FOSTERING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR ESL STUDENT SUCCESS IN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY WRITING

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ABSTRACT

Student success and retention remain key factors for colleges and universities, with faculty and staff working with students to help them overcome barriers as they complete their programs of study. Although students bring with them different and individual challenges, for those students who are entering colleges with English as a second language, they have an added challenge of learning the cultural, linguistic, and syntactical differences of writing in higher education. One way to help these students is raising faculty awareness of the specific challenges that students face when writing in a second language. This article seeks to increase awareness of these differences and help faculty provide students with a place to discuss the writing differences among their cultures and foster opportunities for students to succeed in their writing assignments—specifically, through the inclusion of pre-writing activities, explicit organizational instructions, specific feedback along with chances for revision, and engagement with students' past and present experiences in writing.

"Great teachers give students the skills to communicate effectively and the confidence to express what they think," according to the Teaching Commons at Stanford University ("Defining your own teaching goals," 2016, para. 12). Helping students gain the confidence to express what they believe also helps them in their field of study and, eventually, in their career aspirations. However, academic written expression for ESL students can prove even more challenging, especially for those students who have had no experience in Anglicized schools (Al-Badi, 2015). Language teachers are aware of these differences, but because language is a specialized area, few instructors in the other disciplines are fully aware of the cultural and linguistic challenges that ESL students face as they begin their curriculum classes in their programs of study (Cumming, 2006).

During my experiences developing academic English language programs at two community colleges and presenting at many conferences regarding cultural writing differences, I have heard instructors from across disciplines express their appreciation for the explanations of specific challenges that ESL students face, cultural writing differences, and ways that instructors can help these learners achieve success in higher education.

Success for ESL students is possible with proper preparation and guidance. Cumming (2006) noted that university ESL students respond well to instructions related to "discipline-relevant writing tasks, models of past successful performance on these tasks, and evaluative criteria for task fulfillment based on professional standards" (p. 168). However, Cumming (2006) also pointed out that these instruc-

tions and models are rarely provided. As a result of the cultural assumptions, it is important for ESL students to receive explicit instructions of the cultural expectations of writing in Standard Academic U.S. English (SAE) in order to foster success.

Indeed, the instructors who have participated in my workshops and trainings have been willing to implement these strategies, but they have also expressed that they would not have realized or understood how to help students without such explicit training. Additionally, faculty training should also include focus on the components of cultural differences in writing among languages. Such guidance would help instructors recognize when student writing may have the ideas and analysis present, but exhibit discursive characteristics resulting from the transfer from the L1 (home language) to the L2 (target language, specifically English in this case), in areas such as organization, structure, and cultural expectations, especially pertaining to analytical reporting (Al-Babi, 2015).

Understanding these dynamics of writing for ESL students is particularly important since the number of immigrants enrolling in college has increased. Some arrive as refugees with little training in English, but many have been highly schooled in their native country (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011). Although highly schooled, these immigrants discover that their degrees are not recognized in the U.S., and/or their acquisition of the English language is not adequate for communication and further study in the U.S. (Calderón et al., 2011). Furthermore, the speaking competence they may develop as they live and work in the U.S. does not necessarily transfer to academic fluency (Hyland, 2015). Additionally, many English language learners (ELLs) enter community colleges with a solid academic background in their primary language, and some have even spent time in and graduated from U.S. schools; however, they often find that the expectations in college are confusing and unclear due to language and cultural barriers (Hyland, 2015).

Since most college classes include writing assignments, providing instructors with the awareness of cultural and organizational differences and effective strategies to help ELLs will, in turn, provide the students with the strategies they need to effectively write academic papers (Al-Badi, 2015). The English academic essay may be a completely different style than what they have been taught as a correct writing form in their L1, and may often require an entirely different way of thinking about and processing the information they are writing (Bell, 1995). It is also important to help students see that their "customary style of expressing themselves is not illogical or wrong, but it is just not English writing" (Raimes, 1991, p. 429). Leki (1995) proposed that in an ideal world, these different writing styles would be accepted and embraced rather than corrected; however, until such a time occurs, instructors and students can be educated about these differences in order to assist students learning to write under the guidelines of SAE. Moreover, recognizing the diversity in L1 writing styles creates an environment more conducive for learning because students' cultures are neither devalued nor marginalized. Understanding these differences can therefore help relieve frustrations and bring clarity for ESL students.

