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Multilingual Writers and Online Writing Instruction: Expanding Our Theoretical and Instructional Frameworks

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**MULTILINGUAL WRITERS AND ONLINE WRITING
INSTRUCTION: EXPANDING OUR THEORETICAL
AND INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORKS**

by

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DISSERTATION

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by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is based on a year-long mixed-methods study of linguistically diverse students in one online composition program. It focuses on the experiences of students and instructors from 27 online sections of first and second-year college writing courses. Using student and instructor surveys and interviews, it analyzes how second language writers' success was affected by the online environment, especially by the issues of technology and digital divide, students' online identity construction, and the lack of authentic online classroom learning communities. The manuscript provides a broader overlook of students' experiences across linguistic backgrounds and uses four case studies to offer a detailed, in-depth account of four multilingual students' paths through their online writing courses. This dissertation provides writing instructors and administrators with recommendations to re-envision online writing courses, mobilizing the affordances of online venues to promote the success of students from all language backgrounds.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF TABLES	xi
CHAPTER 1: LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND ONLINE WRITING INSTRUCTION	1
Introduction	1
On Terminology.....	5
Chapter Overview.....	7
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	10
Second Language Writing's Place in OWI Literature and Practice	10
Second Language Writers' Unique Characteristics and Needs.....	12
Instructional Design and The Nature of Online Writing Courses.....	15
Digital Divide and L2 Writers	18
Possibilities of OWI and CMC for Multilingual Students: From Feedback and Tutoring to L2 Writers' Identity	21
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	29
Institutional Context.....	29
Research Design.....	33
Research Questions	33
Case Study Research	34
Research Instruments	37
Data Collection	40
Participant Overview	43
Data Analysis.....	45

Theoretical Frameworks: From Poststructuralist Identity to the Community of Inquiry Framework	48
Identity in L2 Acquisition and L2 Writing	48
Community of Inquiry Framework and OWI.....	51
Limitations.....	57
CHAPTER 4: STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN ONLINE WRITING COURSES	59
Introduction	59
Survey Results: Student Participants Overview and Demographics	59
Student Participants' Linguistic Backgrounds	61
Survey Results: Students' Challenges in Online Writing Courses	64
Survey Responses: Comparing Online and Face-to-face Courses	68
Students' Technology Use: Navigating Online Courses	70
Classroom Community, Social Presence, and Peer Interaction.....	87
Conclusion.....	102
CHAPTER 5: DETAILED CASE STUDIES OF MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS IN OWCS	103
Introduction	103
Anika: Resourcefulness and recent-arrival immigrant identity.....	104
Self-Positioning and Constructing Identity: Passing for a NES Online	112
Conclusion.....	115
Diego: Building L2 writer confidence can be complicated	116
Engaging with the curriculum and using technology	119
Student-instructor relationship:.....	125
Classroom community: L2 writers sticking together.....	128
Diego's online identity: language learner confidence and insecurity.....	130
Conclusion.....	133
Tai: When the Outcomes Are Less than Ideal.....	134
Digital Literacy and Technology Use.....	135
Tension in the student-instructor relationship	136

Classroom community: A Little Help from My Friends	141
Identity and Positioning: Immigrant Narrative and the American Dream	143
Conclusion.....	149
Camila: Being on Your Own	149
Engaging with the curriculum and technology; interacting with instructor	153
Identity and Community: English-only and a Virtual “Classroom of Three”	156
Conclusion.....	160
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....	162
The Challenges of Increased Reading and Writing Load	162
Usability, Technology, and Navigating the Online Course	166
Identifying Multilingual Students and Students’ Identities	175
Identity, Social Presence, and Classroom Community.....	182
Recommendations for OWI Instructors and WPAs	188
Concluding Thoughts.....	191
REFERENCES.....	194
APPENDIX A: STUDENT SURVEY QUESTIONS	213
APPENDIX B: INSTRUCTOR SURVEY QUESTIONS.....	221
APPENDIX C: STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	226
APPENDIX D: STUDENT USABILITY WALKTHROUGH QUESTIONS	228
APPENDIX E: INSTRUCTOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	229

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. Visual representation of the Community of Inquiry Framework.....	52
Figure 4.1. Age of student participants (in years)	59
Figure 4.2. Students' ethnicity.....	60
Figure 4.3. Question 17 on the student survey.....	63
Figure 4.4. Challenges in online writing courses. Students' responses to Question 17 (in percentages)	65
Figure 4.5. A screenshot of Tai's usability walkthrough	72
Figure 4.6. The "To Do List," the only item inside Week 16 in Hannah's English 219 class.....	74
Figure 4.7. The view from inside Week 6 folder in Hannah's English 219 course	76
Figure 4.8 The view of Week 6 folder from "Project 1" page in Hannah's course	77
Figure 4.9. "Turn in assignments here" page in Hannah's English 219 course	78
Figure 4.10. A screenshot of Lee's "Assignment Prompts" page in her English 219 course	79
Figure 4.11. A screenshot of Stage II page during Diego's walkthrough	80
Figure 4.12. A screenshot of Stage II page taken at a later time	81
Figure 4.13. A screenshot of Week 6 folder during Diego's usability walkthrough	82
Figure.5.1. One of the slides from Anika's elevator pitch presentation	107
Figure 5.2. An example of Jessica's positive feedback on Anika's use of parallel sentence structures	108
Figure 5.3. An example of Jessica's carefully worded criticism and suggestions for improvement for Anika's word choice	109
Figure 5.4. Diego's company profile website (homepage).	119
Figure 5.5. Jessica's instructions for making the Elevator Pitch video	121
Figure 5.6. Jessica's instructions for accessing her feedback	123
Figure 5.7. An excerpt from Diego's company description	131

Figure 5.8. An example of Hannah's feedback	136
Figure 5.8. An example of Tai's response to a student he was not familiar with outside of class	145
Figure 5.9. Tai's response to a friend in the first third of the semester	146
Figure 5.10. Tai's response to a friend's post towards the end of the semester	146
Figure 5.11. One of the slides from Camila's instructional video for how to make chocolate-covered strawberries	152
Figure 5.12. An excerpt from Camila's analytical report	153
Figure 5.13. One of Camila's first responses to a peer's post on the discussion board	158
Figure 5.14. Camila's last comments on a peer's post	158

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1. Interview participants' demographics	44
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Chapter 1: Linguistic Diversity and Online Writing Instruction

Introduction

The last two decades in the history of higher education in the United States have been marked by greater diversity on multiple levels: greater cultural and linguistic diversity of its student demographics and higher diversity across instructional modes. Online and hybrid courses have become a common feature for most public and private higher education institutions. Online education has been steadily growing over the past two decades, and now at least one in three students is taking at least one online class every semester (“Online Consortium Report,” 2017). Moreover, the demographics of students taking courses online have shifted from primarily distance students to increasingly local students choosing to take a mix of onsite and online courses (e.g., Friedman, 2018). According to the latest Online Learning Consortium’s report, a total of 6,359,121 students were taking at least one online course in the Fall 2016, which represented 31.6% of all students studying at higher education institutions in the US. This number grew by 5.6% between 2015 and 2016, and while the total number of students studying on campus dropped by over a million (or 6.4%) between 2012 and 2016, the number of students who are not taking any online courses dropped even more over the same period of time—by 11.2%, or 1,737,955 students. It is clear that the growth of online education is a well-established trend that is unlikely to change, especially as more students prefer to take a combination of onsite and online courses to reconcile the demands of school and work.

