Internal Language Barrier: Addressing Disconnects in Discourse at the Collegiate Writing Level

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One of the most difficult issues students face during their First-Year Composition courses relates to their understanding of the concept of the language of academia. Instead of learning how to use the conventions of their personal discourse communities—or native discourse conventions (NDC)—to help create an amalgam of their languages and the language of academia, students feel compelled to learn and utilize what they perceive as a completely new language, disregarding the idea that an overlap exists between academic discourse communities and NDC. The resulting creation conflicts with the language used in students' NDC and fails to represent academic language accurately. This project focuses on utilizing an in-text outline during the prewriting process as an outlet for students to write their ideas using their NDC. With the help of focused conferencing, students can learn to mold and transition the ideas from their in-text outlines into the language of academia.

In the field of Writing Studies, scholars and instructors struggle with teaching students how to write an accurate representation of their thoughts while simultaneously transitioning those thoughts from their various everyday spoken languages to the written language of academia. As a discipline, we need to continue to address the importance of understanding how to adapt to these variations of English within the classroom. We ask students to enter into a conversation without understanding how to speak the language, and we ask them "to work within the fields where the rules governing the presentation of examples or the development of an argument are both distinct and, even to a professional[,] mysterious" (Bartholomae, "Inventing" 135). As a result, students attempt to overcompensate by writing how they think they should, instead of learning how to express their ideas in a universally understandable manner. Consequently, students experience trouble entering into the university and understanding the importance of being able to adapt to the language of the university.

The result of this difficulty with adaptation leads to "dialect interference, where in the attempt to produce the target language, the writer intrudes forms from the 'first' or 'native' language rather than inventing some intermediate form" (Bartholomae, "Study" 258). This interference results in students trying to write strictly in the unfamiliar language of academia, yet these unfamiliar terms and phrases they attempt to use, spliced with their original variations of English, make their writing sound unclear and underdeveloped. Ken Macrorie labels the resulting language students create as "Engfish," which he defines as "[a] feel-nothing, say-nothing language, dead like Latin, devoid of the rhythms of contemporary speech. A dialect in which words are almost never 'attached to things'" (18). Students think they have created an academic essay

because they used key words taught at the collegiate level; however, the inflated language used neglects to accurately reflect the actual thoughts of the students.

When students first begin learning language, they do so through their own discourse communities. Problems arise when students enter into the collegiate setting and discover tremendous conflict between the language used in their discourse communities and the language used in academic discourse communities. Kenneth Bruffee states, "Mastery of a knowledge community's normal discourse is the basic qualification for acceptance into that community" (643). As such, until students utilize their internal languages, or native discourse conventions (NDC), to learn how to transition from the language used in their discourse communities to the language used in the academic discourse community, they will not be able to precisely, or accurately, represent their ideas in a manner acceptable to the academic setting. Therefore, through brief case studies aimed at understanding the problems with this transition, this project addresses the discord between the discourse communities and also addresses the utilization of an in-text outline and extended one-on-one conferencing as potential solutions to this disconnection.

During the 1970s, scholars began to acknowledge the importance of addressing this disconnect between students' spoken language and the language of academia. The actual 1972 Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) resolution, passed by the Executive Committee of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, reads as follows:

> We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language. (710-11)

Though discrepancies surrounding responses to this resolution exist, the crux of the matter surrounds the conventions of the original languages within students' discourse communities—their NDC.

The SRTOL resolution approached the idea of students having more empowerment; however, direct responses provided by several scholars still addressed the inconsistencies of the resolution, noting the disconnect between the suggestions of the resolution and the actual actions that followed. The first of these responses, by Lil Brannon and C. H. Knoblauch, addresses instructors' roles in implementing the ideas presented in the resolution and the importance of student empowerment. Students need to feel that their original intentions in their writing matter, and instructors can assist students by taking a "less authoritarian" (161) approach to students' writings. This action will allow students to gain confidence in their own ideas, regardless of dialect or NDC. The crux of this argument is placing validation of ideas at the foreground of teaching composition, which, in turn, supports the idea of

student empowerment. Once the students experience efficacy in their ideas, they are more likely to be receptive to suggestions for surface-level corrections that will guide them toward a more acceptable level of standard written English (SWE) (Brannon and Knoblauch 165). This idea of placing emphasis on content prior to surface-level errors aligns with the original resolution and reinforces the intention of the resolution.