In addition to cultural differences in organization, differences also exist pertaining to acceptable topics to write about and discuss in the classroom. ESL students must often learn to think and write in ways and about topics that are discouraged, difficult, or even wrong in their cultures (Harklau, 2000). For instance, in the curriculum that I have developed for my academic language program, I include readings and writing assignments about evolution because many students are resistant to this concept since they feel it infringes on their religious beliefs. I provide them with a place to explore the topic, but we then discuss how to separate religious beliefs from science and academic requirements. Additionally, a topic that would be welcomed by someone who has grown up in the U.S. (e.g., premarital sex, dating, drugs), may for some ESL students be offensive to write

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about or discuss because of beliefs or taboos in their home countries.

As I have developed curricula and assignments, recognizing and understanding these challenges that ESL students face in higher education has helped me develop and create a program where students have explicit teaching of the differences and expectations in U.S. higher education. Consequently, students have had great success in their program of study courses, completing them with an A, B, or C grade. In addition, I have worked to bring awareness of these concepts to instructors in all disciplines. The core of the program focuses on providing students with a place to discuss the writing differences among their cultures and fostering opportunities for students to succeed in their writing assignments by the inclusion of pre-writing activities, explicit organizational instructions, specific feedback along with opportunities for revision, and engagement with students' past and present experiences in writing.

CULTURAL WRITING DIFFERENCES

When an English for academic purposes (EAP) learner is given an assignment, they often experience confusion as to what the actual writing prompt may mean, especially when an instructor requests that students use critical thinking (Leki, 1992). The instruction to "use your critical thinking skills" is commonly part of writing prompts in colleges and universities, yet it causes confusion for native speakers and is even more ambiguous for the EAP student (Sofianou-Mullen & Mullen, 2012, p. 157). Therefore, the definition of an organized essay with critical analysis is one of the first components discussed in my program's composition courses. From an historical point of view, we discuss Kaplan's (1966) seminal article, "Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-Cultural Education" where he discussed rhetoric as a way of thinking and explored its ties to culture and language. I show students how he divided the rhetorical patterns into five categories: English, Romance, Ori-

ental, Semitic, and Russian. Kaplan's (1966) argument centered on the basic premise that all cultures ask their students to write and think critically, but that each language has a different way of defining critical thinking, which intertwines with the expectations that professors have for writing assignments. Sofianou-Mullen and Mullen (2012) defined critical thinking in American English as the ability to reason, question biases and assumptions, and investigate opinions and facts (p. 264). However, Kaplan (1987) noted that some cultures do not ask students to exhibit these skills in their writing and rely more on students' abilities to copy and reiterate what they have read or heard rather than expressing their beliefs or opinions. Moreover, Kaplan (1966) noted that how a writer creates the essay from beginning to end will follow a different pattern depending on how the writer conceives of expressing the topic, main idea, supporting details, and conclusion.

We have had insightful conversations about writing as students discuss Kaplan's article and consider his premise. Several advanced students over the years have looked at Kaplan's model and noted that they do not see English writing as following a straight line of reasoning, because they are expected to tell the reader what they are going to write about (introduction), then write about it (body), then tell the reader what they wrote about (conclusion). At this advanced level where students have begun to understand the structure of the SAE essay, they are now provided with opportunities to learn how to question research, analyze data, and express their thinking in writing through the discussions and models of how other researchers have done this. For instance, I show them how Sofianou-Mullen and Mullen (2012) argued that Kaplan's (1966) article perpetuated stereotypes of cultures and people; students once contended that it is not the language that creates different rhetoric, but the method in which writing is taught and the educational expectations of the program rather than cultural or ethnic differences. Moreover, in another retort, I provide them with a model of questioning in which Ovando and Combs

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(2012) posited that culture is not carried in one's genes, and that individuals would therefore not write in a certain way merely because of where they were born or what language they spoke. In addition, I provide students with models of how writers use other research to support their argument, specifically where Greene wrote:

> No one can be considered identical with any other, no matter what the degree of gender, class, ethnic, or cultural identity ostensibly shared. Neither fixed in place nor voiceless, no one can be conceived as an endlessly reproducible repetition of the same model, to be counted for in accord with general laws of behavior. Nor can any human be predefined. The self is not something ready-made (as cited in Ovando & Combs, 2012, p. 187-188).

Through these examples, students begin to understand that as with any custom, tradition, way of thinking, or even writing, individuals exist within the whole of any study or research. In the process, we are also able to provide models of reporting research as expected in SAE.

