and codify structures of social inequity. As Jesse Stommel forcefully puts it: "Agency, dialogue, self-actualization, and social justice are not possible (or, at least, unlikely) in a hierarchical system that pits teachers against students and encourages competition by ranking students against one another"(27-28).

While "ungrading" is a somewhat novel term—one making its rounds among university educators and compositionists, particularly since the start of the pandemic—its conceptual framework and ethico-affective orientations draw notable parallels to already-established scholarship on assessment. In *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning*, for instance, Brian Huot has argued that because assessment is "a direct representation of what we value and how we assign that value, it says much about our identities as teachers and theorists" (1). Ungrading seemingly shares Huot's imperative to rearticulate the contours of assessment not subtractively, "as a way to enforce certain culturally positioned standards and refuse entrance to certain people," but additively, as an indispensable aid in transforming "the learning environment for both teachers and students" (8).

Much like the contributors to Blum's anthology, the authors of the present article are also troubled by grades. What's more, we have found in our own practices that ungrading, or "*going gradeless*" (Blum 2, emphasis author's), has proven itself to be nothing short of transformative—a pedagogical about-face rather difficult to abandon once taken up. In its current iterations, however, ungrading is noticeably porous. As Blum herself remarks: "The authors of this book's chapters are not uniform in our approaches," since alternatives to grading "incorporate a variety of techniques" (15). As per Blum's inventory, approaches to going gradeless range from tossing out rubrics altogether to collaboratively remaking them; testing or not testing students; turning to labor-based contract grades; and grading for "completion, effort, quality, or quantity," among others (15). While any approach to alternative assessment should be open-minded and flexible enough to respond to the unique contexts in which it is deployed, the diversity of approaches for what can be taxonomized as "ungrading" is notably vast. While such diversity is generative, the inchoate nature of ungrading as a category raises questions about what commitments and methodologies it specifically articulates and performs, beyond functioning merely as an umbrella term for a general dissatisfaction with the arbitrary and problematic nature of grades.

In what follows, we offer one possible answer to this question in the form of an approach to ungrading that we think marks its vital distinction

from other modes of alternative assessment. As we have come to understand and implement it, ungrading hinges its conception and practice of learning on a holistic, metacognitive, and student-inclusive process that resists quantification and radically resituates the *affective* relationships underpinning the interpersonal, as well as communal, dynamics of the writing classroom. We here use the term “affective” in a general sense to refer both to the force relations that capacitate bodies in different ways, sometimes prior to cognitive apprehension, as well as the emotional registers that become available to individuals as the result of such processes. Thus, we follow Brian Massumi’s key observation that emotion “is the way the depth of [affect] registers personally at a given moment” (4).

In their recent article, “In the Absence of Grades: Dissonance and Desire in Course-Contract Classrooms,” Joyce Olewski Inman and Rebecca A. Powell make the crucial observation that grades “work along the axis of affect” (31). Though they experiment with and ultimately favor a labor-based contract grading approach, the authors still point to what they perceive to be a distinct lack of reflexivity among compositionists concerning the affective dimensions of grades—specifically, grades’ power to produce affective identifications and attachments that necessarily complicate logocentric approaches to alternative assessment: “Grades convey identities and standing, and in that conveying, students derive comfort” (42). While some students in Inman and Powell’s study reported feeling “free to focus on improving their writing” with the absence of grades, many of those same students also reported having the desire to know the grade they had received on a paper after being surveyed on what they disliked about their experience with contract grading (39-40). Inman and Powell conclude that in order to begin the “decolonization process” that alternative assessment has the potential to enact, teachers must first “allow and encourage students to understand and voice their desires for grades even while denying them the satisfaction of that desire” (52). Such cognitive-affective dissonance, moreover, speaks to the general need for writing instructors to possess a better understanding of grades as “affective carriers” (Inman and Powell 40).

Echoing Inman and Powell, we want to suggest that ungrading, as we understand it, explicitly attends to the affective underpinnings of assessment by mobilizing them toward different ends. That is, one of ungrading’s most crucial contributions to alternative assessment is its propensity for making open discussion of the often negative—sometimes even traumatic—feelings produced by the disciplinary structures of giving and receiving grades. Ungrading addresses the issue of affects, both harmful and positive, head-on

by transparently seeking to establish an ungraded classroom culture critical of grading structures.

Yet if ungrading prompts students to attend to and reorient the affective aspects and registers of learning, creating a safe and supportive environment in which to do so—an environment where risk-taking is permitted—it also germinates a different set of affective identifications for teachers. Our experience has been that ungrading’s affective bi-directionality (its two-way flow between teachers and students) essentially disrupts or short-circuits what childhood literacy scholar Elizabeth Dutro calls the cognitive “leap to certainty” we as teachers are habituated to make when evaluating our students’ writing and performance (386). Put another way, ungrading both *moves* us toward the sympathetic consideration of our students’ goals, desires, and needs, just as it also *suspends* our familiar, often problematic habits of disembodied judgment in the assessment process. Our own iteration of ungrading draws on dialogical and metacognitive student self-assessment, which we think allows students to voice their anxieties and desires while also encouraging and inviting a meaningful change in those desires. We call this process “qualitative” learning. By this we mean learning that reflects not the “quality” of student writing or classroom performance, so-called, but rather the dynamic (and ultimately unquantifiable) experience of learning itself.

This article offers an implementable model for ungrading—one that prioritizes affect and qualitative assessment—based on our use of it as a pedagogical framework in a pair of first-year composition courses. These courses occurred in the Fall 2020 semester (in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic) at New Jersey City University (NJCU), a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) located in Jersey City, New Jersey. While gradeless curricula or alternative assessment learning models at the undergraduate level have primarily and traditionally been experimented with in predominantly White-Serving Institutions (Blum 4-5), we argue that ungrading is not only workable but desirable within more diverse university settings.

As we will later revisit in this essay, however, ungrading is faced with potential challenges and limitations.¹ Contrary to the possible misconception that ungrading entails more or less the abnegation of labor on the part of faculty, ungrading often requires just as much, if not more, labor on the part of the instructor—labor both intellectually and emotionally demanding. This fact is a particular challenge for part-time faculty, who so often comprise the majority of instructors of basic writing courses. Equally, we have found that while the majority of our students are open to and even excited by ungraded classrooms, some of our students still evince certain

apprehensions about evaluating themselves in a qualitative way. As we later discuss, we believe there are ways to mitigate these apprehensions despite the unavoidable reality, as Inman and Powell have shown, of grades being potent carriers of affects both good and bad.

Like other forms of alternative assessment, ungrading must be sensitive to the learning contexts in which it is practiced. Indeed, if teaching during the pandemic taught us anything, it is that our familiar pedagogies have failed to adequately respond to the unpredictable novelties of our students' lives, and, by extension, the novelties of real learning itself. Our pedagogies therefore require humility, flexibility, open-mindedness, and experimentation, even as they also need not shy away from certain key commitments.

To question grades—to treat them as institutionally embedded constructs rather than transparent necessities—is in many ways to reexamine one's approach to teaching in general. As we show here, our version of ungrading prompts our students to reflect on what their specific learning goals are (not necessarily bound to a given semester or class) through self-narration, which we see as crucial in capturing the qualitative, affective, and metacognitive nature of ungrading. Our narrative-based approach asks students to conceptualize themselves as individual learners, a gesture which opens up new possibilities for learning, just as it signals to our students that we trust them enough to take control of their own learning process and progress.

It is worth stressing as well that ungrading does not obliterate all assessment or feedback when it comes to the content and quality of student work. It is not a program for intellectual or epistemological relativism. Rather, ungrading recontextualizes assessment within a radically holistic, ungraded classroom culture and process. Such recontextualization does not then mean that course objectives are thrown out but rather that they must be recognized as necessarily abstract and in need of fleshing out within lived dynamic relation to the individual as well as collective needs and desires of the classroom: its felt and shifting atmospheres, and its processes of open-ended transformation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Assessment's relationship to composition pedagogy is marked with complexity. Huot discusses how "one of the driving impulses in the formulation of composition as an area of study in the 1970s was against current-traditional rhetorical practices that emphasized correctness and the assess-

ment methods to enforce it” (8). These practices Huot refers to centered the concept of assessment as needed because of a deficit in the student, in their writing, and in their learning. Huot asserts that while compositionists have “evolved pedagogies that conceive of teaching [writing] as a coaching and enabling process,” it is also the case that we “have yet to create in any substantive way a pedagogy that links the teaching and assessing of writing” (61). He emphasizes that assessment in composition needs to more fully connect to the values and attitudes that ground instructors’ pedagogies.

Assessment also affects the ways that students learn writing in an embodied sense. Stephen Tchudi, in the introduction to *Alternatives to Grading Student Writing*, speaks to the role that grades play in the student-teacher dynamic. One of Tchudi’s students, Julie, received an A on her first paper and then a B on the next. She explained that this was the best work she could do. Tchudi recommended that Julie revise because this paper was not as strong as her first one. The effect of Tchudi’s recommendation, however, was that Julie became demotivated in the course: “She did C-level work for the rest of the course and seldom talked to me. This experience was something of an epiphany for me. To this day, I blame the grading system for poisoning my teacher/student relationship with Julie, and since that course, I have never again put a letter grade on a piece of student writing” (x).

Tchudi has tried alternative assessment mechanisms, including contract grading and asking students to self-recommend grades. Similarly, Nicolle Caswell and William Banks take up the issue of embodiment in assessment when they write about LGBTQ students’ experiences with writing. They note how most LGBTQ students in their study chose to write about their identities or coming out stories when it was “permissioned,” meaning they knew the instructor and classroom would be supportive (364). Caswell and Banks argue that “writing assessors must concern themselves with the emotional (and physical) safety of the students they assess, recognizing that because knowledge and ability are fundamentally embodied experiences, we must attend to those bodies that remain marginalized in and by culture” (354).

In order to combat the deleterious effects of traditional grading, Ira Shor calls for contract grading as a mode for critical pedagogy in order for students and the instructor to share power. Additionally, Shor grades down to only a C in his course. Peter Elbow and Jane Danielewicz propose a “hybrid grading contract” where students would meet certain requirements of the class—such as attending class regularly, participating in all activities, and revising major assignments--to automatically receive a B. They explain:

“With our contract, we ignore quality of writing for grades up to a B—but focus explicitly on writing quality for higher grades” (2). Christina Kato-
podis and Cathy Davidson write about the use of contract grading in their
classrooms. Their grading focuses mostly on the quality of writing and input
from other students in the classroom to determine quality. C’s are the low-
est grades students can contract for in the classroom, though the authors
“reserve the right to reward a grade of D or F to anyone who fails to meet
a contractual obligation in a systematic way” (115). What’s at stake in all
of these approaches is how power is used and distributed in the classroom
through contract grading. For all examples, a base grade is given based on
a minimum amount of participation. These contract grading approaches
challenge traditional understandings of student-teacher power relations
and how the quality of writing is determined.

Asao B. Inoue takes a different approach in contract grading by focusing
more on labor than the quality of writing. In *Labor-Based Grading Contracts:
Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom*, Inoue
addresses how grades are afforded to certain students based on race and socio-
economic status. Inoue sees labor-based contract grading as a counter to the
White language supremacy that comprises higher education (130). Inoue’s
class, like Elbow and Danielewicz’s, has a default grade of B. Inoue’s contract,
however, is different in that it concentrates on quantity through labor. The
delineation of labor detailed in his contract shows that students must com-
plete a revision of two mini-projects, an individual class presentation, three
mini-project responses, and a final project. Inoue also counts attendance,
late work, and missed assignments into the student grade, thus prioritiz-
ing the quantification of student labor as a necessary means of producing
more equitable relations in the composition classroom. Like others, Inoue
is interested in the distribution of power, but instead of focusing on quality
of writing, he focuses on the data of labor by students. As Ellen Carillo’s *The
Hidden Inequities in Labor-Based Grading Contracts* has recently pointed out,
however, Inoue’s work does not address students with disabilities or students
who are multiply marginalized: “I have become concerned with how labor-
based grading contracts, which are intended to promote equality and social
justice, unintentionally privilege some students over others” (8). Carillo
thus ventures into how Inoue’s approach to labor through the quantitative
is seen as neutral, when in fact, labor is still ideological in this manner and
leaves certain students out of just assessment practices.

Inoue’s approach to alternative assessment has had material influ-
ences on writing programs and in many ways has become the standard

bearer to labor-based contract grading. In “Openings, Risks, and Antiracist Futures at a Hispanic-Serving Institution,” Lizbett Tinoco, Scott Gage, Ann Bliss, Petra Baruca, Christen Barron, and Curt Meyer discuss that at their university, Texas A & M University, San Antonio, “75% of FYC faculty and 66% of English literature faculty have incorporated labor-based grading as an assessment practice” (1). They follow Inoue’s approach and explain that “our use of labor-based contract grading has fostered an assessment ecology in which faculty seem both conscious of and committed to decentering the hierarchical relationships and power structures traditional forms of assessment often create between teacher and student” (2). Reflecting on Inoue’s work for the context of their university and student population, the authors decided that labor-based contract grading was successful in their classrooms and helped instructors reorient their positions in writing assessment.

Following many of the premises of contract grading, ungrading is another alternative assessment practice which focuses on metacognition and reflection. The practice of self-assessment, for instance, is central to Blum’s ungraded class when she asks students to respond to questions like: “What were [you] trying to get out of the assignment? What did [you] learn? What was successful? What was less successful? Why? What might [you] do differently? What would [you] like help with?” (59). These questions perform the valuable work of recasting the teacher’s role as one of directing the student toward agency in their learning process through metacognitive reflection.

Further, ungrading is not only an assessment strategy in composition but in other fields as well. In Jeffrey Schinske and Kimberly Tanner’s “Teaching More By Grading Less (or Differently),” the authors describe how ungrading functions in undergraduate science courses. Schinske and Tanner ask, “[D]oes grading provide feedback for students that can promote learning? How might grades motivate struggling students? What are the origins of norm-referenced grading—also known as curving? And, finally, to what extent does grading provide reliable information about student learning and mastery of concepts?” (159). They come to the conclusion that instructors should focus more on effort-based grading, encourage student self and peer evaluation, and avoid grading on a curve.

In all, it is critical to remember, as Shane Wood writes, that “[c]lassroom writing assessment practices, including teacher response, are never neutral” (1). Ungrading has its own beliefs and attitudes that influence the pedagogy of the classroom, just as rubrics, contract grading, and labor-based contract grading do as well. Furthermore, while some students may appreciate a gradeless classroom in whatever form, it is also the case, as Inman and

Powell observe, that grades have a productive power as “identity markers”: “Students are primed by our education system not to assess the quality of their own writing but to use the grades they receive to categorize themselves and to prepare for the emotions that come along with the identity these grades create” (40). While it is possible that many students may be open to and excited by alternative assessment practices, it is also the case that the affective identifications students experience via traditional grading systems may manifest in unpredictable ways, across varying identity markers. Inman and Powell thus think that making assessment more equitable is crucial work, but it is work that needs to acknowledge how students’ identities connect to grades: “This is to say, simply casting grades as ineffective ignores these identities and affect, the emotional residue and system of values, that students and instructors associate with grades” (35).

As these examples indicate, ungrading emerges from a wider ecology of alternative assessment practices. Still, it has remained somewhat ambiguous whether ungrading is distinct from, or rather ensconced within, contract grading as simply a larger part of alternative assessment. Going by Blum’s anthology, it would seem that ungrading and contract grading are to some extent enmeshed, though not without certain lingering questions about their potential divergence. For example, how does ungrading approach the democratization of power in the classroom differently from contract grading? To what extent does ungrading center metacognition and affect as compared to quantification? In addition, what more specifically does addressing the affective dimensions of grades, as well as the difficult-to-quantify aspects of learning, look like at Minority and Hispanic Serving Institutions and in basic writing classrooms?

METHODOLOGY

Institutional Context

We implemented our approach to ungrading in two classes: English 102 ALP, taught by Caroline (Associate Professor of English and WPA), and English 101, taught by Austin (an adjunct instructor and PhD candidate in English) at New Jersey City University, a public university, in the Fall 2020 semester, at the height of the pandemic and fully online (a notably kairotic moment in which to rethink assessment). In 2021, Jersey City was named the second most diverse city in the country (“Diverse”). A smaller state school, with 5,844 undergraduate students, NJCU has a diverse student population:

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43% of its students identify as Hispanic/Latinx, 23% as African American, 18% as White, 8% as Asian, and 8% as Other (“Profile and Outcomes”). NJCU is classified as a Minority-Serving Institution and a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Most of the NJCU student population work while attending college. 81% of the undergraduates work either full or part-time jobs (“Fact Sheet”). The university’s mission statement focuses on providing “a diverse student population with an excellent university education,” and pledges that NJCU “is committed to the improvement of the educational, intellectual, cultural, socioeconomic, and physical environment of the surrounding urban region and beyond” (“Mission Statement”). The university’s identity is tied closely to the local community as many of the students come from the Jersey City area. Most students attending NJCU are first-generation college students with 73% of them receiving Pell Grants for college (“Profile and Outcomes”).

NJCU offers two tracks for composition courses: English 101 and 102, and Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) English 101 and 102 for Basic Writers. The ALP program is modeled on the eponymously named sequence at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC). According to CCBC, the ALP model should function as “a form of mainstreaming” that works to “raise the success rates and lower the attrition rates for students placed in developmental writing” (“ALP”). Administrators at CCBC designed their ALP program so that half of the class would be standalone composition students and half basic writers as designated by the institution. The basic writers also take a companion class that “functions as a workshop to provide the support the basic writers need to succeed in English 101” (“ALP”).

NJCU’s ALP classes differ from the CCBC model. At NJCU, though an SAT score is optional, the placement procedure for basic writing involves SAT score/and or high school GPA. Any student placed in standalone composition takes a 4-credit English Composition 101, without the ALP lab model attached. Students who take the ALP course take both a 4-credit and 2-credit course. Therefore, NJCU students do not receive one of the main benefits of the CCBC model because they do not take classes with more advanced student writers. Part of the reason for this is because more students place into ALP than regular composition so it would be logistically difficult to balance the course sections. In Fall 2020, 65% of students placed into ALP English 101. In order for students to move out of ALP English 101 into standalone English 102, students must pass the course with an A or A-.

Interviews and Student Narratives

Our research design included textual analysis and semi-structured interviews of the four students that participated with IRB approval. The students were selected based on their voluntary interest in participating in the study when we announced it to the two classes. We analyzed the essays, student narratives—specifically, what we call Narrative Self-Evaluations (NSEs)—and classwork of the student writers in both courses. We also conducted semi-structured interviews with the students at the end of the semester to better understand their thoughts on ungrading in our courses and what they saw as its strengths and weaknesses. This study unfolded during the coronavirus pandemic, thus both classes were conducted via Zoom. Likewise, our interviews also occurred via Zoom.

As we discussed research questions together, we decided to focus on the following questions for our interviews: “What kinds of grades did you receive in your past writing classes? To what extent did these grades transform how you saw yourself as a writer? How did you respond to ungrading practices in the composition classroom? What was confusing about them?” and “What are the benefits to ungrading practices for you as a student? What are the limitations of ungrading practices for you as a student?” These were guiding questions that led to more of a conversation between the students and ourselves on their experiences with grading and thoughts on ungrading. The interview process for us involved “active listening” (Talmage, Lillrank) in order to meaningfully engage with what students thought about this different assessment practice. We wanted to make sure that our students were able to speak freely on what they thought of ungrading and how it connected to their past writing assessment experiences. We then analyzed the interviews by focusing on patterns of students’ experiences with ungrading, the differences in ungrading versus grading for their motivation and learning, and the benefits and limitations of ungrading as an overall assessment practice according to the students.

We are aware of the power differentials in interviewing students on an assessment strategy while they are taking our classes. As Carol A.B. Warren explains, “The interview encounter is framed by the circumstances that got the interviewer and the respondent to the moment of it” (131). This is why we made sure that the interviews were voluntary and were clear to students that participation was not tied to improvement in the class. Also, ungrading itself requires a certain amount of trust in the community of the class and of the instructor. That classroom environment helped with conducting the

interviews at the end of the semester after a repertoire had been established within our classes.

For the essays, NSEs, and classwork, we read all of the students' work together as co-authors so that we could understand the themes that connected to the interview data. We read the student writing, specifically the NSEs, many times throughout the planning and writing of this article. We anticipated certain themes like anxiety over grading and ungrading, increased feelings of community in the classroom, and confusion with respect to ungrading at the beginning of the semester. While aspects of these themes were apparent in students' NSEs, we did not anticipate the extent to which students assessed themselves intensely and expressed powerful and complex emotions in connection to grades, being graded, and undergoing the process of ungrading. We also did not anticipate the extent to which our students would voice care from their professors as a priority and central issue for them in their learning. As we continued to write this article and reread the NSEs, we also recognized that the atmosphere ungrading created in the classroom made some students feel more motivated in drafting and revising their essays.

Establishing the Ungraded Classroom

For a class to be ungraded on a macroscale (rather than through discrete assignments, for instance), students should have ample opportunity to become stakeholders by being introduced to some of ungrading's basic concepts. Our focus on purely qualitative assessment emerged from our reading of Stommel who includes statements like the following on his syllabi: "This course will focus on qualitative not quantitative assessment. . . While you will get a final grade at the end of the term, I will not be grading individual assignments, but rather asking questions and making comments that engage your work rather than simply evaluate it" ("Why I Don't Grade"). In our classes, Stommel's blog piece "Why I Don't Grade" was assigned as a particularly useful framing text due to its readability and philosophical breadth. Additionally, our course syllabi featured some exposition about ungrading: its principles, its ethos, and how it was going to work throughout the semester. On Austin's syllabus, for instance, the following language was used: "I practice something called 'ungrading,' a pedagogy that strives to decenter grades as the primary means of assessing student work. Throughout the semester, we will aim to create a culture of ungrading—of trust, mutual recognition, and mutual support—as an intentional practice framing our

learning process” (“Syllabus”). Instructors venturing into ungrading would do well to present students with as clear and concise a conceptual framework as possible for what ungrading is, what commitments it entails, and how it functions, thereby planting the seeds for a culture of ungrading early on.

USING NARRATIVE SELF-EVALUATIONS

The core of our ungrading practice consisted of several informal reflection pieces, or Narrative Self-Evaluations (NSEs), during the course of the semester: two for Austin and three for Caroline. Approximately one to two pages in length, NSEs are informal writing assignments that ask students to discuss their educational goals, interests, and histories, and thus to graft connections between the class and their identities as learners. NSEs accomplish this through a series of basic questions that prompt narrative-based, metacognitive reflection and self-evaluation. Our approach to the use of NSEs came from our reading of Stommel, yet we felt that introducing the aspect of narrative (not present in Stommel’s examples) would offer an important element of low-stakes, metacognitive reflection. Thus, we devised a set of questions we felt would encourage a narrative of student development from the mid-point of the semester to the end. The questions devised for our NSEs were similar to the self-assessment questions Blum asks of her students: “What were they trying to get out of the assignment? What did they learn? What was successful? What was less successful?” (59).

NSEs ask students to center themselves in the learning assessment process by telling the teacher stories about who they are as students, allowing for what is often occluded in “scholarly” classroom exchanges, i.e., racialized and gendered bodies, disabled bodies, socio-economic backgrounds, parenthood, learning and literacy histories, etc. NSEs build off of cover letters or other reflections that many instructors already use in composition courses for metacognitive work. In “Writing beyond the Page: Reflective Essay as Box Composition,” Lindsey Harding writes how in composition “reflection seems to become more of a direct response to course design and assessment practices and the impact of both on students’ feelings towards writing” (240). Harding asks her students to create digital, multimodal reflections that promote metacognition and represent the identities of her students. These reflections span the course of the semester. Harding writes: “I wanted my students to analyze essay structure and composing processes and evaluate their specific experiences with these elements and activities” (240). Similarly, NSEs ask students to reflect on their writing and course performance through the

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lens of metacognitive reflection. We chose narration as the focal method for NSEs because of its qualitative nature. Our stories about who we are, what we have experienced, and how those experiences have shaped us cannot be quantified. Moreover, to tell them is to more explicitly humanize ourselves in the learning spaces we inhabit.

The information provided in the NSEs is self-selected; students are encouraged to share only what they feel comfortable sharing. Moreover, they are encouraged not to view NSEs as exercises in grade justification. Below are directions taken from Austin's syllabus for the midterm NSE:

Midterm Self-Evaluation

In approximately one page (two pages maximum), tell me a brief story about who you are as a student. Why are you in college, what are you interested in achieving with your college degree, and how might this class fit into your broader educational goals? What are some of your specific goals for this class? What would you like to accomplish for the remainder of the semester? Based on these reflections, and all the work you've done so far this semester (including participation), what overall course grade do you think you've earned at this point?

Please reflect on and answer these questions holistically (that is, without itemizing them) in a 1-2 page reflection. I am interested in your thoughts about this as a process, so please do not feel like you have to justify your course grade. You are not on trial. Rather, this activity is meant to be an open-ended and thoughtful exchange. I am curious about your own reflections when it comes to your learning process and what you would like to accomplish.³ ("Syllabus")

We determined that NSEs could be submitted alongside, or separate from, any other assignment, since they run parallel to the class's other forms of instruction and content. NJCU is a grade-giving institution (as most institutions are). We decided that students would propose tentative grades for themselves in their midterm and final NSEs. We decided that for Austin, grade proposals would be holistic, applying only to how the students felt they were doing in general, rather than to any discrete assignment. In contrast, for Caroline, grade proposals would apply specifically to each major, discrete assignment. Moreover, we felt that these proposals would need to be con-

tingent on the agreement of the teacher. It is important to stress, however, that the teacher aims to have minimal intervention in this process, since the point is to promote receptivity to the students' lived learning contexts, which become the primary vehicle for assessment.

In Austin's class, for instance, one student, Serena², wrote the following in one of her NSEs:

I get afraid and am shy because I know I don't belong, and mostly because I know that I'm just an outsider in this country. Why am I in college? Is the question that I try to answer myself every day when all I want is to give up because I don't see the point in continuing when anxiety and not being able to understand the subject hits me all at once. But why am I in college? That's easy, I am a first-generation student or college student trying to reach my goals and be a successful woman. But most importantly I am trying to make my father proud because I know that with a good education perhaps one day, I can give back everything that he has done for me.

Serena's narrative foregrounds the concrete nature of her learning context, which includes feelings of inadequacy about her performance of standardized English and a sense of purpose (and pressure) about being a first-generation student. Allowing such contextually rich, qualitative information to guide assessment immerses teacher and student alike within affective flows of becoming and learning together—spaces which privilege what Tamara S. Hancock and Oona Fontanella-Nothom call (after Karen Barad and Lenz Taguchi) “intra-active pedagogies”: “intra-active pedagogies are practices [taking] place *right in the middle of things*, in our very living and doing” (2). For Serena, writing her NSE gave her the chance to reflect on herself as a learner, thinking metacognitively—even therapeutically—about her goals and obstacles. For Austin, Serena's narrative informed and shaped the feedback he gave her on her formal writing assignments. He was therefore able to absorb and apply the information gathered from Serena's NSEs to her other work in the course, making his feedback more compassionate, receptive, and individuated.

