

*"Eye" Learners and "Ear" Learners:
Identifying the Language Needs of
International Student and U.S.
Resident Writers¹*

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Students differ, and the educational background differences among second-language students in ESL writing classrooms can be especially diverse. Student writing by nonnative speakers of English often contains unusual, and sometimes puzzling, language structures, and the rhetorical needs of those ESL students may also demonstrate a wide range of needs. Fortunately, many teacher resources have focused on teaching ESL writing (cf. Belcher & Braine, 1995; Brock & Walters, 1993; Fox, 1994; Leki, 1992; Kroll, 1990; Reid, 1993; Swales & Feak, 1994). The context for this discussion, however, is the differences between writing by (1) U.S. resident students for whom English is a second (or third or fourth) language and (2) students who have come from non-English-speaking countries to study at postsecondary institutions in the U.S. Generally speaking, these two groups of ESL students have learned their English differently, and so their language problems have different sources and different solutions.

Before beginning this discussion, I believe it is necessary to emphasize that just because this chapter concentrates on writing *problems* by ESL students, that need not be the most important focus of the ESL writing teacher. With structured practice, teacher intervention, and revision, student fluency and confidence in their writing skills often increase; language errors decrease, and rhetorical frameworks develop accordingly (cf. Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1997; Jacoby et al., 1995; Li, 1996). Therefore, the concentration on ESL student error in this chapter does not rest in my belief that error is the overriding consideration for the teacher or the student, but rather that it is frequently a source of puzzlement and frustration for both.

U.S. RESIDENT ESL WRITERS

At one end of the continuum of nonnative English speakers is the refugee student whose parents have fled political upheaval for the U.S. or sent the

children ahead to live with relatives or even strangers. Such students are usually orally fluent in their first language, but due to limited or interrupted schooling, they may not be fully literate in that language. These students have learned English by being suddenly immersed in the language and culture of the U.S. Specifically, they have acquired English principally through their **ears**: They listened, took in oral language (from teachers, TV, grocery clerks, friends, peers), and subconsciously began to form vocabulary, grammar, and syntax rules, learning English principally through oral trial and error.

Usually, these students have graduated from U.S. high schools, have had some tutoring—often fragmented—in ESL “pullout” programs when they first entered school, and have been accumulating U.S. culture for a number of years. They have relatively developed English oral fluency and listening skills, and they understand the slang, the pop music, the behaviors, and the “cool” clothes of the schools they attend. Their background knowledge of life in the U.S. is, in many cases, both broad and deep: Their personal experiences have made them familiar with class structures and expectations; they have opinions on current controversies and issues; and they recognize cultural references to, for instance, television programs, cartoon humor, and advertising. However, their reading skills may be hampered by limited understanding of the structures of the English language, and/or a lack of literacy, and/or lack of reading experience. Their writing displays the conversational, phonetic qualities of their “ear-based” language learning, as well as the use of their self-developed language “rules” that may, upon examination, prove to be overgeneralized or false. Below is a writing sample from a Vietnamese student that is typical of the writing done by many U.S. resident students. The in-class essay was written in response to a written text (about students having jobs while in college) during her first day in a first-year university composition course.

The main ideas of the Article is saying that *because of* working while going to School reduces the G.P.A. of students. Some of the Reasons *while* students gettings jobs is because of Advertisements and personal luxuries that the students needed during School.

What the Article is saying is true about students getting lower grade in school, while working. But if we try to put strict rules on College curricula and stopping Television advertising, it wouldn't help *much*. Because almost all students know *what they're doing to themselves*. Students are awared of the lower grades they're getting but *there are more to it, then* just *because of* Work. I agree, that when you get a job, your hour of studying *reduces*. After coming home from work you felt tired and only wanted to put School *words* aside. I have this experiences in the past myself. It does reduced my G.P.A., but I'm not blaming it on T.V. advertising or *anything else*.

Three general areas of error bear examination here. First, there are numerous mistakes in inflection (e.g., verb endings, plurals: note the underlined

words).² Some of these errors might occur because the student's first language is not highly inflected, as English is, and Vietnamese does not have auxiliary verbs (*to be, to have, did/does*). Consequently, the student might question whether to add a plural *-s* to *grade* or *work*, and might not suspect that *are* is needed before *getting* in the second sentence. In addition, even if the student had been tutored in English, it's quite possible that subject-verb agreement in English may not be a fully developed concept, nor agreement between demonstrative pronouns (*this/that*) and nouns. These errors may therefore be "development" (i.e., with practice, the student will learn and produce the correct usage) or "fossilized" (i.e., the student will have to unlearn the deeply acquired and practiced error, then relearn the correct form, a more difficult and time-consuming process).