In our class discussions, students also discover how research changes and evolves over time. Even Kaplan (1987) eventually admitted that the five categories of rhetoric were too narrow and ignored the diversity among languages and sub-cultures. Nevertheless, Kaplan maintained that the study of contrastive rhetoric has provided important insights into L2 learners' adjustment to challenges as they begin to write in English in the academic setting. Kaplan (2005) explained that studying rhetoric in non-English cultures and using the findings from rhetorical analyses provides teachers insight into how L2 writers need to adjust to write successfully in English. For instance, Leki (1995) found that Chinese writers have difficulty inserting their own viewpoint in academic writing because their academic culture discouraged them from doing so. Leki also offers an example from Zimbabwe, in which a teacher told a student, "You put in too much of your own ideas. We are not interested in your ideas. Your ideas are not

authoritative" (p. 246). Furthermore, as Katchen (2009) notes, some cultures start with a general idea and lead the reader through a step-by-step process to reach the main idea, while other cultures never explicitly state the idea but only suggest it. Farsi writing tends to exemplify this structure, for instance: Katchen found that the paragraphs "typically lacked topic sentences, and the method of development differed somewhat from the American pattern" (p. 165). As we discuss these differences in the classroom, students relate to these examples and analyze how they have been taught to write in their L1, versus the U.S. expectation for writing that paragraphs have a topic sentence, expound on that idea, and then transition to the next paragraph or conclude. Using this contrastive analysis has helped my students effectively modify their writing in SAE. These kinds of open conversations regarding cultural writing differences should therefore be encouraged.

Likewise, Joan Bell (1995) discovered the importance of conversations about cultural differences when it comes to writing expectations between cultures. Bell (1995) began her own language study in spoken and written Chinese but found that she failed to please her teacher even though she completed her assignments quickly. She could tell from the teacher's expression that she was not pleased with her work, but Bell (1995) would leave the tutoring session without any conversation. Finally, the teacher explained, "In English, speed is always praised, but in Chinese learning, speed is not seen as relevant or helpful. The way to learn is to receive, and then think about it" (p. 695). This open conversation about the diverse expectations helped Bell discover that cross-culturally, academic writing requires students to develop new ways of thinking and presenting themselves that seldom correspond with how they were taught to do so in their native language (Bell, 1995; Connor, 2002; Leki, 1995).

For instance, "On-Demand Writing" is commonly given as an in-class assignment in many college classes from humanities to the sciences, and teachers expect students to complete a two- to three-page

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writing assignment in one class period (Gere, Christenbury, & Sassi, 2005). Students who come from cultures where contemplation is more important than quantity may have difficulty producing a two-page paper in such a short timeframe. Students in first-year composition classes have come to my office in tears because they cannot formulate their ideas, type the paper, and edit properly in the time allotted. They struggle not because they are not proficient, but simply because they are not fast enough. Additionally, unlike many U.S.-born college students, many ESL students have explained they did not use computers in their home countries because technology was not readily available. Sometimes their challenges result from being unable to type fast enough even though they have the words. Consequently, I have asked instructors in my academic language program—especially those in the highest levels—to offer more in-class practice to help students learn how to manage in this type of high-stress writing assignment.

In addition, it is important to continue raising awareness of these challenge because composing in an L2 always requires additional time, and reading and re-reading is often necessary—even if a student is proficient in the language. In-class writing does not provide such time, and therefore creates anxiety for students, which in turn lowers students' performance (Gere et al., 2005). If teachers are unaware of these cultural differences or challenges that L2 writers bring to the classroom, they could misinterpret the students' performance as a lack of academic or linguistic skills, rather than a cultural writing difference (Matsuda, 1997; Silva, 1993). One way to help ESL students (and all students) is to provide writing prompts ahead of the on-demand writing so that students can explore the topic and formulate their ideas in such a way that will make writing easier once they begin the in-class assignment. As a partial solution, several instructors in our composition department have been willing to allow students to handwrite in-class assignments, which has lowered anxie-

ty levels for at least a few students who lack keyboarding skills.

Of course, even with such efforts and with more open discussions with students and instructors, the cultural differences ESL students face will not simply be erased. Yet I have seen students' faces show relief, excitement, and finally awareness as they realize and discuss these differences. This awareness helps learners process how they write in their language and gain an understanding of the expectations in an English academic essay (Agnes, 2002). These discussions are lively, exhilarating, and rewarding—students have a "light bulb" experience, which is always what I aim for in teaching. Even Hyland (2015), who maintained that these differences should be common knowledge, acknowledged that continued discussion is needed among university and college faculty along with instructions and strategies of how to help ESL students meet the expectations of SAE writing.