However, not all of the scholarly responses found the resolution effective. Geneva Smitherman claimed that though the resolution aimed at equality, limitations still prevented those implementing the resolution from achieving the equality suggested (23). She argues that although SRTOL opened the dialogue for change in the system, that change has primarily involved an attempt to transition students from their native dialect into that of SWE, without allowing students to retain their original dialects, which, again mirrors the original elitist attitude of those supporting SWE (25-26). Scholars Patrick Bruch and Richard Marback echo Smitherman's concerns about SRTOL, stating, "Composition's professional inability to make good on education's promises to African Americans historically parallels continued disappointments in the social geography of race relations after the end of the hopeful era of civil rights" (268). SRTOL attempted inclusion by drawing attention to the validity of differing dialects; however, as these scholars note, without consistent action from the discourse communities touched by the resolution, those most impacted by it, specifically African American students, did not benefit from this attempt.

The need for adaptation to SWE often intersects with ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses, specifically within the African American community. Tim Golden's 1997 *New York Times* article, "Oakland Scratches Plan to Teach Black English," highlights the desperation one school district felt when its lower-income, African American students struggled to adapt to SWE. In 1996, in an attempt to reach the students who could not transition smoothly to SWE, the Oakland (California) school system tried to recognize Ebonics as a valid language. This recognition, if successful, would have allocated funding to programs that would teach SWE to African American students. While programs to teach bilingual students received funding, programs to teach African American students SWE did not. As such, the school district sought to teach as Ebonics as a language, rather than dialect, separate from English. This plan received a negative reaction from the public and was eventually rescinded a month later. Still, this debacle illustrates society's recognition of a language barrier between classes and races and a need to address that barrier in the attempt of breaking it down. Though one of the underlying catalysts for this change was funding, another catalyst was the need for reaching students and helping them achieve a clearer understanding of the primary language used in universities.

Peter Elbow further explores this idea of inclusion by specifically discussing the immersion of this idea into the collegiate setting. Elbow directly addresses the necessity of learning to adopt SWE in the college classroom. Though he acknowledges the importance and validity of a variety of different dialects, he claims that students will need to learn to adapt to SWE in order to achieve a modicum of success in future career and academic endeavors (368). As such, proficiency in SWE abounds in the

collegiate setting. Still, this concept of inclusion over exclusion struggles to find a place in academia, with scholars like Elbow and Eleanor Kutz calling for a shift in pedagogy to address the role of differing dialects in teaching SWE—inciting a new approach to the concept of inclusion.

Though Oakland's idea of treating Ebonics as a separate language had good intentions, the practical application of such a task did not seem plausible. However, Kutz reignited this idea of inclusion when she touched on the topic of interlanguage, which allows for some overlap between students' native dialects and the concept of SWE. Kutz uses interlanguage as a way to bridge the gap between SWE and other forms of non-standard English, thereby removing dialect interference. Kutz states, "Interlanguage provides a conceptual framework for seeing student writing as a stage in a developmental process, for seeing what is there as opposed to what isn't, for seeing individual differences, and for seeing common patterns also as a way of seeing variations" (393). Kutz attempts this pedagogical tactic in teaching composition because writers can apply those same skills to their own writing. This approach also gives the instructor more tools for teaching. By focusing on the underlying ideas of the students' own writing, as well as language, abilities, and dialects, instructors empower students to take control of their writing. This idea also coincides with Elbow's concept of transitioning from an exclusive approach to SWE to an inclusive approach that takes into account all dialects, and NDC, of English.

