

GLCA: Teaching Writing to Multilingual International Students in a Small Liberal Arts Setting, College of Wooster, November 1-3, 2019
Inclusive Classrooms and Student Agency Module, *Dr. Tamara Stasik*

Faculty Activity 2- Expanding your knowledge of key issues in teaching and writing in the English Language: English-Only policy

Learning about the history, key issues, approaches, and assumptions regarding English language writing can develop your understanding of both teacher and student struggles for equitable, fair, and inclusive treatment. Horner, Bruce et al. (2010) critique the still dominant “tacit policy of monolingualism” (Matsuda, 2006) that assumes the classroom norm of a “native-English speaker writer writing only in English to an audience of English-only readers” (p. 1). And yet, for many teachers of multilingual student writing, the whiteness of the English language is so normalized that monolingualism, and all the cultural dominance that goes along with it, is invisible, even if we recognize that the classroom is “diverse” or “multicultural.”

Indeed, the monolingual classroom, and its idea of a single colonial Anglo-American notion of the English language, is now mostly a fiction in the United States. Even when the classroom is only full of “native” speakers of English, they are English writers of a variety of Englishes to an audience that understands or uses “the multiple and fluctuating character of English as not a single, unchanging world language, or lingua franca, but a constellation of ever changing Englishes” (Horner, Bruce et al., 2010. p.2).

Exercise 1: What are the constellations of Englishes you can observe in your classroom, or scholarship?

Where do they fit with your ideas of academic English? How might you recognize the multicultural constituency of your students and their language backgrounds and facilitate their use of these languages to transform their writing, rather than to conform to a particular standard?

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Exercise 2. Making explicit the culture of power implicit in Standard English.

Paul Matsuda (2006) states that the “myth of linguistic homogeneity’ is the “tacit and widespread acceptance of the dominant image of composition students as native speakers of a privileged variety of English” (p. 638). Aguirre (2003) argues that the worldview of academic English writing is colonial; “historically, from the inception of the United States as a nation, the dominance of European culture produces an Anglo-Saxon core society rooted in and identified with English language and customs” (as cited in Diane Lynn Gusa, *White Institutional Presence, Harvard Educational Review*, 2010, p. 468).

Critical Reflection: Where can you identify the implicit power of English in your own use of academic language? How have your own background, training, education, and experience shaped your worldview about learning and using the English language?