TEACHING STRATEGY: PREWRITING

Once these cultural differences are expressed and explained, specific teaching strategies for L2 learners have been shown to be effective. According to Ferris and Hedgcock (2005), pre-writing is one of the most important tools to use in promoting fluency in academic writing. A pre-writing exercise helps ease the inevitable fear that L2 learners have when they approach a writing assignment (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Murray & Christison, 2011). When students are given a free-writing assignment, Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) maintained that it releases students from their compulsion to write correctly. Leki and Carson (1994) surveyed a number of EAP learners who successfully completed their programs of study to find out what had helped them the most in their EAP classes. These students rated pre-writing as one of most helpful exercises because when they began their classes, they had little experience with academic writing, and these exercises

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helped them understand more of the processes without fear of failing (Leki & Carson, 1994, p. 83).

Additionally, Leki (1995) argued—and Santangelo, Harris, and Graham (2016) concurred—that EAP learners need scaffolding and have an easier time producing the final product when they have an example to use as a model. Leki and Carson (1997) also pointed out that as part of pre-writing strategies, EAP learners write better when they are assigned an essay in parts rather than as a whole. This process writing approach gives the students a place to practice and allows the instructor to follow the students' thought processes and guide them in content, organization, and mechanics before the stress of the final product is required (Cumming, 2016). These pre-writing strategies can be through free-writing, graphic organizers, outlining, journal writing, or discussion-based brainstorming exercises—all of which can provide students with tools they can use for the final product, as well as easier organization of the essay since this can be accomplished in separate pieces (Cummings, 2016; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Leki, 1995; Santangelo, et al., 2016).

TEACHING STRATEGY: EXPLICIT ORGANIZATIONAL INSTRUCTION

In addition to teaching pre-writing strategies, Leki and Carson (1994) discovered that students who had been through an ESL writing program at the college level would have liked more explicit teaching of organizational components of the academic essay. In their EAP classes, they were often only given narratives and personal essays, which did not adhere to the strict guidelines that a research or analytical-style essay would require. The EAP learners stated that they would have benefited from more difficult writing assignments that required writing in the same structure that was required in their curriculum classes (Leki & Carson, 1994; Murray & Christison, 2011). Hyland (2015), Ferris and Tagg (1996), and Raimes (1991) concurred that if students only write

about personal issues, this does not help the EAP writer fully understand the organizational components of an analytical essay. Explicit teaching of the expectations, along with practice and application, helps students understand the components of an academic essay, which better prepares them to follow the expected writing styles of in their fields and programs of study (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Hyland, 2015; Leki, 1992; Murray & Christison, 2011; Spack, 1988).

In my program, I explain to students that their instructors will probably not label a writing assignment as, for instance, a compare/contrast, cause and effect, or argumentative essay. However, we teach students key phrases that indicate a specific genre or expectation; then, we have students complete these kinds of essays—following a process writing approach—with explicit directions about how to organize the essays, what vocabulary and transitions to use, and the appropriate syntax. We also provide models of previous successful student essays as concrete examples of what is expected—particularly in how to move from one idea to another, how to synthesize or analyze ideas, and especially how to organize the essay. This type of explicit instruction is supported by research (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Hyland, 2015; Leki, 1992; Murray & Christison, 2011; Spack, 1988), and it is an integral part of my program. Students respond well to this model and have given positive feedback about it once they move into their program of study classes.

TEACHING STRATEGY: FEEDBACK AND REVISION

Another aspect that EAP learners need is simply time to practice once the elements of English writing have been explained (Leki, 1993; Leki & Carson, 1994; Matsuda, 1997). Carpenter and Hunter (1981) found that within an EFL classroom, "students should be given the time to write, and an assigned paper should not be a test of the ability to follow pre-

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scribed rules of writing, but a chance to examine and organize, and then re-examine and reorganize the thinking" (p. 104).