For Caroline's ENGL 102 ALP class, ungrading worked somewhat differently than in Austin's because she asked for students' narratives three times throughout the semester, synchronous with each major assignment in the class. Caroline had a prompt that she revised from Austin's that focused on students' writing processes and experiences. Below is an example of the NSE

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from Caroline's class submitted for the second major assignment (a short research essay):

Essay Questions:

How was your experience writing this paper? Did you have a clear understanding of what you wanted to write or did it take some time to know?

How did this writing process compare to the other two papers? Which paper did you find easier to write and why?

What was the easiest part about writing this paper? (This can be anything from knowing what the theme is you wanted to write on, to finding the sources, to grammar).

What was the hardest part about writing this paper? (This can be anything from knowing what the theme is you wanted to write on, to finding the sources, to grammar).

Since grades must be assigned for this course, you are asked to assign yourself a tentative grade on this paper. Why are you choosing this grade?

This NSE prompt helped Caroline's students know that their instructor saw their writing in the larger, embodied context of their lives. Many students reflected on writing an essay while working at their jobs and struggling to balance their academic work with their lives' other competing demands. These responses aided Caroline in seeing what most students were asking for help with based on the questions in the NSE. Caroline was also better situated to more fully understand the emotional aspects of grades to her students. As one student, Leticia, writes in one of her NSEs:

In my opinion, most of the time in school and in the classrooms, we are usually given a grade for our assignments without much feedback or help on improving our weaknesses, and in the end we just forget everything that we had learned and move on to the next class. We aren't really taught to seriously value our work and

progress that we had put our heart and soul into. It's as though the grade given to us defines us and that all the hard work we had done really meant nothing.

Leticia was in the second basic writing course of the sequence at NJCU and was able to reflect on how sometimes no matter how much of herself she put into her writing, it was not enough. The grade still stood as the definer for herself as a writer and as a student. Leticia reflected in this NSE on the affective dimensions to the grading of writing and how that had impacted her experiences with learning writing. NSEs quite often provide more dynamic and compelling information than traditional assignments. In a sense, this is not at all surprising. When students embody and humanize themselves by telling us who they are as learners, we are able to catch a glimpse—a snapshot—of what actually motivates them.

RESULTS

Affective Dimensions and Desiring Economies

Inman and Powell's study and resulting conclusions proffer contract grading as a viable (though fraught) alternative to traditional grading (31). For us, a study like Inman and Powell's raised the question (also implicit in Blum's introduction) whether and how ungrading differs from other alternative assessment practices. In our view, the kind of dialogic configuration ungrading supports at least implies the possibility of a meaningful distinction between ungrading and an assessment practice like labor-based contract grading. Thus, we want to suggest that the substantial difference between them is not merely technical or stylistic, but based on how ungrading, unlike labor-based contract grading, attends to the affective underpinnings circulating within assessment processes, and makes a deliberate effort to reorient those affects. Our use of NSEs as detailed above suggested to us that one of the distinct benefits of ungrading is the affective relations it promotes, i.e., openness to novelty, generosity, and care-centered action, coupled with the desiring economies (of precarious self-worth and institution-contingent approval) it moves to contest. If, as Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg posit, affect is defined in part as "the name we give those forces...that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension," and that can "likewise suspend us," then ungrading, as we see it, has the potential to both suspend and propel us in different, vital directions (1).

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As we have been suggesting, ungrading's strength lies in its insistence on reimagining assessment as a student-centered and student-inclusive process driven by student-teacher dialogue about the qualitative aspects of learning itself (i.e., students' lives as students). Our use of narrative as a framework, then, was deliberate, since we were interested in how forms of narrative that specifically enacted our students' self-positioning necessarily eschewed the quantitative measuring of student knowledge and performance. For us, this meant building a practice of ungrading sufficiently keyed into the power of affects, since the affects ambulating within the writing classroom so often impact the way students perceive themselves as writers and thus also impact writing efficacy. Commenting on the connection between the diminishment of students' fears about language accuracy and the successful practice of antiracist writing pedagogy, for instance, Amy D. Williams, Sarah Kate Johnson, Anika Shumway, and Dennis Eggett have recently observed that "as students become comfortable dwelling in the unsettling affects that openness to new ideas requires, they also become less sensitive to affects that could diminish their writing confidence" (34).

Diverse approaches to contract grading share the common denominator of quantifying student labor. While it is certainly valuable (as seen in a contract model like Katapodis and Davidson's, for instance) to encourage students to plan ahead for a given semester; and while it is undoubtedly more equitable knowing what one must do as a student to obtain a fair grade, it is also worth asking how shifts in affective relations change our practices and our thinking when it comes to assessment. For instance, when we turn to a model like Katapodis and Davidson's, which involves course contracts that base grades on peer review and ask students to plan ahead in terms of labor commitments, we might ask: *How can we know what a given semester entails?* If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that learning environments are unpredictable because living is unpredictable. How, then, do we center compassion, non-judgment, and mutual care as radical praxis if we are also in the same instance prioritizing abstract conceptions of student labor? Inoue emphasizes compassion in his classroom by using what he calls a "Charter for Compassion" (189). Yet for Inoue, compassion applies to peer review and class discussion, operating more as a charter for classroom conduct and thus an appendix to his assessment methodology (131). However, labor, as Carillo points out, is hardly universalizable. An hour of labor is quite different for working students, students whose first language is not English, or disabled students, for example. Labor therefore is qualitatively different within its differentiated contexts. Moreover, student labor in the composition classroom

carries with it unavoidably affective entanglements and challenges. Thus, as we discovered, it is ungrading's explicitly metacognitive framework of assessment—a framework which allows such affective entanglements to be voiced, just as it also invites the production of different affective registers, such as mutual recognition and trust—that identifies it as a unique approach to alternative assessment.

Students' Responses to Ungrading

We found, both through interviewing students and analyzing their writing, that students discovered much value in the NSEs as a method to reflect on their writing and as a means of creating and attending to the more affective dimensions of their work. The students interviewed commented on the extent to which ungrading created a space for them to expound on the uncertainties inherent to writing at the college level. NSEs worked as a genre of student writing that emphasized the trust and care aspects of ungrading that are particularly valuable for first-year composition and basic writing students.

Leticia: Creating Positive Affect. Caroline had concerns about what students' responses to ungrading would be when she first used it in her ALP class. She did not know if students would like the agency involved or if they would feel like they were not getting enough directness from the instructor. Most students in the ALP class ended up not only being open to ungrading, but embracing it. One student, Leticia, explained her experience with ungrading in the last essay's reflection: "I don't really like to grade myself/judge myself because I tend to rate myself lower than what others would have expected me to choose. I'm not really confident in my abilities." This uncertainty mirrored how a number of students felt about grading themselves in the class. They were unsure and tended to grade themselves harsher than called for. There were a couple students who graded themselves higher than what Caroline would have assigned, but most students graded themselves lower. This reflection seemed to represent how much grades can be arbitrary, especially in the case of grading students' writing.

In feedback on the Final Essay, Caroline asked her students to also respond to what they liked about the class and what they would improve. Leticia remarked that what she liked was that the class created more of a relaxed learning environment: "I really liked how chill everything was and really enjoyed the texts/readings you assigned to us...You are very patient

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with us and care about us being able to understand the readings and form our own thoughts/opinions from them.” Leticia’s comments reveal that ungrading’s relaxed learning environment does not produce a dip in motivation but rather the opposite, that is, increased motivation on the part of the student to improve and develop their writing without the external pressures of grades bearing down upon them. Caroline also received more comments that students felt cared for which seemed to reflect ungrading instead of grading traditionally.

What Caroline found compelling is how much more students shared in these narratives than usual. She was able to understand the material conditions of what her students were working through in a way she did not know as much about before, especially in relation to her students’ jobs and how they impacted their time and energy to write. Leticia stated in an interview why ungrading, specifically the NSE, helped her in the class:

For me, I thought it was really good because I got to elaborate and explain why I wrote the paper, my thought process through it, what type of emotions I was going through while writing it, and yeah I just felt good about it because you wanted to listen to us and see how our whole mental process was going through writing that certain paper. And it was kind of a relief for me. . . it was good to explain how and why I was feeling through the whole process.

Ungrading became a way for students to share their process of writing the papers in Caroline’s basic writing class, including the emotions they had while writing the paper. This type of insight provides the instructor more knowledge of what students are experiencing and also provides students with the agency to tell their own stories.

Serena and Raphael: Compassion, Authenticity, Care. Similar to Caroline’s students, many of Austin’s students also expressed their view that ungrading was beneficial because it fostered a non-judgmental learning environment in which to develop their writing. Austin’s students equally remarked on feeling supported and trusted because of ungrading, in notable contrast with previous and/or concurrent classes. Serena detailed the following thought process about ungrading:

At first, when I was writing, I was thinking, oh, maybe [Austin] won’t like this [piece of writing]. But then I was like, oh but [Austin] said that he’s not going to grade on this or that. So, I felt that that was

good because I could actually tell what I wanted to tell and express myself how I wanted to express myself, freely, without having any limitations. It feels good to practice writing without being judged for it.

Like so many students, Serena's statement suggests that when it comes to writing, she is in the habit of trying to anticipate what it is she thinks her teachers might want. She also expressed the sentiment that "grades do not portray what you are capable of doing, who [you] are, or how smart [you] are," remarking, too, that prior to her experience in Austin's class, she and her fellow classmates have thought about and sensed the more or less arbitrary nature of grades.

Another student, Raphael, expressed in his interview that his enthusiasm for ungrading stemmed from his sense, gleaned throughout the semester, that ungrading makes teachers accountable to students by fostering more compassionate, authentic relationships: "If I sense that you really care, and I like your style of teaching, then I'm really going to care as well. [Ungrading] made me really want to try [since with ungrading] the teacher actually has to do something, not just give busy work." Raphael expressed a similar sentiment in one of his NSEs: "Real learning, to me, is when the instructor takes the student's opinions into consideration. . . The students and teacher essentially become partners that learn from each other, rather than a student just taking in information repeatedly without getting a chance to express how they feel about that information or how they interpret it." Interestingly, Raphael also compared the learning dynamics of ungrading to intergenerational and intra-communal forms of knowledge production, which notably diverge from more individualistic conceptions of knowledge: "[Ungrading] is the same concept as having a friend, parent, uncle, etc., that teaches you life lessons."

A through line in many of Austin's students' NSEs was indeed a sense that grades have little meaning or value beyond their connections to institutional requirements and socio-economic success/class mobility. What also repeatedly arose (and which is especially important to keep in mind in the context of the massive trauma unleashed on students—students of color in particular—by the pandemic) was the extent to which Austin's students identified grades as having deleterious effects on their mental health. In their NSEs, Austin's students repeatedly characterized their histories of being graded as the product, more or less, of institutional caprice, as well as genera-

tive of severe anxiety, depression, isolation, and the distress that naturally arises from grading's social-hierarchical function of sorting.

Potential Drawbacks

Like any assessment practice, ungrading faces certain limitations. Most students are largely unfamiliar with what ungrading means, which can lead to a degree of apprehension about it as a practice. The majority of students tend to move on from initial skepticism, but some students may have concerns that ungrading is too lenient or flexible in helping them become better writers. These students tend to think that instructors should be in full control of the grade and that there should not be any authority ceded to students on grades. This makes sense when we understand that students can sometimes be unsure of, and/or feel a lack of confidence in, assessing themselves. Student anxieties about ungrading underscores the extent to which grades and grading are ineluctably ingrained within educational systems and cultures. As Inman and Powell note, “while course contracts seem to provide students with a new frame of reference for process and improvement, they could not divorce their ideas of improvement from the markers they believe are designed to reward that improvement” (41). While grades are not static entities but dynamic processes—processes which ungrading seeks to transform—it is nonetheless true that the material-affective reality of grades and grading persists at the institutional level.

Ungrading can also take a lot of time and labor for instructors to learn how to adapt to their classrooms. Instructors have to explain to students what ungrading means and what it will look like in their courses. Along with reading students' essays, instructors will have to read—and, moreover, design—an informal student writing apparatus, or some other similar ungrading methodology, to frame and accompany the processing of more standard writing assignments. Contrary to the misperception that ungrading is lax in labor and feedback, instructors who ungrade have to examine their own assumptions about how grades are determined and what grades ultimately mean, sometimes comparing the initial or intuitive grades they would have given to the grades the student thinks they deserve. All of this requires more energy than in traditional modes of assessment, something particularly at issue in the context of the university's exploitative labor practices and its reliance on a majority of adjunct labor within departments (especially for basic writing courses). In light of this fact, one thing we suggest is that the labor of ungrading can be scaled up or down by assigning

shorter NSEs, and/or making NSEs count towards the writing requirements of the composition program.

Additionally, if a composition program enforces stricter requirements around traditional grading, an instructor who wishes to pursue ungrading will be challenging departmental and programmatic norms. As we understand it, and as we mentioned in our introduction, ungrading does not seek to do away with course objectives but rather foster a more dynamic, concrete relationship to them. Ungrading attempts to access students' often underdeveloped intrinsic motivations surrounding course content and purpose. However, because of its challenge to institutional norms, implementing ungrading can be anxiety-evoking for the instructor and will likely require—particularly for the first time—more intellectual and emotional labor on the part of the instructor. This, again, is specifically an issue for adjuncts and their ever-precarious institutional conditions.

It is possible, too, that instructors might find ungrading less than desirable because it cedes authority in the classroom when there are already power differentials based on race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and institutional status. In “Academe Has a Lot to Learn about How Inclusive Teaching Affects Instructors,” Chavella Pittman and Thomas J. Tobin make clear, for instance, that practices like ungrading can affect marginalized faculty in challenging ways: “In urging faculty members to adopt inclusive teaching practices, we need to start asking if they actually can—and at what cost.” As Pittman and Tobin go on to explain: “Students—especially White males—are already more likely to challenge the authority, expertise, and teaching skill of instructors who fall into underrepresented categories of the professoriate by virtue of their race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and so on. So there are real costs for such instructors who adopt inclusive teaching practices like flexible deadlines, ungrading, and classroom-civility policies.”

Sherri Craig, in “Your Contract Grading Ain’t It,” also asks, “[W]hy does contract grading have to be labeled as anti-racist or pro-Black?” (145). Craig emphasizes contract grading in her work, but the same could be equally said of ungrading. As two White instructors, we recognize our own privilege in the context of institutions of higher education, as well as the complex power dynamics at play in the basic writing classroom when it comes to ungrading. We wish to heed and acknowledge Craig’s point that managerial solutions are insufficient in addressing broader institutional inequities, which is why we do not think that ungrading should be institutionalized in writing programs. Instead, we feel that WPA’s would benefit from engaging and experimenting

with the ideas and pedagogical values put forward by ungrading but should not mandate them as institutionalized practices.

CONCLUSION

Some of our ungrading practices should be adjusted for future implementation. Caroline, for instance, would have explained more to students about the uses and purposes of NSEs. One comment students repeated concerning ungrading's potential limitations was how they felt unsure about how to proceed in evaluating themselves. A related challenge Austin faced was ensuring and communicating to students that the function of NSEs is not to justify the holistic grade proposals but rather to engage in metacognitive reflection (the holistic grade proposals being only an institutional requirement). In some ways, this challenge only makes sense. That is, while traditional grades may often produce more stress than ungrading, ungrading can also produce novel forms of stress. This is something instructors should highlight and discuss in their framing of ungrading. Ungrading's use of dialogue opens productive and supportive spaces in which to address such anxieties.

For instructors, ungrading is an assessment practice that concentrates its efforts more on metacognition and the affective dynamics of the writing and learning process. Importantly, it emphasizes care and compassion as fundamental for transformative learning. Such a shift in cognitive-affective priorities for assessment, however, might lead some to question the intellectual rigors of ungrading as a practice. While ungrading operates as an assessment model whose foundations are care, support, and student self-assessment, it nonetheless maintains the intellectual rigors of any other writing classroom. Students still write major assignments and complete homework; they still read a variety of texts and analyze them; they participate in peer review; they receive detailed feedback from instructors on drafts; and they receive grades at the end of the semester, with the crucial difference that these events occur within an assessment framework that fosters intrinsic motivation and compassionate pedagogy. In this sense, a final grade is understood as institutionally inevitable, yet the *process* by which it is achieved has undergone significant alteration.

For Writing Program Administrators, ungrading is an assessment practice valuable to share at diverse institutions—specifically, regional public universities, HSI's, and HBCU's. However, as Rachel Ihara writes, “[W]e need to resist the temptation to simply transplant ideas about ‘basic writers’ into our

new programmatic contexts, instead taking the best of what we have learned from decades of research on basic writing pedagogy, while being mindful of the social justice issues that have troubled the field from the beginning” (88). As an assessment practice for basic writing classrooms—institutional spaces where students have been historically marginalized—ungrading shows a lot of promise in its avoidance of what Davidson calls the “deficit model” of education: “In the deficit model, poor scores are a problem of the learner, not of the instructor or institution” (57). While we have offered two different approaches in this article to ungrading, there are still multiple ways to ungrade, and ungrading will be different according to different classrooms and contexts. Similar to discussions about contract grading, then, ungrading opens up enthusiastic and challenging conversations about pedagogy and assessment, and their co-implication, among instructors within writing programs. This discussion provides a space for instructors to reflect on their assessment practices and how those practices can become more transparent and care-centered.

Ungrading connected us to the humanity of our students, attuning us to their educational goals and intrinsic motivations. As an alternative assessment measure granting us unique insights into our students’ lived learning experiences—their goals, desires, challenges, and aspirations—it also acted in transformative ways on our experience as writing instructors, and continues to do so. In providing students with agency through dialogical openness and compassionate receptivity, our students expressed feelings of being valued in the classroom as a whole, not just in their writing. In our own experiences with ungrading, we have found that students quite often feel encouraged and pleasantly surprised by the investment of trust and process-based learning ungrading makes in their education. Equally, ungrading has given us as educators a sense of renewal and redoubled enthusiasm for teaching, thus transforming our own identities as educators.

NOTES

1. We recognize that ungrading has complex intersections between K-12 assessment strategies and assessment within composition studies. For the focus of this article, we concentrate on assessment at the first-year composition level at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI).
2. All students’ names are pseudonyms.
3. The prompt for the Final Self-Evaluation is the following:

We have come to the end of the semester. We made it! Reflecting on

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your midterm self-evaluation, the work you've done, and all that you have learned (if you stop and think, it's probably more than you realize!) do you feel as if you've achieved your goal/s this semester? Have those goals changed? If so, how have they changed and why? Most importantly, what do you remember about this semester that you will take with you into the future? Lastly, based on these reflections, what overall course grade do you think you've earned? Do not feel like you need to answer each question separately. Just take them in as a whole and write a 1-2 page reflection.

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Terms and Conditions: Working with (and in Spite of) Our Multilingual Student Frameworks

Charissa Che

ABSTRACT: This article examines the ways in which composition theory and pedagogy have traditionally conceptualized “ESL” students. While this term has already been contested for its limitations, and alternatives have been offered in its place, this article seeks to add to the conversation by demonstrating, through students’ and instructors’ first-hand accounts, the nuances that underlie a multilingual student’s identity. These perspectives aim to complement existing literature on how English instruction must consider all students’ language competencies and intersectional experiences, rather than merely the sequence in which their languages were learned. Drawing from English faculty and students’ perspectives on and experiences with the term, this work ultimately suggests pedagogical practices that more equitably address linguistically diverse students’ English language competencies, mobilize their existing assets as sites of meaning-making in the writing classroom, and foster confidence in their linguistic and cultural differences.

KEYWORDS: ESL, ELL, English language learning, multilingual students, community colleges, identity, translanguaging, writing pedagogy, intersectionality, race, cultural awareness, assessment, placement, writing support, first-year writing

The “ESL” term has been primarily used in writing studies in relation to international college students in the United States. In the 1990s, studying these students was convenient; they were easily identifiable through international student groups, data on degree status and countries of origin that is required by the federal government, and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores. Additionally, Christina Ortmeier-Hooper notes that many second language writing specialists were conducting research at large research universities, where international students were a steady presence (389).

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However, broader scholarship on multilingual identities beyond traditional approaches and efforts to develop more inclusive writing pedagogies have become increasingly exigent with the growing number of linguistically-diverse students on our college campuses. Linguistically diverse students possess an array of backgrounds, skills, perspectives, and experiences that are not accounted for in these narrow frameworks. This is especially the case at community colleges...where higher percentages of students comprise a rich blend of experiences, languages, cultures, ages, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Community colleges enroll a higher percentage of minority students in the United States than four-year colleges (Miller-Cochran 20).

For one, domestic “ESL” students have been more difficult to pinpoint. We are left without critical information on the “high school experiences and post-secondary transitions of resident bilingual or immigrant youth” who have lived in areas surrounding our high school and college campuses, and have been a part of their present local communities during most, or all, of their lives (Ortmeier-Hooper and Ruecker 1-2). The “CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Multilingual Writers” outlines the many variations that a “multilingual identity” can take:

Multilingual writers include international visa holders, refugees, permanent residents, and undocumented immigrants, as well as naturalized and native-born citizens of the United States and Canada. Many have grown up speaking languages other than English at home, in their communities, and in schools; others began to acquire English at a very young age and have used it alongside their native languages. Multilingual writers can have a wide range of literacies in their first languages, from being unable to read or write to having completed graduate degrees in that language. (CCCC)

Indeed, these students may or may not speak a language other than English at home; others toggle between multiple languages depending on the family member with whom they are conversing; some speak English more fluently than their first language. Living within the contact zone of their heritage language-speaking and English-speaking selves, they possess linguistic flexibility and cross-cultural knowledges. Their writing competencies vary widely, depending on a variety of other factors, including diasporas (international and domestic), socioeconomic class, dialects spoken within their second languages, ages at which they learned their languages, language and cultural attitudes, generationality, educational background,

and country of origin. Unfortunately, such nuanced considerations of a student's identity background are overlooked when their English proficiency is determined merely by the order in which they learned English, relative to their "home" languages.¹

This article doesn't claim to offer a term that would solve the aforementioned gaps once and for all. It doesn't assume that an entirely unproblematic term might even exist. Instead, it asks how linguistically-diverse students' identifications have functioned *because*, or *in spite of*, the circulation of these terms.² While international multilingual students have predominantly been studied in silos, this research looks at multilingual students through a translanguaging lens by examining how students who have been raised abroad, and residential multilinguals, perhaps share similar experiences and positionalities with limiting identifiers, or in practicing their linguistic identities. Drawing from community college students' and faculty's experiences and backgrounds, we can gain valuable insight on the varied approaches to teaching writing that can potentially have wide-ranging, positive implications on multilingual college students' writing success and confidence.

This article begins by looking at existing literature on terminology that has circulated in the research and teaching of multilingual students; in particular, I summarize the conversations surrounding their limitations and affordances in accounting for students' experiences. A methods section follows, detailing a qualitative study involving self-identified multilingual students in a first-year writing class, and English faculty. Then, from their respective standpoints, linguistically-diverse first-year writing students explain their positionality and experiences with terms such as "ESL." Along with English faculty, they propose changes they would like to see in the writing instruction of multilingual students, describe their favorite and ideal writing assignments, and reflect on the disadvantages and advantages of being multilingual in their broader, everyday lives. Informed by this data, the final section of this article proposes potential avenues for improvement, including the development of more nuanced pedagogies that challenge the constraints of traditional basic writing tenets.

Using one of the most diverse community colleges in the nation as the setting for this work, this article ultimately seeks to spur more equitable pedagogical practices in United States' college-level writing that not only address multilingual students' English language competencies, but also mobilize their existing assets as sites of meaning-making in the writing classroom, and foster confidence in their linguistic and cultural differences. Therein lies the power of translanguaging activism: the ability to dismantle "homogenous

discourses” surrounding language (Pennycook 114); to equip students with the tools to critique present-day “postmonolingual tensions” (Ayash); and to look to “multiple sources of cultural renewal” (Pennycook 114). It begins with us—the instructors, policy makers, administrators—seeing past troubling concepts that have long been operating in plain sight, and rethinking our profession for current times.

LITERATURE REVIEW: TERMS OF [DIS]AGREEMENT

To be sure, the contestation of “ESL” as a useful term is not new. Suresh Canagarajah notes that “English as a Second Language,” when ascribed to a student’s language proficiency, immediately places students in a contentious binary: they either learned English as their first language (see also: L1; NNES) or they did not (e.g. L2; NNES). This binary is reflected in the “mainstreamed and ‘segregated’” classes often found on college and university campuses (Miller-Cochran 21). Yet the order in which languages are learned is not a fair indicator of English proficiency or the type of English instruction needed; nor is it an apt measurer of one’s language skills, broadly: “It is difficult to enumerate one’s language repertoires based on proficiency or time of acquisition” (Canagarajah 417). Not only does the term “ESL” suggest that a student’s languages exist in hierarchical vacuums, it ignores the ways these languages can interact with and inform each other. The frequency of languages used and the ways in which they are prioritized shift over the course of a student’s life, given personal and institutional factors.

Furthermore, Ortmeier-Hooper argues that “ESL” and similar classifications have academic and emotional implications for a student. For an “ESL” student to work towards mastering standard English can feel like a compromise and erasure of the self; in associating a new meaning to a familiar word, for example, students may feel they are committing a “linguistic betrayal,” not just of the word but of the reality in which it is grounded. Mastering a new discourse can result in the eradication of their points of view as “outsiders,” thus breeding mistrust in academic writing instruction (Lu and Horner 904). The “ESL” term also centralizes English in a student’s target linguistic identity, privileges Standard English, and centers English as a linguistic identifier. Rather than viewing a student’s language differences as a potential asset, the label positions them as departing from a “correct” English that must be fixed. It is true that writing programs are moving toward a translanguaging approach by allowing students to use their home languages to mediate and make meaning in their English learning (see Canagarajah;

Hesford et al.; Matsuda and Silva; Jain). However, that is where the approach typically ends; when it comes to producing a finished written product, a student's English competence remains the goal.

Ortmeier-Hooper asks us to interrogate the deeper implications of the term: "What exactly does it mean for a student to be 'ESL'? And when, if ever, does a student stop being an 'ESL' student?" (390). Canagarajah sees the term as deeply racialized. Canagarajah, a person of color himself, believes the answer to the latter question might be "never." "However long I learn English and develop advanced grammatical competence, English will never be considered native to me, given my racial and geographical background," he writes. "The color of my skin would influence someone to call me a non-native speaker of English—not my level of competence, process of acquisition, or time of learning" (417, 589).

Indeed, at the root of the question of who does or doesn't need interventional English support are racist English language ideologies. It is no coincidence that CUNY, after establishing itself as an open-admissions institution in 1970, garnered criticism for admitting uneducable "dunces," "misfits," and "hostile" "non-academics," many of whom were first-generation college students of color (Lu and Horner 892). While our basic writing pedagogies are moving away from racist epistemologies, it remains that many praxes for "ESL" students still measure their English proficiency in light of its "standardness," or its proximity to whiteness. Language education is rooted in histories of white supremacy and colonial expansion—and, as Kerry Soo Von Esch et al. write, "Who gets to define what counts as language ultimately shapes the potential of those learning it" (5).