With this growth, there has been some hope that online programs will make higher education more accessible. Online education has been praised for providing much needed convenience to students overtaxed with busy work and study schedules and for making college education available to those groups of students who would normally struggle in

traditional face-to-face courses. A recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* cited a common perception among university faculty members that online education “can bring together students from more diverse backgrounds — and allow them more chances to connect with each other — than many traditional classrooms do” (Blumenstyk, 2018).

But despite all the optimism surrounding online education, retention rates in online courses have been significantly lower than in face-to-face classes; according to some research, as many as six or seven times lower (Gaytan, 2015). Students at community colleges, it was found, are also less likely to succeed if they take online courses (Barshay, 2015) even if taking online courses helps them complete their degrees. Some polls also suggest that faculty across disciplines remain skeptical of the promise of online education; according to the Online Consortium 2015 Report, “Only 29.1% of academic leaders report that their faculty accept the ‘value and legitimacy of online education.’” Furthermore, research shows underrepresented and academically underprepared students (including English language learners) are the ones that are most likely to fail in online courses (E.g. Harrington, 2010; Jaggars & Bailey, 2013; Xu & Jaggars, 2013). The CCCC OWI (Online Writing Instruction) Committee’s 2011 State of the Art report confirms these finds and states that “some students and faculty will be better suited to the online educational environment than others” (p.2). It appears that multilingual writers are among those who will have better chances of succeeding in a traditional classroom.

At the same time, research outside of the writing studies field shows that digital technology and various affordances of online spaces have the potential to improve multilingual students’ learning and language skills development – if these affordances have been utilized appropriately and with due care. From being liberated from the time constraints of the traditional classroom and having constant access to an array of

instructional materials in different mediums to having more tools to re-create their social identity in the online spaces, multilingual students have a number of benefits to explore in an online writing course (OWC).

However, the experiences and needs of multilingual writers in fully online English composition courses remain largely underrepresented in research and in theory. How do distinct needs of multilingual writers, well-documented in research over the last three decades, change - or remain unchanged - when the writing course goes virtual? What are the conditions that allow multilingual writers to take advantages of the unique affordances of online spaces? What kinds of curricular and design strategies are best suited for ensuring multilingual writers' success? My project aims to help answer these questions by providing a close look at the experiences of resident and international multilingual writers in one online writing program. My initial goals were to uncover the main factors defining multilingual writers' experiences in online writing courses as well as their instructors' perspectives on what pedagogical strategies are most effective in working with multilingual students online. As my data collection progressed, I came to pay particular attention to the ways all students and multilingual students in particular navigated their online courses and engaged with the course materials, their peers, instructors, and the technology. In my description and discussion of the findings, I pay particular attention to the instances where usability aspects of the course (the ease and intuitiveness of navigation, the ways instructors designed and structured their courses, as well as the ways students engaged with the LMS) hindered or jeopardized students' success. As analyzed student interviews, students' written work, and instructor interviews, I also discovered some important themes in how students created their identity online and positioned themselves in the class by disclosing or withholding certain details about their backgrounds. While students' social identity was one

of my main foci from the start, the focus on classroom community developed later out of my observations of students' interactions with their peers and their experiences with their online and offline communities. As I found the topic of community insufficiently developed in the OWI literature, I turned to the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000) that provided a useful theoretical lens in looking at both students' peer interactions and identity construction. As I argue, in the last chapter of this manuscript, that the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework should be more widely adopted into OWI research as a theoretical and analytical tool, I also point to ways the CoI framework needs to be problematized and expanded to account for the presence of linguistic diversity in online classrooms.

As the student demographics in higher education institutions are undergoing significant changes, linguistic diversity needs to become the default setting for program and curriculum design across disciplines and especially in composition studies. As Matsuda (2006) argued over a decade ago, "all composition teachers need to reimagine the composition classroom as the multilingual space that it is, where the presence of language differences is the default" (p. 649). And while this call might not be a *nouvelle* idea, recognizing and accounting for the linguistic diversity in composition classrooms become even more imperative when these classrooms become virtual. This study provides one insight into how a group of multilingual and monolingual students navigated their mainstream OWCs in one online writing program, facing new and unique challenges but also uncovering the opportunities this instructional mode provides. It is important to expand our research efforts to provide OWI scholars and practitioners sufficient data upon which a more inclusive theory and practice of OWI can be built.

This research project provides an important insight into the factors that shape multilingual students' experiences in fully online writing courses. Not all of the findings are generalizable, but the detailed accounts of students' experiences paint vivid pictures of the challenges multilingual students faced and the strategies they used to overcome them. This project is a needed contribution to the field that seeks to make sure that OWI succeeds as "part of the new culture-wide, digital landscape" while growing "in positive ways, without overlooking the interests of any one group" (Newbold, 2015, p. xv).

On Terminology

When talking about linguistic minority students, assigning labels to the students' lived experiences is an inevitable and ideologically complicated task. Multiple terms have been used in different disciplines and at different times: ESL students, ELL, ESOL, LEP, EFL, NNES, second language (L2) writers, linguistic minority, multilingual, or bilingual students. However, as Cox, Jordan, Ortmeier-Hooper, and Schwartz pointed out (2010), "all of these terms mask the complexity of second language writers' identities" (p. xv). Paul Kei Matsuda (2006) commented that none of these terms are without shortcomings: "Each of these terms comes with its own history, some more contended than others... when does a person stop being an English language learner? What is the bar- level of expertise? Furthermore, 'ESL' and 'ESOL' are often seen as negative markers that stay with students long after they have exited from formal programs" (p. 4). Indeed, "ESL," "ESOL," or even "ELL" have been associated with negative connotations (e.g., Costino & Hyon, 2007; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008; Rucker, 2011), and students have experienced their stigmatizing effect. Matsuda (2006) further acknowledges the limitations of the term "second language writers" as well: indeed, for multilingual students, English might be their third or fourth, or fifth language. Based on the findings of this study, I would like to add that it might be even

more complicated than that: some student participants identified English as their first language even though it was not the language they learned when they first learned to speak. However, because it had become their primary language in both school and home settings, students considered English to be their main - and consequently first - language.

