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THE WRITING PROGRAM
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INCLUSIVE ACTIVITIES 2022

Promoting Inclusivity Through In-Class Activities

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I. Diagnostic Invitation: Questioning Language and Power in the Classroom

We can look at student differences in language and culture as an occasion for a thoughtful and productive discussion about the ways in which language and writing conventions influence and are influenced by our ideas around power, authority, knowledge, intertextuality and individualism/originality. Allowing students to lead the conversation and asking them what writing conventions they are familiar with and have practices ensures that we don't essentialize languages but also highlights the ways in which writing is contextual and always situated.

Opening the semester with a diagnostic essay prompt that engages these ideas is one way to set the tone for the semester. **On the first day of class**, I ask students in groups of three to define the terms literacy, language, and practice (as the term relates to literacy and language). Once each group has generated definitions, they pass to the next group to add, question, and refine the definition they receive. The definitions and revisions then go to the next group, which lists examples of literacy and language practices based on the definition they receive. As the definitions shift and grow, the exercise highlights the fluidity of terms and language. The small group dynamic creates a more comfortable environment for students unfamiliar with student-led discussion and helps foster interaction and community among peers. As the groups report back to the class as a whole, we have a dynamic discussion about the terms and examples.

For homework, I assign the prompt:

Draw on our definitions discussion in class and your own experiences, opinions, and knowledge. In about one double-spaced page, please respond to the following questions:

What literacy or language practices do you feel you need to leave behind when it comes to writing in school and why?

Your response to these questions is meant to give me a sense of where you are in your thinking and writing about language so I can plan and structure aspects of the course and our discussions accordingly. This will not be graded. This is merely one way for you and me to see where you are right now in terms of your writing about a given topic and to help me generate

discussion questions and prompts for future assignments. Examples can come from any local, national, or international context.

Tip: Take a few minutes to jot down some notes and organize your thoughts.

During the following class period, we create a list of the purposes of and what constitutes academic writing (first in groups, then together as I write on the board). In making the list, we acknowledge that academic language is a learned form of discourse that has colonial origins and is rooted in racial and cultural power dynamics. We return to the definitions, examples, and diagnostic responses from the previous class period, and in groups, students share some of the literacy and language practices they feel they or others must leave behind when it comes to academic writing. I then ask the groups to consider the following questions:

·   Why do we consider some practices "inappropriate" in an academic context? Where have we learned that these practices do not have a place in academic writing? Who benefits and who is disadvantaged when academic writing is narrower?
.   When do the practices we discuss bolster or enhance writing in an academic context?
·   Where have we come across academic writing that does not conform to conventions? What are the effects?·
.   How might conventions of academic writing differ in different local, national, or cultural contexts?

We discuss as a class, and I remind them that we will continue this discussion throughout the semester while we examine both published academic writing and their own. Additionally, based on their diagnostic responses, I generate a list of literacy and language practices students feel they must leave behind and then locate academic and popular sources that use these practices to integrate into the course readings or recommend to individual students throughout the semester.

In looking at their own writing throughout the semester, we return to these questions in a more personal way. I ask students to ask themselves (adapted from Jessi Johnson and Taiyaba Husain):

• How do I make my writing authentic?
• What forms of language or linguistic practices are comfortable for and familiar to me?
• How does my identity better inform my reader?
• How can I guide my reader through potentially unfamiliar language in my text?
• How can I use language authoritatively and with clarity?
• How can I confront linguistic discrimination and challenge existing power dynamics through my use of language?

II. Rhetorical Choices and Effects

Linguistic hierarchies and monolingual ideologies are prevalent in many contexts in the U.S., especially in higher education. In looking to translingualism in established, published texts, we provide students with authoritative models (often admired by students) for exploring and implementing translingual approaches—both for native English speakers and non-native speakers of English. Engaging texts that capitalize on linguistic differences as a resource can encourage students to critically consider the negotiations and writing practices in texts that they read as well as texts that they produce.

Texts like Gloria Anzaldúa's "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" *Borderlands/La Frontera* illustrate the impact of negotiating one's identity and place in specific contexts and locations. During a unit focused on community, representation, and writing, I assign "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" as reading **assignment for students to complete for class.** Before students complete this reading and others, we have a class period focused on reading and note taking strategies.

https://www.everettsd.org/cms/lib07/WA01920133/Centricity/Domain/965/Anzaldua-Wild-Tongue.pdf

For homework along with the reading, I ask students to consider the following questions:

1. Which words and phrases does Anzaldúa translate? Why are those choices significant?
2. Who is Anzaldúa's intended audience? How do you as a reader navigate the text if you are not a Spanish speaker? If you are a Spanish speaker, how do you feel reading a text that code meshes in this way? If you are not a Spanish speaker, how do you feel reading a text in which not all of the language is immediately accessible to you?
3. What is Anzaldúa's purpose and/or argument in this chapter? Where do you see evidence for the argument?
4. How does Anzaldúa use voice and language to navigate nationality, culture, and identity in this text?
(If assigning several chapters, I would point to Anzaldúa's description of the book as "an assemblage," "mosaic pattern (Aztec like)," "a crazy dance" and ask a question about the order of chapters and the impact of arrangement on the reader.)

