Annotated Bibliography: ESL and College Composition

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Locating her article within an emerging conversation regarding the recognition of politics in the L2 classroom, Benesch defends this practice against those who oppose it, arguing that a pragmatic approach to L2 instruction is just as political as any other. She does not deny the importance of teaching L2 students the basic skills they need to negotiate target situations effectively, but argues rather that "[t]arget-situation demands and students' right to challenge them can be simultaneously addressed through what Pennycook called 'critical pragmatism'" (162). After outlining key arguments in the conflict between pragmatists and critical pedagogues in L2 composition, Benesch provides as an example of critical pragmatism in action her experience teaching an ESL writing course linked to an introduction to anthropology course. During the semester, in addition to helping students to discern material presented to them in their anthropology course, Benesch also helped them to develop strategies for changing the conditions of the class in which lectures were difficult to comprehend and assignment deadlines were unclear. Benesch concludes by arguing that critical pragmatism differs from pragmatism in that it resists indoctrinating students into one way of thinking, helps to build community and fosters agency among students while still giving them the opportunity to practice academic English.


With this article, Chen calls attention to an issue which he says has gotten little scholarly attention: minority (ESL) students' transition from high school to college. Specifically, the article's purpose is to investigate the difficulties of this transition for "economically disadvantaged and educationally underprepared Chinese ESL students" (24). He opens the article by acknowledging the stereotype of Asian Americans as the "model minority" in the United States and argues that this stereotype can be harmful for Asian American students, many of whom experience difficulty in English comprehension as well as oral and written expression. He then systematically challenges this stereotype with an analysis of interviews with 36 Chinese students and 12 instructors in a pre-college summer program. The study found that the factors affecting the students' academic performance in English were limited exposure to the language, discomfort with class participation, and limited parental involvement. Suggested strategies for ESL teachers include providing students with writing samples of assignments, putting Chinese students into homogenous groups for group work, and providing a well-structured syllabus.


After a productive conversation at a TESOL conference in 2001 regarding the role of race in English language teaching, the editors decided to fill a gap in the field with a collection of
narratives by TESOL professionals of color. The narratives respond the editors' request that authors identify important events or conditions in their professional lives resulting from their status as people of color and explain what they learned from these events or conditions. The narratives, drawn from a wide variety of contributors of African, Asian, and Latin American dissent are grounded in critical race theory, the tenets of which are briefly explained in the book's first chapter, and accompanied by discussion questions at the end of each chapter posed by the editors. The volume concludes with the editors' assessment of common themes and some suggestions regarding how these issues might be addressed in the profession.


Des Jarlais argues that western traditions have become so widespread that they are often taken to be self-evident principles. Because the privileged system of western education has spread globally and exercises greater and greater influence upon indigenous cultures worldwide, she attempts to provide indigenous populations with information about western education and its possible impact on indigenous ways of knowing and being. She begins the book by giving a short account of the historical development of core western values like individualism, democracy, capitalism, homogenization, and professionalism. Next, she discusses what she calls the "intuitive ways of knowing" common to indigenous cultures, characteristics of which include oral traditions, contemplation and nature, and symbolism in art. She compares and contrasts western and indigenous culture to illustrate the impact of the former upon the latter and shows alternatives developed by indigenous cultures to the western education imposed upon them. She concludes that, while both systems have merit, the compulsory education and standardized testing instituted by western cultures is repressive, and that education should be the responsibility of individual communities rather than the nation-state.


In the absence of ethics courses for university faculty (like those present in business schools), the authors attempt to offer a practical guide to ethical issues for ESL faculty in postsecondary institutions. They argue that discussion of ethics is particularly important for ESL faculty because the ESL classroom is often international students' first exposure to American culture and they are often overwhelmed and unsure of what is appropriate and inappropriate classroom behavior. It is also important because ESL faculty and students are likely to have different ethical systems due to cultural influences. The chapters, organized into three sections, Inside the Classroom, Outside the Classroom, and The Broader Context, address ethical issues which commonly arise for ESL faculty including how to address cheating, whether to tutor a student outside of class, and what to do about racist, sexist, or homophobic jokes made in class.