It is probable, however, that many of the verb tense errors occur more from "ear-learning" than from first-language transference. That is, because the English verb tense system is complex—a single sentence, and certainly a single paragraph, may contain several verb tenses—and because these students have listened to the language rather than studied it, they may not even recognize the mistakes. Moreover, because the mistakes they make may not have interfered with their ability to communicate orally, they may have structured rules for verb use that will seem idiosyncratic to the teacher. Think, for example, of a sentence a student in my class wrote recently: *The students are taken their time*. Then try reading the Vietnamese student's paragraph (p. 77 in this volume) aloud, attending to the possibility of slurring or unstressed final syllables that are not articulated, and thinking about how this student may have learned her verbs.

Second, the student has made some vocabulary mistakes and has used some idiomatic expressions (correctly or incorrectly) that indicate her immersion in U.S. culture (see the italicized words and phrases). During a conference, this student indicated that she had never noticed the word *why*; instead, she thought that *why* and *while* were the same word (*while*) with different meanings—because the *l* in *while* is not pronounced. "Like lot of English words," she said. Idiomatic language used by this student, which might be unknown to international students who have studied English as a foreign language, include *it wouldn't help much, what they're doing to themselves, and anything else* (although an international student might write *any other reason*). The use of *Because of* is an oral insertion that would probably not be noticed in a conversation. Following are some other authentic examples of U.S. resident ESL writers mixing informal idioms into their writing because, like many native English writers, they do not understand levels of formality in English writing.

- Young **folks** usually get a better **kick out of** trips than older people.
- which is imperative **to hang around** a large number of friends
- they will want **to take off ASAP**.
- **Guys** like Neil Bush are destroying the American future.
- when you spend time with **a couple** of your close friends.

Finally, the seemingly arbitrary capitalization needs analysis. When I asked the student why she capitalized *Article* and *School*, she told me that she had learned that all nouns had to be capitalized. Of course, she did not know very much about nouns, but she did her best. She had later added the (correct) rule about capitalizing "I," though she found that English rule peculiar and intimidating because capitalizing "I" made her "stand out too much" in her writing.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT WRITERS

At the opposite end of the continuum from U.S. resident ESL students are international students who have chosen to attend postsecondary schools in the U.S., in much the same way that U.S. college students spend a semester or a year "abroad." Many of these nonimmigrant, visa-holding students come from relatively privileged and well-educated backgrounds. They are literate and fluent in their first language, and they have learned English in foreign language classes. That is, they have learned English principally through their eyes, studying vocabulary, verb forms, and language rules.

These students know, understand, and can explain English grammar; they have usually learned grammar through methodologies that focus on rule learning. Often their reading skills are substantial. Usually, however, their listening and oral skills are hampered by lack of experience, nonnative English-speaking teachers, and the culture shock that comes from being immersed in a foreign culture, the language of which sounds like so much "noise," so different from their studied English language. Their writing skills are often also limited because their prior English education has not provided opportunities for composed writing, preferring instead exercises in written grammar or answering reading questions in single sentences (Leki, 1992). Below is an e-mail from a native Spanish speaker who has spent some time in the past studying in the U.S., but who is now in his native country, Chile.

Dear Rolf Turner:

Thanks you in asking my question.

In memorian I am study models of regression and multivariates data for my **tessis academic** deductive in productivity and quality "*just and time*" in **management industrial**, (my carrer) in complexity with *n* variables **incidents operationals** and costs, this new study is casual, and important help for our country chile and United States of America in potentials **management strategic**. Before studied T.U. industrial control my investigation in data standars in **control of qualyty final** in cocesa (cobre cerillos s.a. chile) associate with Phelps Dodge in EEUU. I am not expert in statisticals but know ideas in mejority **methods productivity multivariates** in industries.

We might investigate three major areas of language error in this sample. First, interference from this writer's first language is visible in the false cognates: words that are close (but not exact) in meaning and used in both Spanish

and English (underlined in the paragraph). For example, *en memoriam* means to remind you in Spanish. In addition, the boldfaced phrases indicate the use of Spanish word order, in which (1) the adjective follows the noun (*qualyty final* instead of *final quality*), and (2) adjectives in Spanish are appropriately inflected (*operationals incidents*, a plural adjective for the plural noun).