At the core of these issues resides a call to action—a call for change. Bruch and Marback suggest that those in power determine the status quo (270), and where once

this idea supported the elitism of SWE, now the idea lends support to necessity of change. The inclusion of dignity and respect surrounding differing dialects remains a crucial point that most of the scholars in this interchange support. These concepts will assist in providing feasible solutions for the transition into an all-inclusive approach to SWE. Elbow advocates for students to write in their own dialects, thereby removing the stigma attached to those dialects (378). He also pushes students to acknowledge when they need assistance and ask for that assistance (366). By including students' native dialects and utilizing their NDC in the classroom, we, as a discipline, can show students the validity of their ideas and help them build the self-efficacy necessary to gain self-esteem in their writing—a task that will undoubtedly provide the inclusive environment necessary for students to understand the importance of adaptability within the university. Though every student's goal doesn't include becoming proficient in SWE, students who choose to pursue academic degrees will need to familiarize themselves with SWE and learn to adapt to situations that call for such vernacular.

Blending Discourse Communities

As a Supplemental Instruction Leader (SI), English Tutor, and Writing Consultant, I spent the last eight years, in a classroom and one-on-one setting, working with students who possess a variety of writing skill-level problems—from sentence-level grammatical issues to content-related understandability. One commonality between these students resides in the clear verbal articulation of their ideas, and when faced with the task of writing those ideas in the language of academia, many students falter. Insecurities begin to swarm, and students agonize over

their final drafts, wondering why the results do not resemble academic voice. Instead of learning how to using their own NDC to help create an amalgam of their language and the language of academia, students feel compelled to learn and utilize what they perceive as a completely new language, disregarding the idea that an overlap exists between academic discourse communities and their personal discourse communities.

When addressing this transition, a student entering into college must "invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language while finding some compromise between idiosyncracy, a personal history, on the one hand, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline, on the other" (Bartholomae, "Inventing" 135). As such, students who find themselves unable to achieve this compromise begin to lose confidence in their writing skills, which can translate into potential performance problems in the classroom. Instructors in our field need a new approach to this problem that can be utilized in order to expand the reach of instructors, which, in turn, will provide students with the option of including, instead of excluding, their NDC during the writing process. We can help encourage student prosperity in the academic setting by trying to utilize students' NDC to ignite ideas during one-on-one conferences. Collegiate-level instructors bear the responsibility of assisting students with this transition from student speaking to academic writing, and extra emphasis paid to this process during conferences can alleviate stress and misconceptions related to the struggle faced by students.

Contrary to a common misconception held by some students entering into college, students do not need to discard their NDC in order to enter into the academic discourse community. They need not stop using colloquialisms, improper grammar, slang, fragments, and other language choices that make up their speaking mannerisms. Rather, they need to learn how to adapt their own NDC to fit the discourse conventions of the university. "The 'second language' a basic writer must learn to master is formal, written discourse, a discourse whose lexicon, grammar, and rhetoric are learned not through speaking and listening but through reading and writing" (Bartholomae, "The Study" 259). This process should occur through the molding of students' everyday language from their personal discourse communities to the language of academia—commonly referred to as SWE. Part of this process should begin with the utilization of students' NDC during the prewriting process. During this prewriting process, students can write their ideas in any way they choose, as long as they are able to document their ideas accurately. Following one-on-one conferences focused on the transition between student and academic language, students should be able to identify the discrepancies between the language usages and adjust their drafts accordingly.

Conferences, whether between student and instructor or student and tutor, can help students understand and clearly express their ideas and should center on utilizing academic writing tools for precision, such as outlines written using students' NDC. The crux of this argument resides in the idea that instructors will need to carefully reflect upon this part of the process. The in-text outline I propose as a potential solution only provides students with a framework of what they need to do, but it allows them to begin creating this framework in their NDC. Once students create their own framework for written projects,

the next step requires conferencing to help demystify SWE, which includes assuring a clear understanding of SWE and techniques to help students transfer their ideas into SWE. This pedagogical tactic, meant to be implemented over a semester, should help reinforce students' original ideas while allowing them the freedom to transfer those ideas into SWE. Though these types of discussions related to the incorporation of such writing tools can exist at either the classroom or one-on-one level, the topics broached during conferences should maintain a cohesive approach. The beginning of these types of discussions should focus on students starting their writing process by recording their ideas in their own conventions first. The focus should then shift to utilizing available tools to help mold student language into SWE, while preserving the precision of the students' original points. Approaches like this may help alleviate dialect interference and allow students to express their ideas without losing the integrity of said ideas.