Generating preliminary answers to these questions in advance of class discussion prepares students to engage in small group and class discussions the following class period.

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III. Generating Ideas about Language Policy:
The Pentad with English Only as the Topic

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Even as students often have flexibility in writing and research focused classes to choose their own topics and issues, there are opportunities for structured activities that encourage students to interrogate linguistic hierarchies and monolingual ideologies in schools and are also adaptable for a variety of topics. For instance, I often use English Only policies in schools as a sample topic to teach students Kenneth Burke's Pentad. **In a class session**, I first provide some

background on English Only language policies and practices (SAE and SWE) and then introduce the Pentad and its terms:[2]

Act   names what took place, in thought or deed

Agent   names the doer of the act, whether person, force, or concept

Agency   names the manner or means of the act

Scene   names the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred; spatiotemporal but also social, moral, psychological, etc.

Motive   names the purpose of the action

As a class, we generate a few analytical questions we might ask about the topic. That is, we consider open-ended questions (how, why, should, what if)[3] that might lead to an argument.

Then, in small groups, students brainstorm and list ideas surrounding English Only. I encourage students to list every act, agent, agency, scene, and motive that comes to mind in the following table:

Act			
Agent			
Agency			
Scene			
Motive			

Students fill out the chart and identify the many stakeholders and complex motivations behind explicit and implicit policies and practices that privilege Standard English in school and/or suppress other languages. In asking subsequent questions about how each item relates to another in a different category (e.g. What motive might X agent have to perpetuate Y act?), students identify multiple perspectives and often gain direction for future research.

<div align="center">IV: Broadening Perspectives in Research</div>

Broadening the texts and perspectives in a research project or unit is a way to value of linguistic and cultural diversity and enrich class discussions and student writing. After students have completed a bit of preliminary research on a topic of their choosing related to our course theme, **I assign the following task for homework**:

On our class Discussion Board, please post one text that addresses the issue you plan to write about for WP 3 in a local or national context we have not discussed as a class. The title of the post should be the issue you are examining for this unit. The text can be written, aural, visual and in any language (as long as you can read it!). The text can address a context you are familiar with or have a particular interest in. On the same thread, write a couple sentences summarizing the text to give other students in the class a sense of its context, purpose, and argument.

Before the next class period, students are required to read the texts and/or summaries posted by peers exploring an issue similar to their own subject of study for the unit and take note of what struck them about each text as a comment on the original post.

The following class period, I put students focusing on similar issues in small groups together to discuss their texts. Discussion question:

How have the additional texts complicated, shifted, challenged, or reinforced a perspective of the issue you are studying?

<div align="center">V. Challenging Standard English with Vershawn Ashanti Young
Submitted by Rochelle Gold and inspired by Dan Dissinger</div>

In class, I show the students the first 23 minutes of the following video: https://www.pbs.org/video/connections-dr-vershawn-young/

I pause the video intermittently and we discuss as we watch. I pose the following discussion questions:

1. What are the distinctions Young makes between code-switching and code-meshing? Why is this significant?
2. What do the examples about Barack Obama tell us about language use?

3. What is Standard English? What kinds of definitions do you see when you look up this term? Why is this term contested?
4. How does Young define "effective rhetoric"? What do you make of this term?
5. What is the conventional wisdom about Standard English and professional rhetoric? How does Young challenge this conventional wisdom? What do you think?
6. What could "effective rhetoric" look like in the context of your next writing project?

VI. Note on Community Engagement and Promoting Inclusivity

Working with community partners in Los Angeles specifically has offered an opportunity for MLL students to showcase their language skills. We work with community partners including: 826LA—a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting students with their creative and expository writing skills; the Francisco Homes—a nonprofit organization that offers holistic support to formerly incarcerated individuals aspiring to re-integrate back into the community; and Miracle Messages—a nonprofit organization that helps people who do not have stable housing reunite with missed loved ones. In this work, students encounter individuals with a variety of language backgrounds, and often, MLL students are particularly well equipped to communicate with partners and generate writing with community partner organizations who need to reach clients in languages other than English.

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[1] All of these questions are adapted from the "Questions for a Second Reading" in David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky's *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*, 8th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008.
[2] The technique and definition of terms comes from the University of Southern California Writing Program's *Writing 150 Course Book* (2017).
[3] Thank you to Cory Nelson for her analytical questions definition and lesson plan.