Next, the structure "Before studied . . ." also demonstrates the transference of Spanish rules into English. Spanish allows a subject not to be named in a sentence if that subject is understood. Finally, the writer gives three examples of English use that demonstrate a lack of understanding about U.S. idioms and culture. He uses *asking* for *answering*; instead of writing *Thank you for or Thanks to you*, he writes *Thanks you*; and he attempts an idiom (*just in time*)—which may well be an "ear error" gained during his earlier U.S. studies.

CAVEATS: BETWEEN THE EXTREMES

Between the two ends of the continuum are immigrant students whose families have chosen to come to the U.S., and/or whose education in their first language has been substantial, and/or whose first language may not have a written language, and/or who may have studied English as a foreign language for a relatively limited period of time before they arrived in the U.S. Also along the continuum are international students who have come to the U.S. to study because they have not been successful in their own educational systems, and/or whose study of both their first language and English has been limited.

There are also differences within the differences: parental attitudes toward education that include the belief that women should not attend college; a prior education system that values rote memorization and/or teacher-centered classrooms in which students do not participate orally; a culture that values reflective thought or cooperation above the analysis and competition valued in many U.S. classrooms. And there are individual student differences in personality, learning styles, learning strategies, and motivation (Reid, 1993, 1995).

Finally, more caveats about this chapter. First, I need to point out that although this chapter focuses on linguistic and rhetorical writing problems, some ESL student writing will equal and surpass writing by native English speakers (NES). Many ESL writers will have little need of English language development; their writing problems may differ from NES writing problems in type, but the quality or sophistication of the writing may well be comparable.

I also need to distinguish between generalization and stereotype. In this chapter, I discuss two general kinds of students; I write about typical problems of students from different language and cultural backgrounds. However, I am keenly aware that while many stereotypes begin with a grain of truth, individual students differ widely in their educational backgrounds, their unique approaches to learning, and their levels of proficiency. Therefore, it is essential to approach each student as an individual, and to identify each student's needs.

INITIAL IDENTIFICATION

For the teacher of an ESL writer, discovering whether that student is a U.S. resident or an international student is the first step in identifying the student's needs and formulating an assistance plan. The process is simple: Ask the student for background information so that appropriate resources and support for the student can be recommended. Sample questions that might be asked via a written survey or an oral interview (whichever is best for the student's English language proficiency and comfort level) include those listed in Table 1.

It may also be important to discover more background information about the ESL writers. Follow-up questions for resident and international students alike are included in Table 2.

TABLE 1. Sample Survey/Interview Questions to Identify ESL Student Writer's Language Background

1. Is English your second (or third or fourth) language? _____	
• What is your first language? _____	
• List your previous schooling	
• in your first language: grade ____ through grade ____ total years ____	
• in English: grade ____ through grade ____ total months/years ____	
2. Did you graduate from a U.S. high school? Yes ____ No ____	
3. If the answer to the last question is	
No	Yes
(Usually indicates an international student)	(Usually indicates a U.S. resident)
• TOEFL score _____	• high school attended _____
• TOEFL section scores:	• graduated in what year _____
listening _____	• ESL classes taken
structure/written expression ____	____ hours each week
reading _____	in grades ____ to ____
TWE _____	• was your first language
• full-time English language study:	schooling interrupted?
Yes ____ No ____	Yes ____ No ____
If yes, where? _____	If yes, how long? _____
how long? _____	• fluency in first language (high, medium, or low)
	speaking & listening _____
	reading _____
	writing _____

TABLE 2. Sample Follow-Up Questions for ESL Student Writers

1. How did you learn English?

	<i>a lot</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>a little</i>	<i>none</i>
• studying grammar				
• listening to English speakers				
• practicing with language tapes				
• reading English literature				
• watching U.S. movies				
• watching U.S. television				
• other: _____				

2. How would you evaluate your English language proficiency?

	<i>excellent</i>	<i>very good</i>	<i>average</i>	<i>poor</i>
• speaking				
• listening				
• reading				
• writing				
• grammar				

U.S. RESIDENT ESL WRITERS

Investigation

Resident students may provide more complete information if the surveys are administered orally, allowing the students to use their English speaking proficiency. Results of the surveys will differ according to students' prior experiences. For example, a U.S. resident who has studied several years in U.S. public schools, and who has had constant language support through an excellent ESL program, will probably have the necessary skills to succeed in college or university work with minimal external support. In contrast, the writing of a student who has attended only the last year or two of U.S. high school, along with some classroom study of English prior to arrival, may have a combination of international and resident errors that make solutions to writing problems more complex.