This problem in universal understandability weaves its way through community colleges and universities alike, and the goal of this project will be clearly articulating the specific issues students face and reframing those issues as issues of cohesion between students' NDC and SWE. Through modified techniques and practices, a smooth transition into this new rhetorical situation remains attainable for incoming and returning students. The central focus of this transition should encompass including students' ideas through the means of their own conventions to assist them during their writing processes. Achieving an understanding of this transition process begins with meeting students at their own levels—their internal languages—and then focusing on students'

adaption to SWE. The following case studies introduce a technique I developed to help students ease into adapting to the university requirements for SWE.

NDC to SWE: Brief Student Journeys

Prevalent in the collegiate setting, the idea of elitism surrounding SWE tends to leave students with a view of SWE as unattainable—an especially valid idea in students who already perceive their writing skills as inadequate. Often, due to a lack of understanding of academic voice, students create dialect interference and prohibit themselves from utilizing their own observational skills to determine the validity of the language they use. Students then create essays in what they think constitutes academic voice, regardless of logical organization and flow. Even if some of their sentences do not make sense when read aloud, students will cease to recognize an existing problem and submit their drafts anyway—hoping what they created will suffice for the assignment. These kinds of disconnections occur often in First-Year Composition (FYC) courses.

In 2009, during my time as an SI for an FYC course, I worked with "Emily," whose writing exemplified this idea of dialect interference. Emily submitted a final draft of an analysis essay containing the following sentences: "Here sit an American mastodon, an animal from the ice-age… He or she has different thought on this also on their own like thought and how their brain may work with even knowing it." Instead of reading these sentences aloud to check for clarity and understandability, Emily submitted this essay assuming what she had written constituted academic voice because she did not include the first person pronoun "I." While this example is not typical of all FYC students, it does illustrate one possible

outcome of a student trying to write how she thinks academia wants her to write, instead of writing using her own NDC and molding those ideas to match SWE.

After a brief conversation with Emily, I realized she did not understand the concept of using third person. Instead of writing about a topic from an outside perspective, Emily thought she just needed to replace the word "I" with the words "he or she." This choice illustrated her lack of understanding of SWE because her solution, when read aloud, did not create a comprehensive, understandable sentence. Even when I discussed this choice with her later on in the semester, she confessed that she realized her sentence did not make sense, but she thought her creation was what the instructor wanted her to write. Emily thought she wrote her essay in SWE and because she did not know the parameters involved in SWE, she assumed what she wrote was correct. Students' misconceptions about SWE contribute to these types of common misunderstandings, and when students attempt to write in the mysterious language of academia, the task feels unattainable and nearly impossible. After several conferences centered on understanding the parameters of SWE, Emily seemed more aware of how her actual writing differed from her expectations of SWE and what she could do to shape her writing to fit within those parameters.

When I first began my college courses in 2008, I, like Emily, struggled with understanding the concept of writing in academic voice. To help alleviate some of my confusion, I created an in-text outline (see Fig. 1), which I wrote using my own NDC, to assist me with issues I experienced entering into academia. This creation grew out of my desire to follow a rule-based structure. Though the course I took at the time,

Composition I, focused on breaking free from formula-based writing, I found the information contained with the in-text outline necessary to help guide me through my writing process. My process included jumping from idea to idea, and the in-text outline afforded me the opportunity to do just that without fear of forgetting vital points I needed to include in a collegiate-level essay. After using this in-text outline for several semesters, I encountered others who struggled with traditional prewriting processes, as well.
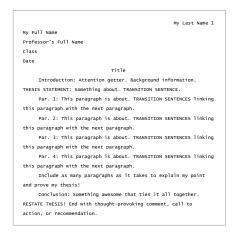

Fig. 1 In-text Outline

As an SI and tutor, I started working with many students who I thought could benefit from my in-text outline. I began using it as a guide and a tool, with the caveat that the outline may or may not work for everyone. The purpose of this outline is to eliminate the stress surrounding specific formats, such as APA and MLA, and provide students with the opportunity to input the information required of them before beginning to focus on their ideas. By eliminating specific stressors relating to the writing process, this outline provides students a way to enter into their essays on their own terms.