Despite the criticisms already surrounding it, the "ESL" identity marker continues to be used in crucial and ever-shifting ways in our colleges, and the criteria by which "ESL" students are identified have a marked impact on how students are placed. Between the academic years of 2016 and 2019, the percentage of incoming first-year students at Queensborough Community College (QCC) who were designated "ESL" based on the standardized CAT-W (CUNY Assessment Test in Writing) placement exam stayed relatively consistent, ranging between six and 11 percent of all first-year students admitted each year. Notably, as of 2020, first-year students at CUNY are flagged as "ESL" if they have spent at least six months in an institution where English is not the primary language of instruction³, and the percentage of "ESL" students identified rose to 16%. When the college began administering a version of the CAT-W tailored for ESL placement in Spring 2023, the number of students placed as "ESL" dramatically decreased to 6%. These trends (see Appendix

for a full layout of student placement numbers) show a correlation between changing methods of identifying, assessing, and placing “ESL” students, and how many students end up receiving additional English support.

This “flagging” can be consequential: Those placed in “interventional” courses (many of which are non-credit-bearing) often end up dropping out of the course, or leaving college altogether. Across CUNY campuses, less than half of students assigned to developmental courses have finished them by the end of their first year (Che 191).

Unfortunately, alternatives that have emerged to describe linguistically diverse students have yielded their own set of concerns. “L2” and “NNES” (Non-native English Speakers) similarly identify language users based on a single scale of reference; their relative proficiency in English and time of English language acquisition. Based on their definitions, an “L2” or “NNES” can never cross the threshold into “L1” or “NES” (Native English Speaker), regardless of level of English proficiency possessed or gained.⁴ Given the narrow definition of “native speaker,” being “native” or “non-native” to English inevitably carries its own racialized implications. “Nativeness” has long associations with birthright, while non-white, monolingual English-speaking individuals are nonetheless treated as NNES given their racialized bodies (Canagarajah).

While a descriptive term, “English Language Learners” (ELL) is also an institutional marker of one in need of additional services and “someone still marked as a novice in the English language” (Ortmeier-Hooper 390). “Generation 1.5” refers to resident students who had completed at least some of their secondary schooling in the United States. Again, these are still static terms meant for a liminal institutional space that do not consider language and language learning as fluid and do not account for students’ affective and lived experiences. In fact, “ELL” and “Generation 1.5” can themselves pose concerns, as seen in Rod E. Case et al.’s study on how instructors assess student papers in mixed classrooms comprising basic writers, Generation 1.5 writers, and international students. Even though the instructors purported to grade their students as individuals separate from their linguistic identities, the authors found that students’ self-identifications impacted the content, form, and amount of feedback they received: the study revealed that instructors gave the least feedback overall to U.S. resident basic writers, and the most to Generation 1.5 and international students, with regards to ideas, grammar, and form. Coupled with transcribed interviews with instructors, these findings revealed ingrained beliefs about students’ abilities, needs, and prior education based on their linguistic self-identifications (Case et al.). While

they may seem benign, such student labeling can evidently lead to instructors' biased treatment of, and outcomes for, their multilingual students.

While the terms discussed in this section are by no means exhaustive, their common and disparate implications give us a glimpse into the social, racial, and intellectual assumptions that have been placed on multilinguals—and the trajectory of our efforts at unpacking and remedying the harmful effects of these assumptions.

A BLUEPRINT FOR SURVEYING “ESL” POSITIONALITIES AND MULTILINGUAL IDENTITIES

Part of the City University of New York (CUNY) system, Queensborough Community College is one of the most diverse two-year campuses in the nation. As of Fall 2021, Asian students represent the largest group of students (28%), followed by Black (26%), Hispanic (25%), and White students (14%). “Non-resident aliens” and American Indian or Native Alaskan students comprise 6% and 1% of the student body, respectively (Office of Institutional Research and Assessment [OIRA] 20). While the majority of these students' country of birth is the United States, they hail from 111 different countries. Twenty-four percent are “non-native” English speakers, with Spanish, Chinese, Bengali, Creole, and Urdu being the most prevalent non-English native languages spoken (OIRA 1). QCC provides an ideal locus for this study given it is a “majority-minority” institution; its enrollees comprise 86% students of color and 14% white students. In any given semester, a first-year writing class (averaging 25 students) can be made up entirely of students of color who speak a language other than English as their first.

In order to tap into the implications of this student diversity and the pedagogical potential it holds, I conducted a qualitative analysis of survey responses from self-identified multilingual students and English faculty at QCC. This research reveals the prevailing yet variegated sentiments held about the “ESL” label. Students explain their perceived utility of the term, and how they have positioned themselves with it over time. Complementing these remarks are survey responses from QCC English Department faculty who share their opinions on existing “ESL” student definitions. They consider assets their multilingual students have that monolingual English-speaking students may lack, and writing challenges that their “ESL” students commonly face. Then, they describe key assignments that they have developed to account for these assets and challenges, and explain how and why they have proven efficacious. A survey method was chosen for data

collection as it would provide the most robust responses across participants, and would be accessible online for students and faculty unable to meet and complete the survey in person. On the whole, questions were open-ended (see Appendix) to allow for more openness in responses (Cresswell 149).

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- What are writing instructors' impressions of the "ESL" label, and how have they shaped their instruction of multilingual students?
- What are multilingual students' impressions of, and experiences and positionalities with, the "ESL" identifier, and how have these factors shaped their ideas of what makes an effective and inclusive writing assignment?

Participants

The student questionnaire was administered to 27 self-identified multilingual students enrolled in English 101 across the Spring and Fall 2022 semesters, and 28 English faculty members who teach writing courses at differing levels.

Students were either in their first or second year at QCC. Fourteen of them learned a non-English language as their first language; nine learned English as their first language; four identified English *and* a non-English language as their first languages (simultaneous bilinguals) (Canagarajah). While none of the nine English L1s were admitted as "ESL" students, six of the English L2s and two of the simultaneous bilinguals were, respectively. In addition to English, the languages and dialects these students were proficient in included Spanish, Bengali, Urdu, Hindi, Armenian, Tagalog, Puerto Rican Spanish, Trinidadian, Haitian Creole, Cantonese Chinese, Mandarin Chinese, Punjabi, and Dominican Spanish.

Faculty surveyed were adjuncts and full-time instructors, and specialize in a variety of English subdisciplines. Participants were recruited through critical case sampling; given the students' diverse backgrounds and faculty's varied disciplines, this approach uses "logical generalization and maximum application of information to other cases" to create synthesis across responses (Cresswell 158). Having my own students as participants enabled me to become more acquainted with the students' linguistic and cultural identities through our class discussions and their personal writing over the course of the Spring and Fall semesters, which informed and contextualized their responses. In the same vein, given that my faculty participants were in

the English department, they were accessible and shared general knowledge about the course policies and outcomes expected from teaching their courses.

Method of Analysis

The study took a grounded theory approach, given that both the students and faculty have “participated in a process about a central phenomenon.” In this case, the “central phenomenon” pertains to participants’ experiences with and knowledge of the “ESL” term: multilingual students who have come in contact with the “ESL” label and are taking a college writing class, and English instructors who have taught multilingual students and have some level of familiarity with “ESL” (Cresswell 148). While all students surveyed self-identified as multilingual, they varied in the order in which they learned their heritage languages relative to English, their heritage languages, and whether they were U.S. immigrants, born abroad and emigrated to the U.S., or born domestically. From these variations, the analysis ultimately sought to find commonalities and divergences in areas, such as positionalities with the “ESL” term, and overall experiences as multilingual students in writing classrooms, before and during college. Similarly, analysis of faculty responses sought similar and dissimilar understandings of the “ESL” identifier alongside their instruction and perception of their multilingual students. While all surveyed faculty taught English, their disciplinary backgrounds varied and the classes they taught spanned the gamut of first-year writing, upper-level writing, and developmental English.

The student survey questions (see Appendix) are broken down into three main categories: background (i.e. What is/are your first language/s?); linguistic identity/their positionality toward the “ESL” identifier (i.e. How do you feel about the “ESL” student” label? Does it have a positive and/or negative connotation to you, and why?); and writing support (i.e. Generally speaking, what kinds of writing assignments do you find the most valuable?). Student background questions were asked to gauge their linguistic competencies, and the ways that they have been treated in academic spaces, up until the point of college writing placement. In the second category, students consider the connotations they believed the term held, and their positionality with it, institutionally and personally. In the third category, students apply their previous and current experiences in writing classes in suggesting improvements to first-year writing classes and support systems offered on campus, particularly for multilingual students.

The faculty survey seeks to first understand their level of familiarity with “ESL” pedagogy and terminology via their teaching experiences. Questions (see Appendix) were broken down into the following categories: teaching and disciplinary background/“ESL” positionality (i.e. What is your discipline? How does your discipline define “ESL” students (if at all)? What would YOU consider to be the criteria for an “ESL” student? What informs your definition?); classroom context (i.e. What are some writing *challenges* and *strengths* that your “ESL” students have faced?); and writing support and praxis (i.e. Describe an assignment that you have found to be particularly effective in your teaching of “ESL” students).

By understanding factors such as English instructors’ varied disciplinary backgrounds, we may also understand their positionalities with the “ESL” term, translanguaging, and multilingual writing, both within the discipline and at the college level. From this background information, we may draw a connection with how they situate the “ESL” identifier within their writing instruction, as well as their perceived limitations and affordances of the term. In the second category, I ask faculty to share their first-hand experiences of teaching multilingual students and evaluate the writing competencies of their current and previous multilingual students, including the linguistic and cultural assets they bring to the classroom. Then, I ask faculty for examples of writing assignments that have proven effective in engaging and teaching writing to multilingual students, and explain the reasons behind their efficacy. They also provide suggestions for reformed and/or new on-campus writing support systems for multilingual students.

Given the goals of this research, after learning the students’ and faculty’s backgrounds, themes and subsequent sub-themes were derived from the student categories of *Linguistic Identity* and *Writing Instruction & Support*, as well as the faculty responses within *Classroom Context* and *Writing Support and Praxis*. A table of these themes and sub-themes can be found in the Appendix.

Any deviations from Standard English in students’ responses will be maintained for the sake of accurately representing and honoring their voices in this piece.

“ESL” RELATIONALITIES: STUDENT RESPONSES

Linguistic Identity and “ESL” Positionality

Of these 27 multilingual students, 19 did not consider themselves “ESL.” These 19 comprised all nine English L1s, eight out of the 14 English L2 students, and two out of the four simultaneous bilinguals. As noted in the table below, while some respondents answered “Yes” or “No” based on which language they learned first, eight L2 respondents did not consider themselves “ESL” based on other considerations.

Table 1. Student self-identifications

Question: Would you consider yourself “ESL”?		
	Yes	No
English L1s	0	9
English L2s	6	8
Simultaneous bilinguals	2	2
Total	8	19

In explaining their responses, four predominant sub-themes emerged among respondents within the theme of Linguistic Identity and “ESL” Positionality: age of English language acquisition; ease of heritage versus English language use; ability to navigate everyday spaces in English; negative associations with “ESL” label.

Age of English acquisition. Whether some students self-identified as “ESL” was influenced by their age of English acquisition. For one English L2 student who answered “No,” English acquisition came with her introduction to U.S. schooling: “My first language was Spanish and that comes from my family, but *once I got into school English was my first language*, and I would only speak Spanish at home when needed to” (emphasis added). Her L1 linguistic self-identity was not determined by the order in which she learned her languages, but rather, the shifting demands of when and where she was expected to speak each of her languages, namely, in school and at home. Meanwhile, another English L2 student who emigrated to the United

States as a child identified as “ESL” “because I didn’t know English when I came to USA.” For him, linguistic identity was tied to place; in particular, English was associated with America. “I spoke Armenian up until six years old, then from that point on I learned how to speak fluent English,” answered another English L2 student who did not see himself as “ESL.” “I am much stronger in speaking English than Armenian.” This student associated his age of English acquisition with his level of fluency in English over Armenian.

Ease of languaging. Indeed, the ease with which some multilingual students spoke English versus their heritage language determined whether or not they identified as “ESL.” While the above Armenian L1 student correlated his ease with English with acquisitional age, others cited the *frequency* of their heritage language usage as the reason English was easier to use. One English L2 student explained that he did not self-identify as “ESL” because “I speak a lot more English than Spanish and sometimes struggle more with my Spanish than my English.” Meanwhile, another English L2 student believed she was “ESL” because she associated her “ESL” identity with the idea of “correct” *English pronunciation*.

Navigating everyday contexts. Yet other responses indicated a correlation between being “ESL” and an ability to navigate everyday spaces, such as work, school, and community, effectively and practically in English. A Spanish L2 student said she “currently” would not say she is “ESL”; “I have gotten used to speaking English everywhere all the time.” A Haitian Creole L2 speaker similarly believed he was not “ESL” because his ability to communicate in multiple languages “doesn’t affect my involvement in society, ex: when speaking at school or work, places that I speak English predominantly at.”

As these comments demonstrate, the question of what defines an “ESL” individual isn’t always clear-cut or based on a singular criterion, especially when left up to a multilingual student’s own determination. Perhaps this is most evident in the response of one Spanish L1 student, who, while having replied that she would self-identify as “ESL,” also noted several factors that would indicate otherwise:

Literally, I would [say I am “ESL”] because I only learned and picked up English from going to school and from my older brother. I grew up in a Spanish speaking household, it was always Spanish before my family (including cousins) grew. However, no, considering the purpose [of this survey], I never had trouble learning or speaking English. Throughout my whole elementary school years (K-5th) I

was placed in a dual language (English/Spanish) class because I was proficient in both languages.

From this response, we see a multilingual student's awareness of the ways in which she may be "ESL" and not "ESL" at once. She remains proficient in both Spanish and English, speaking Spanish at home, in her community, in church, at family reunions, and with "any Hispanic really that understands Spanish," and English in school, with friends, and while shopping. She is able to deftly utilize her languages according to her various social contexts, and has had formal education in both in primary school. In these senses, she considers herself not "ESL." Yet she also acknowledges that she may still be considered "ESL" given she acquired English proficiency at a young age, and in school.

Compared to the question of whether they would deem themselves "ESL," respondents were noticeably more affective in their responses when asked how they *felt* about the term itself. For instance, one Spanish L1 student describes an "ESL" student as "a student who grew up most of their lives speaking another language other than English, but [was] *forced* to learn English due to the schools and community" (emphasis added). "ESL" in this context represents a lack of agency in self-identification, a reluctant label taken on by someone in the face of institutional and societal expectations.

"ESL" as a negative term. Students who believed "ESL" carried a negative connotation generally cited a correlation with one's level of intelligence, a de facto association with being a racial minority, and overall inferiority. The majority of respondents who associated "ESL" with a negative connotation believed the term is used to describe someone who is unintelligent, or less intelligent than those who learned English as their first language: "Growing up I hated that label because it made me feel like I was stupid just because English isn't my first language," a Spanish L1 student wrote. While not having experienced this prejudice first-hand, one Spanish L2 student was still aware of the stigma attached to the term. "I have not experienced any negative connotation due to my language because most schools I've been to were diverse," she said, adding that nonetheless, "I feel that 'ESL' students are viewed as less intellectual when that's NOT the case." Several students believed "ESL" should exist simply to signal a student's English learning needs, but that negative associations with their intelligence can overshadow this purpose. "I personally don't feel that 'ESL' has a positive or negative connotation to me because if English is your second language you should receive some help and there's nothing wrong with that," said

one student, for example. She adds, however, “I do feel like the label ‘ESL’ has negative stereotypes around it, people seem to think that if you’re ‘ESL’ then you’re not that smart.”

Other students believed the term unfairly suggested a fixed otherness of the speaker based on their race, regardless of English proficiency acquired: “Personally if I had the label I would take a bit of offense to it cause that insinuates that all the English classes that I took my whole life was for nothing or that my racial identity makes people think that I don’t know English,” said one student. “It represents inequality and not belonging to the majority race. Some ‘ESL’ students may feel excluded from the rest of their peers,” another student wrote. For her, this linguistic othering paves the way for racial othering that may in turn present an impediment to someone’s social well-being.

Further, students correlated “ESL” with a general sense of inferiority. One English L2 student reported being “looked down upon.” A simultaneous bilingual student who learned Chinese and English at the same time nonetheless cited being a Chinese speaker as having caused him to feel “out of the norm.” However, he expresses pride that he is able to bring linguistic and cultural knowledge to the table that his monolingual English-speaking peers cannot: “[My languages are] also a strength because I am different yet the same as them.”

Writing Instruction and Support

On the types of writing instruction and support they have found helpful, or would like to see more of on campus, students responded with the following emergent sub-themes: the ability to choose their own writing topics; the freedom to write from a personal standpoint; more practical and personalized writing support; on-campus student community.

Choosing your own topics. Among the types of writing assignments respondents found most valuable were either narratives, freewriting, or argumentative papers based on a topic of their own choosing. Words and phrases most commonly used to describe their preferred assignments were “relatable,” “opinion,” “feelings,” “my experiences,” “express myself,” and “personal.”

“Maybe the ones where you’re given a topic/assignment that you can choose or relate to/free writing, not only because it might be easier but because it won’t feel like a burden,” wrote one student. Interestingly, she adds, “I would probably remember what I wrote about, it won’t feel like I wrote it in vain even if I got a low score.” Beyond getting a good grade on the assign-

ment, this student believes that assignments that are relatable and not too rigid are intrinsically rewarding and help with the retention of knowledge.

Personal writing. Similarly, another student emphasizes the value of loose constraints in writing assignments, believing that the genre of personal writing allows for the greatest flexibility in form. “I find the most valuable would have to be a personal paper about me or something that has impacted my life in some way,” she writes. “Something that is personal, I think is the most valuable because you have no limits to what you can write, you can write it in your own way. and speak about it well, with no format.” Collaborative assignments such as in-class group work and discussion board posts were also preferred among respondents, along with the traditional academic essay.

Outside of the classroom, however, students who have not sought writing support on campus vastly outnumbered those who have. Four students have consulted the college’s Tutoring Center for help on writing assignments; one has gone to the CUNY Start program (which allows students who need to take one or more skills development courses before beginning credit-bearing courses) for assistance. Meanwhile, nine respondents explicitly noted that they have either not sought support or were not aware of existing writing support at QCC, and the remaining students did not answer the question at all.

Practical and personalized writing support. Students’ suggestions for added writing support on campus range from formal programs that tended to their writing competencies, to student communities that would boost their confidence as writers. On the formal side, one student who has not reached out for writing support suggested the addition of “a department where students could go to get help in writing and feedback on papers.” This perhaps gestures to his lack of awareness of a tutoring center at the college, and/or the function of one. An L1 Cantonese-Chinese speaker who was not admitted as an “ESL” student, nor self-identified as “ESL” nonetheless wanted to see “more support for writing in multiple different languages.” Yet others wanted more practical writing support for essay and research paper writing.

On-campus community. Students also sought writing support for more personal reasons. One recommended “maybe like a club or something like that,” as it “might be helpful for students who might be struggling writing essays, or papers.” A few students suggested a “creative writing club” would help in fostering their enjoyment of writing, while another student recommended “a journal entry class, so students can feel comfortable talking about personal dilemmas while improving their writing.” This particular student saw a connection between one’s personal life and lived experiences

with their writing outcomes, and wanted support that addressed this gap in what the college values in its writing instruction

“ESL” RELATIONALITIES: FACULTY RESPONSES

Teaching and Disciplinary Background / “ESL” Positionality

Twenty-eight English faculty members responded to the faculty survey. Several of them taught multiple sections of the same class while others taught multiple sections across different English classes. At the time of the survey, 19 faculty members taught English 101: English Composition I; five taught ALP (Accelerated Learning Program): a dual enrollment program, comprising English 99 and English 101, that provides students with supplemental support to advance to English 102; five taught English 102: English Composition II: Introduction to Literature; three taught English 90: Integrated Reading and Writing for Advanced “ESL” Students; and two taught the upper-level English 201: Introduction to Literary Studies. Other outlying respondents taught English 220: Introduction to Creative Writing, and CLIP (CUNY Language Immersion Program), a special program that helps “ESL” students improve their language skills before they begin taking credit-bearing courses. Of these faculty, the majority have backgrounds in literature (i.e. Comparative, 18th century, 17th century British). Four broadly identified their disciplines as English; four have disciplinary backgrounds in “ESL” or TESOL (Teachers of English as a Second Language); three, in composition/rhetoric; two in Applied Linguistics.

None of those with literature backgrounds cited a definition of “ESL” within their disciplines. Among those with “ESL” and TESOL backgrounds, Professor RR (all names are pseudonyms) wrote that “ESL” was a term used to refer to “students whose native language is not English *and* who struggle with speaking, reading, understanding or writing in English” (emphasis added). In this context, the mere need for improved English skills is not enough to qualify an “ESL” student; the student also needs to be a “native” user of a non-English language. Coming from the same disciplinary background, Professor W believed “ESL” refers to “anyone who speaks a language other than English at home.” However, she disagrees with this criterion, having observed her “ESL”-designated students’ English proficiency in her classes; “I have had students listed as ‘ESL’ who spoke fluent English,” she states. This recalls the nuanced linguistic identities of our multilingual students,

who can be simultaneously proficient in multiple languages and possess a translingual orientation across home and school contexts. Trained in TESOL and Linguistics, Professor R believes “ELL” is a “more accurate term” to refer to those we have traditionally considered “ESL,” given the breadth of linguistic knowledge these students may already possess: it is not always a heritage language versus English language binary. “Many non-native speakers studying the English language already have a second or third language in their repertoire,” he writes.

It is important to understand how (if at all) different English subdisciplines understand the “ESL” term if we want to spur department-wide English collaboration and writing instruction that equitably accounts for our multilingual students’ backgrounds and language proficiencies. Professor M, who holds a background in Composition, delineates between “multilingual students” in her field and “English Language Learners” in TESOL. Having worked in developmental education for over 10 years, she notes, “I have seen how these distinct definitions by these two fields can make cross-disciplinary conversations about ‘ESL’ students difficult. My discipline focuses more on linguistically diverse students, some of whom might be identified as ‘ESL’ in a formal way through an ‘ESL’ program’s criteria,” she says, referring to the “ESL” flagging criteria outlined in the Introduction. Professor M makes a disciplinary distinction: while Composition considers “ESL” students in light of their language repertoires, TESOL considers “ESL” students in terms of their English language learning needs.

On the college level, Professor M notes that this formalization of the “ESL” definition in writing placement has led many students who would benefit from additional English support to fall through the cracks. “CUNY is currently using a pretty narrow definition to identify students as ‘ESL’ through the admissions process,” she writes. “It used to be that students were identified as ‘ESL’ through an examination of their placement essay (and perhaps their answers to questions about linguistic background and language use). ‘ESL’ functioned more as a marker of linguistically diverse writers in need of additional Academic English support when scorers of placement exams were looking at writing samples. Now the ‘ESL’ definition is more formalized, which means fewer students are identified as ‘ESL’ and therefore offered ELL support.” This narrow institutional framework for writing placement, coupled with cross-disciplinary disagreements on what constitutes an “ESL” student, further complicates how colleges place, instruct, and evaluate multilingual students.

In terms of what faculty understand the college's definition of "ESL" student to be, responses varied widely, from some believing that "ESL" students are simply those placed in ALP classes (which is not necessarily the case), to others outright admitting that they were unaware of the college's official definition, either because it was "constantly changing" or "unclear." Professor E, who has worked at CUNY for 20 years, writes bluntly, "I try to avoid any definition they provide. I prefer the term 'English Language Learners' because it puts the students in the same space as those who would study French, Spanish, Latin, Chinese, etc." Similar to Professor R, Professor E's preference of "ELL" to guide her instruction of multilingual students serves as a way to relativize a student's multiple languages, with English proficiency being just one of a student's (rather than *the*) potential language learning goals.

Professor A agrees with Professor M on the limitations of a formal means to identify an "ESL" student, believing that students should have agency in their linguistic self-identification. "I think labeling a student as 'ESL' in some official way should come only from interaction with the student: from asking them about their language(s) and their own level of comfort and fluency with English," she says. Citing "students who I have seen labeled 'ESL' in CUNYFirst (an online platform through which faculty can review their students' records) but whose English skills are very strong," Professor A doesn't see the usefulness of the "ESL" label. Like Professor W, she has noticed a discrepancy between some students who have been designated "ESL" through placement criteria—and thus deemed in need of supplemental English instruction—and their actual English competencies, which can exceed those of their English L1 peers.

Classroom Context

Key sub-themes found in faculty responses included "ESL" students' preoccupation with notions of "correctness," rhetorical dexterity, practical barriers to learning writing, and negative impact of the "ESL" label on writing performance.

"Correctness" over intent. The most common challenges faculty noted their multilingual students faced related to mechanics: trouble translating vocabulary words from a heritage language to English; adapting to the linear Aristotelian structure that is typical of Western argumentation; incorrectly mirroring English sentences after the grammatical structure of their heritage language. Faculty noted students' preoccupation with "cor-

rectness,” namely, with grammar. While some feel this concern is justified, others worry that it can impact a student’s sense of confidence as a writer.

Granted, grammar is not a priority for all instructors—after all, some like Professor D, have observed grammatical struggles in student papers and online discussion board posts, yet note that because these students dedicate time to comprehending class texts, they can still produce strong writing. A preoccupation with “correct” grammar, Professor E believes, can stop a student from even beginning to write. She argues that more emphasis needs to be placed on an assignment’s “content or intent.” In response to the pressures her English L2 students might feel to produce “correct” grammar, Professor T has lowered the stakes on this criterion, and has observed a shift in her students’ performance and attitude towards writing. She describes a student who “is really an enthusiastic writer, and since now grammar and punctuation is 0% of the grade, the students’ enthusiasm seems to grow.”

Conversely, a preoccupation with “getting it right” has fostered in many “ESL” students a determination to proactively seek supplemental instruction. Professor L has seen her “ESL” students “show determination in crafting their writing, including coming to the professor for extra help, working with a writing center tutor, and making sure they understand what the assignment is asking.” These efforts have yielded tangible results. “Students who possess this perseverance tend to have more positive outcomes in the class,” she says. Professor D adds, “‘ESL’ students often excel in their study habits, their effort, and insights. I have often been impressed by how much many ‘ESL’ students care and are invested in their learning.”

Rhetorical dexterity. In being extremely focused on their grammar usage, students have also demonstrated a keen rhetorical awareness of the choices that go into their sentence construction. Said Professor A, “I’ve noted in particular that some ‘ESL’ students have a strong willingness to share and discuss the norms of their first or second written language(s) in comparison to English. So these students are strong in their ability to reflect on written language and rhetoric generally.” Other faculty similarly noticed a meta-awareness in their “ESL” students, using phrases like “deep and analytical thinking” and “critical” to describe their writing processes.

Faculty have also noticed that their “ESL” students have often in fact demonstrated dexterity in using *stylistic language*, given their multilingualism and cross-cultural knowledges. They have described their “ESL” students’ writing as “poetic,” “rhythmic,” and having “flavor”—strengths that can be overlooked if these students are referred to only in a loaded term that otherwise merely denotes having learned English secondarily. Professor KA,

an instructor of the upper-level English 201: Introduction to Literary Studies, has observed “poetic translations of home phrases,” while Professor D writes, “Many bring... a sound, rhythm, and texture to their writing that offer innovative as well as critically responsive ways to put forth their thoughts, their experiences, their assessments of an event or text.”

Of course, faculty note that these strengths are often dependent on the kind of prior formal education students have received, which, contrary to “ESL” placement criteria, may depend less on whether the primary language spoken at an institution, or a standardized high school exit exam was conducted in English, and more on cultural differences that influence rhetorical styles of argumentation, skills prioritized (i.e. rote learning; critical thinking/reading/writing), and beliefs of what the ultimate goal(s) of being able to write well should be (i.e. self-expression; acing an exam; applying to college, or a job).