As my intent is to represent the student participants' perspectives as accurately and truthfully as possible, I have chosen to use the term "multilingual" when talking about all students who are proficient in more than one language, whether they consider English to be their first, second, or third language, and regardless of their legal status (international students, permanent residents, US-born citizens, and everything in between). This term brings more positive connotations and creates a broader umbrella for students from very diverse backgrounds that would be next to impossible to clearly separate into "L1" or "L2" categories. Using a broader term, however, comes with its own consequences. While Miller-Cochran (2015) also used the terms "multilingual," she noted that it united students from vastly different backgrounds: "These students might be proficient in academic writing in their first language or perhaps in multiple languages but probably not in English. By contrast, some students might not have developed written literacy in their first languages, of which English may be one" (p. 291). She further added that because of these highly diverse backgrounds multilingual students might be coming from, "identifying students who might benefit from a pedagogical approach designed for language diversity can be incredibly difficult" (p. 292). To that argument, I want to point out that traditional, English-only speaking students will benefit from more accessible course design and more inclusive pedagogies as well. Furthermore, since most of the curriculum and course design for OWCs is completed before the instructor even knows who her students would be, making sure that all OWCs are created with linguistic diversity in mind becomes imperative.

In addition, I use the term “monolingual students” to refer to the traditional, Native English-speaking students who are not proficient in another language. While this term has its own limitations, I use it in contrast to the “multilingual” term I use to describe the linguistically multiliterate students in my study. Some of the students who were grouped under the “monolingual” term indicated some knowledge of another language (e.g., one or two years of Spanish in high school), but all of them indicated their knowledge was very limited and normally they did not use the other language outside of the foreign language classroom. At the same time, the term “monolingual” does not come without limitations as it obscures the variety of regional, class, and other types of dialects of English represented by the participants grouped under this umbrella term. Nonetheless, I chose to use this term as it provides better readability by making a clear distinction between multilingual and monolingual students. While the experiences of speakers of dialects other than Standardized American English might in some aspects be similar to those of students speaking multiple languages, the confines of the present study did not allow me for a deeper look into the “weaker forms of language differences,” in Matsuda’s term (2006), of the linguistic variation that native English speaking student participants represented.

A more detailed description of student participants’ backgrounds will follow in Chapter 3. Finally, I use the terms “second language” (L2) writers or “ELL” in Chapters 2 and 3 when referring to the published literature in the fields of second language writing and second language acquisition in order to represent the author’s voices more accurately and to connect my work to the existing conversations in the fields.

Chapter Overview

The next two chapters lay the foundation for the findings and analysis of this project. Chapter 2 discusses some of the main trends in the scholarly literature covering the

intersections of second language writing, online writing instruction, and community of inquiry framework. The chapter discusses the available research on linguistic diversity in digital and online composing. The chapter takes a look at different perspectives, from second language acquisition to second language writing, composition studies and OWI, and community of inquiry framework. I point to some of the main theories and pedagogical suggestions presented in these diverse scholarly perspectives while also identifying the gaps in OWI and CoI literature regarding addressing linguistic diversity. Chapter 3 describes the design and methodology of my study; I provide an overview of the institutional context, describe the research questions and methods, and give a brief overview of the data collection and analysis as well as a preview of the study participants.

The next two chapters focus on the main findings of the study. Chapter 4 opens with a discussion of survey results and proceeds to explore issues of technology use and CMS navigation as well as classroom community and social interaction. Chapter 4 pays particular attention to the experiences of multilingual writers, and it compares survey results of monolingual versus multilingual students. However, it explores the central research questions across student linguistic backgrounds in order to better understand how online writing instruction impacts students' experiences across social, cultural, and linguistic borders. Chapter 4 opens with an overview of the student participant demographics, followed by a more detailed look at students' linguistic backgrounds. Next, it discusses the challenges students faced in their online courses, comparing student responses across language backgrounds. The next section offers a brief overview of what differences students perceived between online and face-to-face courses. The last two sections explore in more detail students' engagement with the course management system (CMS) and the ways students interacted with peers and the issues of building effective

learning communities. These last two sections draw on survey results as well as interview and usability walkthrough data. Chapter 4 thus describes the main findings of this study and lays the foundation for the arguments further elaborated in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5 presents detailed case studies of four multilingual students. These four students were selected for a closer analysis as they represent a range of experiences and perspectives: three of these students were born outside of the United States, and two (Diego and Anika) had lived in the country for less than two years before enrolling in the study, while one of them (Tai) came to the US with his family as a child. The fourth student, Camila, was born in the US into an immigrant family and considered Spanish to be her first language even as she was equally comfortable with English and Spanish. Among the students' first languages were Spanish, Vietnamese, and Gujarati. These students also had strikingly different approaches to building their online identities and their online or offline learning communities. I also trace students' engagement with technology and the challenges they faced in navigating their OWCs.

Chapter 4 and 5 thus present the main findings of this project. Chapter 6 then offers a discussion of these findings and the implications they have for further developing our theoretical frameworks and practice-oriented guidelines. I discuss in more detail the challenges multilingual writers faced, the issues of technology and CMS use, and the ways students were - or were not - able to build learning communities. The chapter closes with some recommendations for writing instructors and WPAs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Second Language Writing's Place in OWI Literature and Practice

At this point in the history of writing instruction, it is rather a truism to say that online education has grown exponentially over the past few decades together with the increasing proliferation and sophistication of digital technology. It has been 20 years since Cynthia Selfe gave her CCCC Chair's Address on the perils of not paying attention to how technology is changing the literacy landscape of the country, and in these years, the field of composition studies has been devoting increasingly more attention to the roles technology has come to play in writing, whether in the form of online writing instruction (OWI) or multimodal composing, with multiple studies and publications on the topic (e.g. growing number of publications in *Computers and Composition* several journals of distance education; books and edited collections by Hawisher & Selfe, 1999; Bolter, 2001; Takayoshi & Huot, 2003; Selfe & Hawisher, 2004; Shipka, 2011; Warnock, 2009; Hewett & Ehmann, 2004; Hewett & DePew, 2015). The research published over the last three decades informed the Principles for Online Writing Instruction, adopted by the CCCC in 2013, which have become a set of guidelines frequently used in online writing programs across the US.

However, there are still some significant gaps in OWI research and practice, especially at its intersection with Second Language Writing (SLW, or L2 Writing). When it comes to second language¹ writers in online writing courses, research has been far from sufficient. In CCCC OWI's 2011 *State of the Art of OWI* report, for instance, the authors simply state that "The needs of EL2 [English language] learners and users are vastly

unknown and insufficiently addressed in the online setting – both fully online and hybrid” (Hewett & DePew, 2015, p.19). In the eight years since that report, the situation has not seen a sufficient change, with occasional publications or inclusions like Miller-Cochran’s chapter in *Foundational Practices for OWI* (2015) being rather an exception than the rule.

In part, the lack of more deliberate attention to L2 writers can be explained by what Matsuda (2006) called the myth of linguistic homogeneity: “the tacit and widespread acceptance of the dominant image of composition students as native speakers of a privileged variety of English” (p. 638). Scrutinizing the mechanisms of linguistic containment, Matsuda stressed that this myth means that not only L2 writers’ needs are likely to be treated as an afterthought in research or policy design, but that composition teachers will be eager to relegate L2 writers and their concerns to dedicated agents such as writing tutors or ESL courses. Based on the results of this study, thirteen years after the publication of Matsuda’s piece, the situation with institutional policies and instructor attitudes has not changed to a very significant degree: L2 writing concerns are rarely part of a programmatic agenda, and instructors often feel underprepared to work with L2 writers, especially if they have to translate any experience and expertise they have in that area into online spaces.