Tracing the shift from the classical languages, Greek and Latin, to English as the language of instruction in American universities and identifying the assumptions that accompanied this shift
in contemporary arguments both for the institution of English Only policies and against basic writing and ESL composition courses as well as in arguments against English Only policies and for basic writing and ESL composition courses, the authors argue that "a tacit language policy of unidirectional English monolingualism has shaped the historical formation of U.S. writing instruction and continues to influence its theory and practice in shadowy, largely unexamined ways" (595). In response to their findings the authors recommend that compositionists acknowledge the extent to which the unquestioned privileging of English monolingualism has shaped their field, resist identifying students in terms of fixed categories of language ability and identity, acknowledge the value of bilingualism, and encourage writing in languages other than English.


Asserting the impact of belief on the perception of texts, situations, and even scientific experiments, Kamhi-Stein identifies a lack of scholarly research on the influence of belief on reading strategies for L2 readers. Noting the three orientations toward the L1 identified by Ruiz, "language as a problem, language as a right, and language as a resource" (39), Kamhi-Stein cites the results of a qualitative experiment researching the influence of these attitudes on the reading strategies and comprehension of four Spanish/English bilingual college freshmen reading both English and Spanish texts. The study finds that the reading strategies of the four students were at least somewhat affected by the students' attitudes toward their home language. Those who viewed the Spanish language as a resource read the English text for meaning and used translation of the text into Spanish as a strategy for comprehension, although the comprehension was not always accurate. Those who viewed Spanish as a problem read logocentrically, aiming to understand the meaning and pronunciation of individual words rather than the text as a whole, a strategy which led to a fragmented reading process. Kamhi-Stein concludes by noting significant findings, including the observation that both strategies led to similar comprehension, and makes suggestions for further research.


Kaplan discusses the concept of contrastive rhetoric, which looks at "discoursal macro-patterns in the light of underlying cultural traditions and not only in terms of syntactic features on the linguistic surface" (375) to show that second language literacy goes beyond simple comprehension of vocabulary and grammatical rules, which are often the focus of L2 writing classrooms. Kaplan argues that contrastive rhetoric raises four central questions in composition: who writes what to whom, how, under what circumstances, and to what end? (379). Studies in contrastive rhetoric reveal that the answer to each question will vary widely from one culture to the next. Differences in authorial license, appropriate topics, acceptable evidence, and generic traditions across cultures introduce barriers to the writer/reader relationship. Contrastive rhetoric, according to Kaplan, will empower L2 students to anticipate and begin to address those barriers.

Lvovich, Natasha. "Literature as a Door to Textual Home for Second Language Learners."
In this article Lvovich reflects on her experiences reading Chaim Potok's novel, *My Name is Asher Lev* as a native Russian learning English as a foreign language and, later, teaching the novel as an ESL writing instructor at an American university, in order to illustrate the value of literature to ESL writing students. She explains that recent immigrants to English-speaking countries struggle to develop identities in the context of new and often mystifying linguistic and social communities, arguing that literature aids this process because of its emotionally and intellectually engaging nature. As proof, Lvovich offers the example of a student who entered her classroom with little idea of how to write a paragraph, let alone construct an entire essay in English. However, in the course of reading and analyzing Potok's novel, the student learned to make the novel her own in her increasingly proficient writing, drawing examples and ideas from the text as support for the articulation of her emerging biliterate American identity.


Matsuda challenges the lack of attention that has been paid to second language writers in the field of English composition and seeks, with this article, to problematize the default assumption that all composition classrooms are monolingual. He traces the history of linguistic containment in United States composition classrooms starting with the first first-year composition course taught at Harvard in the early nineteenth century. He explains that, as American universities have continued to diversify since the end of the Civil War and the presence of international students has grown, universities have used a number of strategies to keep linguistic diversity out of the classroom. These include filtering out all but native speakers of the most privileged varieties of English during the admissions process, ignoring language issues, and placing nonnative speakers of English into remedial or ESL classes. Matsuda concludes by noting that the separation of nonnative speakers into separate composition courses continues today, and clarifies that he is not advocating for the abolishment of these placement policies. Rather, he encourages instructors to abandon the assumption that their classrooms are monolingual spaces and to expect linguistic heterogeneity.