Practical barriers. Other challenges that instructors observed in their students included unrealistic deadlines (English L2 students often needed more time than their English L1 peers to read texts and complete assignments), unfamiliar cultural references and idiomatic expressions in texts, and quite simply, “general life challenges” such as employment, long work hours, and family obligations—considerations that aren’t as present among four-year college students.

Several professors believed that the move to online learning and events of the past few years have exacerbated existing issues faced by their English L2 students: “In the past year or two, more students have had trouble with understanding, reading, and writing in general,” says Professor D. “In meeting with them, they are not always sure what to do—many don’t have the time or foundation they can draw on as their own.” Foundational reading and writing skills are absent from many of their English L2 students’ repertoires, leading them to rely on familiar habits to read and write about English language texts. “They struggle to understand literature, books and articles,” notes Professor RR. “Some read in their first language whereas others make up or contrive information about a piece of literature.”

Impact of “ESL” on writing performance. And then, there is the obstacle presented by the term “ESL” itself, and all that it can connote for a student. “More than any particular syntax/grammar issue their sense of self and confidence is greatly impacted by their ‘ESL’ status,” writes Professor ND. “They feel insecure about their academic proficiency because of their language fluency, or their perceived language fluency, even if they are academically stronger than other native speakers in the class.” Professor D

likewise has noticed, “Many ‘ESL’ students have a better understanding of grammar than native speakers of English.” Indeed, students deemed “ESL” by the college can very well be proficient in English, mechanically and stylistically—even more so than their English L1 classmates. However, these students may feel held back by the assumptions of a “fixed” deficiency that is tied to, as Professor ND phrased it, their ‘ESL’ status.”

Writing Support and Praxis

Predominant themes that emerged from faculty’s responses include: the need for more positive reinforcement of multilingual students’ assets; more non-academic writing assignments; more institutional support prior to or during their matriculated writing classes; placement reform.

Positive reinforcement. Faculty insist on making their students’ strengths known to them. “I think in teaching, it’s important to acknowledge these strengths—students like to hear they add to an assignment, that their work and effort is recognized,” says Professor D. Professor C recognizes that often, “ESL” students are doing double duty—learning a new language while learning how to use it in the college context, in Standard Academic English. “I believe this fact should be greater acknowledged and praised by the faculty,” she writes. Amid the persisting stereotypes that are attached to the “ESL” label and students’ tendency to internalize them, it is critical that their instructors remind them that they are valuable contributors, both practically and creatively, to their classrooms.

Non-academic writing assignments. In terms of praxis, faculty recognize that students are generally more comfortable writing about personal topics. Professor KA assigns a “poetry explication assignment” that asks students to close-read their own poem, its devices and uses of figurative language: “They seem more comfortable to talk about something familiar, than when they write about texts/histories that are unfamiliar,” she says. Similarly, Professor D has seen her students “write eloquently about ‘place,’ their neighborhood, memories of childhood in their native country.” This genre of personal narrative writing has fostered a comfort level that has allowed for more inventive use of language. Writes Professor D, “These writings have been especially rich in imagery, in sensory details, that bring forth the presence of these places. These assignments are especially effective after they’ve responded to particular readings and considered how different writers present their own descriptions of place—of childhood memories.” She cleverly weaves in these personal writing assignments with writings

about class texts, allowing students to synthesize their understanding of shared human experiences in a broader conversation. Other personal topics instructors ask their students to write about have included role models, foods, and “memories of a place in nature.” “Non-academic” writing assignments, Professor AA says, motivate students to write. “I find assignments outside the standard essay model give students a greater sense of the exigency of writing practice and can be incentivizing to ‘ESL’ and native English speakers.”

Several instructors name poetry as a genre that gets their students especially engaged and invested in writing. “Many of my ‘ESL’ students have enjoyed working with poetry, particularly because of its focus on imagery and emotional impact. This transcends language and gives students a useful tool for expression,” Professor A says. An instructor of first-year writing and the director of QCC’s Creative Writing Club, Professor C writes, “Many ‘ESL’ students have great strengths in writing poetry and writing creatively, as there are less rules to follow in creative writing, especially poetry, and they can use the vocabulary and syntax that works for them to communicate.” Her students’ creative writing, as enabled by fewer “rules,” is reminiscent of Professor T’s student who became more “enthusiastic” about writing once grammar and punctuation became worth 0% of her grade. Professors A and C’s observations about their students’ writing of, and responses to, poetry, demonstrate the genre’s efficacy not just in creating more comfortable, flexible spaces for students to experiment with voice; they also in bringing out their aforementioned stylistic dexterity in “sound, rhythm, texture,” and “translations,” as noted by Professors KA and D.

In addition to personal writing, Professor R has found low-stakes reading responses to be effective in engaging and encouraging “ESL” students to write more freely. During the time of this research, he assigned his class *The Alchemist*, “which is not too challenging of a read, but is a novel full of big ideas about life.” In their response journals, students answer a weekly thought-provoking question related to the novel. Professor R believes the assignment has worked well in building writing fluency given it is not graded; students can “relax a bit and to express themselves in English.” Professor L has similarly observed more expressive writing in her “ESL” students’ writing in low stakes writing assignments such as discussion boards: “Even when there is error, their responses are more robust and developed.” Professor CL assigns “lots of in-class informal writing,” then, from these low-stakes assignments, asks his students to choose one or two of those informal pieces “to be upcycled into carefully crafted versions.” Like Professor D, Professor

CL uses scaffolding as a means to ease his “ESL” students into writing more comfortably, confidently, and creatively.

Other professors weave in socialization with scaffolding. In her English 102 classes, Professor R assigns “group presentations/videos on specific sections of a book we’re reading. The groups are of mixed backgrounds so they must work in English. They must also listen, read, write, comprehend in order to complete the task.” Professor R writes that the socialization aspect of the task forces her “ESL” students to practice, in real time, their English-speaking skills. Professor P aims to make his assignments more relevant to his students through their medium. He recalls a particularly effective “writing/speaking assignment that asked the students to write a summary of a chapter of the novel, *Siddhartha*, and then make a TikTok based on that summary” that they would publish on the app and share with the class. Because of students’ familiarity with TikTok’s generic conventions, this assignment led to improved grammar and summary writing. In addition to improving writing, Professor R and P’s assignments foster community and support in the classroom among students from different linguistic backgrounds.

Increased institutional support. On the institutional level, Professor R argues that often, “ESL” students need more training on reading and writing skills prior to enrolling in credit-bearing writing classes. Professor A warns that without this preliminary support, some students will inevitably fail their English classes. “This is a change CUNY needs to initiate, especially with the influx of immigrants into NYC,” she says. “Throwing these people in [matriculated English classes] may set them up for failure.” She notes that this is a particular risk for “ESL” students who are not literate in their heritage languages. Other forms of institutional support suggested by faculty include student workshops, reinstated, required visits to a “writing lab.” Currently, an optional “Conversation Hour” workshop for ELL students allows students to practice their oral fluency in English with peers in an informal, out-of-classroom environment. In terms of credit-bearing English classes, Professor R also calls for more course offerings targeted towards English language learners. “As it stands, we only have English 90, and students are expected to be prepared for a co-req with English 101 after just one semester. As research clearly shows, language acquisition takes more time than that.”

Placement reform. Placement and assessment practices also need to change in order to be more equitable. “Many of us are wondering what happened to our ‘ESL’ population,” Professor R says, of the dwindling number of students placed as “ESL.” “This semester we had only 43 students place into our one ‘ESL’ level.” He cites the Spring 2020 introduction of the CUNY

Proficiency Index—which employs multiple measures to “more accurately assess the developmental needs of our students than placement tests”—as a potential reason for this sudden discrepancy (OAA 1). “Before CUNY instituted their mysterious placement index, which waives many ELLs from taking a standardized CUNY writing exam, we had many more students in our ‘ESL’ classes,” he says. Ongoing advancements in AI technology have caused faculty to feel concern that the individual needs of students are overlooked during placement. “CUNY should implement an English assessment that is graded by a human being, not a computer, which is the case for the new Accuplacer—the prospective students’ writing will be scored by AI (!!!),” Professor P writes, adding that in addition to non-machine assessment, we could gain a fuller sense of a student’s language competence through an oral assessment, “via a brief interview of all students.”

Professor L suggests that the college “switch terminology to ‘multilingual’ across the board. And DEFINITELY allow [the] Foreign Languages department [to] offer WI (Writing Intensive) classes. It is a real shame that this hasn’t happened yet.” He also suggests closer collaboration between the English department and the Foreign Languages department by merging the two: “Call it Language and Writing or something like that.” As indicated by Professor L’s response, lasting and meaningful writing support for our multilingual students comes with a change and reorganization in institutional structures and a change in mindset. That is where rethinking terminology comes in.

TOWARD A MULTILINGUAL FUTURE

To echo David Bartholomae’s sentiments about basic writing reform, “The first thing we would need to do to change the curriculum would be to *change the way the profession talked about the students who didn’t fit*” (Bartholomae 21, emphasis added). Change begins with mindset, which is then followed by practice. While terms can seem benign, we as writing instructors and compositionists undoubtedly know that what terms we use, and how, matter.

A Change in Mindset

The hope is that this article can encourage us to be more cognizant of the potentially damaging effects and implications of the terms we use to describe our linguistically diverse students—particularly, terms that essentialize a student and rob them of linguistic self-determination. Validation

goes hand in hand with supplemental support and instruction. As Professor J states, “I think students find tutoring helpful, but also I think it’s just important not to make ‘ESL’ students feel as if they are behind or as if they are a problem. They come in with rich language skills (that I envy) and adaptation into any language is a process. I don’t like hearing conversations where it feels as if ‘ESL’ students are being viewed clinically or critically. I think any extra language help is something they find helpful, but I don’t like the idea of constant testing to categorize people.” The assumptions of deficiency that come with the “ESL” identifier can be internalized by students and instructors alike.

Language identities will be layered and complex, leading to new classifications—and this is what a translingual disposition toward multilingualism acknowledges. Student identities may need to be continually re-imagined for pedagogical purposes (Canagarajah 430). It may be some time before this and other disciplines (see Professor M’s earlier note about Composition/TE-SOL divisions) can agree on a singular term to describe linguistically diverse students—and perhaps there is no term that isn’t entirely unproblematic, or accounts for every nuance in a student’s background.

In the meantime, in the midst of these terms’ continual institutional usages and presence, instructors should actively seek to understand their students’ linguistic self-identifications, through a translingual framework. While terms like “ESL” and “ELL” and binaries like “L1/L2,” and “native/non-native” can be guiding heuristics that orient us to where a student might stand on their English learning needs, they should be merely that—guides—for our instruction, program development, and conception of writing support systems. Our efforts at getting to know our multilingual students’ linguistic capabilities, preferred modes of learning, and personal roadblocks should be ongoing, personalized, and individualized. “Such knowledge is particularly relevant in order to support late arrival resident L2 students who may not appear to be multilingual, i.e., depending on their oral fluency levels, they may be mistaken for monolingual L1 students, but their writing may nonetheless exhibit patterns that do not adhere to the norms of the ‘standard’ language that may be expected in the classroom,” argue Crista de Kleine et al. (7). Indeed, instructors and their institutions need to take greater initiative in learning their students’ background linguistic knowledges to make up for what simple L1 and L2 classifications cannot account for.

A Shift in Praxis

With this shift in mindset, instructor initiatives may take the form of embedding curricula that help instructors identify multilingual students' writing competencies and needs, in faculty programs, first-year composition programming for instructors, or programming offered through Writing Across the Curriculum programs, writing centers, ESL support services. Teachers—especially at community colleges, where faculty are often over-worked and undercompensated—should be given opportunities to attend workshops on teaching second language writers at professional conferences. Instructors may be trained to understand the ways cultural differences can influence writing patterns, and writing programs can familiarize themselves with the multilingual populations surrounding their institutions (CCCC). Being able to locate and interpret the varied “second language effects” of students given their language background could, importantly, broaden our understanding of multilingual students' language competencies, and inform fairer, more student-centered teaching and assessment practices.

QCC faculty member and former English Department Chair Jennifer Maloy sees linguistic difference as a site for pedagogical opportunity rather than constraints. “We. . . should consider possibilities for thoughtfully integrating linguistically diverse students into basic writing and composition courses,” she argues in “Binary Structures in a Translingual Age” (32). Cheryl Comeau-Kirschner and QCC faculty Jed Shahar put Paul Kei Matsuda and Tony Silva’s proposal of a cross-cultural composition class into practice in advanced-level developmental writing courses by mixing English language learners (ELLs) and native English speakers (NES) (Matsuda and Silva; Comeau-Kirschner and Shahar). In contrast, a growing number of universities are offering “ESL” track FYC courses, comprising self-identifying “ESL” students, as an equal alternative to “mainstream” FYC courses, rather than a prerequisite for first-year composition. Students are placed into these FYC-equivalent courses through directed self-placement (DSP), a model in which students receive guidance on how to place themselves, and then make their own placement decisions. Given its matriculated status, the availability of these classes can boost retention while fostering a safe space for cultural and linguistic exchange in the classroom (Mesina 24, 27). The potential downside of such a course may come from students' further feelings of marginalization, given their negative responses to the “ESL” label. These “segregated” classes may also perpetuate the myth of “linguistic homogeneity” (Matsuda 638).

Furthermore, Hope Parisi asks that we seize on the generative nature of writing in teacher-student collaborations. When teachers consider students' literate lives alongside their own, a network of subjectivities forms, providing a repertoire of diverse yet intersectional literacies and identities—a translingual disposition rooted in social justice (139). Additionally, among Maloy's proposed reforms for writing placement are designing Directed Self-Placement (DSP) protocols for multilingual students that consider their local contexts and demographics, and gives credit to the self-awareness they may hold on their own English language competencies. "Translingual approaches to writing placement for linguistically diverse students. . . must be built on the belief that, as experienced language users, students will have valuable views on the types of courses that would best serve them," writes Maloy (50). Echoing her advocacy for DSP for linguistically diverse students, the CCCC 2020 statement adds that the advantages and disadvantages of each placement option should be made transparent to international and residential multilingual students alike so they can make informed decisions (CCCC). A translingual approach to how we place, instruct, and refer to our linguistically diverse students is the means by which we can fairly and fully honor their agency: agency to linguistically self-identify, to flout conventional academic structures, and to mobilize their diverse language repertoires in their meaning-making.

Ultimately, a translingual approach to teaching composition benefits *all* of our students, regardless of linguistic background. The term "translingual," Lu and Horner note, has commonly been associated with "those deemed linguistically 'other'," such as writers designated "ESL." It is therefore a sort of "prescription" given just to these students for support; "Conversely, those identified as English monolinguals are seen as beyond the purview or concern of teachers and scholars taking a translingual approach" (585). In fact, when language difference is seen as the norm, we recognize that it permeates all language users' everyday contexts. "A translingual approach is best understood as a disposition of openness and inquiry toward language and language differences, not as a matter of the number and variety of languages and language varieties one can claim to know," write Lu and Horner (585). Meaning negotiation, translation, and invention are inherent processes in languaging, including "standard" varieties that claim to be static.

Navigating the composition classroom through this lens frames writing as an emergent act, not as something to master. This can take pressure off of multilingual and monolingual students who in their educational experience have been trained to produce texts that are "correct," and pave the way

for writing that is more confident, engaging, and expressive. And even more than this, it can reinforce to students that they have *a right to choose*—*whom* they write as, what they write *about*, and *how* they write.

NOTES

1. Students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds are unaccounted for in CUNY writing placement, which determines incoming students' English proficiency by the languages primarily used in their previous schooling and standardized exams. First-year students are flagged as "ESL" if they have spent at least six months in an institution where English is not the primary language. The consequences for placement are severe; at QCC, those placed in "interventional" coursework (many of which are non-credit-bearing) often end up dropping out of the course, or college altogether. Across CUNY campuses, less than half of students assigned to developmental courses have finished them by the end of their first year (Che).
2. Given the research conducted in this work draws from contributions from students and faculty at QCC, and writing placement at the college flags "ESL" students, this term in particular will be used to anchor this discussion. Separate from the discussion of terms, "multilingual" will be used to refer to students to more holistically account for those who learned English as their first, second, third, etc. languages.
3. The criteria has since been expanded to include students who have graduated from a secondary school where the language of instruction is English, and completed at least one semester in a non-English secondary school environment, or completed their High School Equivalency Examination (GED, TASC, HiSet) in a language other than English (Office of Academic Affairs [OAA]).
4. In the context of this article, "L1" and "L2" will be used to delineate between students who learned English as their first language and those who learned it as their second language. They will be discussed alongside simultaneous bilinguals, who learned two or more languages in congruence as their first languages.

APPENDIX

QCC First-Year Placement by Academic Year

Student Survey Questions

Student Background Questions

- What year are you in at QCC?
- What is/are your first language/s?
- What languages and/or dialects can you communicate in?
- For each of the languages you mentioned above, specify where you use them in everyday life (i.e. home, school, friends).
- Were you admitted as an “ESL” (English as a Second Language) student?

Linguistic Identity and “ESL” Positionality

- How do you define someone who is “ESL”?
- How do you feel about the “ESL” student” label? Does it have a positive and/or negative connotation to you, and why?
- Would YOU consider yourself “ESL”? Why or why not?

Writing Instruction and Support

- Generally speaking, what kinds of writing assignments do you find the most valuable?
- What writing support, if any, have you found helpful at QCC? In what ways was this support helpful?
- What writing support, if any, would you like to see at QCC?

Faculty Survey Questions

Teaching and Disciplinary Background / “ESL” Positionality

- What English class(es) are you teaching this semester?
- What is your discipline? How does your discipline define “ESL” students (if at all)?
- What is your understanding of how the College/CUNY defines “ESL” students?
- What would YOU consider to be the criteria for an “ESL” student”? What informs your definition?

Classroom Context

- What are some writing *challenges* that your “ESL” students have faced?
- Similarly, what are some writing *strengths* that your “ESL” students have possessed?

Writing Support and Praxis

- Describe an assignment that you have found to be particularly effective in your teaching of “ESL” students. What elements of the assignment were particularly efficacious, and why? What learning outcomes did you observe?
- What suggestions, if any, do you have on how we can improve pedagogy/support services for “ESL” students?

Student Themes and Codes

Category #1: Linguistic Identity and Positionality				
Themes				
	Age of language acquisition	Ease of heritage vs. English language use	Ability to navigate everyday spaces in English	Negative impression of “ESL” term
Codes	Introduction to U.S. schooling	Correct pronunciation and grammar	Use in school/work/other predominantly-English-speaking spaces	Correlation with one’s level of intelligence
	Arriving to the U.S.	Frequency of language use	Heritage language does not interfere with English use	A de facto association with being a racial minority
	Relationship of language with place (i.e. English = America)	Level of “struggle” with a language		Overall inferiority
				Lack of agency; predetermined identity

Category #2: Writing Instruction and Support			
Themes			
	Ability to choose their own writing topics and expectations	Practical and personalized writing support and assignments	On-campus student community
Codes	More motivation to write	Tutoring for multi-lingual writing	Creative writing club
	Better knowledge retention	Journal writing to express writing insecurities and concerns	Collaborative assignments, in-person and virtually
	Likelier to write better		Writing support club
	More investment in assignment itself; less preoccupied with grade		
	No formatting requirements		

Faculty Themes and Codes

Category #1: Classroom Context			
Themes			
	“ESL” students’ metacognitive abilities	Cultural differences	Negative impact of “ESL” on performance
Codes	Can explain grammatical norms of different languages	Unfamiliar with idiomatic expressions; U.S. cultural references	Feelings of deficiency
	Literary translations from heritage to English language	Different writing/argumentation styles	Lack of confidence as writers
		Emphasis on different writing abilities and skills in heritage country	

Category #2: Writing Support and Praxis				
Themes				
	Need for more positive reinforcement of multilingual students' assets	More non-academic writing assignments	More institutional support prior to, or during their matriculated writing classes	Placement Reform
Codes	Recognition of translation work in writing	Poetry responses	Student workshop/writing lab	Support before placement in matriculated writing class
	Acknowledgement of their contributions to an assignment	Writing about childhood memories	Conversation hour	Placement exams graded by humans rather than computers
		Writing about food	Collaboration between English and Foreign Languages department	
		Low-stakes assignments		
		Use of multimodalities (i.e. social media)		

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Explicit Language Instruction: Developing Writers' Metalinguistic Awareness to Facilitate Transfer

Tom Slagle

ABSTRACT: Responding to a lack of attention to language in transfer pedagogies, this study examines the potential effects that direct language-level instruction has on the metalinguistic awareness of students who were enrolled in stretch and corequisite courses at two four-year, public universities. Informed by a functional view of language, the instruction made explicit the connections between conventional language-level features and the related socio-rhetorical practices of academic discourse and provided metalanguage for students to describe these connections. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participating students to determine the extent to which the metalanguage from the instruction aided their ability to articulate their awareness of these connections. The findings suggest that the instruction cultivates a metalanguage that helps students verbalize their metalinguistic awareness. When considering the role that such awareness has on the transfer process, these findings indicate that functional language-based instruction can prepare students to transfer their writing strategies across contexts.

KEYWORDS: corequisite; explicit instruction; functional grammar; metacognition; stretch; transfer

Students' difficulty in successfully transferring their writing strategies is often attributed to the common practice of instructing students in general writing skills, an approach that some suggest is counterproductive by encouraging an overly simplified view of "academic writing" and thus leading to the misapplication of strategies or "negative transfer" (Yancey et al. *Writing Across Contexts* 55). Common curricular interventions designed to facilitate students' successful transfer, Writing About Writing (WAW) and Teaching for Transfer (TFT), focus instruction instead on inquiries within writing studies by making "what we know about writing" the primary "subject" (Wardle "Mutt Genres" 784). Proponents believe that such an approach—in its rejection of the (mis)conception that "academic writing" is "generally

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universal”—aids in “developing a rhetorical awareness necessary for transfer” by providing key rhetorical terms as a metalanguage to encourage students’ metacognition (Downs and Wardle 554; Yancey et al. “Teaching for Transfer” 273). Research suggests that when transfer pedagogies, including WAW and TFT, are applied in basic writing courses such instruction improves students’ metacognitive processes which, in turn, facilitates students’ ability to transfer their writing strategies across contexts (Blaauw-Hara et al.; Bird; Moore).

Research also suggests, however, that students often have difficulty reflecting on the kinds of choices that writers make at the sentence level to, for example, engage competing viewpoints from source texts or appropriately express conviction based on the genre and context or what we might describe as language-level choices, which present additional barriers to transfer (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 174; Moore 190; Yancey et al., *Writing Across Contexts* 17, 34). This difficulty can, in part, be attributed to the lack of attention to language, not only in transfer pedagogies, but also in post-secondary writing instruction more broadly since the socio-rhetorical focus of this instruction often precludes explicit instruction in the language-level features that characterize genres and likewise students’ awareness of these characteristic features (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 18–19; Gere et al., *Developing Writers* 9–10; Moore 181). This lack of language-level instruction presents a gap in transfer pedagogies as it relates to developing students’ metalinguistic awareness, that is, their ability to understand the ways in which language-level patterns relate to textual-level rhetorical strategies and how such relations construct meaning. Developing metalinguistic awareness, particularly for basic writers, is essential to guiding their successful transfer given that these students often lack a repertoire of metalanguage or “metatalk” for describing discourse strategies at the sentence-level (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 173–174; Ferris and Eckstein 336–337; Moore 178; Yancey et al., *Writing Across Contexts* 16–17).

In this study, I seek to expand the ways transfer pedagogies might facilitate basic writers’ transfer through direct language-level instruction. Specifically, I examined how direct language-level instruction informed by a functional view of grammar can potentially assist students’ successful transfer by giving them a metalanguage for navigating discourse at the sentence level. A common approach to demystify the conventional language features of academic discourse for non-native speakers of English (Aull *First-Year University Writing* 10; Hardy et al. 17; Moore 197; Peele, et al. 53), functional grammar provides a view of language that connects language-level features to macro-rhetorical strategies and thus offers the potential to develop students’

awareness of the interrelations between language forms and meaning by giving students a metalanguage to describe these interrelations.

Potentially adding to the curricular interventions that aid students' successful transfer, I set out to examine what such direct language-level instruction might afford in developing students' rhetorical and metalinguistic awareness. I was guided primarily by the following question: To what extent, if any, does direct instruction in functional grammar help basic writers develop metalinguistic awareness and a repertoire of metalanguage to verbalize and reflect on their academic literacy practices so they might successfully transfer these practices to other contexts? To answer this question, I aimed to answer the following, more specific questions:

- a. What metalanguage do basic writers use to discuss and reflect on their academic literacy practices after receiving instruction in functional grammar? Does this metalanguage help them develop metalinguistic awareness, that is, an ability to understand the relationship between the conventional language patterns of academic discourse and the socio-rhetorical practices underlying these patterns?
- b. How might direct instruction in functional grammar affect these students' potential to transfer their writing strategies across contexts?

To answer these questions, I analyzed data derived from seven sections of basic writing modeled on the stretch and corequisite designs as implemented at two four-year, public universities located in Northeast Ohio. Theoretically grounded in M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the lessons in functional grammar offer a linguistic approach to transfer instruction. They are designed to develop students' metalinguistic awareness by emphasizing how conventional language-level features function in relation to the socio-rhetorical practices valued in academic contexts (Peele et al. 52; Rose and Martin 235–303). By emphasizing these relations, the lessons differ from traditional, decontextualized grammar instruction, which focuses on the identification of the formal features of language with minimal consideration for how these features construct meaning in social contexts (Fearn and Farnan 64; MacDonald 610; Moore 178–179). I set out to examine the effect this instruction had on developing basic writers' potential to transfer by conducting semi-structured interviews with 14 students who were enrolled in the seven experimental courses of basic writing and thus

received instruction in functional grammar over the course of a 16-week semester. My analysis of interviews with these 14 students suggests that students who receive instruction in functional grammar develop a repertoire of functional metalanguage which, in turn, cultivates a metalinguistic awareness conducive to transfer. Based on these findings, I argue that language-level instruction informed by functional linguistics can effectively prepare basic writers to transfer writing strategies across contexts.

THE TRANSFER QUESTION AND LANGUAGE-LEVEL INSTRUCTION

Research in educational psychology finds that explicit instruction is critical for facilitating reflection and, in turn, learners' ability to transfer (Perkins and Salomon 24). Given these findings, engaging students in reflective, metacognitive tasks has become a fundamental practice not only in transfer pedagogies, but also in postsecondary writing instruction generally (Gere et al., *Developing Writers* 9–10; Reiff and Bawarshi 315; Yancey et al., *Writing Across Contexts* 32–33). A related instructional practice—one necessary for engaging students in metacognitive tasks—is developing students' metalanguage particularly with the consideration that, as Kathleen Yancey et al. observe, first-year students often lack a repertoire of language to “describe key concepts in writing, such as genre” (*Writing Across Contexts* 34). These two strategies for facilitating students' metacognition—including explicit instruction and developing a common metalanguage—have been foundational to the curricula of pedagogies designed to develop students' transfer, such as TFT and WAW.