The influence of this “myth” can be exacerbated in online environments as they tend to erase diversity to some extent or have a dehumanizing effect (Hewett, 2015, p.3). Indeed, the lack of in-person interaction might affect teachers’ perception of their students. For example, in Matsuda, Saenkhum, and Accardi’s study (2013) of writing instructors’ perceptions of the presence and needs of L2 writers, the majority of instructors indicated

¹ In this chapter, I use the term “second language writers” to connect to the body of literature existing in the L2 writing field.

that they identified L2 writers in their class either through self-disclosure or by certain features of their spoken language. The researchers even noted that “One instructor indicated that multilingual students were not identified because he or she taught all courses online” (p.75). Similarly, online instructors in this study indicated that they relied primarily on students’ self-disclosure to determine their language background. Thus, it becomes all too easy for writing instructors to overlook how diverse their classrooms are. Furthermore, writing instructors might also be compelled to design their courses for a “universal user” rather than “a universe of users” (Bowie, 2009) who all come with various experiences, abilities, skills, predispositions, etc. that affect the way they learn and interact with the curriculum.

Second Language Writers’ Unique Characteristics and Needs

Instructors’ awareness of the presence and needs of L2 writers in their online classes might often be lacking. However, apart from knowing who their students are, instructors also need to be able to tell what unique needs they might have and how to best address them. Research into the distinct needs of L2 writers in traditional writing classrooms has a long history and a substantial record. While publications on Second Language Writing appeared in 1970s and 1980s, the interest in L2 writing really flourished in the 1990s with the rise in international student admissions and increased globalization. Many of the commonly cited works outlining the unique needs and characteristics of L2 writers (Silva, 1993; Valdés, 1992; Leki, 1992; Reid, 1998; Hyland, 2003; Freidrich, 2006; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008; among others) demonstrate how L2 writers differ from their monolingual L1 peers in terms of language acquisition and cultural integration, educational backgrounds and history, learning styles, and attitudes towards language usage and learning; these studies have also shown that the population habitually called “ESL” or “L2”

students is not a homogenous mass and that there is a wide range of differences between international L2 students and domestic L2 or bilingual students.

In one of the first comprehensive overviews of the unique characteristics of L2 writing, Silva (1993) concluded, among other things, that “adult L2 writing is distinct from and simpler and less effective (in the eyes of L1 readers) than L1 writing. Though general composing process patterns are similar in L1 and L2, it is clear that L2 composing is more constrained, more difficult, and less effective. . . Their transcribing was more laborious, less fluent, and less productive - perhaps reflective a lack of lexical resources” (p. 668). While Silva’s review focused largely on international student writers (and some would argue followed the deficit view of second language writers), some of its main findings, like the more limited vocabulary or the longer composing time, might still raise concerns when we consider the additional literacy load of online courses (Warnock & Gasiewski, 2018).

A number of studies published in 1990s and early 2000s (e.g., Váldez, 1992; Friedrich, 2006; Reid, 1998, among others) pointed out some important distinctions between international ESL students, resident ESL or bilingual students, and in some cases, basic monolingual NES writers. Most of these scholars agree on a few key distinctions: resident L2 students might be more familiar with and proficient in spoken language (to the extent that some features of spoken, informal language might influence their writing) while international L2 students are often more comfortable with more formal written English and may lack the knowledge of many colloquial and informal features of English. International L2 students also tend to have more extensive metacognitive language awareness and explicit knowledge of linguistic features and rules whereas resident ESL or bilingual students may not have very extensive knowledge of the formal structure of English. Therefore, strategies that rely on explicit grammar instruction, for instance, might

not work equally well for these two groups of L2 students. These distinctions between different populations often grouped together under the umbrella of “L2 writers” lead some scholars to recommend using multiple modalities in communicating with students and in teaching materials such as creating text-based and video instructions or providing written notes for video lectures (e.g., Miller-Cochran, 2015).

Furthermore, international students specifically might face additional challenges when acquiring proficiency in academic English writing as they might be used to very different discursive and rhetorical practices that are often culturally-bound and are not addressed explicitly in EFL classrooms. Steinman (2003) cited a number of cases where L2 writers faced “collisions regarding voice, organization, reader/writer responsibility, topic, and identity” (p. 80). Similarly, Li (2014) attested that “In my learning to write in English I found that what was hardest for an outsider was not grammar, but those hidden, unarticulated values about good writing” (p. 105), and Canagarajah (1999) affirmed that “To be academically literate in English, second language students have to acquire not only linguistic skills, but also the preferred values, discourse conventions and knowledge content of the academy” (p. 147). Thus, mastering academic writing in English requires a more sophisticated understanding of discourse and rhetoric, and more specifically Western ideas of discourse and rhetoric: “Learning to write in English for academic purposes presents a significant challenge for non-native speakers. Not only must they deal with the obvious linguistic and technical issues such as syntax, vocabulary, and format, but they must also become familiar with Western notions of academic rhetoric” (Steinman, 2003, p. 80).

Considering all of these distinct characteristics, challenges, and needs that L2 writers bring into mainstream composition classroom, it is not surprising that most scholars believe L2 writers need additional support in terms of language development and

adaptation into the mainstream US academic writing and that writing instructors and programs need to be prepared to work with L2 students and provide them with this appropriate support, be it in the form of feedback (Ferris, 1999, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Matsuda, 2009), individual guidance (e.g. Liu, Weiser, Silva, Alsup, Selfe & Hawisher, 2008; de Oliveira & Lan, 2012), placement options (Braine, 1996; Costino & Hyon, 2007; Silva, 1994), and assessment (Hamp-Lyons & Kroll, 1996; Leki, 1995; Weigle, 2002, among others). However, even if instructors have sufficient training in or experience with L2 writing in traditional settings, it is often difficult to say how prepared instructors are to work with L2 students in online environments and whether they are able to transform these best practices designed for face-to-face courses into their online classes. Most importantly, instructors and WPAs need to be aware of not only the distinct needs of L2 writers but also how those needs transform in online settings, and how the new medium of instruction might affect different groups of L2 writers (e.g., resident bilingual students versus international students) in different ways. This study adds to existing knowledge of these unique challenges and experiences.

Instructional Design and The Nature of Online Writing Courses

Even if the instructors are aware of the diversity of their classes and are prepared to accommodate it, the learning management system (LMS) employed by any specific school may lend itself to more or less flexibility. Ideally, instructors should have control over the design features of their class to make it user-centered and user-friendly; for instance, Blythe (2001) offered ways instructors can make sure their courses follow the best principles in instructional design through usability tests. However, in some situations instructors might have few opportunities to change the way their courses are designed.

Approaching course design from a global perspective, Rogers, Graham, and Mayes's study (2007) probed into how educational technology developers approach cultural differences. While most instructional designers the researchers interviewed agreed that culture, among other factors, "has a strong impact on human-computer interaction" (p.198), they also confessed insufficient knowledge of the multitude of possible cultural differences. The researchers also pointed out that "instructional designers are frequently isolated physically and mentally from the learners for whom they are designing instruction" (p.207); interestingly, the study also found that "when the language of cross-cultural instruction was English, instructional designers tend to forget about the impact of other cultural issues and misunderstand the level of the English learners can handle" (p.205). Along the same lines, Gunawardena and LaPointe (2008) offered a more detailed discussion of the sociocultural factors that impact online education on the global scale, from diverse learning styles and educational experiences or communication styles to language issues and differences in interpreting icons, symbols, and other elements of Web design. The authors also gave practical recommendations for design development. However, there are other factors that can affect L2 writers' success in online classes.