The outline also enlightens students to the idea that the writing process can and should be different for each student and, occasionally, for each written project.

This tool remains extremely useful regarding the concept of dialect interference because it allows students to begin writing their essays using the language of their personal discourse communities, which they will later mold into, instead of parsing together with, academic voice. During individual conferences, instructors can introduce students to this type of tool and discuss the function of student language. As shown in Fig. 1, by using the phrase "Something awesome that ties it all together," I have reminded myself, in my own way, that I need to tie together the main points of my essay and use the conclusion for emphasizing that process. While including the phrase, "Something awesome" would not be considered SWE, this phrase speaks to the part of me that is not engulfed by academia—my internal language. This outline allows students to prepare themselves for an upcoming essay by writing a framework for themselves in their own NDC.

By including reminder phrases, students can feel empowered by their ideas and not overwhelmed by the concept of SWE. The in-text outline only provides a shell for students. As long as students know the information they have to include in each essay, they seem more apt to begin writing. The connection to SWE occurs when students begin to fill in the individual paragraphs. I tend to leave my own "Par. 1: This par. is about…" until I know I have completed a paragraph and clearly stated my point in the more-refined SWE. As such, I have to remove language that does not fit within the guidelines of SWE. I cannot use colloquialisms, so I have to express my

points clearly. If I notice phrases like "They hung out," then I realize I need to refine that statement into something like "John, Sarah, and Bob met in the library to discuss their upcoming term paper." While the first sentence seems socially acceptable, in SWE, using a prepositional phrase like that does not clearly illustrate the true meaning of my point. In later drafts of my essays, I also include reminders to myself, such as "This is terrible! Rework this so your reader gets it!" I write these comments in all capital letters to alert myself that this type of language would be unacceptable in a final draft, yet in preliminary drafts, I can write these reminders in my own way. Students can utilize these tools, as well.

By using the in-text outline to identify their own ideas, students can alleviate the initial pressures of collegiate writing and focus solely on ideas they want to express. Written in their NDC, the outlines can also provide students with an overview of the information they want to present to their readers. After writing a topic sentence to themselves in their NDC ("This par. is gonna include some stuff about how I went to the zoo that one time with Bill and got those sweet dino trucks from the gift shops an' that showed me how cool Bill was"), students can then continue revising drafts until they've created a piece that echoes SWE. During their final revision phases, students can refer back to the ideas presented in their first few drafts, written in their NDC, and make sure the ideas presented match. This tactic helps alleviate the nonsensical jargon that often accompanies student writing.

This approach is not without its difficulties, though. Writing processes differ from student to student, assignment to assignment, course to course, and semester to

semester. As such, this outline doesn't always provide students with the solution to their writing issues. During my first year at a university, after transferring my degree from a community college, this outline didn't work for me. The idea that I had to fill out each paragraph from the beginning of the essay overwhelmed because I didn't know what I wanted to write in the first place. I kept the MLA heading, deleted everything within the outline, and started writing from the first line, instead. As such, there are limitations regarding this approach. If students have no idea what they want to write, then a tool like this becomes ineffective. Only after students brainstorm and have some base idea of what they want write will a tool like this assist them during their writing processes.

Recently, I worked as a Writing Consultant with "Amelia." Though Amelia possessed the tools necessary to understand her assignments, this particular assignment, an analytical research paper, gave her cause for concern. She experienced trouble beginning to write her essay because she did not completely understand the concept of how to write this particular essay in academic voice, especially since the essay needed to include her own analysis. When I provided my in-text outline as an option to Amelia, she seemed more eager to begin writing her essay because she understood she did have the leeway to include her own type of language, without detracting from the academic language used in her final draft.