In their TFT framework, Yancey et al. advocate for explicit instruction in the key rhetorical terms central to their transfer curriculum's metalanguage. These terms range from “audience, genre, and rhetorical situation,” which students are introduced to at the outset of the course, to “exigence, critical analysis, [and] discourse community” in later units (*Writing Across Contexts* 57). These terms, according to Yancey et al., are introduced to help students reflect on their prior knowledge and formulate a theory of writing, a written assignment that culminates the TFT curriculum (*Writing Across Contexts* 97–98). Anne Beaufort also advocates explicit instruction in genres and their social functions. The metalanguage for such instruction includes the terms that comprise Beaufort's model of writing expertise, namely discourse community knowledge, subject matter knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, and writing process knowledge (149–151). Explicit instruction in these terms,

according to Beaufort, can be a means for students' transfer to be "cued, primed, and guided" by serving as "mental grippers" for students as they reflect on "general domains of [writing] knowledge," which they can then apply in the "local circumstances" of specific rhetorical situations (151). These approaches have shown to enhance students' ability to reflect on their writing choices by developing a metalanguage around socio-rhetorical concepts, such as audience and genre (Yancey et al. "Teaching for Transfer"). With this focus on the social, contextual factors of writing, these approaches have not, however, adequately integrated a set of terms for developing students' metalinguistic awareness, that is, their ability to reflect on how these socio-rhetorical concepts are embodied in the language-level features of texts (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 174; Brown 129; Moore 197).

Research suggests that functionally informed approaches to language-level instruction can improve students' metalinguistic awareness, particularly among basic writers. For example, Miriam Moore's findings from a study examining the metalanguage used in reading journals by 19 first-year undergraduates—13 of whom were dual enrolled in a corequisite section of a WAW course—suggest that instruction in functional grammar can help students develop a metalanguage for describing how language-level choices realize "genre moves such as concessions or rebuttals" (191, 187–188). Debra Myhill and Ruth Newman, likewise, found that a functional approach to language instruction, one that utilizes metalanguage or "metatalk," "supports learners' capacity to engage in metalinguistic discussion about writing" by providing tools for "critical reflection" on "writerly choices" (187) and helping to develop "knowledge about the relationship between meaning, form and function" (179). Studies examining functionally informed language instruction have similarly indicated improvement in the quality of students' writing. Leif Fearn and Nancy Farnan, for instance, examined the effects that instruction in functional grammar had on the quality of writing by a group of tenth graders (63) and compared this functional approach to the effects of instruction in traditional grammar that a group of control students received (64, 68–69). While the experimental groups' performance on the objective assessment of a cloze test was equal to that of the control group, the experimental group's scores on the holistic assessment of their writing surpassed that of the control group's performance. From this finding, Fearn and Farnan conclude that when students are instructed to view grammar as a resource for meaning-making—and not as a separate activity for editing—language-based instruction can have beneficial effects on the quality

of students' writing by facilitating their transfer of grammatical knowledge to functional literate practices (73, 78).

Taking a similar functional approach to language-level instruction, research examining the effects of explicitly teaching the rhetorical moves of academic discourse finds that these approaches not only enhance students' metacognitive awareness, but also can positively affect their academic dispositions and, in turn, their ability to transfer. Don Kraemer, for example, reports on the results of explicitly instructing basic writers using the templates from Graff and Birkenstein's *They Say / I Say* to make students aware of valued social practices underlying "academic discourse" ("Fact and Theory and Value Judgment" 10). In one study Kraemer examined how using these templates as models for making conventional "intellectual moves" (e.g., to introduce debates and engage counter arguments) can potentially help students "embody [the] values important to academic discourse" (13). In a similar study examining the use of *They Say / I Say* in a basic writing course, Kraemer suggests that students learned "to act out ways of thinking with different audiences for different purposes" ("Economy of Explicit Instruction" 113). By using the templates as a guide, in other words, students were able to develop the socio-cognitive habits of mind valued within academia, specifically those "valued across English Studies, including the ability to critique powerful, institutionalized semiotic systems" (Aull, *How Students Write* 15–16). Although the language patterns templated in *They Say / I Say* are rarely used in published scholarship, Kraemer's findings suggest that instruction that connects generic and linguistic form to their intended rhetorical and social functions can help students internalize the socio-cognitive habits and dispositions that underlie academic discourse conventions.

Thomas Peele et al., like Kraemer, examined the effects of language-level instruction in basic writing courses at the City College of New York (CCNY). Informed by the results of a "form-function analysis" that examined the rhetorical moves in a corpus comprising 548 argumentative essays by CCNY students, Peele et al. describe reforms made to the "philosophy and structure" of the writing program at CCNY (45). With consideration of their findings, the writing program at CCNY reconceived their assignments so that the writing tasks focused on rhetorical analysis at the macro-level of genre and the micro-level of language features and subsequently replaced the assignment sequence of narrative to expository genres with "a curriculum that asks students to study genre explicitly," which served to "support their transfer of writing knowledge from composition to other classes" (36, 51). Informed by the TFT framework, the curriculum included corpus analysis

to facilitate students' reflection and their development of metalanguage (51–52). According to students' performance after this intervention, Peele et al. conclude that, although explicit language-level instruction is often designed for the “explicit teaching of genre as a means of demystifying the expectations for second language learners,” their basic writing students, who like “English language learners” are likely “less familiar with conventional rhetorical moves than other students,” benefited from the instruction that focused on the valued language-level patterns of academic argumentative genres as indicated by students' ability to develop a “much better sense of academic genre expectations” (53).

Adding to the possible curricula interventions that aid students' successful transfer, the lessons designed for this study offer a similar functional approach to language instruction. I examined the possible effects this instruction had on the metalinguistic awareness of students enrolled in basic writing courses modeled on the corequisite and stretch designs. To examine these possible effects, I conducted interviews with students enrolled in these basic writing courses during which I solicited descriptions of these students' academic literacy practices to provoke the metalanguage they use to articulate these practices. In what follows, I explain the lessons' general aims to give a sense of the nature of the instruction that students enrolled in these experimental courses received. This explanation includes the functional linguistic theories informing the lessons' design and example applications used in the seven experimental corequisite and stretch courses. I then explain the protocols and coding process for conducting and analyzing interviews with students who were enrolled these experimental courses. Before turning to these explanations, however, I first situate the basic writing courses within their institutional contexts in addition to describing the integration of the functional language-based instruction into the curricula of experimental corequisite and stretch courses, which was done in collaboration with five participating instructors after receiving IRB approval.¹

METHODOLOGY

Institutional Contexts and Data Collection in Experimental Sections

Located in Northeast Ohio, both institutions that served as the research sites for the study are four-year, public universities. The first institution, which I refer to as Institution A, has been offering the corequisite model

as an alternative to non-credit bearing, remedial writing instruction since the fall of 2017. With a design informed by the extended instructional time model (Miller et al. 83), the corequisite was initially implemented as a response to a remediation-free mandate (“Uniform Statewide Standard” 1), and approximately 2,900 students have been enrolled in the course as of spring 2022. The second institution, Institution B, has been offering stretch courses exclusively on its regional campuses since the early 2000s.

To recruit instructors at both institutions, I chose from a pool of instructors who regularly teach the respective models of basic writing at the institutions and requested these instructors’ participation in the study that would integrate the functional grammar lessons into the curricula of their corequisite and stretch courses for the upcoming semester. Selecting from this pool of instructors, I considered the instructors’ views on language-level instruction, giving preference to instructors who had a less prescriptive view of grammar specifically and the conventions of academic discourse generally. I also considered the instructors’ familiarity with approaches from applied linguistics, such as pedagogies for English Language Learners, believing that such familiarity would facilitate their ability to instruct the lessons in functional grammar. However, this latter criterion was difficult likely due to an inadequate “knowledge of linguistics” amongst post-secondary writing instructors (Aull, *How Students Write* 22; Gere et al., “Communal Justicing” 391).

The final recruitment included five instructors amounting to seven experimental corequisite and stretch courses. At Institution A, I recruited one part-time instructor who had research interests in transfer and another, the composition coordinator, who helped design the original curriculum of the corequisite when the model was first piloted in fall 2017. At Institution B, I recruited one instructor whose research interests included pedagogies for English Language Learners, while the other two instructors had interests in online instruction and creative writing. After instructors agreed to participate in the study, I requested samples of their course materials, such as syllabi and assignment instructions from prior semesters during which they taught corequisite and stretch courses, so that I could review the materials and provide recommendations for how the lessons in functional grammar might configure into their lesson plans. My recommendations focused on how the lessons would scaffold toward the major writing tasks of the instructors’ curricula. After the instructors reviewed these recommendations, we met on various occasions both individually and once as a group to determine the specific scaffolding of the lessons. Once we determined the scaffolding of

the lessons, I worked with each instructor throughout the semester, having the opportunity to observe as well as co-teach the class sessions in which the lessons in functional grammar were taught.

Functional Grammar Instruction

As noted above, the lessons are informed by a functional view of language by being theoretically grounded in Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and are designed to develop students' metalinguistic awareness—specifically their awareness of how conventional language-level features function in conjunction with socio-rhetorical practices to construct meaning in academic contexts (Rose and Martin 235–303). Similar to the “form-function analysis” designed by Peele et al. for developing the genre awareness of basic writers at CCNY, the lessons aim to enhance students' awareness of the typical language patterns that help writers execute the conventional rhetorical moves of academic discourse. The language-level features explicated in the lessons, in this way, do not merely instruct in formal features but aim to develop students' understanding of how these features “embody [the] values important to academic discourse” and thus reflect the socio-rhetorical practices valued in academia (Kraemer, “Fact and Theory and Value Judgment” 13).²

To instruct students in these social practices and the related language-level patterns embodying them, each lesson emphasized the dialogic nature of academic discourse, or what Barbara Bird describes as a “meta-purpose of academic writing” which, according to Bird, is “contributing to a conversation” (63). This “meta-purpose” aligns to SFL's view of language, which draws on Bakhtin's notions of dialogism and heteroglossia. That is, linguistic frameworks within SFL, as J.R. Martin and Peter White explain, operationalize the study of how language construes “social relationships” through linguistic resources that arrange “relationships of alignment / disalignment” and “various value positions” (95). SFL, in this way, diverges from frameworks that focus on “form” as emphasized, for instance, by Transformational-Generative approaches (TG) (Martin 3; Thompson 8). Frameworks in SFL instead focus on how language is used in situated, social contexts and thus provide explanations of how social relationships are construed through language by, for example, “entertaining” alternative viewpoints or, in other words, how a “point-of-view is...potentially in tension with dialogistic alternatives” (Martin and White 108). Further illustrating the meta-purpose identified by Bird, analyses of written discourse informed by theories within

SFL suggest that while all utterances are “dialogic,” disciplinary discourse is particularly so by construing writerly positions that are in response to previous arguments and thus occurring within a “heteroglossic backdrop of other voices and alternative viewpoints” (Martin and White 99; cf. Hyland 6; Lancaster 28). This dialogic nature reflects the constructivist epistemology of academia, which views knowledge as a product of a balance between “contrastiveness” and “solidarity” among competing perspectives (Aull, *How Students Write* 6–7; Barton, “Epistemological Stance” 754). Developing students’ awareness of how this valued epistemology is embodied in the common language-level patterns of academic discourse further aligns to Bird’s approach to developing students’ academic writerly identities which, like Kraemer’s instruction, emphasizes “explicit instruction” in the “whys” underlying certain academic “discourse practices” and, importantly, illustrating for students how these practices reflect “academic community purposes and dispositions” (65, 68–69).

In all, there are a total of seven lessons informed by this view of language that participating instructors and I tailored to scaffold with their existing curricula. Each lesson typically required at least two class sessions. The materials provided for the lessons included first an explanation of how the typical language patterns of academic discourse reflect valued social practices by connecting specific language-level features to macro-rhetorical concepts, such as genre and discourse communities. The materials for this first part of the lessons were designed to be read by students before the class session in which they were taught and then explicated by the instructor using examples from published and successful undergraduate writing to illustrate. The second part of each lesson provided instructions for guiding meta-discussions on the concepts and analyses of the examples. These collaborative activities were designed to prompt students to use metalanguage informed by a functional view of grammar and, in turn, facilitate students’ development of a terminology to articulate the socio-rhetorical purpose of these conventional language patterns. The third part of each lesson provided possible tasks and activities for students to apply their understanding of the concepts to their own writing.³

Instructors and I scaffolded the lessons so that students received sequenced instruction in the discourse patterns that reflect conventional social practices of different text types. An introductory lesson used early in the curricula, for example, explained to students how functional grammar differs from traditional grammar with the former focusing on the conventions of language used to communicate in various rhetorical situations—and

subsequently emphasizing meaning-making, patterns, and conventions—while the latter focuses on prescriptive (i.e., formal) rules and subsequently emphasizes correctness. As explained in the first part of the lesson, by focusing on conventions as opposed to formal rules, functional grammar provides the means to understand how the forms of language help writers achieve their communicative goals. To set a foundation for the metalanguage used throughout the curricula, the introductory lesson also presented students with the common terminology of functional grammar contrasting it with the terminology informed by a traditional view of grammar (Moore 180).

Following this introductory lesson, the applications and subsequent meta discussions involved having students analyze example texts by identifying the linguistics features according to their functional categories and then reflecting on how these features relate to macro-rhetorical features ranging from the writer's stance and credibility to the execution of rhetorical moves including concessions and rebuttals. Students in Corequisite C, for example, applied the metalanguage from this lesson to an analysis of published scholarship and popular texts. During the meta discussion following students' analysis, we discussed how the functional features of popular texts, such as the use of intensifying language, often sensationalize topics, which led to speculation on how such language features perhaps reflect a common purpose of popular writing, namely to entertain readers, while the use of hedging language in published scholarship often functions to make claims precise and honest.

Emphasizing the dialogic nature of academic discourse, instruction in strategies for engaging competing viewpoints ranged from how contrastive connectives (e.g., *however*, *on the contrary*) index macro-rhetorical moves, such as introducing objections and concessions, to how the use of reporting verbs function to convey a position in relation to viewpoints from sources. Similarly, instruction for engaging competing viewpoints also explained how the strategic use of qualifying and intensifying language projects an appropriate academic *ethos*, one that values “diplomacy” and “civility” by “balancing open-mindedness and conviction” (Aull, *How Students Write* 6–7; Barton, “Metadiscourse Functions” 234; Lancaster 40). In another lesson, students are first introduced to common words and phrases that help qualify and intensify the certainty with which claims are expressed. The lesson then explains how these language-level features function to project an appropriate academic disposition or *ethos* (Kraemer, “Fact and Theory and Value Judgment” 21). Linking the language-level features of expressing certainty to macro-rhetorical moves and common social practices, the expli-

cation part of the lesson informs students that the use of hedging language reflects values of precision and honesty by helping academic writers avoid overstating their claims beyond available evidence in addition to anticipating possible objections from putative readers (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 89). With the explanation of these functions of common discourse practices, students gain an awareness of how linguistic choices for meaning making project an appropriate writerly identity, one that is “open-minded toward competing positions” (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 97; Gere et al., *Developing Writers* 9–10).

Applications of this particular lesson led to discussions of how the language features for expressing certainty help to realize macro-rhetorical concepts, such as credibility by demonstrating critical thinking. When I was observing and co-teaching this lesson in the experimental section Stretch B, for example, I had explained how students might tacitly use these language patterns for expressing degrees of certainty depending on their familiarity with the research. This was in the context of explaining to students how patterns of hedging language are appropriate, especially when the available evidence is inconclusive, and thus hedging in such instances can avoid overly expressing the certainty of claims beyond what the evidence will support. One student then related this consideration to how knowing the research would also expose the writer to alternative viewpoints; he elaborated on this insight explaining that such awareness helps to avoid bias which, as he suggested, illustrates critical thinking as well as open-mindedness—with the latter specifically, according to the student, functioning to make a “connection” with an “opposite point of view” (Student 41, Stretch B). As found in the results of the interview data with this student, such connections were a typical theme of the metalanguage he used to discuss the relationship between language patterns for expressing degrees of certainty and macro-rhetorical concepts such as credibility.

To develop students’ ability to abstract and subsequently apply rhetorical strategies to various writing tasks, another lesson introduced students to the moves of *problematization*. Informed by the concept *macro-genre*, the lesson emphasized how the moves of problematizing can be applied in a range of more specific, rhetorically situated genres (Bawarshi and Reiff “Genre” 228–229). Students are first introduced to key terms for executing this move which, according to functional analyses of academic discourse, is conventionally highlighted and cued by contrastive language (e.g., *but*, *however*, *yet*) (Barton “Epistemological Stance” 748; Gere et al., “Local Assessment” 619). Although applicable to other genres, the lesson illustrates

the moves of *problematization* in abstracts of published scholarship and the introductions of non-disciplinary argumentative writing, including film reviews, to illustrate for students how these rhetorical moves are realized in both academic and popular contexts. Students in the experimental sections Stretch A and Stretch B were taught this lesson while being tasked to write reviews of a film or TV show and a visual, respectively. The focus of the curricula at the time students were taught the lesson thus informed the choice to illustrate the moves of *problematization* in these rhetorically situated genres. However, employing other genres, such as op-eds and feature articles, would likely encourage students to view discourse strategies as flexible—and not “generally universal” (Downs and Wardle 554)—by seeing how writers of different genres adapt similar strategies when writing in specific, rhetorically situated genres.

By illustrating the applicability of these moves in disparate rhetorical situations and genres, the lesson potentially encourages high-road transfer in far-transfer contexts particularly when considering that students who are more likely to successfully transfer their prior knowledge often repurpose a “range of genre strategies” rather than “whole genres” when metacognitively reflecting on their writing process (Reiff and Bawarshi 325). With consideration of these findings, instruction in the moves of *problematization* and *macro-genres* more generally not only gives students insight into the patterned moves valued in academic discourse, but also develops their potential to successfully transfer by providing a flexible notion of rhetorical strategies rather than instruction in the formal conventions of whole, rhetorically situated genres.

Interview Protocols and Coding

To understand the potential effects that functional language-level instruction had on developing students’ metalanguage and metalinguistic awareness, I conducted semi-structured interviews with student participants who were enrolled in one of the seven experimental corequisite and stretch courses. These interviews were recorded and transcribed so that students’ metalanguage when reflecting on their literacy practices could be coded and analyzed. With this approach, I follow similar methods for examining the effects of curricula designed to foster transfer, such as TFT and WAW, which examine how students use key terms related to the socio-rhetorical concepts of the curricula during interviews (see, for example, Blaauw-Hara et al. 70; Yancey et al. “Teaching for Transfer”).

Explicit Language Instruction

In all, there were a total of 14 interviews conducted at the end of the semester during which participating students received functionally informed language-based instruction. The purpose of these interviews was to understand the potential effects that the instruction had on students' metalinguistic awareness and the metalanguage they use to verbalize their academic literacy practices. The interviews were, in turn, designed to be generally descriptive by first asking students about their experiences with writing instruction, drawing on some of their prior knowledge, and getting insights on their personal constructs of academic writing. While the specific formulation of these questions varied, generally I began by asking, "What are the expectations of college-level writing? In other words, what do you believe instructors value when evaluating students' writing?" The purpose of having students describe their understanding of these expectations was two-fold. First, I aimed to understand how the language-based instruction possibly informed the construct of academic writing they described. Second, and relatedly, throughout the interviews, I attempted not to lead students explicitly to use terminology from the lessons and instead see if the metalanguage from the instructional materials naturally emerged from their responses. In sum, these interviews provided space for students to articulate their construct of academic writing and their strategies for using such discourse.

Subsequent questions ranged from asking students about their strategies for executing macro-rhetorical moves to the language-level features of academic discourse. For example, I asked students about their typical strategies for engaging others' viewpoints in their academic writing and their strategies for engaging ideas from secondary sources. Other questions aimed to gain insights on students' metalanguage for discussing more socio-rhetorical elements of their academic writing, such as strategies for counter argumentation and enhancing one's credibility. In sum, the structure of the interviews aimed to solicit students' metalanguage for discussing their academic literacy practices, including their ability to discuss the relationship between language-level patterns and socio-rhetorical concepts.

My process for coding transcripts of these interviews was informed by the instructional materials taught in the experimental sections. These codes emerged from constant comparison of the memos I used to document the content that was covered by participating instructors while either observing or co-teaching the lessons in addition to various scholarship, including research examining language-level instruction and transfer. The codes, in other words, were informed by my "literature reading" (Tavory and Timmermans

125; cf. Geisler and Swarts 124). Because instructors' use of the lessons varied, these codes helped to identify instances during interviews where students were drawing on concepts from the instructional materials in their responses, but not using the metalanguage from the materials verbatim. The codes also aided in analyzing the frequency and distribution of metalanguage in the transcripts with this quantitative perspective providing an examination of general trends in the data (Bird 75, 81). In total, there were six codes, which I associated with two primary dimensions, including *metalinguistic awareness* and *metalanguage* (Geisler and Swarts 118). These two dimensions were devised primarily by my reading of related scholarship, while their subcodes emerged from my analysis of the interview data, specifically by the recurring themes I found in my initial analysis of the transcripts.

Within the dimension *metalanguage*, these subcodes included *rhetorical*, *functional*, and *traditional*. I applied the subcode *functional* to students' responses that used any functional elements to "talk about language" use (Moore 180). These elements ranged from specific terms that were used in the functional language instruction students received including, for example, "hedging" and "intensifying," or related derivations given the variation in the language used by participating instructors. I applied the *functional* code, for example, to a response from a student who was enrolled in Corequisite C in which the student was probed for language to describe phrases that introduce information from secondary sources. The student responded saying "Johnson goes on to explain. . ." and identified such phrases as "leading phrases" (Student 1C, Corequisite C). Following this scheme, I applied the code *functional* to students' responses in which they identified functional elements using appropriate metalanguage to describe that function but not the specific metalanguage of the functional language instruction. For instance, in the previous example, the student described phrases that introduce source information as "leading" although the terminology used in the materials identified these as "signal phrases."

The other two codes within the *metalanguage* dimension were used to distinguish between other possible sources of students' metalanguage and the metalanguage they seemed to develop from the functional language instruction they received. I applied the code *rhetorical* to students' responses that included terminology common to most academic literacy instruction (Nicholes and Reimer 43). For example, the response below by Student 29 used *rhetorical* metalanguage when describing her general construct of academic writing.

Explicit Language Instruction

Interviewee: ...obviously have a thesis based off what your paper is going to be about and not write about random stuff that isn't really backing up your thesis and if it's about a topic then trying to really key down...to get your point across. (Student 29, Stretch A)

The student's response illustrates the use of *rhetorical* metalanguage to describe their construct of academic writing by identifying features, such as thesis statements ("thesis") and evidence ("...backing up"). Although these concepts are addressed in the instructional materials designed for the study, such terms are common to most academic literacy instruction. Responses coded as *traditional* within the *metalanguage* dimension were primarily form-based. That is, students' responses to which this code was applied articulated rules and prescriptions for language use rather than emphasizing the ways language forms reflect their functional use as "meaning-making resources" (Halliday 10). For example, two students enrolled in Stretch B responded to the general probe about the expectations of college-level writing by explaining that "good writing" avoids "contractions" (Student 44, Stretch B; Student 41, Stretch B).

I used codes within the dimension *metalinguistic awareness*, including *lexical*, *syntactic*, and *textual*, to identify instances in students' responses that indicated their understanding of how conventional discourse features function in conjunction with socio-rhetorical practices (Moore 179). While this awareness implies an ability to explicitly articulate social practices related to language use, such awareness can be implicit (Moore 179–180; Myhill and Jones 848). I, therefore, applied these codes even when students' responses did not use any overt metalanguage to indicate their understanding of these connections. For example, in an interview with a student enrolled in Corequisite A, I presented two claims that expressed the same argument but with varying levels of certainty. I asked the student to describe their differences with one claim being appropriately qualified by using hedging language (e.g., *likely*, *perhaps*) while the other used intensifying language (e.g., *all*, *always*) and thus expressed the argument with more conviction. The student first describes the intensified claim as a "false statement," and I probed for the words that informed this description. The student responded as illustrated below.

Interviewee: It says ". . .they will. . ." and there's no guarantee that they will and the second one says "they will" and they just kind of leave it at that whereas the second one says "likely" and the word

“likely” is the one that’s definitely true. You’re more than likely to do anything so just adding the word “likely” helps. I forget what we called that in class. There’s a fancy word for it though. (Student 7, Corequisite A)

The student identifies the hedge “likely” but lacks metalanguage, such as “hedge” or “qualifier,” to explicitly identify the lexical item; in fact, the student notes that they “forget” what these terms were called. Because the student identifies specific language, such as “likely” and “will,” that contribute to the different expressions, however, I applied the code *lexical* within the dimension *metalinguistic awareness*. In other words, while the student does not have the specific terminology or metalanguage to describe these lexical items, they demonstrate an awareness of their function in making arguments precise and honest (Myhill and Jones 848–849).

I likewise applied the code *textual* within the dimension *metalinguistic awareness* to responses in which students demonstrate an awareness of how macro features, such as paragraphs and *macro-genres*, can have specific rhetorical functions. I applied this code, for example, to the response below in which the student was asked to describe the conventional parts of paragraphs as taught in a functional grammar lesson on integrating sources which explained the function of topic sentences and strategies for elaborating ideas by using specific details.

Interviewee: I know that for a good paragraph you’re going to want to make sure you essentially introduce the topic that you’re talking about, and if you don’t then you’re kind of all over the place. (Student 7, Corequisite A)

Like the example above, the student lacks explicit metalanguage for describing the conventional parts of a paragraph. However, the student demonstrates an awareness of the macro-rhetorical function of a paragraph by explaining how “introduc[ing] the topic” maintains focus and, in turn, avoids being “all over the place.” In this way, while the student lacks specific metalanguage, they nonetheless demonstrate awareness of the macro-rhetorical function. I, therefore, applied the code *textual* within the dimension *metalinguistic awareness* to this and similar responses.

In aggregate, my analysis of students’ interviews using these codes suggests that functional language instruction has noticeable effects on students’ metalinguistic awareness and the metalanguage they use to verbalize academic literacy practices. Specifically, my analysis, as detailed below, suggests

that students develop an explicit metalanguage informed by a functional view of language which, in turn, allowed students to verbalize how the valued socio-rhetorical practices of academic contexts underlie conventional language-level patterns.

RESULTS

As illustrated in Table 1 below, students used metalanguage informed by a functional view of language most often as indicated by the frequency of the code *functional* compared to other types of metalanguage including *rhetorical* and *traditional*. *Functional* metalanguage, in fact, was the most frequently occurring code per interview in addition to having the most frequent total occurrences across interviews overall, slightly exceeding the use of *rhetorical* metalanguage in the number of total instances across interviews and noticeably exceeding *traditional* metalanguage in both total occurrences and the number of interviews containing the code.

Functional metalanguage specifically occurred in 13 of the 14 interviews (~93%) and had a total frequency of 77 occurrences distributed across them. *Rhetorical* metalanguage, in comparison, had a total of 72 instances across interviews while also occurring in 13 of the 14 interviews (~93%), and *traditional* metalanguage occurred in nine of the 14 interviews (~64%) and had fewer total occurrences overall with only 20 instances across the interviews. Given that there was an emphasis on traditional grammar in the curriculum of Stretch A, I expected students from this experimental section to use *traditional* metalanguage more readily than students in other experimental sections. However, *traditional* metalanguage was evenly applied across the interviews with students from the seven experimental sections with four corequisite students and five stretch using *traditional* metalanguage. These results suggest that the functional language instruction had initially informed, to some degree, students' ability to articulate conventional academic literacy practices.