As students revise and practice, they also need to master academic grammar and mechanics, which can otherwise prevent them from receiving high marks on their papers. As an example of this revision component, Rebecca Wheeler (2005) described several English teachers' experiences in grading and correcting papers. One teacher marked every error and wrote comments on the papers, reminding students of the rules that she had already taught them, while another teacher used contrastive analysis and code-switching to help students with their essays. By code-switching, Wheeler (2005) explained that the second teacher would display the incorrect sentences alongside the corrected sentences so that students could see the contrast between the correctly formatted sentence and the incorrect one. She did not mark on their papers at all but kept track of the 10 most frequent errors that students made. She wrote their sentences on a chart, then wrote the same sentences in SAE. According to Wheeler's (2005) study, the students whose papers were graded in the traditional way did not improve—these students used incorrect grammar and mechanics 8.5 percent more while those taught using code-switching and contrastive analysis showed a 60.7 percent improvement in their use of SAE. Wheeler (2005) proposed that by using this method, students were better able to self-correct; they were also allowed to revise their own papers and resubmit them to receive a higher grade.

As I integrated this contrastive feedback approach into my program, I was and continue to be amazed at how excited students are when their sentence is displayed and used as a teaching component of the classroom. I display the sentences anonymously; however, the students usually identify themselves as the author of the sentence. I have used this approach in several ways. Sometimes I give students copies of the incorrect sentences, they work in pairs to correct them, and then they read the incorrect sentence and the correction aloud to the rest of the class.

Another method is to have students write the sentences on the board and then correct them there. Additionally, I sometimes use a document reader, and we correct the sentences together as a large group. These activities are quite exciting because students are on their feet with markers in hand, working as a large group to correct the problems. I rarely have to interject corrections because they work together, helping to make the sentences accurate. This type of activity can get students quite rowdy, but inevitably students ask for this activity to be repeated. From my perspective, it is quite exciting to watch this work in the moment, as well as in their future writing assignments.

Similarly, Ferris and Hedgcock (2011) reported that teacher feedback has a direct effect on student's writing, and studies have shown the following insights:

- Students greatly appreciate and value teacher feedback, considering teacher commentary helpful to their writing development.
- Students see value in teacher feedback on a variety of issues, not just language errors.
- Students are frustrated by teacher feedback when it is illegible, cryptic (e.g., consisting of symbols, circles, single-word questions, or comments), or confusing (e.g., consisting of questions that are unclear or suggestions that are difficult to incorporate).
- Students value a mix of encouragement and constructive criticism and are not offended by thoughtful suggestions for improvement.
- Feedback is most effective when provided at intermediate stages of the writing process.
- Teachers should provide both encouragement and constructive criticism, following a 50/50 prescriptive guideline of positive and negative comments (pp. 188-192).

In addition to these feedback guidelines, Ferris and Hedgcock (2011) recommended having students provide a cover memo detailing the changes that were made in the revision process so that students

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have to think through their process and why they are making any changes or additions. Furthermore, face-to-face conferencing provides students with a comfortable setting to ask questions about suggestions made, and teachers can explain in more detail where the errors have occurred and how to correct them (Kim, 2012).

While my students have a tendency to complain about multiple revisions through the feedback process, at the end, I have them read their first draft and their final draft. It is rewarding for them to actually see their progression through the drafting process, and even though most of them want to write the paper only once and be finished with it (as most all of us do when we write), they are able to see how their writing improved; then, I ask them to project how they will use this information for future assignments. As students revise and practice writing, they learn to see it as a tool that they can use in the future. Writing and revision processes should be used to help students progress through prescriptive writing requirements and methods, rather than seeing these elements of writing as simply right or wrong (Al-Badi, 2015; Carpenter & Hunter, 1981; Hyland, 2015).

TEACHING STRATEGY: ENGAGE STUDENTS' PAST AND PRESENT EXPERIENCES

Finally, to help students acclimate to the culture of the English writing classroom, teachers need to be willing to engage in conversations with students as to why they are in ESL classes and how this pertains to their academic learning process (Harklau, 2000). Common stigmas regarding ESL education often serve as a deterrent for their education plan. Harklau (2000) stated that these labels can have adverse effects on learners; as a result, many of these ESL learners drop out of college and find themselves unable to find jobs or unmotivated to return to college for fear of failure. In addition, "the sociocultural environment has relegated immigrants to certain roles and positions in society (consumer, worker, tenant) among educators" (Harklau, 2000, p. 37). Often, too, educators are not willing to see beyond the language barrier to a bright, intelligent human being whose only issue with academic rigor is needing a better understanding of academic customs and expectations.