Online courses might pose an additional challenge to L2 writers because all instruction takes place in written form: "the instruction both *is written* and *is written about the act of writing*" (Hewett, 2015, p.3). The sheer amount of reading might be a challenge in itself for L2 students; as Griffin and Minter (2013) pointed out, the amount of reading in online classes is "more than 2.75 times greater than in face-to-face classes" (p.153). Furthermore, as Hirvela's (2005) study demonstrated, students might lack preparation for academic writing expected in writing-intensive courses; for instance, they might not be prepared to work with sources in the expected way and can inadvertently turn to

plagiarizing when they find that previous instruction failed to prepare them for work in content courses. While Hirvela (2005) called for better collaboration among instructors across curriculum, it is also worth noting that students in his study sometimes struggled with technology in various ways and sometimes had to improvise in order to overcome these challenges (e.g. one student printed out all of the course articles because she did not want to read them on her screen).

As Jaggars and Bailey (2010) demonstrated in their meta-analysis of studies comparing learning outcomes between onsite and online courses, fully online courses did not pose any significant advantages for students across socio-economic backgrounds and were in fact found to be potentially damaging to the progress of low-income and academically underprepared students. They further argued that “In order for increased online course offerings to translate to improved academic success and postsecondary progression for low-income and academically underprepared students, we need to develop and evaluate programs and practices explicitly designed to improve such students’ retention in online courses” (Jaggars & Bailey, 2010, p. 12). Finally, Harrington (2010), studying the effects of hybrid writing courses on ESL and EFL students, similarly found that this format – and, by extension, fully online courses as well – can pose particular challenges for language learners who were likely not only to struggle with the text-heavy environment as well as new technologies and the plethora of online activities but also to choose to “self-mute” due to their low comfort levels with using English or feeling intimidated by the native English-speaking students in the course. He argued:

The same technologies which hold the promise of improving ESL/EFL students’ writing also hold the potential for creating feelings of acute self-consciousness and anxiety; increased opportunities for open discussion and

sharing of ideas also create increased opportunities for intimidation. The same classroom social community which should allow for the creation of an academic self also has the potential for fragmenting that self, perhaps even preventing its creation all together. (Harrington, 2010, p. 9)

Harrington (2010) further called on researchers to investigate “the issues regarding identity, discourse development, forced individualism, and muting due to switching between the two instructional delivery methods” (p. 9).

Digital Divide and L2 Writers

The fact that L2 students often find themselves struggling with the technological aspects of the class is supported by the research on digital divide. The terms “digital divide” has been introduced to the public and academic discourses in the mid-1990s. Selwyn (2004) cites a definition given in 2000 by the US Department of Commerce that reflects many of the common understandings of the term:

[Some individuals] have the most powerful computers, the best telephone service and fastest Internet service, as well as a wealth of content and training relevant to their lives . . . Another group of people don't have access to the newest and best computers, the most reliable telephone service or the fastest or most convenient Internet services. The difference between these two groups is . . . the Digital Divide. (p. 344)

This dichotomous approach has been persistent in public debates and studies that often show how inequalities in access to technology exist along “the lines of socioeconomic status, income, gender, level of education, age, geography and ethnicity” (Selwyn, 2004, p. 344). A number of studies explored these inequalities in access; for example, Guillen and

Suárez (2005) looked at the digital divide across countries arguing that the divide is closing with the spread of telecommunication technologies and advent of democracy and cosmopolitanism. But while conceptualizing the divide in terms of technology haves and have-nots provides a dichotomy that is easy to use for the purposes of large-scale quantitative research or public policies, scholars have pointed out that such approach obscures the complexities of what it means to be well-adapted in today's technology-driven world. As many scholars (e.g., Gunkel, 2003; Selwyn, 2004; Warschauer, 2003; Monroe, 2004; Banks, 2006) have pointed out, it's not simply the access to the Internet and technology, but rather the kind of access and kinds of uses that matter.

Gunkel (2003) argued that the term "digital divide" is misleading in representing the situation as a binary opposition between information haves and information-have-nots. According to him, the term promotes "potentially disturbing forms of prejudice" (p.508), and Gunkel called the field to practice self-reflection and use the term with caution. Selwyn (2004) also urged not to conflate access with use: contrary to the presumption that access inevitably leads to use or is equal with use, having physical access "is meaningless unless people actually feel able to make use of such opportunities" (p.347). Selwyn also stressed that there is a hierarchy of access (e.g. someone with a broadband Internet access on multiple devices at home and someone accessing the web at a public library clearly have different kinds of access) and a hierarchy of uses.

A number of later studies investigated the divide in terms of these finer hierarchies. Jones, Johnson-Yale, Millermaier, and Seoane Perez (2009) looked at the patterns of Internet use among college students of different races and genders and found that differences in use were greater between White, Hispanic, and Black non-Hispanic students than they were between students of different gender. Lu Wei's (2012) study of Internet use

showed that female, less educated, older, or poorer Internet users only use the web for very few applications. Warf's (2012) study of digital divides across the US likewise showed that there are significant differences in the kinds of access between racial and socio-economic groups, with age, income, ethnicity, and educational background being the most significant factors. Warf also points out that as technology develops and changes, so does the divide: as Internet traffic becomes heavier, broadband access becomes more imperative even if it is still far from universally affordable. Broadband access is thus the new frontier in the digital divide, but it also follows along racial and socio-economic lines: according to Pew Research Center's 2015 report, the rates of broadband subscription for Whites is 73%, while for Hispanics and Blacks, it is 48% and 55% respectively.

Finally, Ruecker's (2012) study of two high school students transitioning to college highlighted how the digital divide was present at secondary and post-secondary educational institutions as manifest not in access to technology but rather the uses of it: the school described in the study utilized its technology for remedial "drill-and-skill" programs that did not facilitate students' digital literacy development, and the students had to rely on resources outside of school. While the study also stressed the importance of the students' own agency in bridging the digital literacy gap, the author remained skeptical of the promises of technology: "Technology, while promised as a great equalizer, served to replicate existing divides in education, especially at the remedial levels" (p.249). Indeed, the gap in access to technology and its uses is not likely to disappear; we are bound to see significant differences in students' preparedness to work with the different digital tools required in our online classes. Resident L2 writers coming from economically disadvantaged households are likely to be affected by the divide as well, lessening their

chances to succeed in an online course where they already might be facing linguistic challenges.

Affordances of OWI and CMC for Multilingual Students: From Feedback and Tutoring to L2 Writers' Identity

However, despite the potential challenges that digital technology might pose, it can also be utilized to the benefit of all students and L2 students specifically. The affordances of online environments and computer-mediated communication (CMC) have been documented in a substantial body of research; chief among these affordances are those for teacher or tutor feedback and those for L2 writers' individual language skill improvement.