Amelia and I first discussed the process of molding and shaping her language choices. I expressed to her that while slang may be acceptable in casual conversation, and can be included in her in-text outline, she would need to find acceptable terminology that clearly expressed the meaning behind

her slang usage. This step would prove crucial for Amelia. Her essays previously included colloquialisms, second person, underdeveloped ideas, and incomplete sentences. We worked through her first in-text outline together, and by the time we finished, she was able to identify certain types of language she used that would not work in academic writing, as well as acceptable academic language. By allowing her space to write using her own conventions first, this process also helped her recognize how the language she used differed from SWE.

The idea of freedom within the in-text outline supports student empowerment in writing and lends support to the importance of self-discovery, which eases the anxiety surrounding this process. Individual conferences seem the best place to address these types of dialect interference issues, and I experienced a productive conference session exemplifying this process early last spring when a young man sat down at my tutoring table, looking flustered, and announced, "I just don't know how to write this paper. I don't know where to start." He slammed his notes down on the table and flopped back in the chair.

Understanding the difficulty of the upcoming task, I tried to establish a relationship with him first because "relating to the student as an individual and empathizing with his or her particular personality and character traits will go a long way toward forming a special trust" (Murphy and Sherwood 9). In order for this young man to receive and incorporate my information, trust needed its place.

"I know how that feels. I have a ten-page paper due in two weeks, and, until yesterday, I didn't know where to start either. By the way, I'm Meghan. What's your name?" Earnest in my reply, I opened the door for

mutual collaboration. He seemed taken aback by my confession.

"I'm Jace." He shook my hand. "You have problems starting papers, too?" he inquired, leaning forward in his chair a bit.

"Oh yeah. I'm not perfect, man. I'm a student, too." With this simple phrase, an open dialogue began. By identifying with Jace, and acknowledging that we shared the same challenges, our social structure changed, and he viewed me as an equal.

Even our interchange exemplifies the concept of molding language to fit the rhetorical situation. By using the term "man" instead of "Sir," or even "Jace," I attempted to mirror his language. In this case, Jace, an African-American man, spoke using different NDC than me, a Caucasian woman. If I had spoken using the conventions of my personal discourse community while trying to help Jace, I might have added to his current frustration and alienated him by not providing him with a comfortable environment in which to share his writing insecurities.

Jace explained his issues with the assignment. He did not completely understand the assignment, and, therefore, did not know how to begin his prewriting process. After reviewing his assignment sheet with him, I recognized what his professor wanted—a compare and contrast essay in MLA format. We discussed the assignment together, referring to his writing handbook for clarification and examples. When Jace felt comfortable with the explanation of the assignment, we moved on to his writing process.

I asked him the simple, yet complex, question, "How do you write?"

"Look," he shrugged, "if I knew that, I wouldn't have come to you." His frustration began again.

I asked him to explain his process of writing, which, according to him, included waiting until the day before the paper's due date, scribbling a web of ideas, writing as many of those ideas down as he could, and submitting the essay without even rereading the draft. He laughed about this, but then he confessed that by using this process, he failed his previous assignment.

"I try. I tried the web thingy; I tried the freewrite thingy; I tried it all, Meghan. I just ain't a writer." Shame consumed him.

The main issue here is that Jace consistently tried to begin writing his essay without understanding he had the freedom to write using his own NDC first, and "we should teach students to think in terms of dialect, shifting the objective from learning to write correctly to acquiring an 'academic dialect'" (Blauuw-Hara 169). As such, Jace felt hindered by the prewriting process because instead of allowing the ideas to flow freely first, Jace tried to begin by writing a final draft that did not allow room for error or revision. The ominous idea of SWE loomed over him and prevented him from acknowledging his ideas first.

Alarmed by his confession, I decided to delve a bit deeper and asked him what he planned to do with his life. He told me he wanted to be an anesthesiologist, and we both knew that meant writing would be a skill he needed to refine. I decided to offer my in-text outline as an alternative. In many cases, "a student's life includes much more than the writing assignment at hand and often other issues and concerns interfere with completing the assignment" (Ryan and Zimmerelli 31), and linking Jace's writing with his future career choice helped him understand the real world application of his writing. I opened my notebook and began writing, explaining the outline to him as I wrote. He stopped me several times, interjecting for clarification.