Moreover, resident ESL writers who are fluent and literate in their first languages will acquire written English more easily than students who are not fully literate in their first languages. And students whose educations have been interrupted (by war, flight, refugee camps, and the like) may also be older and may have problems external to language learning that impact their ability to learn more English. Finally, students who have attended U.S. schools for a significant period of time but whose formal ESL education has been spotty are often doubly disadvantaged. Orally fluent, they have developed (perhaps unconsciously) language "rules," some of which must be identified,

unlearned, and relearned if they are to become successful academic writers. In the meantime, they are saddled with prior experiences of failure, and their reading as well as their writing skills may be limited.

Assistance

U.S. resident students have many resources for assistance on college or university campuses. First, they have direct access to federally funded student programs on the campus for help and tutoring (and perhaps test accommodation) in writing, reading, and math. The student (or the teacher) can contact those offices for short- and long-term assistance, and the teacher can require that the students seek this assistance. Often the support offered by these offices provides the necessary scaffolding and encouragement that resident students need to achieve successful learning experiences.

It is possible that the campus personnel are not adequately trained to help ESL writers, but that training is available through the college or university intensive English language program, the English Department, or through written materials. The books and articles in Table 3 will prove helpful resources for teachers and tutors. In addition, teachers or tutors who need information about the rules of English grammar might consult the resources in Table 4.

TABLE 3. Resources for Teachers and Tutors

- Bates, Linda; Lane, Janet; and Lange, Ellen. 1993. *Writing Clearly: Responding to ESL Compositions*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Carson, Joan, and Leki, Ilona (Eds.). 1993. *Reading in the Composition Classroom*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Connor, Ulla, and Kaplan, Robert B. 1987. *Writing across Languages: Analysis of L2 Text*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fox, Helen. 1994. *Listening to the World: Cultural Issues in Academic Writing*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Johnson, Donna, and Roen, Duane. 1989. *Richness in Writing: Empowering ESL Students*. New York: Longman.
- Kroll, Barbara. 1990. The rhetoric/syntax split: Designing curriculum for ESL students. *Journal of Basic Writing* 9 (1), 40-55.
- Kroll, Barbara. 1991. Teaching writing in the ESL context. In *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (2nd Ed.) (Marianne Celce-Murcia, Ed.), pp. 245-263. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Leki, Ilona. 1992. *Understanding ESL Writers. A Reference for Teachers*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Li, Xiao-Ming. 1996. "Good Writing" in Cross-Cultural Context. Albany: State University of New York.
- Reid, Joy. 1993. *Teaching ESL Writing*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall-Regents.
- Scarcella, Robin. 1990. *Teaching Language Minority Students in the Multicultural Classroom*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

TABLE 4. English Grammar Resources

- Byrd, Patricia, and Benson, Beverly. 1989. *Improving the Grammar of Written English: The Editing Process*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Byrd, Patricia, and Benson, Beverly. 1992. *Applied English Grammar*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Celce-Murcia, Marianne, and Larsen-Freeman, Diane. 1998. *The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL Teacher's Course*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Frodesen, Jan, and Eyring, Janet. 1993. *Grammar Dimensions: Form, Meaning, and Use (Book Four)*. (Diane Larsen-Freeman, Series Ed.) Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Master, Peter. 1996. *Systems in English Grammar: An Introduction for Language Teachers*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall-Regents.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Investigation

In contrast to U.S. residents, many international students can provide the teacher with actual data that will help analyze their writing problems. Most will have taken the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), an examination that is required for admission at most U.S. colleges and universities. At present the test is a multiple-choice examination designed and administered world-wide each month by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the same educational corporation that administers the SAT, GMAT, and LSAT. An overall TOEFL score of 550 or above often indicates that the student is ready for full-time postsecondary work; a score below 500 usually indicates that the student should be taking intensive English language courses.

TOEFL section scores can also be quite revealing. The three section scores on the TOEFL indicate general proficiency in listening, grammar, and reading skills; those scores are reported in double digits, but by adding a zero to a section score, you can compare it with the overall TOEFL score. For example, a section score of 55 → 550 indicates that a student has adequate language proficiency in that language skill. However, while students from different language backgrounds may have similar overall TOEFL scores, their section scores may differ, indicating potential problems in U.S. classes. For instance, often Asian students will score well on grammar and reading (e.g., 58 → 580), but less well on listening skills (e.g., 45 → 450). These students may be able to keep up with university reading assignments, but they may have problems understanding lectures or working with other students. In contrast, Arabic students may score higher on the listening section and lower in the reading section; these students may seem fluent during class discussions, but they may have substantial problems completing reading assignments. Table 5 summarizes TOEFL examination scores.