Digital tools not only facilitate the task of giving instructor feedback but offer new ways of doing it. Dana Ferris (2012) gives an overview of the common computer tools such as Microsoft Word or Web 2.0 resources that instructors can use to improve the effectiveness of their feedback. From text editing and commenting to using macros, audio-recording, Web 2.0, or other tools for providing feedback, these tools provide opportunities to improve the quality of corrective feedback and direct student learning towards student autonomy. Similarly, Yang (2010) argued for the use of collaborative editing tools such as Google Docs in language learning classrooms across delivery modes.

Ducate and Arnold (2012) took a closer look at two of computer-mediated feedback tools: screencast feedback (a combination of audio and video) and more commonly used comment function of a word processing software tool. The authors found that students overwhelmingly preferred the screen-cast type of feedback delivery and while the difference in feedback effectiveness was not significant, the authors noted that screencasting "might have facilitated, even encouraged, the instructor to provide more detailed and/or learner-friendly feedback that can function as scaffolding during the revision

process” and it “might have more ‘corrective force’” (p.46). The latter finding is reinforced by Elola and Oskoz’s study (2016) of the two feedback delivery methods; the authors found that instructors tended to give different types of feedback depending on the type of delivery: “when using the screencast software, the instructor provided additional and lengthier comments on content, structure, and organization; the instructor was more explicit on form when using the coding system in Word” (p.58). Similarly, Vincelette (2013) argued that “screencast assessment fits into students’ daily experiences with technology, uses familiar interfaces, and can provide more effective feedback to students about their writing than can text-based feedback alone” (108).

Online environments might also provide opportunities for more effective tutoring for L2 students. Hewett and Lynn (2007) looked into online conferencing with L2 students and gave an excellent set of guiding principles for instructors, such as using more explicit language, taking the time to find out more about the student and the issue for which they are seeking assistance, etc. Jones et al (2006) also argued that online tutoring allows for more equal participation between the tutor and student.

It has been argued that computer-mediated communication can also provide a “safe house” for L2 writers who might be traditionally marginalized or who might choose to remain silent for fear of being criticized in traditional face-to-face classrooms (Canagarajah, 1997). In online settings, students might be more free to battle stereotypes about themselves (Warschauer, 1999) and to exercise the rhetorical traditions of their home cultures, expressing them in English (Bloch, 2004). Carmen Kynard’s study (2007) also showed how African American students in an online writing course were able to re-envision their own identity and resist the stereotypes and the pull of Standardized American English. On the other hand, Hafner’s more recent piece (2015) explores how students make

use of existing written artifacts and “whether this practice of remix promotes or compromises the expression of learner voice” (p.486).

Besides promising benefits for teacher- or tutor-student interaction, the use of Internet also offers a number of advantages for L2 writer’s language skills development. Thus, a number of studies have investigated the use of various social media and online communication tools and their effects on L2 writers. Fong, Lin, and Engle (2016) investigated how English language learners communicated in a public online chat room for language learners, co-constructing their language identities. The authors claimed that online communication instruments like online chat sessions may foster positive identity development of L2 learners. Boas (2011) similarly argued for the use of blogs and Internet more broadly in L2 writing because online tools create “conditions for idea generation, research, and collaboration, especially with teenage learners who are accustomed to interacting online with social media” (p. 27).

Other researchers have looked at how multilingual writers use their multiple literacies in constructing their identities in various online spaces and what affordances and challenges the new communication environments offer to language learners. Thus, DePew and Miller-Cochran’s study (2009) of L2 writers’ use of social networks also demonstrated students’ engagement with sophisticated rhetorical considerations in constructing their identity online, something that instructors can mobilize for developing students’ academic writing. Nguyen and Kellogg (2005) analyzed L2 students’ online discussion posts in a content-based hybrid course to demonstrate that “L2 students do not simply acquire new language forms; rather, they learn to construct themselves in the second language” (p. 130). Barton and Lee’s (2013) comprehensive overview of language diversity in public online venues included a few case studies demonstrating how social media users were

constructing their identities through language choices, demonstrating their alliances to certain cultural or national narratives in multicultural multilingual settings. The authors argued that “The dynamics presented by new media enable people to constantly display, construct, perform, shape and reshape different sense of the self online through linguistic means” (Barton & Lee, 2013, p. 84), adding that the participants in their study utilized different self-representation strategies depending on their real or imagined audience, the specifics of the social media, and their goals.

Similarly, Chen (2013) examined the literacy practices to two multilingual writers on social media sites, demonstrating how the writers “developed multiple, and sometimes competing identities through different types of literacy activities and social interactions in the social networking community” (p. 163). As the participants utilized their multiple languages and multiple available mediums and technologies in creating their online presence, the study served as an illustration of how “languages and literacies function as symbolic resources within digitally mediated spaces as promoted by globalization and emerging technologies” (Chen, 2013, p. 163). The author further emphasized that language learning should be viewed as symbolic competence, in Clair Kramsch’s term, that “places students’ semiotic choices of resources, meaning-making processes, and identity formation in the center of language learning” (p. 163). Furthermore, in a later study, Schreiber (2015) demonstrated one English language learner engaged in translingual language practices in online social media spaces, where he integrated “diverse linguistic and semiotic resources into a unified expression of identity, relying on the multimodal affordances of digital writing to accomplish his communicative goals” (p. 69). Schreiber (2015) also showed that these translingual practices were not part of the student’s ESL course, which was seen as a much more restricted – and restricting – place. Schreiber’s study is not the

only one that pointed to the disconnect between multilingual students' everyday language practices and the constrained monolingual spaces on composition classrooms. Researchers like Canagarajah, Horner, Lu, and Trimbur, among others, have called for a paradigm shift in composition studies that would taking into the consideration the impact of World Englishes, as well as the hybrid nature of modern cultures and discourses, and embrace the multiliterate (or translingual) practices of multilingual writers. Despite these calls, the field still has not fully distanced itself from the monolingual ideologies that have historically shaped its underlying ideologies.

Besides student or learner identity, researchers also investigated teacher identity in online spaces. DePew's earlier piece on online teacher identities (2008) also offered a discussion of how instructors made use of digital environments' affordances in order to construct their desirable instructional identity. DePew (2008) highlighted the unique opportunities of online spaces, claiming that "CMC applications allow the individual to be whomever the individual can compose themselves to be" (p. 212). While this statement holds true regarding both instructors and students in online courses, DePew discussed how two particular writing instructors constructed their online identities. One of them, an "Asian ITA" (p. 214) requested to teach a hybrid course after receiving complaints from his onsite students regarding his accented English. In the hybrid course, he "used multiple CMC and DC applications – from a course Web site, to e-mails, to Microsoft PowerPoint and Microsoft Word – to communicate with the students both face-to-face and outside of the classroom" in order "to appear more proficient in English" (p. 215). This case study provided a useful insight into how language learners can utilize the new technological possibilities to their advantage. DePew (2008) also pointed out that as online education becomes more and more common, "instructors will have to ask themselves how the

technology shapes the ways their students perceive them,” further adding that “While instructors may instinctively try to replicate their face-to-face instruction when they teach hybrid or online courses, they should resist that call” (p.217).