The saliency of these students' uptake of *functional* metalanguage was particularly evident in their responses to the general probe asking for their personal construct of academic writing. Responding to a variation of this question, which asked specifically about the expected and valued expression of stance in academic contexts, a student enrolled in Corequisite C, for example, demonstrated an understanding of the expectation for "balancing open-mindedness and conviction" (Aull, *How Students Write* 6-7; Barton, "Metadiscourse Functions" 234; Lancaster 40) and used func-

Table 1. Ranked Frequency of Codes within Metalanguage Dimension

Code	Rank	Total Instances	Interviews with Code
functional	1	77	13/14 (~93%)
rhetorical	2	72	13/14 (~93%)
traditional	3	20	9/14 (~64%)

tional metalanguage to describe this expectation by identifying elements, including “hedges, boosters, and self-referencing.” As illustrated below, after identifying these functional lexical elements, the student then compares the expectations of expressing an appropriate stance in academic writing to their secondary, high school writing instruction.

Interviewee: More like speculative. I know in high school everything I would write would be like ‘this is how it is’ or ‘how it should be’ and you shouldn’t sound like as affirmative, and just allow the reader to see your point and be like ‘okay I can see where they’re coming from’ and make their own conclusions. (Student 2C, Corequisite C)

As the student’s comparison suggests, an appropriate expression of stance in college-level writing conveys more speculation by being less “affirmative.” Perhaps reflecting “traditional notions of argument” that “privilege winning and persuading one’s opponent” (Knoblauch 248; cf. Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 97) as commonly taught in secondary education, the student’s high school instruction suggested that an appropriate stance conveys more conviction. By articulating this distinction and using functional metalanguage to do so, the student’s response demonstrates not only an explicit metalinguistic awareness of how language-level features connect to valued socio-rhetorical practices of academic discourse, but also a willingness to reconceive their prior knowledge.

A student who was enrolled in Stretch B, likewise, demonstrated an explicit metalinguistic awareness explaining how contrastive connectives (e.g., *but*, *however*) can function to realize a credible academic *ethos*, one that conveys “critical thinking” and “open-mindedness.” The student explains the connection between these language-level patterns and their potential socio-rhetorical effects, as illustrated below, when I probe the student about their use of contrastive connectives.

Interviewee: Just kind of give a different view instead of the one I’m

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talking about. 'But it also can be' blah, blah, blah. You know being more open minded about it. I'm open minded, hopefully they're open minded to see my point of view. (Student 41, Stretch B)

Explaining the function of contrastive connectives as lexical features that indicate a willingness to consider alternative viewpoints, or being “open minded,” the student’s response moves beyond a conventional description of the function of these language-level features, such as to illustrate contrast. Instead, the student explains patterns for using these lexical features from a functionally informed perspective, one aligned to the conventional discourse practices of academic argumentation. Specifically, the student’s explanation reflects the functional language instruction they received which explained how, when used to engage alternative viewpoints, contrastive connectives realize the socio-rhetorical convention regarding the dialogic nature of academic discourse by considering “various value positions” (Bird 63; Martin and White 95).

These students’ responses illustrate an awareness of the value placed on academic discourse practices that balance “contrastiveness” and “solidarity” when engaging various viewpoints (Barton, “Epistemological Stance” 754; cf. Aull, *How Students Write* 6–7). The students’ awareness as it aligns with this valued disposition is particularly evident in their suggestion that the appropriate stance opens one’s argument dialogically by allowing perceived readers to, as Student 2C put it, “make their own conclusions” or, as Student 41 explained, to “give [readers] a different viewpoint.” With the comparison of college and high school expectations for academic discourse, the response of Student 2C, moreover, seems indicative of the student’s ability to mindfully reconceive their prior knowledge which, in turn, likely enhances their ability to successfully transfer across contexts (Perkins and Salomon 22; Reiff and Bawarshi 315; Wardle, “Creative Repurposing”; Yancey et al., *Writing Across Contexts* 10–11).

Students’ metalanguage also indicates the development of metalinguistic awareness even when such metalanguage is not necessarily informed by a functional view of grammar. Sources informing students’ metalanguage included activities and instruction in experimental sections’ existing curricula and, in some cases, students’ prior writing instruction, whether in high school or a previous writing course. This was the case as illustrated in the response by Student 2C above in which they parse expectations for appropriately expressing claims in the contexts of high school and college. The effect of this prior instruction as another source of students’ metalanguage

is illustrated by the similar frequency of *rhetorical* metalanguage. According to Table 1 above, *rhetorical* metalanguage was ranked second, and while *rhetorical* metalanguage was almost as frequently used by students to articulate academic discourse practices, the fact that *functional* metalanguage was more widely distributed across the interviews and the most frequently occurring code suggests that the language-level instruction students received had some initial effects on their repertoire of metalanguage and in turn their development of metalinguistic awareness.

In some cases, however, students demonstrated metalinguistic awareness without drawing on declarative or explicit knowledge (Moore 179–180; Myhill and Jones 848). This implicit awareness can be seen in the quantitative results of the codes within the *metalinguistic awareness* dimension, including *lexical*, *syntactic*, and *textual* awareness. The results of this analysis can be seen in Table 2 below. According to these results, students developed an awareness of how textual features, such as the conventional features of *macro-genres*, can have rhetorical effects more readily than lexical or syntactic features. All students (100%) who participated in interviews demonstrated knowledge of conventional textual features while 13 interviews (~93%) included the code *lexical*.

The development of students' metalinguistic awareness at the textual level suggests potential instances of concurrent transfer, and these instances seemed to be facilitated by the meta-discussions designed for the language-level instruction in functional grammar and informed by the concept of *macro-genres*. The instructor of Stretch A, for example, would often commit time at the beginning of class to analyze assigned readings, and we designed the meta-discussions for the language-level instruction around this activity of her existing curriculum. As students' primary exposure to rhetorical analysis, these meta-discussions likely developed students' *textual* metalinguistic awareness and, in turn, facilitated some forms of concurrent transfer. Students reported, that is, that these meta-discussions helped them to see the value of acknowledging alternative viewpoints generally and engaging counter arguments specifically. These meta-discussions, moreover, likely provided students with a metalanguage for classifying text types (Blaauw et al. 57; Beaufort 178); for instance, students during interviews used similar *macro-genre* categories to describe the writing tasks assigned throughout the course.

Illustrating the possible effect that these meta-discussions had on the *textual* metalinguistic awareness of students enrolled in Stretch A, one student, for instance, described how the “argumentative” writing they were

Table 2. Ranked Frequency of Codes within Metalinguistic Awareness Dimension

Code	Rank	Total Instances	Interviews with Code
textual	1	92	14/14 (100%)
lexical	2	62	13/14 (~93%)
syntactic	3	16	7/14 (50%)

assigned was facilitated by these meta-discussions (Student 29, Stretch A). After I probed the student about strategies for integrating alternative viewpoints into her essay, she suggests in reference to these meta-discussions that the “twenty-five-minute debate” they would have about “those random, weird articles” likely “helped all of us be able to write those types of essays” (Student 29, Stretch A). I then asked the student to elaborate on how these meta-discussions helped, and she suggested that they provided a way of considering multiple viewpoints when writing in the argumentative *macro-genre*: “It was showing everyone in real life that people don’t agree all the time and we’re writing argumentative essays and we’re on one side but there’s always going to be another person on another side that doesn’t agree with what you’re saying” (Student 29, Stretch A). As the student’s response suggests, she was able to connect these meta-discussions to the argumentative *macro-genre*, which was her categorization of the writing tasks assigned in Stretch A. The student went on to explain that, in some ways, these meta-discussions were also generative, particularly during workshops by encouraging students to seek out counter viewpoints or, as the student explains, she could “ask for opinions [from classmates] to bring into [her] essay” (Student 29, Stretch A). In addition to illustrating awareness of the rhetorical effect that the consideration of alternative viewpoints has within the argumentative *macro-genre*, the student’s response also suggests some form of concurrent transfer by applying the knowledge she gained from these meta-discussions to her writing tasks during the course (Yancey et al., “Teaching for Transfer” 277).

Two other students enrolled in Stretch A, likewise, described these meta-discussions as helpful to their ability to write in the argumentative *macro-genre* by, for instance, encouraging “healthy debate” (Student 32, Stretch A). Student 34, for example, seemed to develop notable *textual* metalinguistic awareness by categorizing various types of *macro-genres* ranging from “informational” to “argumentative,” and similar to Student 29’s explanation, the student suggested that these discussions were in some ways generative by

getting his “brain moving” (Student 34, Stretch A). Thinking about *macro-genres*, in this way, specifically how a particular mode of communication can be generative, the students demonstrate a metacognitive awareness, one likely to facilitate transfer by potentially using various modes in disparate rhetorical contexts. While the meta-discussions informed by the concept of *macro-genre* seem to have contributed to the metalinguistic awareness that particularly students who were enrolled in Stretch A developed as it pertains to the socio-rhetorical function of macro-textual features, such as engaging competing viewpoints, they also in some cases articulated their awareness of these conventions for academic argumentation by referring to materials designed for the functional language instruction and posted on the course’s learning management system.

For example, when probed about their strategies for approaching counter arguments, Student 29 references these materials explaining that “[My instructor] posted a lot of like transitional words but we never really had to put in a counter argument but she provided multiple papers of like the different words we can use to start a sentence or like continue a paragraph...which was helpful” (Student 29, Stretch A). When I probed the student for examples of the specific words or phrases that she found helpful for addressing counter arguments, she mentioned contrastive connectives including “however.” Student 32, who was also enrolled in Stretch A, likewise, referenced the “transitional” handouts when explaining how her instructor “taught [us to] use certain like transition words and ways to phrase words to help convince” (Student 32, Stretch A). Student 32 referenced these materials again when probed about her strategies for organizing: “. . . [my instructor] would give us lists of good transition words and what kind of words were for an argumentative transition or just like an ending transition for the whole essay” (Student 32, Stretch A). In addition to referencing these materials, the student also demonstrates metalinguistic awareness by specifying the function of the transitional phrases she used, including “argumentative” and “ending” transitions. Like the explanation of the use of contrastive connectives by Student 41 from Stretch B above, the connection this student makes between the function of transitional phrases suggests a “depth of understanding” in terms of her metalinguistic awareness (Myhill and Jones 844).

This finding is not, however, meant to suggest that students enrolled in experimental sections of the corequisite did not develop a *textual* metalinguistic awareness nor that they lacked a repertoire of *functional* metalanguage. In fact, of the total 77 instances of students using *functional* metalanguage, 41 of these instances (~53%) occurred in interviews with students

enrolled in an experimental corequisite section. The distribution of these instances, moreover, occurred in all seven of the interviews conducted with students who were enrolled in an experimental corequisite section while the *functional* metalanguage occurred in six of the seven interviews (~85%) with students in an experimental section of stretch.

Regardless of the course design, it therefore seems that, for these students, direct language-level instruction informed by functional linguistics helps to develop a repertoire of metalanguage to articulate metalinguistic knowledge, specifically an awareness of how the socio-rhetorical practices of academic discourse underlie typical language patterns. The instruction in functional grammar, in other words, served as a mediational means for developing students' metalinguistic awareness and, in some ways, socialized them to the socio-cognitive habits and practices for "thoughtful dialogue" and "civil discourse" (Aull, *How Students Write 5*).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Drawing on foundational socio-rhetorical concepts of the field, existing transfer pedagogies have shown to be effective, particularly for developing students' genre awareness by instructing in the contextual factors that affect writing and, in turn, students' ability to metacognitively reflect on their writing strategies by encouraging students to consider macro-social concepts, such as audience, genre, and discourse communities. However, such pedagogies have not adequately established a metalanguage for developing students' awareness of language-level features as they affect transfer. With this study, I therefore aimed to examine what approaches to direct language-level instruction informed by functional linguistics can potentially offer existing transfer pedagogies by examining the possible effects that functional language instruction has on basic writers' metalanguage and what these possible effects suggest about the instruction's ability to facilitate these students' transfer of writing strategies. In sum, I found that such language-level instruction has noticeable effects on the metalanguage that students use to verbalize their literacy practices. This repertoire of metalanguage, moreover, seems to facilitate students' development of metalinguistic awareness by allowing them to verbalize how valued socio-rhetorical practices of academic discourse underlie conventional language-level patterns. These effects suggest an enhanced ability to successfully transfer based on research showing the critical role that metalanguage and reflection have on

the transfer process. These findings, I believe, pose several potential implications for writing research and pedagogy.

First, given that transfer pedagogies often preclude developing a metalanguage for students to describe the language-level features of discourse practices (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 173–74; Brown 121, 129; Moore 197), the results of the study present potential implications related to the ways that writing instruction can reorient toward language-level instruction. Specifically, the approach toward explicit language instruction illustrated by the study potentially answers recent calls for developing students' language awareness generally and critical language awareness specifically (Gere et al., "Communal Justicing" 392–392; Shapiro). In response to these calls, the findings suggest that direct language instruction that aims to develop students' metalinguistic awareness helps basic writers acquire the metalanguage necessary for metacognitively reflecting on the social practices underlying academic discourse.

While there is limited data to make definitive claims about the effect the functional language instruction had on students' ability to transfer, my analysis of interviews suggests that, for some students, the instruction developed a metacognitive awareness conducive for transfer. Several students' responses, for instance, suggested that they engaged in concurrent transfer as indicated by the students' explanation of how they applied their understanding of *macro-genres* as learned during collaborative meta-discussions to the writing tasks they were completing, particularly in Stretch A. These instances of transfer from the data would seem to confirm claims about the efficacy of giving students and instructors metalanguage for "identifying overall genre families," that is, the identification of *macro-genres*, so as to "highlight rhetorical aims across a range of assignments, both to make those aims more explicit and to highlight expectations that do and do not transfer across them" (Aull, *How Students Write* 59). Nonetheless, these instances of transfer cannot be attributed to the curricular interventions for this research exclusively because, although *macro-genre* was a conceptual framework for the lessons' design, there were likely other factors informing students' constructs of writing tasks.

Finally, these findings have potential implications for approaches to basic writing instruction. The results, for instance, suggest that students who received instruction in functional grammar developed a repertoire of metalanguage, which allowed them to articulate connections between language-level features and macro-rhetorical strategies. In turn, they seemed to use this metalanguage to externalize their understanding and, likewise,

demonstrate their metalinguistic awareness of these connections. The conceptual awareness demonstrated in these interviews substantiates previous claims that language-level instruction should not be exclusive to English Language Learners (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 43–44; Gere et al., “Local Assessment” 624; Moore 197; Peele, et al. 53). The study, in other words, demonstrates the benefits of instructional approaches typically designed for English Language Learners for developing the linguistic knowledge of students who are native speakers of English.

Developing the linguistic knowledge of these students, however, is contingent on relevant applications that require students to externalize their metacognitive awareness through metalanguage, whether by analyzing their own writing or example texts in collaborative meta-discussions. As suggested by this and similar studies, such “awareness-raising activities” can be effectively used in “various ways and degrees in heterogeneous, low-level literacy courses” (Hardy et al. 17). By raising students’ awareness of the connections between language-level features and macro-rhetorical concepts, functional approaches to language instruction can also potentially aid students’ understanding of the “often tacit expectations” of academic writing (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 10). As an approach lacking in most pedagogies that hold students’ successful transfer as their primary goal, instruction that makes these connections explicit for students, overall, illustrates the possible affordances of language-based instruction particularly for basic writers.

NOTES

1. IRB Protocol Number 21-309 at Kent State University.
2. The concepts and overall instructional approach for each lesson were drawn from existing applications and pedagogical materials including those designed by Laura Aull (*First-Year University Writing; How Students Write*).
3. Examples of the lessons in functional grammar that were used for the study are available at <https://bit.ly/48QsWlx>.

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Promising but Struggling Multilinguals: A One-on-One Intervention for Getting on Track in First-Year Composition

Misun Dokko

ABSTRACT: The two-year institution where I teach first-year composition serves multilingual students who excel, keep pace, or fall behind. In addition to these students, there are one or two whom I identify as “promising but struggling multilinguals.” While this small but ever-present contingent attend regularly, submit work somewhat consistently, and engage with potential, their reticence is palpable and their attempts at assignments are uneven. Eventually, they disappear, withdraw, fail, or barely pass. Overlooked by instructors and scholarship, promising but struggling multilinguals are excellent candidates for individualized instruction. This article describes how I came to categorize a student as a promising but struggling multilingual. My recognition of this student functions as a starting point through which I developed an intervention consisting of bi-weekly 30-minute meetings, which I tested with my student’s participation. This case study suggests that an instructor’s regular individualized attention coincided with a promising but struggling multilingual’s social and academic progress, a passing final grade, and professional development for the instructor.

KEYWORDS: multilingual; one-on-one; intervention; first-year composition; Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI); two-year institution; community college; professional development

Road Map of an Intervention

This article introduces “promising but struggling multilinguals” as a contingent of students whom I identify by their steady attendance and signs of academic potential early on in a semester; at the same time, their reticence is palpable and their attempts to complete assignments are uneven. By the end of the semester, they disappear, withdraw, fail, or barely pass. There are usually only one or two per class. It is difficult to discern them not only because there are so few of them but also because they either disappear or

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avoid attention. That is, they do just enough—attending most classes and handing in some work—without raising the need for an early intervention. In my experience, it is at the end of the semester when their struggles pile into a non-passing final grade that their presence sharpens into focus. Consequently, it is often too late to help them develop confidence, social skills, and academic literacy that would have helped them pass.

In response to their persistent albeit small-in-numbers presence, I developed an intervention to support them because, as the first section below suggests, they have been overlooked in the classroom and scholarship. Responding to classroom and scholarship shortcomings, I follow with a literature review of individualization. This scholarship informs how I developed one-on-one sessions that center students' interests by inviting their funds of knowledge into practicing academic literacy and prioritizing their goals. More specifically, the one-on-one intervention consisted of bi-weekly 30-minute meetings with time for banter and student-driven content support. I conducted the case study with Nico (a pseudonym), a promising but struggling multilingual from one of my first-year composition (FYC) courses.

Aligned with and distinct from approaches to academic literacy pedagogy, the intervention yielded strategies that circumvented my reliance on dense explanations. I put these tactics into practice when I encouraged Nico to feel confident and comfortable through conversations about his interests, used a yellow legal pad to visualize concepts, pointed at areas of text, numbered key words, punctuated lessons with Spanish, clarified concepts that I took for granted, and restrained myself from interrupting. These approaches supported Nico to avoid “patchwriting” (a step in academic literacy that is often vilified and criminalized as plagiarism)¹, grasp rhetorical patterns, organize according to FYC standards, write with specificity, and participate by helping his classmates. His social and academic progress suggests that supporting promising but struggling multilinguals with a one-on-one intervention by their instructors may enable them to overcome disappearing, withdrawing, failing, or barely passing. Ultimately, one-on-one meetings are advantageous for other students when the instructor and student who participate in the intervention bring what they learned from each other to support the classroom. The impact on professional development is undeniable. When I transferred strategies during the semester of my collaboration with Nico and beyond, other students have benefited. This article concludes with limitations and implications, recommending a future for individualization.

Individualization as a Response to Marginalized Promising but Struggling Multilinguals

On the Sidelines in the Classroom. At the New York City two-year Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) where I teach, FYC begins with English 101 (ENG101) or Accelerated English 101 (ENA101). The latter is an accelerated learning program (ALP) that supports basic writers. Both ENG101 and ENA101 are populated with students who have varied linguistic repertoires and academic abilities. These FYC students are led by those at the front of the pack who excel by reading and writing competently in an academic context. They are high achievers who pursue competitive majors and earn prestigious commendations, scholarships, and internships. In the middle of the pack are those who may not prioritize FYC, but their attendance and work are steady. They are comfortable with academic English, or they adapt to it by drawing on their cultural and linguistic resources. This group gradually grasps academic literacy skills and passes the class. Unlike their classmates, a small number of students disengage and disappear.² It is difficult to comment on the way academic English plays a factor in this group's attrition because their elusiveness means that language repertoires are challenging to assess.

Preoccupied by those who excel, keep pace, or fall noticeably behind, I was not focused on promising but struggling multilinguals. They escaped my radar until the end of the semester partly because they avoided attention and partly because they did not raise flags—good or bad—to demand early attention. This meant they were left on the sidelines without support to develop academic skills of participation, reading comprehension, and basic conventions of FYC writing such as summarizing and paraphrasing. Indeed, my approach to teaching composition focuses on reading and writing about sources. Close reading—by way of monitoring the way a text's ideas are organized, identifying main ideas and central claims, and understanding details that support arguments—functions as a set up for writing about sources and responding with reflections. Therefore, writing is inextricable from reading and reflection. Even at this preliminary stage, however, reading and writing are not easy for promising but struggling multilinguals. Searching for guidance, I turned to the scholarship. While foundational discourse and conversations on linguistically diverse students inform my pedagogy, this body of work also represents a point of departure for setting up a literature review on the need for individualization.

An Absence in Scholarship. Dialogue about supporting students to read at the postsecondary level exists. The representative work of Ellen C. Carillo,

Promising but Struggling Multilinguals

Alice S. Horning et al., Patrick Sullivan et al., and Holly Hassel and Joanne Baird Giordano describes challenges, theories, and reading practices such as mindful reading and teaching for transfer. Albeit valuable, these conversations do not prioritize developmental reading in the form of grasping and engaging main ideas and details, an approach that has a direct benefit for my FYC multilinguals. To be sure, there is discourse that addresses basic academic literacy, drawing productively on primary and secondary scholarship.³ Francine C. Falk-Ross, Simon A. Lei et al., Martha E. Casazza, Ellen R. Hart and Deborah L. Speece, Kathleen Skomski, and Horning propose multi-pronged approaches to support the fundamentals of college-level reading.⁴ Though these techniques transfer to my classroom and work well, they are not intended to serve multilinguals.

Put plainly, a body of scholarship about the granular aspects of instructing developmental reading for multilinguals in an FYC context is not at the forefront of discourse. Conversations about teaching academic literacy to multilinguals in postsecondary settings by Angela Rounsaville et al.; Emily K. Suh et al.; Alyssa G. Cavazos; Shawna Shapiro et al.; and Kim Brian Lovejoy et al. call for validating the experiences of multilinguals through instructors' supportiveness, text selection, and writing assignments that draw on students' agency, experiences, and linguistic repertoires. Indeed, it has been beneficial for an instructor like me, who searches for ways to support FYC multilinguals at a two-year HSI, to implement these practices. Though advantageous, they do not drill down on getting students to read, grasp, and engage a text's main ideas and details. This is the point where multi-pronged reading strategies come into play. For most of my students, blending general reading practices with approaches for multilinguals supports the fundamentals of literacy. As successful as this mixed practice is for the classroom, it has not been sufficient in supporting promising but struggling multilinguals, which I unpack at the end of this section.

Conversation on academic writing at the level of summarizing and paraphrasing fills some of this gap, but it echoes the aforementioned trends in college-level reading. To take a case in point, Rebecca Moore Howard's pioneering work on patchwriting clarifies that weaving copied words with elisions and synonyms is similar to plagiarism in process, yet patchwriting—unlike plagiarism—is not to be demonized. Howard argues that patchwriting ought to be acknowledged as a productive stage of reading, a steppingstone that leads to paraphrasing (“Plagiarisms, Authorships, and the Academic Death Penalty” 800-01). This approach in combination with Diane Pecorari's strategies for teaching summary and paraphrasing have been beneficial

for most of my FYC multilinguals. Yet, upon further inspection, points of convergence and divergence emerge as I compare these approaches with the practice of teaching multilinguals. In particular, Howard and Sandra Jamieson parse out the issue of summaries and paraphrases through the Citation Project. Drawing on their multi-institutional study of first-year writing, they report that 94% of student citations indicated an understanding of sentence level details, but the citations did not convey a text's central claims. Furthermore, Jamieson and Howard find that first-year writers read only the first pages of a text (114), and Jamieson goes on to acknowledge that the issue might be traced to a lack of scaffolding (15-16). The results of this research are important because they motivate instructors to develop lessons that improve reading and source use. I am less inclined, however, to object to the practice of strategic reading because selective reading benefits my students to understand general claims.⁵ In this instance, then, my experience of teaching through deliberate close reading contrasts with Howard and Jamieson's research, suggesting that foundational scholarship on source use does not fully serve multilinguals at two-year HSIs.

As an extension of Howard and Jamieson's efforts, research on postsecondary multilingual developmental writing, which I draw primarily from English for academic purposes (EAP), presents the kinds of concrete strategies that are productive for most of my students. It is useful to pause and begin with Kristen di Gennaro who presents an instructive précis of labels and pedagogy for second-language learners. After reviewing the literature on the topic, di Gennaro observes that multilinguals are heterogeneous and that they benefit from a variety of pedagogy. Indeed, the options for supporting multilinguals' academic writing are vast.⁶ Among these options, EAP research has been a touchstone for my instruction because it buttresses how I approach literacy and because its methods are supported by quantitative outcomes. For instance, Heike Neumann et al.'s report, Yao Du's research, and Leora Freedman's study indicate that explicit instruction on reading sources, learning vocabulary, and analyzing the knowledge and values projected by authors supports the process of academic writing by way of paraphrasing and integrating ideas from texts. As generative as this EAP discourse has been for my writing instruction, I am aware that there are swaths of it that can present formal writing in English as an uncontested formula of academic engagement. For example, Suresh Canagarajah ("Multilingual Writers") and Janne Morton et al. point out that EAP scholarship has struggled to recognize and invite multilingual repertoires and funds of knowledge into the classroom.⁷ While this may be true at times, it would be a mistake to dismiss the

entire discourse without attempting to balance productive elements of EAP with other approaches such as those that build on multilinguals' resources external to academia. That said, I take issue with EAP for other reasons.

Despite gains that most FYC multilinguals make in academic literacy with pedagogy informed by EAP and other scholarship that I summarized above, this is a limited approach even when it draws from the most generative aspects of postsecondary writing and reading practices. Put another way, current postsecondary literacy scholarship is incomplete because it emphasizes classroom teaching where promising but struggling multilinguals have difficulty keeping pace. The problem may stem from a convention in educational research to showcase a successful practice, lesson, or multipronged methodology that benefits most in the classroom, implying (but rarely acknowledging) that some students do not benefit from general instruction pedagogy. The fact that educational research seeks to benefit the many is not inherently wrong, but it is problematic to neglect their shortcomings. The issue is that in spite of exposure to the same variety of research-based tactics that support their peers to understand texts and write about them, promising but struggling multilinguals continue to have difficulty with the basics of academic reading, writing, and reflecting. Di Gennaro's commentary about the heterogeneity of second-language learners and the need for corresponding pedagogy bears repeating. The takeaway from di Gennaro's work for my purposes is that even an amalgam of best practices is not sufficient to support everyone. I maintain that some students require support in the form of individualization offered by their instructor.