"So, I don't have to start with the intro-duction?" He sounded shocked.

"Not at all. Usually, I have no idea what I want to say first, but I know what I want to say in paragraph seven. So, I start there." I continued writing.

"Wait wait, so I don't have to make a big, long outline and spell out all my thoughts into sentences and stuff?" Excitement started to show in his voice.

"Nope. Well, unless your professor requires you to. If that happens, and it will eventu-ally, I advise writing a formal outline. But, the great part about this in-text outline is that you can write it how you want." This information seemed to change his outlook, and Jace became excited about writing his essay. His excitement exemplified an eager-ness to begin writing in his own way, which allowed him to take control of the situa-tion. By encouraging student empowerment through an adaptation and intertwining of internal and academic language, this ses-sion also illustrates the impact this process can have upon students. By the end of our session, he wrote his own in-text outline and organized his paragraphs by compari-sons and contrasts. His confidence level raised, and his body language reflected the change. He made a follow-up appointment for help with revision, but he took control of his essay. He took control of his ideas. This session taught us both something important. Jace realized his potential and ability as a writer, and I realized the impor-tance of adaptability.

Follow-up appointments with Jace included a focus on specifying his language choices and clarifying his points. We dis-cussed some of the parameters of SWE, which include complete sentences, fully developed ideas, and proper grammar. From those parameters, we developed a strategy to help Jace mold his internal lan-guage into academic language. We used a testing system that included reading his sentences aloud to another critical reader. If the sentences made sense, he could move on the next section of his essay. However, if the sentences did not make sense, or were incomplete ideas, he would need to revise that section. Still, Kutz's concept of interlanguage suggests this step is crucial in learning to write in SWE. She states, "While some features [of interlanguage] rep-resent errors, they are a necessary part of constructing and testing hypotheses about the new language" (393). As such, personal acknowledgement of these errors remained crucial to Jace's development of a compre-hensive understanding of how to assess his own position during the molding and lan-guage shaping process.

This interchange with Jace illustrates the importance of flexibility and adaptability regarding interpersonal communication with students, as well as the impact of stu-dent empowerment. While the example regarding Jace discusses a one-on-one inter-change between a student and Writing Consultant, the techniques used—which include adopting the internal language of the student, as well as follow-up sessions to assist in further molding processes—can be revised to reach an entire class. Adapting curriculum to include a classroom discussion involving the demystification of SWE assists students in alleviating some of the stress related to writing. As Mark Blauuw-Hara argues, "Rather than devalu-ing students' native dialects with notions of correct and incorrect, we need to make the benefits of learning an academic dialect plain, and then provide students with the resources (individualized instruction, hand-books, models, etc.) to acquire it" (169).

Reinforcing provided literature within the classroom can help provide a baseline for students, and communication about this issue will be crucial. Once a clear understanding of SWE is established, subsequent class sessions focused around peer feedback for clarity, as well as one-on-one conferences directed at specifying main points and utilizing exact language, will help students begin to recognize the individual steps they need to take to mold their own writing into SWE.

Applying the Techniques

When students enter into the collegiate setting, one of the main goals of FYC classes should be teaching students how to gain a clear understanding of SWE, and a core concept involved in this instruction should incorporate how students can utilize their NDC to help write their ideas in the language of academia. Patrick Hartwell attests, "It is the mastery of written language that increases one's awareness of language as language" (123). As a discipline, we can increase this awareness first through constructive feedback and then by reiterating to students the validity of their ideas, as presented through their NDC. In the examples of Emily, Amelia, and Jace, gaining a deeper understanding of the requirements of SWE allowed each student to decipher their ideas in a less-hindered manner, which helped remove the dialect interference. After students recognize which individual steps they need to take, we need to assist them in the process of shaping those ideas into SWE through the implementation of rhetorical grammar and idea refinement.