However, it is impossible to discuss identity without acknowledging some of the foundational studies done on the subject in L2 writing and acquisition fields. In SLA, one of the most notable contributions was made over 20 years ago by Bonny Norton who studied the experiences of immigrant English language learners in Canada. Drawing on Bourdieu’s theories of cultural reproduction and linguistic exchanges, Norton (1995) problematized ideas of competence and motivation. Norton used Bourdieu’s idea of “the power to impose reception” (p. 18) to show that “opportunities to speak are socially structured” (p. 26) and that immigrant language learners often struggle to be accepted in their new country’s society. Norton (1995) maintained that social identity was “multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change” (p. 9) and a language learner’s ability to speak the language or “impose reception” depended on having access to social networks. Lam’s (2004) study provided a similar account of young Chinese female immigrants who struggled to be accepted in school because of their limited English ability; Lam’s study, however, had one important difference: the participants were able to practice their English in online chat rooms designed for English-Chinese bilinguals. While these studies demonstrate that social identity is fluid and changeable, they also make it clear that it is both constructed by and constructive of the social surroundings. For language learners unable to be accepted in their new society and to be seen as worthy of conversation, creating new social circles and using the new language becomes a challenge.

Ortmeier-Hooper (2008) further complicated the issues of labeling and student identities in her investigation of immigrant university students enrolled in composition

courses. She argued that for students, labels such as “ESL,” “ELL,” or “Generation 1.5” bore complications that were “emotional as well as tactical” (p. 390). She further asked, “what exactly does it mean for a student to be ‘ESL’? and when, if even, does a student stop being an ‘ESL’ student?” (p. 390). While the terms might seem purely descriptive (e.g., an ESL student is someone who speaks another language as his/her first language), the term is “also an institutional marker, pointing to a need to additional services and also to the status of someone still marked as a novice in the English language” (p.390). Further expanding research on identity to include students’ agency as a mediating factor between their individual traits and the environment, Varghese (2012) explored how one successful linguistic minority student created her agency through a discursive presentation of herself as someone “capable of overcoming significant challenges” (p.154), combined with some forms of cultural and social capital and resources. Varghese analyzed the cultural narratives and discourses the student drew upon in constructing her narratives and further contended that “it is important to consider not only the material actions and effects of student agency, but also how students construct and narrate themselves as agentive through the discourses they avail themselves of and articulate” (p.154). Student agency can be all the more important if we consider Kanno and Varghese’s (2010) claims that many resident L2 students tend to self-eliminate and avoid situations where they need to be more assertive for their own benefit.

On the whole, research on identity in L2 writing has demonstrated the importance of considering the interconnectedness of the social environment and L2 students’ sense of self, as well as what consequences student identity might potentially have for their learning trajectory. Being able (or unable) to construct a desirable online identity impacts language learners’ motivation and investment in learning. After all, as Gonzalez and Hancock (2008)

demonstrated, public self-representations are likely to be internalized; in other words, we adopt or internalize the qualities of our online identities. Furthermore, students who are not able to construct a positive self-representation in their online courses might choose to self-mute (in Harrington's term 2010) or stop participating in the online discussions. In a setting where online participation is not only mandatory but often plays a defining role in students' success, any obstacle to full and effective participation needs to be investigated. In this study, I paid particular attention to what opportunities students had in creating their online self-representation, how they positioned themselves in online interactions with their peers and instructor, and what effects their online identities played in their learning trajectories.

Overall, online courses bring a number of affordances that new technology and internet use have introduced to second language learning. There are, however, some inherent disadvantages that might jeopardize multilingual students' success, such as increased literacy and technology load, lack of direct interaction, or limited number of means students can utilize in constructing their identity.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Institutional Context

The study was conducted at the University of New Mexico, the state flagship university with close to 30,000 students on its main and branch campuses. The state demographics indicate that 46% of the state's population are Hispanic², 41% White, 9% Native American, and less than 2% are Asian or African American. In addition, the US Census Bureau states that 35.7% of the state's population speak a language other than English at home. The student demographics at UNM are representative of the state numbers: according to the UNM Official Enrollment Report for Fall 2017 (when this study was launched), 48.5% of undergraduates were Hispanic, 32.5% were White, 5.6% were American Indian, 3.9% were Asian, and 2.3% were African American. Finally, 3.5% of students were labeled "two or more races," and 2% were foreign. UNM student demographics thus have higher numbers of Hispanic and Asian students than state averages and lower numbers of Native American students. While the university does not track students' linguistic backgrounds, it is reasonable to assume the number of students speaking a language other than English at home or as their first language is similar to, if not higher than, the state average. Finally, the university also enrolls over 1,000 international students, with almost a half pursuing an undergraduate degree. While the Core Writing program at UNM offers one or two sections of first-year composition specifically designed for international students, a large number of international students are placed in regular English Composition courses where instructors might not always be aware of their background. Placement of international students is most often handled by the Global

Education Office at UNM, and the Core Writing program has few ways to influence students' placement. So far there have been no online courses offered for international students specifically. I taught an experimental cross-cultural first-year composition course in 2016-2017, but that course did not become a regular offering as issues with student recruitment, curriculum design, and staffing made it difficult to offer it on a recurrent basis. For more details on that course, see Tseptsura (2017).

The eComp (short for Electronic Composition) program at UNM was founded in 2013 in response to the university's efforts to expand its online course options. The program was also made possible by the addition of two new faculty members specializing in online writing instruction (Bourelle & Bourelle, 2015). At its beginning in Spring 2013, the program offered only two online pilot sections of first-year composition. At the time this study was conducted, the program offered up to 20 online sections of 100-level first-year composition and 200-level technical and professional writing courses. In the 2017-2018 academic year during which this study was conducted, the eComp program offered online sections of English 110 and 120, a two-part first-year composition course, although there were more sections of English 120 than English 110 offered, as the Core Writing program deemed it necessary to have the majority of English 110 sections on campus. The eComp program also offered a large number of English 219, Technical and Professional Writing, and some sections of English 220, a higher-level Expository Writing course.