Tutoring and coaching have dominated the discussion about one-on-one approaches to supporting struggling college students⁸; accordingly, a dearth of research about individualization delivered by instructors pervades postsecondary discourse. This may result from a reluctance among researchers to propose regular individualized support from two-year and four-year faculty because instructors feel stretched thin by teaching, advising, mentoring, engaging in departmental and college service, and fulfilling scholarly activities. Responding to these conditions, institutions have invested in peer tutors, professional tutors, and coaches on whom instructors rely for one-on-one attention. Furthermore, the call for individualization from FYC faculty may be unappealing because contingent instructors often teach first-year writing courses and are underpaid for doing so (Horn 174). These factors may underpin the way dialogue on tutoring and coaching have dominated the conversation about individualization in higher education. Acknowledging these challenges and proceeding with tentative observations about what it

takes from faculty to provide students with one-on-one attention, Dashielle Horn and Anthony F. Grasha agree that developing rapport and drawing on students' interests ought to inform one-on-one support from instructors. Nevertheless, practical details about scheduling and strategies are not fleshed out, a necessity given instructors' limited bandwidth to develop them.

A Primary and Secondary Starting Point for Individualization

Gaps in postsecondary scholarship and my interest in promising but struggling multilinguals led me to research on individualization for struggling primary and secondary students. This robust body of work reports clear outcomes of one-on-one support for developmental reading. In a meta-data analysis of empirical studies about adult tutors who worked one-on-one with primary students who were identified as "at risk for reading failure" (606), Batya Elbaum et al. found that tutoring informed by best practices led to improved reading outcomes and academic persistence. Contributing to this point, Linnea C. Ehri et al. advanced Reading Rescue, a model that they adapted for "language-minority" students who came from households where a language other than English was spoken. They found that first grade "language-minority" readers who had reading difficulties and were tutored based on the Reading Rescue model made progress by achieving average reading scores. Similar results were found when Bonnie Z. Warren-Kring and Valerie C. Rutledge conducted a study of education students who tutored secondary students. Their results show that gains in confidence and self-esteem mirrored gains in reading. According to these studies, tutoring benefits struggling readers at different levels of development.

Meghan D. Liebfreund and Steven J. Amendum concur that individualization is key to supporting students with reading challenges, and they recognize that pulling struggling readers out of class to work with an outsider such as a reading tutor is the standard approach. At the same time, Liebfreund and Amendum observe that this practice of taking students out of the classroom neglects research about the stigma of working with a tutor and about the way tutoring may lead to confusion, especially for those who are most at risk for falling behind, when the tutor is not familiar with classroom content. Teachers are preferable interventionists, Liebfreund and Amendum contend, because they are most adept with the topics and assignments of their class, and they are usually in the best position to calibrate students' skills (67). Supporting this approach, Liebfreund and Amendum cite the work of Karen Broaddus and Janet W. Bloodgood who studied instructor-based one-

on-one interventions among primary teachers. Broaddus and Bloodgood's scholarship stems from research about the practice of pulling students out of classrooms for extra support and the resulting disconnection between teachers and their students' challenges. This body of work suggests that tutoring may promote avoidance of accountability among teachers, whereas Broaddus and Bloodgood's study indicates that involving instructors in an intervention fosters accountability and professional development (426-27). According to this discourse, then, there are limitations to tutoring, especially for students who are sensitive to tutoring's stigma and who benefit from a teacher's direct guidance.

Responding to these limitations, Liebfreund and Amendum developed and tested a one-on-one intervention by kindergarten, first grade, and second grade teachers. Their experiment involved two urban schools and interviews with 12 instructors who participated in about 26 hours of professional development and who worked with struggling readers for 15-minutes, 3-5 times a week during class time (64-65, 68). Their findings reveal that the one-on-one intervention represented a multi-tasking challenge that caused teachers to feel overwhelmed; notwithstanding, the sessions generally benefited students and teachers (71). Specifically, the sessions cultivated rapport, and this generated reading confidence and development among students. Furthermore, teachers began to implement newly gained strategies into the general classroom (77). Liebfreund and Amendum's outcomes offer a compelling starting point for postsecondary instructor individualization and for scaling up their approach on a programmatic level. While their argument is inspiring, Liebfreund and Amendum do not focus on how to conduct the one-on-one sessions.

At this juncture, case studies about linguistically diverse struggling readers provide guidance for the intervention through the narration of granular moments and methods. Laura Klenk's work, as an illustration, involved Klenk as the researcher and interventionist and a kindergarten student who came from a Puerto Rican household where they used English and Spanish. The student was an "enigma" because she did not answer questions during standard language evaluation, and she refused to communicate in her bilingual and Spanish-only classes (218-19). Volunteering to work with the student as a reading specialist, Klenk met with her outside of the classroom once a week for a little over half of the academic year. By "establishing rapport," "eliciting expressive language," encouraging "emergent writing," and "acquiring language of storybooks," Klenk achieved what other educators could not. The student communicated with Klenk (220-35). An important

lesson from this research is the initiation of rapport. Klenk asked ritualistic questions, such as asking about family and age, and invited the student to comment on nearby objects such as colors of clothing and the contents of a nearby bag (220-24).⁹ In an analogous case study featuring a child who was reluctant to speak, Nancy Anderson was the researcher and volunteer specialist for an African American student who was starting first grade and who was struggling to make progress. They met every day to read and write (98). Adjusting initial failed attempts at conversation, Anderson discovered that tapping into the student's immediate experiences like going to the dentist, rather than general discourse about school related activities, facilitated communication. With this foundation, the student's language repertoire expanded, and he learned to perform academically (99-103). Klenk's and Anderson's studies suggest that one-on-one oral communication about subject matters immediately available to reticent and struggling primary students function as a starting point for literacy development.

Building on this approach, research on "at risk" secondary readers shifts the focus to "multiliteracies" as a resource that facilitates academic progress. According to the New London Group, "multiliteracy" counters the concept of "mere literacy" and honors an expansive understanding of literacy that is shaped by visual, audio, spatial, and behavioral representations that are not bound by standard forms of language (64). By validating struggling students' multiliteracies as untethered from "mere literacy," Allison Skerrett's research suggests that multiliteracies can be a conduit for reading. Specifically, Skerrett carried out a study taken from a larger project about a reading class of ninth grade students who failed or were at risk of failing a standardized reading test. Skerrett's observes that the teacher, who was well versed in adolescent literacy practices, drew on a Mexican American teenager's array of multiliteracies to develop writing practices and identity (330-32). Similar to Klenk's and Anderson's findings about primary students, Skerrett's research indicates that affirming and drawing on secondary students' funds of knowledge facilitate academic development. Thus, scholarship on individual support for primary and secondary struggling students demonstrates that reading progress does not always involve reading itself. Some struggling readers benefit from realizing that their personal repertoires and multiliteracies are building blocks for academic literacy.¹⁰

Though empowering students on their terms is important to defining the parameters of individualization, this does not mean that the onus ought to be only on them to communicate and perform acts of literacy and multiliteracy. Multilinguals benefit from absorbing information, and this

process requires taking the pressure off of them to engage. John Gibbons' and Muriel Saville-Troike's research on children's "silent period" contends that this stage of development occurs when children who are learning language need time to observe and listen. This is certainly true of young adults such as postsecondary promising but struggling multilinguals who are acclimating not only to English but to the conventions of FYC-level discourse. Considering the scholarship on silence, my case study agrees that it is sometimes best to follow the lead of students even if that means the student remains quiet while the instructor clarifies concepts, directions, and feedback. This delicate balance of communication between student and teacher carries through the present study, which the next section introduces through participant descriptions.

Intervention Participants Who Are Multilingual and/or Language Aware

Student Participant: Nico. During the first three weeks of the semester when I was searching for a research participant, Nico exhibited the characteristics of a promising but struggling multilingual. This included refraining from speaking during small group work and shaking his head as the only response when I called on him during discussion. Despite his reticence, he exhibited promise. He attended regularly and paid attention. When Nico submitted homework, his work testified to diligence, creativity, and thoughtfulness. An early assignment that conveyed Nico's potential was a concept map that acted as scaffolding for a narrative about the way "larger forces" (systems, structures, and events) influenced his educational and language development. His concept map reported in detail and at length about the impact of geography, economics, and culture on his language and education. Despite signs of promise, the concept map was incomplete. Additionally, he submitted work inconsistently prior to the intervention, especially in-class worksheets that hinged on shorter turn-around times.

For example, on the second day of class, I distributed a relatively simple worksheet to help students take notes during a presentation that defined ethos and invited students to share their personal values and literacies (Skerrett; Purdie-Vaughns et al.). Nico never submitted the worksheet, but I know he answered two out of five questions because he gave me his class folder, as part of his participation in the research study, with handouts and work from class. This inconsistency in doing some work and (not) submitting it intimated that general classroom strategies were not sufficient in helping

him grasp content, complete assignments, and have the confidence to turn in work. Nico's performance during the first three weeks of the semester left me with the strong impression that he was a promising but struggling multilingual who would benefit from more than seven hours of weekly support that he was receiving as an ALP student.¹¹ When I formally approached Nico to participate in the research project during the third week of the semester, I asked a classmate to join us to help translate with Nico's permission. I explained the Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent form, and once Nico agreed to participate, we compared our schedules to agree on meeting days and times.

Nico's language, educational, and family background informs the present study, and it is worth unpacking even further because details about his background invite an awareness of elusive promising but struggling multilinguals and the circumstances that influence their development. A first-semester, part-time college student when we collaborated on the study, Nico spoke, read, and wrote with the greatest ease in Spanish. Comfortable reading English, which he learned in school in Central America, Nico buoyed his literacy by communicating orally and via text with a sister and nieces in English. He also read English translations of Japanese manga and subtitles of Japanese anime (sometimes overdubbed in a Chinese dialect, which we did not identify). It is no surprise, then, that Nico's English reading ability exceeded his comfort with speaking and writing as with many multilinguals who learn languages primarily by sight.¹² Nonetheless, Nico was receptive to individualization and spoke in halting English to articulate ideas, questions, and concerns. He expressed himself much more during one-on-one sessions in comparison to class discussion and small group activities.

Nico's ability to move between languages is notable. When commenting on personal matters or when searching for a word, he used an online translator to share ideas in Spanish that translated into English for my benefit. I also encouraged him to write homework and papers in Spanish and use a translator embedded in our word processing software. Negotiating different languages in these ways might be described as translanguaging, a process of toggling between languages without boundaries that separate them (e.g., Spanish at home and English at school).¹³ I doubled down on Nico's translanguaging by pairing him with another student who was comfortable mixing languages during class. For these reasons, I characterize Nico as a multilingual rather than a bilingual because bilingualism assumes linguistic separation such as when a person uses one language at home and another one at school, never toggling between them.¹⁴ Thus, Nico's language

repertoires—proficiency in Spanish, developing English, translanguaging, exposure to the Maya language Mam (through his grandparents), and his encounters with Japanese cultural production and Chinese overdubs—suggest that he was Spanish proficient, multilingual, and multiliterate.

Alongside Nico's language background, his educational and family background is useful to understand the academic engagement and family circumstances that shape promising but struggling multilinguals' development. Nico completed most of his education in Central America, including the first two years of high school. With the support of a sister who permitted Nico to live with her in New York City under the condition that he pursue an education, Nico found a high school that served immigrants where he re-enrolled in ninth grade. Transitioning to a US school system was challenging because he was not fluent in English, he did not know where to go, and he was uncomfortable with expectations such as self-introductions. After a year, he began to settle in, but the coronavirus disease pandemic struck, and ad-hoc distance learning did not make matters easier. Though there were academic complications, he benefited from a school program that offered tutoring for his first year and a half of high school. *Familismo*, a Latinx core value in family that plays out in belief systems and actions, was also a source of stability (Lugo Steidel and Contreras 314-15). In New York, his family consisted of his sister, his sister's daughters, and an adopted mother. Cousins from his mother's side of the family lived close by in New Jersey; prior to getting a job, he visited them frequently. A central figure of this support system, Nico's sister advocated for academic perseverance; she encouraged him to attend school and monitored his academic progress in Central America and New York. Her influence no doubt nurtured Nico's academic habits, promising qualities that conveyed his potential for case study participation.

In return for his sister's support, Nico contributed to paying rent and bills by taking on full-time work in restaurant kitchens. This decision attests to Nico's dedication to *familismo*, a choice precipitated by his sister's loss of steady work as a result of the pandemic. While commitment to the household was important, it also informed Nico's academic struggles, a common tension between *familismo*'s risk and protective factors, which Esther J. Calzada et al. recognize in their study on the topic. In Nico's case, a subway commute to and from home, work, and college crossed four boroughs, involving multiple transfers and late-night limited service. He returned home around 11 PM after long shifts, had trouble falling asleep, and was often late to our 8 AM class. At one particularly stressful time, he lost a job (resulting from

taking a day off to accompany his adopted mother to the hospital), found a new one, started at one location, and was moved to a different one with unfamiliar staff. As Nico explained, sleep deprivation made him unfocused, and work-related turmoil distracted him and made him unable to participate.

There are other pieces to the puzzle of Nico's troubles with participating and completing assignments, and his explanations alerted me to the possibility that mindset factored into the picture. He used the word "dudar" (doubt) to describe his self-doubt and fear of being wrong; this prevented him from volunteering a response when he had one at the ready during class discussion. Nico also confessed that he felt reluctant to do well because it would set up expectations that he might not uphold, an expression of familismo in his concern for protecting family honor (Lugo Steidel and Contreras 315; Calzada et al. 1704). This lack of confidence and worry about disappointing his family intersected with inconsistent access to US educational experiences that might have acclimated him to a culture of self-expression, confidence building, and participation. In addition, Nico characterized himself as a "complicated" thinker. He attributed his complex thought patterns to overthinking assignments. Thus, Nico's self-awareness—about fatigue, work-related distractions, self-doubt, fear of disappointment, and complex thinking—helped me understand his academic potential and struggles in the context of language, education, and family. I also realized that economic pressures and family expectations represent some of the conditions that shape promising but struggling multilinguals' development.

Instructor, Interventionist, and Researcher Participant: Misun. My interest in promising but struggling multilinguals might be traced to my language background. US American English is the only language in which I am fluent, though I spoke my first words in Korean. My parents communicate in a combination of Korean, English, and Konglish (a translanguaging blend of Korean and English). For most of my life, however, I have not been able to speak, read, or write Korean proficiently. I understand only a handful of basic phrases and sentences. French has been easier to learn because it was built into the predominantly White institutions that educated me, and I continue to practice it on a daily basis. Interestingly, rather than French, Spanish has surrounded me as a born and bred New Yorker, and this influences the way I have adopted Spanish words and phrases while teaching. Finally, my yoga practice exposes me to Sanskrit, a reference point that has piqued my curiosity about Hindi, Urdu, and other languages of the Subcontinent.

In short, I am fluent in US American English, and I have a strong sense of language awareness, especially in my role as an FYC instructor (Lindahl

and Watkins). Specifically, my pedagogical approach through language awareness stems from the contrasting experience of having an easier time with Korean by hearing it and having easier time with French when reading it. This personal reference point for multilingualism lends itself to appreciating the different degrees with which my students are able to think, discuss, read, and write in academic English. My experience lends itself to unpacking academic conventions and vocabulary through oral, visual, written, and gestural clues. As I explored literacy scholarship to support these insights, I found that offering students an opportunity to explore their language background might be helpful. If I wanted them to share their language history, I knew I had to reciprocate. One of the first texts that my FYC students read is a narrative about my Korean language loss in context of other factors such as the Korean War and Catholicism (my parents' religion). Students read my story in advance of writing their own narratives. While language loss may not seem to promote linguistic agency, I report it to my students and in this article because the shame around my lack of Korean language skills has been formative to my identity and because it resonates with my students on different registers. By sharing my language regret, I aim to normalize it as a way of gaining control rather than being controlled by it. With respect to this research study, reporting on my language loss also suggests that linguistic humility may motivate an instructor, interventionist, and researcher to invest in a one-on-one intervention for promising but struggling multilinguals.

Sharing personal experiences was one step toward developing my pedagogy. Incorporating research-based literacy practices that benefited students generally and multilinguals especially was another step. However, it dawned on me that though these approaches benefited students who excel and keep pace, they were not enough to help others. This led to a pursuit of individualization. The literature on one-on-one support ultimately shaped how I worked with Nico, and Nico's participation influenced the direction of this study, which I flesh out in the next section.

Methods: Scope of the Intervention

At its core, the intervention consisted of meetings between the student participant, Nico, and me—the instructor, interventionist, and researcher participant—after FYC class. We met in my office, located at a two-year HSI in New York City. The sessions occurred twice a week for approximately 30-minutes per session. We spent 10 minutes on reading and conversation

about multiliteracies and experiences outside of school. This preceded 20 minutes of course related support that Nico requested. Supporting him involved strategies that circumvented dense explanations by gesturing, numbering, using Spanish, and restraining myself from interrupting. In total, meetings added up to 11, and they occurred over a 6-week period. Although a full semester is 12 weeks, there is a gap because I spent the first three weeks identifying Nico as a participant, and there was a three- and half-week period when he could not attend the sessions. I audio recorded and transcribed our meetings. The study also draws on a background survey, worksheets, homework, reflections about the sessions, and a yellow legal pad used to animate concepts. In addition, the study borrows from scaffolded high stakes assignments, consisting of a language and education narrative, an essay about geography and immigration, and a poetry literary analysis.

The scholarship on individualization left a deep impression on this intervention, an impression that shifted according to context and Nico's preferences. That is, Liebfreund and Amendum's research at the primary level inspired the scope of this study's one-on-one sessions, but their original intervention had to be altered for a two-year postsecondary setting because 3-5 sessions per week during class could not be replicated. This number of meetings per week is not possible when two-year college students balance obligations such as full-time work and taking care of family members along with school. Moreover, it is not possible for two-year faculty to manage 3-5 meetings outside of class because there are teaching, service, and scholarly engagements. Given these circumstances, Liebfreund and Amendum's vision of "intense and consistent instruction" (75-76) became bi-weekly 30-minute sessions. Similarly, tasks completed during the course of Liebfreund and Amendum's study—re-reading familiar texts, word study, and sentence writing (68)—were used as a jumping-off point.

When I put the one-on-one sessions into practice, I expected, based on my reliance on Liebfreund and Amendum, to offer general reading support and time for writing. However, Nico's preferences led to limited reading and writing practice. Different from Liebfreund and Amendum's approach, the present study enabled me to witness a postsecondary student's lack of enthusiasm for reading non-course-related texts such as manga and his struggle to write on the spot. Despite these subtle objections to initial methods, Nico engaged easily through personal dialogue and when showing me videos and images about his experiences and interests. This conveys that building rapport through discussion and multiliteracies—which Klenk, Anderson, and Skerrett recommend—were more effective than reading and writing

during one-on-one sessions.¹⁵ Through Nico's participation, I realized that individualization for postsecondary promising but struggling multilinguals need not be about reading and writing per se but could focus on building rapport and clarifying assignments.

While it is useful to begin an introduction to the intervention by summarizing its scope, I must pause here to address the preliminary work of identifying a potential student participant. At the start of semester, I watch for students who exhibit habits of promising but struggling multilinguals such as regular attendance, attentiveness, and attempts at completing assignments. In fact, they engage with sparks of academic promise and intellectual curiosity. It is important, however, to be equally attuned to instances when these actions are offset by writing that can be uneven or deviate sharply from directions. Social withdrawal and reticence accompany these habits and manifest through long pauses, silence, and refusals to participate. Such behaviors result in not taking full advantage of discussion and group work that may move too quickly, cause confusion, and evoke social anxiety. Observing these habits and characteristics as a way to identify a student for the intervention is important because attendance, work ethic, and intellectual promise indicate that the student will show up for one-on-one support despite social challenges and confusion about how to complete assignments. Simultaneously, taking time to identify a promising but struggling multilingual and assess their performance prior to regular one-on-one instruction establishes a baseline against which progress can be evaluated. In summary, faculty must not rush the initial steps of identifying a student participant because this groundwork will determine how well the sessions will work and the intervention's outcomes.

Example of a One-on-One Session

Here, I offer a walkthrough of the sixth session, occurring midway in the intervention, to describe how the meetings functioned to instill Nico with confidence, helping him submit work, understand academic vocabulary, write according to academic conventions, and pass the class. When the session began, I asked Nico about a recent family camping trip, plans for which he mentioned during previous discussions. Nico described the campground, the friends and family who were part of the adventure, and their activities. After he showed me pictures of a lake, a cousin, and a snake, he explained the food they prepared that was like a pizza but not exactly a pizza. When I volunteered "flatbread," he agreed it was flatbread and then

pivoted to a picture of a bacon sandwich he made, listing its ingredients and extending a conversation from an earlier session about his preparation of food at home and work in a restaurant. Expanding on the topic of work, Nico recounted his five day-a-week, 40-hour work schedule, helping me appreciate that he had time to take only one course, our 7-hour ENA101. Nico added that sometimes he arrived home after 11 PM from work and that he had trouble falling asleep, leaving him only 3-4 hours before getting up and commuting to campus for our 8 AM class.

Starting our sessions by encouraging Nico to share his core value in familismo and his food-related interests and profession intended to convey my interest and respect for his commitment to family, work, and hobbies, an approach that case studies by Klenk, Anderson, and Skerrett corroborate. Indeed, Nico was comfortable and even proud of sharing his family activities and skills. Our conversations may have also helped Nico understand that I recognized his value as a human being in and out of the classroom, which research on Latinx students by Enrique J. López et al. suggests is key to supporting their academic achievement. In this way, 10-minutes of conversation helped us develop rapport and highlight Nico's funds of knowledge, developing Nico's confidence, a confidence that correlated with regularly turning in assignments.

After this dialogue, I asked Nico to direct our next steps. He requested clarification on homework about sharing his personal experiences of living in the city. The assignment served as scaffolding for a paper about the benefits and challenges of living within and apart from urban areas as they pertain to immigrants. By disclosing reasons for preferring not to write about the neighborhood where he lived (something that was too touchy to bring up during general and small group discussion), Nico expressed why he was struggling to complete the homework. I followed up, asking him to clarify his general position on living in urban or rural areas, and he replied that cities provided better living conditions for immigrants. With this insight, I suggested that if I were writing the paper, I could write about parts of the city where I do not live or work but where I visit. Replying to this prompt, Nico mentioned a visit to the Rockaways, a beachside area on the southern edges of New York City, to meet a friend who lived there. As I encouraged him to "keep going," Nico described the setting and challenges of living in the Rockaways, and this became a personal example that supported Nico's claim that urban centers provided better resources for immigrants.

Describing the assignment in another way, I introduced the academic vocabulary of "pro/con." As we defined this binary, Nico brought our atten-

tion back to the assignment, inquiring if establishing pros and cons about the Rockaways was the assignment. Commending him for the question, I noted that the task was to tell a personal story about visiting the Rockaways that testifies to pros and cons, rather than submitting a list of them. At this point, Nico indicated he understood the directions, and he did indeed submit a detailed personal narrative about his visit to the Rockaways. As this exchange suggests, Nico doubted whether he could complete the homework. An adjustment made during a one-on-one meeting, which we could not have developed during general class time, allowed him to complete it.

At the end of the session with limited time remaining, I asked if he wanted help with anything else. He asked for additional feedback on homework that he previously submitted. The assignment was to write a paragraph about two research studies reported in a newspaper article; the studies measured outcomes of immigrants living within and apart from ethnic enclaves. Students had the opportunity to draw from a small group worksheet that functioned as a guide to distilling the article's information. Completing the linked worksheet and homework assignment were achievements for Nico, but his homework was laden with patchwriting and over-reporting. I explained this to Nico, which I address in the next section. Though Nico did not revise this particular homework assignment, his revision of the essay on this topic demonstrated that he understood the lesson of paraphrasing and self-editing a tendency to over-report. The revised paper and this representative one-on-one meeting, then, indicate that feedback generated during one-on-one support provided an adjustment and elucidated conventions of incorporating personal narrative, empowering him to submit the assignment. In short, individualization enabled Nico to grasp methods of academic writing, turn in assignments, and ultimately pass FYC.

Demonstration and Results: Strategies that Support Academic Literacy

At times, my explanations about concepts and assignments were accessible for Nico, and he submitted work that testified to this; at other moments, general classroom pedagogy was less successful. Sources packed with information, text heavy directions, a reliance on academic vocabulary, and swift oral explanations represented hurdles to comprehension that led to work that strayed from directions or went unsubmitted. Avoiding these obstacles, I relied on strategies that de-emphasized them during the intervention. This included conversations about experiences, literacy, and

multiliteracies; animating concepts with a yellow legal pad; literal pointing; numbering key words; translanguaging by using Spanish to punctuate English instruction; clarifying concepts that I took for granted; and restraining myself from interrupting. I elaborate on these strategies below to pinpoint how they fostered Nico's emergent confidence and skills, a foundation that supported him to practice academic literacy and pass FYC.

Student-Centered Conversation. During our initial 10-minute discussions, I prompted Nico to talk about interests such as his manga figure collection and experiences outside of school such as restaurant work. I also asked Nico to share his literacy and multiliteracies by reading excerpts of manga and showing me videos of anime such as *One Piece*, *Hunter x Hunter*, and others. While conversation rituals and sharing interests did not relate directly to course concepts and assignments, it was key to engaging Nico on terms familiar to him, an important first step for a student who was otherwise reticent and socially withdrawn.

A Yellow Legal Pad as a Visual Aid. For another strategy that lightened the cognitive weight of academic discourse, I used a yellow legal pad to present concepts visually. When discussing sources that identified opportunities available to immigrants in urban and rural areas, I used the notepad to write down key words in large letters and in lists, animated with circles, arrows, and wavy underlining, akin to a graphic organizer. On one page, I jotted down "pro" and "con" to display the vocabulary that was in play and to take a moment to define these terms with which Nico was unfamiliar. Next to these words, I wrote familiar English synonyms such as "good" and "bad." When I invited Nico to nominate Spanish synonyms, he offered "bueno y malo," and I wrote them on the page. With this foundation, which he could see (important for someone who has learned a language primarily through sight), Nico grasped the concept of pro/con.