Several times a year, the Test of Written English (TWE) is added to the TOEFL exam; the TWE is a direct test of student writing and is evaluated holistically by experienced writing teachers at large scoring sessions held in California. The maximum score is 6; a score of 4.5 or better usually means

TABLE 5. TOEFL Examination Scores

Typical Admission Scores at U.S. Colleges and Universities^a

	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students
Unconditional Admission	525	550
Provisional Admission	500	525

Sample TOEFL Section Scores

Listening	55 → 550	(Add a zero to compare with overall TOEFL score)
Grammar	50 → 500	
Reading	45 → 450	

Overall TOEFL Score (average of three section scores) → 500

Test of Written English (TWE)

- administered with the TOEFL exam several times a year
- scored from 1 to 6 (including 1.5, 2.5 etc.)
- typical admission TWE score: 4 to 4.5

^aThe Educational Testing Service does not provide recommended admission scores for the TOEFL. Rather, it encourages admissions officers and department faculty to set those scores at individual campuses.

that the student can do postsecondary written work.³ Scores lower than 4 suggest that those students may need intensive work in U.S. academic writing. Unfortunately, many international students will not have a TWE score, either because it is not offered on every TOEFL examination or because they chose not to take it. And many postsecondary institutions still do not require the TWE as a viable admissions tool.

Another variable in international students' preparation may be attendance in an intensive English language program, either prior to their arrival in the U.S. or in a U.S.-based program. If students have studied ESL in the U.S., they may have encountered the rhetoric of academic English writing and so may be relatively proficient in presenting written ideas; the concepts of topic sentence, supporting detail, and essay structure may be familiar to them. For students who have studied English prior to their arrival, even intensively, the rhetorical principles of academic writing may not be information that they have encountered, much less practiced (Leki, 1992).

Assistance

Generally speaking, international students are not eligible for federal assistance although some colleges and universities do not discriminate (or simply do not know the differences between the two types of students). However, international students who have had prior experience with an intensive English language program on or near the campus have access to previous teachers in that program, and those teachers have knowledge of other campus options. In addition, because of their prior English language study, international students are usually capable of using a handbook or a dictionary to

TABLE 6. ESL Handbooks^a

- Asher, Allen. 1993. *Think about Editing: A Grammar Editing Guide for ESL Writers*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Byrd, Patricia, and Benson, Beverly. 1994. *Problem/Solution: A Reference for ESL Writers*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Fox, Len. 1992. *Focus on Editing: A Grammar Workbook for Advanced Writers*. New York: Longman.
- Heinle & Heinle. 1996. *The Newbury House Dictionary of American English*.
- Lane, Janet, and Lange, Ellen. 1993. *Writing Clearly: An Editing Guide*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Raimes, Ann. 1992. *Grammar Troublespots: An Editing Guide for Students* (2nd ed.) Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Regents.

^aOf course, the resources for teachers and students listed in Tables 3 and 4 are also relevant for teachers of international students and those students themselves, and the handbooks listed here (Table 6) may be used with success by some U.S. resident students.

check their errors and to expand their knowledge of English grammar and mechanics. However, because handbooks for native speakers of English do not address ESL problems effectively, I suggest the resources in Table 6.

ALL ESL STUDENT WRITERS

Other campus resources that are available to all ESL student writers (and usually assist students free of charge) include the campus writing center (or writing laboratory). The writing center is a valuable resource that will support ESL writers throughout their postsecondary careers, so students should be encouraged to investigate and use this resource. Moreover, paid tutors, often accessible through the international student services/education office, the intensive English language program, or the MA TESL/TEFL program, can provide necessary support for ESL writers.

NES friends can also serve as editors and language informants (Healy and Bosher, 1992). I advise my ESL students about appropriate approaches to such assistance:

- Never expect a friend to write, revise, or rewrite your paper.
- Sit with your NES friend and learn from him/her.
 - Identify specific problems.
 - Ask specific questions.
 - Draw conclusions and learn!
- Ask politely for assistance; don't demand.
- Offer a friendly trade, such as
 - pizza for proofreading, or
 - sharing language and cultural information.
- Give thanks with a smile.