As exemplified in each brief case study, utilizing the in-text outline as a tool for students allows them to take control of their writing. Students can use this tool as a heuristic to help articulate their thoughts during the prewriting process. From that point, the clarifying processes surrounding the tool, which include constructive feedback to draw attention to less molded sections of writing, also bolster student empowerment. The instructor's role in this process is to assist students in addressing and recognizing instances of dialect interference and use students' own interlanguage as a way to help students mold their ideas into SWE. Nancy Sommers emphasizes the importance of student empowerment by stating, "When students respond to feedback as an invitation to contribute something of their own to an academic conversation, they do so because students imagine their instructors as readers waiting to learn from their contributions, not readers waiting to report what they've done wrong on a given paper" (255). This incorporation of constructive feedback during the writing process assists students with building confidence in their ideas as well as their writing skills.

The idea of focusing on students' ideas should be the first step in addressing the transition process between discourse communities. By illuminating for students the importance and validity of their ideas, we can help students build the self-efficacy needed to reach the second step in this process: addressing rhetorical grammar. Laura Micciche argues for the importance of implementing the teaching of rhetorical grammar within the classroom by simply stating that "grammar competency has always been linked with social power or the lack thereof" (733). By instilling effective grammatical skills in students, we take them a step closer to understanding the link between skilled writing in SWE, which includes a strong knowledge base in

rhetorical grammar, and the impact of this skill upon both their future academic and professional endeavors.

Students must understand the implications of a fluid understanding of SWE because "standard English is in fact the language of American law, politics, commerce and the vast bulk of American literature—and the traditionalists argue that to deny children access to it is in itself a pernicious form of oppression" (Sheils 4). Though Merrill Sheils wrote those words in the 1975 article, "Why Johnny Can't Write," the ideas still hold a place in academia today. We may not entirely deny our current students access to SWE; however, by not including their NDC as part of their individualized writing processes, we still deny these students one of the most important facets of their personalities—the language of their discourse communities.

Recent research suggests feasible solutions to this problem reside in the concept of change within the writing classroom. We must incorporate Kutz's concept of interlanguage because "the interlanguage of each person at any moment is unique, though there are common patterns. This means that our analysis and pedagogy must be sensitive to those differences while taking advantage of the commonalities that will allow effective classroom teaching" (Kutz 393). We cannot take a uniform approach to writing and expect that approach to work for each student. Rather, we must address students at their levels of language and writing. By showing students how to mold their internal language into that of academia, we increase student empowerment and gain more contributing, valid ideas for this discipline.

Future Considerations

Throughout my eight years in this field of study, I have introduced this outline to hundreds of students. Though it hasn't cured each student of process-related problems, it has alleviated some of the pressures related to format and organization. By lifting some of these pressures, students can place their central focus on content and clearly express the ideas they want to address. The onus is on the students, though. In the student journeys I've documented, as well as many others I didn't, this tool allowed students to efficiently organize their ideas and express their points clearly. However, a more in-depth study following the implementation of these in-text outlines in a classroom-wide setting could provide this discipline with insight into the overall effectiveness of this strategy.

The brief case studies discussed in this project only shed light on a minimal fraction of students who struggle with the concept of understanding and utilizing academic language. The broad question of how we can use students' NDC to assist in the molding and shaping processes remains largely unanswered. However, our main task should be to allocate more time and resources to this question because this issue plagues today's students. Students still struggle with writing as a process, and a large portion of this struggle resides in the lack of acknowledgement that their ideas matter, regardless of NDC. If we continue to place a stronger emphasis on students' ideas first, and then teach them the importance of shaping their language skills to accurately represent those valid ideas, students will gain the self-efficacy necessary to continue the molding and shaping processes on their own. Though this project offers possible techniques instructors and students can use during the writing process, more research into this topic is needed to provide students with the tools they need to succeed in

writing. Research including detailed studies of the implementation of these techniques, as well as longitudinal studies including knowledge transfer of writing skills learned with these techniques, would be a strong step in the right direction. As instructors and facilitators of knowledge, we owe it to our students to address these issues with the same passion that helped us claim Writing and Rhetoric as its own discipline.

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