At a different stage of the writing process, Nico referred to sources we read in class to ground his analysis of the pros and cons of living in different areas. During this moment, he described a visit to the Rockaways, a location that represented qualities of a rural location or a setting outside an urban center. Taking notes about his narrative, I recorded the pros and cons of living in the Rockaways on the notepad, helping him understand how his experiences gave him access to contributing to a discourse about geography and immigration. I organized this information into lists, shown in Figure 1, divided by headings labeled "Rural" and "Urban," which I defined for Nico by writing "Farms" and "Cities" under them to offer accessible English synonyms. Based on his observations, I took notes—represented by key

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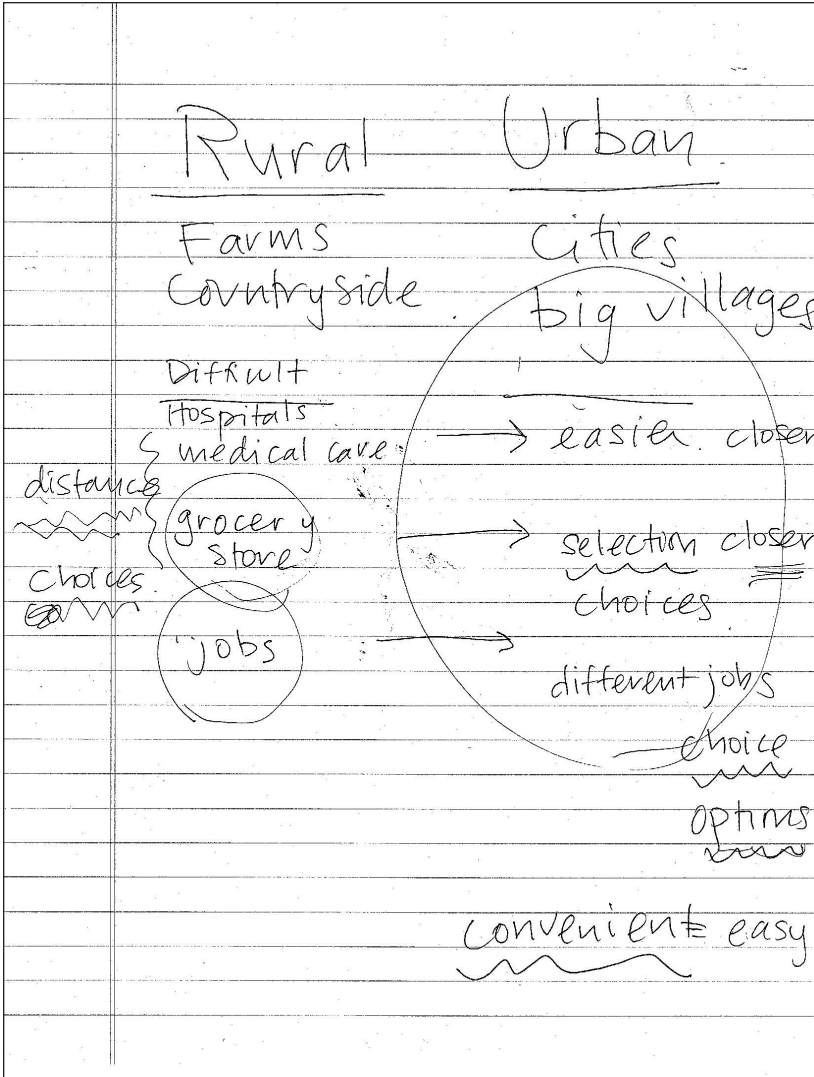


Figure 1. Key words and their relationships on a yellow legal notepad.

words—about services that were and were not available in these locations such as immigrant-oriented medical care, grocery stores, and jobs. I circled these concepts to indicate that they could be used as supporting details in a personal narrative for an essay. Arrows pointing from one side of the list to the other side implied that these services were easier to access in urban areas. Punctuating this, I wrote down “Difficult,” “easier,” “choices,” and “closer” to propose language that Nico could reference to address the conveniences

afforded to immigrants in urban centers. In this way, the yellow legal pad became an instructional tool that pared down dense discourse to key words and their relationship to each other, which I animated by listing, circling, drawing arrows, and underlining.

Explanation By Pointing, Numbering, and Translanguaging. As a complement to the notepad, I de-emphasized turgid explanations by pointing, numbering, and translanguaging by blending Spanish words with English instruction. As I prepared Nico to complete an essay, we focused on format. Reviewing the format of introduction paragraphs, I literally pointed to an introduction paragraph from an example student paper. When I reminded him that thesis statements are placed at the end of an introduction paragraph, I pointed to the thesis statement in the student paper. For body paragraphs, I pointed to where an example student paper included paraphrases of sources and followed with personal testimony. Supplementing these gestures, I used numbers to list elements of body paragraphs on the notepad: 1) paraphrase a source, 2) add personal testimony, and 3) analyze the relationship between the source and personal testimony. Then, I literally pointed to the areas that represented 1-3 on the example student paper. Put differently, when I pointed to and numbered an element of writing, Nico understood what I meant and where the corresponding component was placed. Presenting this formulaic approach to writing without relying on English academic jargon also meant using Spanish. When responding to Nico's personal testimony about the pros and cons of living in urban and rural areas, I used the word *imprecisa* (vague) to explain the gaps in his narrative. After pointing to areas where his testimony was *imprecisa*, I suggested he replace generalizations with details. For inspiration, I turned to our online platform where he submitted homework, and I gestured to examples from his own writing where he had been more precise. With support from pointing, numbering, and Spanish, Nico grasped conventions of academic organization and balancing a literature review with detailed personal testimony.

Clarifying Academic Concepts. On a separate front, Nico's confusion with assignments illuminated an assumption about his access to academic concepts, an assumption that led to unclear instruction. To take a case in point, Nico struggled to use a thesis template. Part of the issue was that I took templates for granted. When I explained what a template was—a pre-written phrase, sentence, or block of sentences with general academic phrasing and blank spots that writers are encouraged to copy and fill in—Nico realized that using a template is desirable because it acclimates writers to writing conventions. With this clarification, Nico borrowed from a template and a

model to complete a thesis about urban and rural areas, which I quote here at length (words in bold represent phrases from the template):

Although I admit that living in rural areas has its advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages is that you can easily find jobs with good pay and thus be able to have a good livelihood. The disadvantage is that just as a person earns, they also spend, since the price of rents is not at all favorable and many of the people tend to have double jobs to support their families. **I continue to insist** that immigrants should live in cities, since there they can find free aid such as organizations that help them by giving them free health services and also helping people with limited resources. **I'll start by** saying that many people who live in rural areas tend to travel to cities to get those benefits and find jobs that pay well. **I'll go on to** say that immigrants would be much better off settling in a city than outside the city.

Though this thesis is long and though I suggested revisions for conciseness, it exemplifies progress. Prior to the intervention, Nico was not in the habit of consistently submitting work, especially when he was not familiar with a convention embedded in the assignment such as a template. The intervention allowed us to pinpoint and address a lapse in instruction. When we detected that templates were not familiar and therefore required explication, Nico had access to a tool that helped him turn in homework. Moreover, his thesis shows an ability to assert an argument and a concession, another sign of development because Nico was in the habit of presenting evidence without always advancing a confident claim. These achievements were only possible by revisiting assumptions about what I expected students to understand, a process precipitated by one-on-one engagement.

Interruptive Restraint. Different from the above strategies, restraint became a resource as I learned to stop interrupting. When I reviewed the audio recordings of the initial meetings, I was struck by my habit of interjecting Nico's pauses as he searched for words to express himself. When I proposed words, Nico responded by subtly declining them. Nico's pauses represented moments when he needed my restraint so that he could collect his thoughts and translate his ideas from Spanish into English. As I realized this, I paused for long stretches with which I am not normally comfortable but that enabled Nico to articulate himself in his own way. One particular session attests to the importance of restraint. We were rereading an article

from class, and I asked him if he could define “refugee.” He explained that it was a type of location. In the moment, I thought this was incorrect, and I went on to differentiate between immigrants and refugees. However, the audio recording revealed that Nico replied, “refuges are like a house where the government put people to live.” Here, he defined “refugee.” Because I was unable to understand him in the moment, I corrected him. With the correction came a missed opportunity to connect his definition of a place (refuge) to a definition of a group of people (refugees). Reflecting on moments like this, I adopted caution when responding to Nico, pausing for an extended amount of time and asking for clarification rather than assuming and correcting.

Individual Achievements. Prior to working with Nico, I observed that promising but struggling multilinguals were a small but ever-present FYC contingent at the two-year New York City HSI where I teach. Though I recognized their presence, I did not realize they needed additional support, I did not know how to carve out time to work with them, and I did not have the training to serve them. Ultimately, they disappeared, withdrew, failed, or barely passed. I designed and tested a bi-weekly 30-minute one-on-one intervention to interrupt these outcomes. Nico’s C- final grade suggests that regular individualization results in promising but struggling multilinguals not disappearing, not withdrawing, not failing, and not skirting by with a D. In comparison to a D, a C- might be considered unimpressive. I must stress here that even a C- represents progress for promising but struggling multilinguals because it intimates there is improved consistency in grasping tenets of academic literacy and completing assignments that corroborate that fact. I concede that for most four-year institutions, students who transfer with a C- or below will have to retake the class. If we privilege a four-year institutional context that prioritizes certain benchmark grades, a C- is not ideal. However, if we shift the terms of the conversation to a two-year setting where we uphold the development of multilinguals who all but disappear, withdraw, fail, or barely pass, a C- is advancement and an achievement.

Nico’s final FYC grade was an indication of growth. Over the course of the semester with the benefit of attending one-on-one sessions, Nico began submitting work regularly. This shift to consistently turning in work correlates with exposure to strategies of using conversation to build rapport, animating concepts with a yellow legal pad, pointing at areas of text, numbering key words, punctuating lessons with Spanish words, explaining academic terms that I took granted, and restraining myself from interjecting. These tactics supported Nico to avoid patchwriting, grasp rhetorical patterns,

organize according to academic standards, and write with specificity. As Nico put it in a reflection about one of our meetings, “Today I feeling more comfortable talking with my teacher and I learn more clearly about what she was speaking on the class.” His response and accomplishments indicate that a regular one-on-one intervention by instructors has the potential to facilitate academic development of promising but struggling multilinguals.

Nico as a Classroom Resource. The intervention also helped Nico develop social skills that benefited his peers. As Nico’s confidence and literacy evolved, he advanced from refusing to speak with a shake of his head to engaging his classmates. He became receptive to participating when I called on him to share an idea that he rehearsed during the one-on-one sessions or that he prepared prior to class. On one occasion, he came to class with a fully completed vocabulary worksheet that we had planned to complete during class time; drawing on his responses, he helped a student who had arrived late but who had a reputation of standard English fluency. Although Nico was initially reluctant to engage this student, he relented with my nudging. On another occasion, when a friend struggled with small group work and requested Nico as a peer review partner, Nico agreed despite a preference for being separated from each other because he realized their reticence was mutually reinforcing. On this day, Nico read his friend’s work, gave him feedback, and shared his work, which we had reviewed during a one-on-one session. Nico also helped his friend outside of class, helping him submit work to our online platform and understand directions. By transferring confidence and skills from the sessions to the classroom, Nico became a resource for his peers. Apart from these individual interactions, I also presented Nico’s work, which he developed during our sessions, as a model for other students during general instruction. This elevated Nico’s confidence and allowed his classmates to learn from his example.

Applying Individualized Strategies in the Classroom. Nico’s classmates and students from semesters after our collaboration have benefited when I have applied the strategies developed during the intervention to general instruction. As an example of pointing, I noticed that Nico’s classmate struggled to apply my written feedback when she was revising. Realizing this, I physically pointed to different areas of her first draft to explain what and how to reorganize. With these gestures, she was able to move around details that clarified her paragraph. In addition to pointing, I have adopted longer pauses to give students space to gather and articulate their thoughts. This was true during a class discussion when we were weaving concepts and evidence that led two of Nico’s classmates to pause for a length of time that I would have normally

interrupted. Instead, I waited without interference and with focus on them. I was pleasantly surprised when they were able to articulate their thoughts with the support of my restraint. There were other moments when I used Spanish words to support sentence-level writing. Describing the practice of adding a period to separate two independent grammatically complete clauses, I used the Spanish word “punto” (point), which Nico taught me when we were correcting run-ons. Following my example, students adopted this language, using the word “point” to express where to insert periods.

Beyond a singular semester, I have integrated a definition of templates into my instructional presentations. An introduction to templates has become an explicit lesson in FYC because I have noticed students, even those who are fluent in US American English, have asked me to confirm that copying a template is permissible even after I define and explain how to use them. Their uncertainty may stem from the emphasis I place on paraphrasing instead of patchwriting, and this approach may lead them to hesitate before copying templates. Now that I am aware of this—through my participation in regular one-on-one meetings with Nico—I guide my students to use templates by defining what they are and differentiating between using standard phrasing and patchwriting. My claim is that conducting the intervention with even just one individual student has been valuable professional development because it motivated me to adopt new approaches for general classroom instruction (Broaddus and Bloodgood).

Discussion: Takeaways on One-on-One Support

This section extracts takeaways about student preferences, the heterogeneity of multilinguals, and rapport that were specific to the present study but that may inform subsequent applications by instructors and program directors. Moreover, this section analyzes the intervention, illuminating insights that are meant to convince faculty and administrators of the one-on-one sessions' feasibility and worthiness.

Student Preferences. When the intervention began, Nico and I agreed to begin with a 10-minute conversation that purposefully did not relate to course concepts and assignments. This time helped Nico communicate and engage, an approach affirmed by case studies on individual support (Klenk; Anderson; Skerrett). While banter and reading out loud became a ritual for our sessions, Nico and I kept them brief. It seemed that Nico had more to say than he was able to articulate in English and I was able to understand in Spanish. Furthermore, Nico preferred receiving information about assign-

ments. He was a pragmatic FYC student who was responsible for in-class worksheets, homework, and papers. It is logical, then, that he was reluctant to participate in conversations and read texts not directly related to course content; he preferred to put the onus on me to elaborate on lessons, concepts, directions, and feedback. Nico's proclivities echo the research on coaching by Michelle Navarre Cleary and scholarship on the silent period by Gibbons and Saville-Troike. They suggest that it is best to structure sessions around students' self-defined objectives even if that means instructor explication becomes central to the sessions.

Developing Confianza. Based on experiences with other promising but struggling multilinguals, I expected Nico to have difficulty with reading comprehension and patchwriting. During the first few sessions, I realized Nico defied these assumptions, reminding me that multilinguals are heterogenous. He grasped main ideas of texts, and he understood that patchwriting required revision, which he practiced with ongoing support and feedback during the individualized meetings. In fact, one session began with Nico's admission that he submitted patchwriting for his homework, and I confirmed that this was the case. According to Nico, "I need to write everything with my own words...I commit that mistake. I copy and then I write the same thing in my words, but I copied it." I responded with light feedback, and as our conversation unfolded, he responded to prompts to explain when it is best to paraphrase, summarize, and quote. In this instance, the one-on-one session helped Nico corroborate something that he already learned from general classroom instruction, an important moment for students who struggle with self-doubt. In retrospect, I suspect that this and other sessions functioned as a test of our rapport, which I did not anticipate. When I asked Nico about developing connections with classmates, he responded with caution, remarking that he was assessing if they were "good people." When I inquired about his restaurant work, Nico commented on his lack of "confianza" (trust) with a chef and stress caused by working with a new staff. Clearly, Nico valued relationships. This insight cued me to the fact that Nico may have been building trust and rapport by seeking my affirmation during early sessions, and it is no surprise that his values intersect with research on familismo's correlation with trust and distrust (Rodriguez; Calzada et al. 1711).

I point this out to consider how some multilinguals may struggle to advance beyond patchwriting but how this was not true for Nico. His awareness and concerns led us to spend time on confirming—rather than correcting—his grasp of paraphrasing; this dynamic assured him that he was on

the right track and that he could trust me to support him. Empowering Nico to move through self-doubts and imparting my investment in his development were more important than patchwriting revision. The present study suggests that while promising but struggling multilinguals are similar to an extent, they have heterogeneous skills and needs. For his part, Nico needed time to develop trust. General classroom instruction did not instill this; instead, individualized attention cultivated *confianza* and this convinced Nico that he was on the right track.

Distinctions and Exigence. The intervention's logistics are part of what makes it distinct. It differs from one-on-one conversations with students during class and office hours because the intervention prioritizes promising but struggling multilinguals, depends on a standing schedule, and includes time for non-academic conversation and/or reading. In contrast, in-class and office hours meetings are not regularly scheduled, do not prioritize students' funds of knowledge external to school, and are not often used by elusive students such as promising but struggling multilinguals. In other words, I have found that students who request extra help during in-class activities and office hours visits take the initiative to seek attention. The multilinguals at the heart of this study avoid drawing attention to themselves; they do not ask for extra help, and they most certainly do not request it on a regular basis. By starting the intervention with rapport and funds of knowledge, the sessions help to put these reluctant students at ease, a practice that may or may not occur during one-off meetings but become possible through regular individualization. The intervention, then, functions to identify promising but struggling multilinguals and expose them to consistent guidance that includes non-academic discussion and reducing the cognitive load of course content, helping them engage and communicate, a basis for developing academic literacy.

While the case can be made that individualization is important for all struggling students as national trends in reading comprehension are at or below basic levels (The Nation's Report Card), it is especially important for groups such as struggling multilinguals as suggested by Ehri et al. Considering the way general best practices designed for multilinguals support most but not all FYC students and in light of the research on individualization, my study proposes that promising but struggling multilinguals are frontrunner candidates for individualization. I recognize that tutoring by a third party may help students acquire reading and writing skills for general improvement and to complete discrete assignments. However, an FYC instructor who doubles as an interventionist is in a unique position of fostering struggling

students' confidence and self-expression during recurring one-on-one meetings, which the student can transfer to the classroom with the instructor's encouragement. This transfer from one-on-one meetings to classroom learning is not intuitive when the instructor is not the interventionist. Adjacent to this finding, I have experienced professional development by participating in the one-on-one sessions, and this has enriched how I teach students in the classroom and individually. For those still in doubt, I address limitations and implications below.

Conclusion: A Future for Individualization

Admittedly, five hours of course release, funded by a university-wide research grant and release time for incoming tenure-track assistant professors, supported the present study. This enabled me to meet bi-weekly with Nico, transcribe audio recordings, get immersed in the scholarship, and write. I had to reckon with this privilege in the semesters following the case study when I did not have the same course release and when there were difficulties that made it challenging to find time for the intervention. As a result, I considered discontinuing it.

When I observed other multilingual students were struggling despite regular attendance, consistent effort, and attentiveness in semesters since the study, I felt compelled to offer the intervention because Nico's accomplishments suggested that it would benefit them. To make mental and physical time for the sessions, I modified the bi-weekly 30-minute sessions. I turned to office hours, repurposing them for one-on-one sessions, a reorientation that Amanda Joyce's scholarship also addresses. Rethinking the way I spend office hours is a logical next step for me because my students do not take advantage of them. Even when students show up on their own accord, they are students who usually excel and keep pace. If a struggling multilingual appears during office hours, it is a one-off chance encounter. Finding a way to regularly support promising but struggling multilinguals requires reaching out to them. Since my collaboration with Nico, I have experimented with this by offering an intervention that accommodates my schedule and my students'. At one point, I dedicated one 30-minute session per week—instead of two per week—during office hours. During another semester, I was not able to meet immediately with the student participant and instead approached him mid-semester when we agreed to meet once a week for 30 minutes for the next few weeks. In this latter iteration, I presented my student with a “contract” that outlined the schedule of the meetings, which he and I signed

to confirm our commitment (see the Appendix). Based on my experience with the truncated office hour intervention, I have found that meeting six times is an adequate minimum that creates opportunity for low stakes assignment, high stakes essay, and revision support. Further experimentation with repurposing office hours as a time for regular individualization is worth consideration as are modifications to the bi-weekly 30-minute sessions.

Instructors and program directors who are keen on incorporating the intervention during class-time might test it when ALP students meet separately from their other FYC classmates. In this scenario, I might devote one hour of class per week to dialogue and “time on task.” For this regularly scheduled period, the hour might begin with conversation about students’ activities over the weekend and their interests outside of school. Inquiring into an interest that they display like the charms they hang on their backpacks or the music playing on their headphones might be a way to generate banter. If students mention music, movies, shows, and manga, this would be an opportune moment to project the media on a screen for everyone to see, listen to, and discuss. This need not be intense; it would be a passing but meaningful acknowledgment of students’ funds of knowledge and multiliteracies, establishing trust between students and an instructor who cares about them as a whole, not just as academic writers. Following this discussion, students might start the process of completing an assignment, while the instructor actively circulates. As the instructor checks in with all students, I would prioritize at least one promising but struggling multilingual for the semester by spending at least 10 minutes with them each week. During this weekly session, I imagine time would be well spent by asking them to direct the 10 minutes of individual support. My experience suggests that this would involve clarifying assignments, fleshing out embedded academic concepts, and elaborating on feedback. This might be done with familiar English synonyms and inviting words from languages that are more accessible to the student. Drawing on a notepad or whiteboard might lighten the cognitive load as would gestures and restraint. While I offer insights, recurring individualization will demand tweaks as instructors put it into practice.

Even as I earmark areas for faculty and programmatic exploration, my study proposes that individualization requires just that. It requires being attentive to the particular institutional systems and structures—such as course caps, release time, ALP options, and office hours—that support the extent to which we offer one-on-one support. I recognize that for a variety of reasons—among them, instructor workload and contingent labor compensation—that the intervention is an ideal that may not be practical for

some faculty. However, rejecting the premise entirely without consideration is a disservice to students and instructors because it benefits both groups. Individualization is valuable and achievable, but it requires language awareness about instructors' reliance on opaque discourse and an accessible toolkit that bypasses density to empower academic literacy. It also requires being attentive to promising but struggling multilinguals from the start of the semester and pivoting from expectations. Yet what worked at a two-year HSI in New York City for Nico and me at a particular historical moment may not transfer to another school or even another instructor and student at a similar time and place. With an understanding that practice is context specific, it becomes daunting to proclaim a standard for individualization.¹⁶

Nevertheless, I offer recommendations for future research about promising but struggling multilinguals, not just those in ALP or even FYC, to encourage individualization by faculty. Supporting promising but struggling multilinguals begins with promoting scholarship that acknowledges their presence in classrooms and pinpointing the conditions of instruction and comprehension that do not align. At times, for instance, my comprehensive oral and written explanations have impeded learning, whereas putting multiliteracies into pedagogical practice have had more of an effect. Research on this slippage and on the strategies that resolve it will advance the discourse. Building on this point, I recommend that scholars explore intentionality around individualization, whether it occurs inside or outside the classroom. It is not unusual for instructors to work one-on-one with students, but it is unusual for instructors to prepare for these meetings based on theory and best practices. Moving in this direction involves drawing on discourse about one-on-one support at all educational levels. There is research about office hours by Joyce, Parker Glynn-Adey, and Elizabeth K. Briody et al.; however, the issue is that this discourse skims only the surface of what postsecondary one-on-one support by instructors ought to look like. Expanding on this work, my study functions as a call to scholars to take an interest in promising but struggling multilinguals by advancing theory and practices for instructor-based individualization. Rather than surrendering to counterarguments that faculty are stretched too thin to consider regular hands-on support, researchers ought to explore alternatives that facilitate the process. There could be, for example, scholarship detailing modifications to office hours and the development of one-on-one activities during class time.

These recommendations are salient for two reasons. First, foundational academic literacy pedagogy and approaches designed for multilinguals when applied in the general classroom do not sufficiently support promising but

struggling students. Second, the research suggests that struggling students benefit from individualization, and there is increasing evidence that one-on-one support from instructors is especially beneficial for students who struggle the most. To be clear, I am not proposing a playbook to put into action. I am arguing that iterative one-on-one support by instructors for struggling multilinguals is a general practice that ought to be taken seriously by researchers, leaders, and faculty. In this way, I submit my case study as encouragement to invest in regular individualization by instructors via scholarship, programmatic decisions, and professional development where promising but struggling multilinguals become a priority.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. Coining the term patchwriting, Rebecca Moore Howard defines it as “copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym substitutes” (“Plagiarism Pentimento” 233).
2. For examples of studies that point to non-academic factors that disrupt student progress and interventions that prioritize retention strategies, see Ann C. Dean, Yemin Sánchez et al., Mary C. Murphy et al., Scott E. Carrell and Michal Kurlaender, and Valerie Purdie-Vaughns et al.
3. For primary and secondary approaches to reading development, see the National Reading Panel, Kathryn Au, Paola Uccelli and Emily Phillips Galloway, Lily Wong Fillmore and Catherine E. Snow, and Claudia Christensen Haag and Joan Williams.
4. Strategies from this body of scholarship consist of an introduction to academic conventions, explanation of the purpose for reading a source, developing motivation, drawing on familiar subject matter, modeling the practice of active reading, reading monitoring, graphic organizers, revision, and more.

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5. It benefits my students to read primary scholarship relevant to their lives by perusing abstracts and scanning for representative sentences in methods and discussion, a process we practice as a class through guided dialogue, note taking, and worksheets. Supported in these ways, my students grasp central claims.
6. See di Gennaro's article and collected essays in Paul Kei Matsuda et al. See my earlier summary of scholarship about supporting multilingual writers (Rounsaville et al.; Suh et al.; Cavazos; Shapiro et al.; and Lovejoy et al.).
7. See Meena Singhal for a definition of EAP and Kelly Hernandez et al. for an EAP curriculum. Responding to the standardization of EAP as a model of academic literacy implied by Singhal and Hernandez, see Canagarajah's "Multilingual Writers" for an objection. For those interested in ways students supplement their learning beyond the classroom and outside of the EAP paradigm, see Morton et al.
8. See Dashielle Horn for a literature review about how scholarship on writing centers has informed discourse on one-on-one support (170-71). In addition, Michelle Navarre Cleary offers a representative example of coaching vis-à-vis a Writing Workshop.
9. Notably, Klenk's student's silence continued in the classroom (235). This may imply that when the interventionist is an outsider such as a reading specialist and not the teacher, it is difficult for students to transfer gains from one-on-one sessions to the classroom.
10. This finding is so powerful that it has evolved in postsecondary discourse about tutoring and coaching that follows a model of student self-determination. For an example, see Cleary's research about a Writing Workshop.
11. The two-year college where I teach has phased out basic writing in favor of an ALP program that follows the model pioneered by Peter Adams et al. at the Community College of Baltimore County. In my department's iteration of ALP (ENA101) 10 students identified as basic writers join 12 students enrolled in the mainstream section of FYC (ENG101). All 22 students meet as one class for four hours a week. In addition to four hours of instruction, the 10 ALP students are scheduled for an additional three hours a week with the same Composition I instructor.
12. Joy Reid characterizes second-language learners as "ear learners" and "eye learners," and these categories have informed my teaching. Reid explains that "ear learners" are adolescents orally proficient in their first language but are not fully literate as a result of educational interruptions.

When they learn English through spoken language and culture, they do not necessarily develop mastery over mechanics (4). In contrast, “eye learners” are college students who are proficient in their first language. Their access to education teaches them the mechanics of English, but Reid observes that their writing may be limited, resulting from grammar overemphasis. Moreover, their listening and speaking abilities lag behind (7). In Nico’s case, he bore characteristics of an ear learner, but his preference for reading English was more akin to an eye learner. This insight led me to emphasize visual cues during one-on-one sessions.

13. There are many definitions of translanguaging. According to Ofelia García, “Translanguaging is the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential” (140). See Lucas Corcoran and Caroline Wilkinson’s explanation that compares translanguaging to an all-terrain vehicle (ATV), which I find instructive (25-26).
14. See Canagarajah’s “A Rhetoric of Shuttling” for the rhetorical creativity of multilingualism and Corcoran and Wilkinson who favor an understanding of multilingualism that oversees language mixing in a way that defies language separation.
15. Nonetheless, reading out loud in the classroom is important. Reading out loud accompanied with vocabulary development and note taking during class may be the reason Nico did not want to spend time reading during one-on-one meetings. For the value of reading during class time, see Neumann et al., Freedman, and Horning.
16. See Bernard E. Harcourt’s conclusion for the context-specific nature of theory and practice.

APPENDIX

Intervention Participation Contract

One-on-One Support Agreement

This document presents an agreement between _____
[student first and last name] and _____ [instructor's title
and name] to meet for extra help outside of class. We agree to meet for a
minimum of _____ times for 30 minutes on _____ [day]
at _____ [time] in _____ [location].
We agree to begin with a brief conversation. Then, the student will
suggest the content and assignments which they want support, and
_____ [instructor's title and name] will offer guidance.

Student first and last name

Student Signature

Date

Faculty first and last name

Faculty Signature

Date

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