TABLE 7. ESL Writing Textbooks

- Leki, Ilona. 1995. *Academic Writing: Exploring Processes and Strategies* (2nd ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Mlynarczyk, Rebecca, and Haber, Steven. 1996. *In Our Own Words: A Guide with Readings for Student Writers*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Reid, Joy. 1988. *The Process of Composition* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall-Regents.
- Spack, Ruth. 1996. *Guidelines: A Cross-Cultural Reading/Writing Text* (2nd ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Swales, John, and Feak, Christine (1994). *Academic Writing for Graduate Students: A Course for Nonnative Speakers of English*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Weissberg, Robert, and Buker, Suzanne. 1990. *Writing Up Research: Experimental Research Report Writing for Students of English*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall-Regents.

It is, of course, possible for ESL students to abuse the help from friends; teachers may question how much of the draft actually "belongs" to the student. While the issue is real, the pedagogical aim is valid, and safeguards can be instituted to check for ESL student involvement:

- briefly conference with both the ESL student and the NES friend near the beginning of the semester to ensure that both fully understand the process;
- assign frequent in-class writing (formal and informal) to discern whether the ESL student is actually learning;
- require the student to write regular memos to the teacher describing the friendly tutoring sessions, identifying and evaluating the changes made, and
- journal/learning log entries analyzing what was learned during the tutoring sessions;
- ask the student to write a memo on the final draft that describes the changes made from previous drafts.

Finally, for the many resident and international student writers whose rhetorical background is limited, the resources cited in Table 7 can help. First-year composition textbooks for NES writers may not address the differences in rhetorical presentation of materials between ESL students' cultural/educational backgrounds and U.S. academic prose. However, there are materials written for ESL writers that explain U.S. academic rhetoric and provide adequate practice for the students.

CONCLUSION

The discussion in this chapter does not mean to suggest that ESL student writers are any less capable cognitively than other postsecondary students. Indeed, learning and using a second language, attending and participating in classes in

another language, and writing for an audience with different linguistic, rhetorical, and cultural expectations are extremely challenging tasks. Moreover, ESL students are not typical "basic writers"; for example, many international students' educational backgrounds have provided them with substantial grammar and reading skills, and they are often successful students who have fine coping skills. They need information and practice in specific areas of academic prose such as content and organization. Many U.S. residents have only limited (and often incorrect) ideas about English grammar and written communication. Yet they may have significant cultural background from their prior school experiences, and their bicultural, bilingual lives make them unique.

NOTES

1. For more information about student learning styles, including information about cultural differences and lesson plan development, as well as several learning styles instruments, see *Learning Styles in the ESL/EFL Classroom* (Ed., J. Reid, 1995). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
2. Each of these comments has been taken from *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (Ed., M. Celce-Murcia, 1991, 2nd Ed.). Boston: Newbury/Heinle & Heinle.
3. For a thorough discussion of grammar clusters in U.S. academic writing, see Chapters 2-4 in *Grammar in the Composition Classroom: Essays on Teaching ESL for College-Bound Students* (Byrd & Reid, 1998).
4. Each of these samples is taken from one of the four textbooks in the *Looking Ahead* series (Series Eds., Joy Reid and Patricia Byrd, 1998). Boston: Heinle & Heinle. The explanations and grammar exercises have been taken from *Applied English Grammar* (Patricia Byrd and Beverly Benson, 1992). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

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Language Identity and Language Ownership: Linguistic Conflicts of First-Year University Writing Students

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How can I give myself an American identity if I cannot even feel connected to the American language itself? By saying connected, I mean the feeling of owning the language and, therefore having full authority over it. It does not matter how frequently I use English, somehow I can never feel that I own it.

—HAI NGUYEN

I am a native speaker of English because English is the language I know best.

—PETER MACK

I communicated with my sisters at home only through English in the midst of mom yelling, "Speak Korean! Are you Korean?"

—JANE KIM

Now, the only time I speak Vietnamese is to my parents. Unfortunately, I don't talk to them much, only when necessary; it's not very often that I speak their native tongue. I speak English fluently now and this is the reason why I don't talk to my parents very often.

—CHRISTINE NGUYEN

Recently, a body of research has emerged that views language and literacy acquisition from a broad-based sociocultural perspective; a perspective that seeks to explain success or failure of learning from within a social and political context in which the language learning occurs (Lantolf, 1996; Peirce, 1995; Rampton, 1995; Siegal, 1996). It is within this theoretical framework that we align ourselves.

From *Generation 1.5 Meets College Composition: Issues in the Teaching of Writing to U.S.-Educated Learners of ESL*. Ed. Linda Harklau, Kay M. Losey, and Meryl Siegal. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1999. 81-96.