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This volume seeks to fill a gap in second language writing scholarship by addressing the impact of institutional politics and policies on L2 (not just ESL) writing instruction and classroom practices for the benefit of teachers, researchers and administrators in the field. The editors explain that L2 scholarship over the past two decades has focused primarily on the L2 classroom and theories of instruction, and argue that this narrow focus presents an incomplete picture of the situation of L2 writers and writing instructors in the academy. The editors claim that the studies included in the text "provide an understanding of how classroom practices are not neutral, pragmatic spaces but ideologically saturated sites of negotiation" (viii). The chapters are separated into five sections treating the impact of institutional politics on ESL in K-12, university writing programs and writing centers, academic and professional writing, writing assessment, and the academic profession. The text concludes with a coda arguing that the only
way to reach the "promised land" of ideal conditions for L2 learners is for L2 specialists and administrators to continually communicate and compromise.


In this text, whose intended audience is teachers of English to students who will use it for international purposes, the authors aim to examine the sociolinguistic contexts of English use and learning in the age of globalization. Keeping in mind the ideological basis of language embedded in social, cultural and political contexts, the tension between the global and the local, the privileging of English-only discourse in the classroom, and the Self-Other dichotomy in EIL pedagogy which privileges native speakers, the authors explore various factors affecting the EIL classroom. The chapters focus on the development of English as a global language, challenges faced by EIL educators in multiple countries, the politics of official language designation, World Engishes and identity, and interactional sociolinguistics. Based on their research, the authors argue that EIL educators should consider the influences of multilingualism, language policies and practices, and varieties of English used in students' home countries or the countries in which they will be working when making pedagogical decisions.


In reporting her study of how three "1.5 generation" immigrant students perceive their identities and experiences in traditional college composition classes, Ortmeier-Hooper problematizes the term "ESL" as an institutional marker. She notes that none of the students in her study self-identified as ESL for a variety of reasons: first, because they did not perceive themselves as English language learners, second, because some did not want the stigma that comes with the label, and third, because, as one student in the study noted, the label puts students into a static category (language-learner) which does not represent them as people or take into account the diversity of their experiences. In other words, teachers tend to focus on ESL students' position as international students or language-learners to the exclusion of all else. Based on her findings that the three students experienced their composition classes in very different ways, Ortmeier-Hooper argues ESL should not be treated as a monolithic category, nor should composition teachers assume that all of their students are native speakers. Rather, they should assume that a wide range of linguistic backgrounds will be represented in their classes and be aware of and responsive to the students' unique literacy histories.


Responding to two recent articles discussing the focus on critical computer literacy in the ESL composition classroom by Jeanne Marie Rose and Paige Ware, You points out that both articles ignore two critical questions in ESL pedagogy, first, whether political issues should be a focus of the ESL classroom and if so, how it should be done. Following Sarah Benesch's assertion that in
addition to pragmatic issues, sociopolitical issues should be addressed in the ESL classroom, he argues that "a critical pedagogy incorporating critical and rhetorical computer literacies can both address pragmatic concerns and examine ideological and cultural concerns regarding writing and rhetoric." You then illustrates through three examples how students use computer literacy to exercise rhetorical agency, negotiate with professors and peers, and explore multiple identities, concluding that ESL composition teachers should acknowledge and respect their students' critical use of technology and recognize it as a step in "the ongoing development of ESL students' multiliteracies."


In this chapter, Warschauer examines the use of Computer Mediated Communication in ESL composition classrooms and its affect on writing performance. First, he cites the findings of various studies on the use of Computer-Assisted Classroom Discussion (CACD), which reveal several benefits of CACD in ESL composition classes. These benefits include more student-centered classroom dynamics, deeper and more frequent participation in class discussion, and increased grammatical accuracy. Combined with face-to-face interaction, Warschauer argues, CACD can be an important component of ESL composition instruction. Studies of ESL students and communication reveal similar results, with students becoming more engaged with their writing tasks, more expressive, and more collaborative. Regarding Web-Page Authoring, Warshauer concludes that these kinds of assignments can be successful and beneficial as long as students understand the assignment and consider the rhetorical context and relevance of the Web Page they create. He responds to concerns about the use of technology in the classroom, like the fact that it encourages informality and plagiarism and places too much emphasis on graphics by encouraging instructors to address these concerns in their assignments and discussions, and positions computer literacy as and increasingly important part of composition instruction.