For instance, Bell (1995) pointed out that when she tried to learn Chinese, she experienced a "shock to the image of self" because she had always perceived herself as intelligent and held two degrees in her field of expertise (p. 694). Her experience as a language learner helped her realize what the process of learning a language can do to a person's self-image. Bell (1995) explained that she was not even under the pressure of acquiring the language as a way to support her family or find work; she was simply under stress in her privileged situation of language acquisition. Students need a chance to talk about where this stress originates and how an instructor can help that student (Bell, 1995). Leki and Carson (1997) also added, "We concur with the position taken in feminist theory that to explain and understand any human social behavior . . . we need to know the meaning attached to it by the participants themselves" (p. 43). Therefore, instructors need to understand the compelling reasons that students have for learning the language and what it means to them if they do not succeed. ESL students perform better and are more likely to successfully complete their education when they understand the purpose of the class and do not feel stigmatized by the schools or the teachers (Bell, 1995; Harklau, 2000; Leki, 1992; Leki & Carson, 1997). I have had students in my office very resistant to the academic language classes until I talk with them about specific challenges such as cultural differences, organizational requirements, and English syntax. Once I explain to them what these classes entail, they relax with the realization that they do need the classes, which will give them a better chance for success in their program classes. We often forget that conversation and explanation are

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key components in helping ESL students: while we often assume they understand, in fact they may not.

Furthermore, teachers should engage students in conversations about their reading and writing experiences. The following are specific strategies found to help students engage with their previous experiences to help them in their immediate language learning needs:

- Use journal entries as a way for students to describe their experiences, attitudes, and opinions about their educational background (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Spack, 1988).
- Provide time for students to share their experiences (Leki & Carson, 1994).
- Ask ESL students about their L1 and talk with them about the differences that they will find between English writing and their L1 (Kim, 1995; Cumming, 2006).
- Discuss with students the purpose of ESL classes as preparation for their programs of study, and how they can apply these skills to their everyday lives, jobs, and future educations (Hyland, 2015; Leki & Carson, 1997).
- Allow students to reflect at the end of the semester by looking back at their journal entries and discussing the changes and their experiences during the semester (Spack, 1988; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005).

The conversations with students through class discussions, face-to-face conferences, and writing helps keep teachers informed about the specific needs of the students—whether these needs are a result of differences in academic, language, or cultural factors. Such conversations also help expand the knowledge of all students about cultural differences, commonalities, and diversity among people and groups around the world. These discussions can help all students develop and refine their global understanding as it is fostered by the same people they sit beside in class or walk with across campus. Through these conversations, I have seen friendships develop, and misunderstandings about other cultures, reli-

gions, and practices dissipate. We often assume that because students come from other countries, they have a better global perspective—but often they have had limited exposure to other cultures, in much the same way that U.S. students are often limited in their knowledge of other cultures and languages. These conversations and discussions create space for students to be heard by their instructors and their peers, and they foster community within our college campuses and provide insights for our students that go beyond just information for academia.

CONCLUSION

Cultural, language, and academic differences for EAP learners will continue to pose challenges in higher education, but with open discussions about the differences and even the acceptance of these differences, teachers can provide an environment conducive to students' success in academic writing in an English setting. Kramsch (1997) stated that "the culture of everyday practices draws on the culture of shared history and traditions," and that language exists intertwined with identity; therefore, writing outside of the native language creates a difficult and arduous task (p. 7). Given this difficulty, strategies of pre-writing, revising, and providing constructive feedback will give EAP learners the tools they need to not only write effective academic essays in English but to also help them continue improving their writing skills while retaining their L1 language identity. In addition, ESL instructors should share this information with instructors in other disciplines so that these instructors can be made aware of the cultural differences that span other areas besides syntax. This knowledge can help foster open discussions with students and provide instructors with strategies to help ESL students succeed. As Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) even pointed out, process writing and many of the other strategies of teaching EAP approaches benefit all students—even those who are not ESL students.

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The issues ESL students face when writing at the college level are only a few obstacles that learners encounter as they assimilate into college life. There are also challenges related to reading comprehension, integrating writing into reading response, learning discipline-specific academic vocabulary—to name only a few. Even this review does not cover all aspects of culture, pre-writing, revisions, and feedback. More studies and research should be undertaken to help meet the needs of the growing population of ESL learners. As we continue these discussions, students' points of view also should be acknowledged, through interviews with students, for instance. More conversations with students should also take place as they successfully complete their programs of study, such as asking them what was effective or ineffective in their first writing classes. These questions and this research will help us continue to refine and improve our teaching methodologies and strategies in ways that will best promote and facilitate success for ESL students in colleges and universities.

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