All eComp courses follow the curricular principles and student learning outcomes set by the UNM Core Writing program. The program follows genre approach and its learning outcomes focus on developing students' rhetorical knowledge, reflective and

² Here and below, I use the official state and school-used labels, despite their problematic history and implications.

research skills, genre awareness and argumentative strategies, as well as grammar skills and other conventions of academic writing. The students work with a variety of genres and create a portfolio at the end of the course. The portfolio is delivered in the form of a website, completed with students' detailed reflections on the student learning outcomes, revised projects, and a home page detailing students' progress in the course and revision process. There are eight outcomes for English 110 courses and ten for English 120, which has two additional outcomes focused on research skills. For both English 110 and 120, two learning outcomes bring the focus closer on linguistic diversity: outcome B states that by the end of the course, students should be able to "describe the social nature of composing, particularly the role of discourse communities at the local, national, and international level," and outcome E states students should be able to "analyze and describe the value of incorporating various languages, dialects and registers in your own and others' texts." These two outcomes were implemented to help initiate conversations focused on diverse registers, dialects, and languages, as well as develop students' awareness of how their own writing is shaped by the social and discourse communities to which they belong. However, an assessment study conducted by the eComp directors (Bouelle & Bouelle, 2015) discovered that these two outcomes showed consistently lower student performance compared to the other outcomes and to face-to-face courses. To remedy that, the eComp directors, in collaboration with other faculty members in the Rhetoric and Writing program, introduced a number of measures over the last few years. First, an experimental section of English 120 was developed to allow a more explicit focus on language variation. The course was first introduced by the eComp directors; later, I developed it into a fully cross-cultural section that aimed to accommodate linguistic minority students as I recruited resident and international multilingual students to take the course (Tseptsura, 2018). Next,

a “language diversity” requirement was introduced across all courses taught in the eComp program: at least one assignment needed to address linguistic diversity overtly. While the eComp directors and other faculty members suggested a number of ways that requirement could be fulfilled, online instructors had flexibility in how they chose to build that assignment. As a result, there was a significant amount of variation in how instructors chose to approach the task; some of these approaches will be discussed in the chapters below.

The eComp curriculum differs from most onsite Core Writing courses in one important aspect: most of the assignments students create are multimodal projects that include a mix of visual and audio elements. Following Takayoshi and Selfe’s (2007) warning that traditional text-based essays might not prepare students for the kinds of writing they would have to do outside of college classes, the program encourages students to work with such multimodal genres as websites and blogs, video presentations and video instructions, podcasts, etc. Similarly, eComp instructors model multimodal approach for their students as they create instructional materials in multiple mediums.

The majority of eComp instructors are teaching assistants who are graduate students coming from different fields within the English department. All TAs are required to take a practicum on online and multimodal composition prior to teaching online, in addition to the regular teaching practicum required of all TAs teaching in the Core Writing program. UNM is one of the few institutions in the country that provides a dedicated practicum course for teaching online writing courses (Bartolotta et al., 2017). The practicum introduces some key theoretical frameworks for OWI and multimodal composition and offers some practical advice for novice online instructors. The TAs develop their own instructional materials and work on designing their courses using the

CMS tools. In my personal experience with the practicum, it was an extremely helpful and important step towards preparing me for teaching online for the first time. In the words of another TA, Natalie Kubasek, “The theories that I learned in the pedagogy course helped me to understand the purpose and significance of multimodal and online pedagogical approaches, thereby providing a framework for how I could effectively engage students in multimodal composition and evaluate their work in an online course” (Bourelle et al., 2015). Finally, the courses taught by the TAs are also regularly observed by the eComp directors; however, courses taught by the adjunct instructors or faculty members are not usually observed. With limited resources available to most online writing programs, it is not surprising that close supervision of all online courses is currently an unreachable goal. As will be discussed more in Chapter 6, online writing programs instead need to seek ways to ensure quality of instruction across different courses and sections through other measures.

Research Design

In light of the limited documented insight into what goes on in online writing courses when they include multilingual writers, the main goal of my project was to get a more in-depth look at students’ and instructors’ experience in OWCs. To achieve that goal, I chose the case study approach (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2009) within the larger umbrella of qualitative research.

Research Questions

In my initial design of the study, I adopted five research questions to guide my study design and initial data collection:

1. What are the experiences of multilingual students in online writing courses, and how do they compare to those of their NES monolingual peers?

2. What unique difficulties (if any) multilingual students might be facing? What aspects of online courses present more challenges, and why?
3. What are the resources and advantages multilingual writers bring to online composition courses and do the instructors and/or the students recognize or make use of these resources?
4. What are the instructors' perceptions of their multilingual students? Do the instructors perceive the need to accommodate multilingual students in their online courses, and if so, what are their accommodation strategies?
5. Which instructional design features are most beneficial for multilingual students, and which ones should be avoided or minimized?

These rather broad questions were later refined and narrowed down, but at the design stage they provided a helpful guide for constructing my research instruments and initial stages of data collection.

Case Study Research

The core of the project constituted students' and instructors' stories that "offer testimony," in Ilona Leki's words (2003), providing "insights into the complexities of particular cases in their particular contexts" (Johnson, 1993, p.7). Yin (1989) defined case study as

an empirical inquiry that:

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context;
- when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which
- multiple sources of evidence are used. (p.23)

To answer my research questions, I needed to look at a variety of sources of evidence, from interviews and usability walkthroughs with the participants to online course observations, students' written assignments, and teaching materials. Case study research is best suited for this kind of task as its "unique strength is its ability to deal with a variety of evidence - documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations - beyond what might be available in a conventional historical study" (Yin, 2009, p. 11). Furthermore, as I anticipated having recruitment issues (based on the results of my pilot study conducted a year prior to the start of this project), I intended to select no more than 10 student participants for multiple follow-up interviews that would allow me to trace their progress in the course throughout the semester. As each "case" in case study approach is a "bounded system" (in Johnson and Christensen's term, 2017), the goal of the researcher is to investigate how "the parts come together, i.e., their synergism" (p. 434). My goal thus is to determine how my participants' experiences were shaped by the variety of external and internal factors evident in the collected data. Chapter 5 presents four case studies of four multilingual students, portraying their experiences in rich detail while triangulating data from multiple sources. Finally, Johnson and Christensen (2017) also differentiate between intrinsic, instrumental, and collective case studies. In a collected case study (alternatively called "multiple-case design," Yin, 2009), they state, the researcher believes that he or she can "gain greater insight into a research topic by concurrently studying multiple cases in one overall research study" (Johnson & Christensen, 2017, p. 435). As I looked at multiple cases within one research project and multiple student participants enrolled in one program, I was able to compare these cases for similarities and differences, which allowed for more breadth in findings and greater generalizability compared to a single case study. In addition to using

qualitative research methods, I also used survey data to gain a broader insight into students' experiences across different linguistic backgrounds.

This project offers an insight into the inner workings of the complex systems of online classes and brings to the forefront the voices of the often underrepresented and underserved student population. Following case study approach might lessen the generalizability of the findings; however, the case study approach allows me to gain the necessary depth of observation and insight in order to adjust our theoretical frameworks to ensure greater inclusivity and accessibility of OWI. I hope that the depth and richness of my findings will help overcome some of the inevitable idiosyncrasies of the data or shortcomings of the approach. Finally, case studies have been used extensively and with great results in educational and L2 writing research. As van Lier (2005) points out, "case studies research has become a key method for researching changes in complex phenomena over time" (p. 196). In second language acquisition, case studies have been used with both adult and child participants, in shorter as well as in longitudinal projects, in educational settings and in broader contexts. For example, Norton's seminal research (2000) on L2 learner identity (discussed in more detail in Chapter 2) was focused on a group of immigrant Canadian women and documented their daily interactions with NE speakers in a variety of settings. Case studies are a common tool in second language writing as well; it was used by Shi and Cumming (1995) in their study of teachers' perceptions of second language writing; by Leki (2007) in her longitudinal study of L2 undergraduate writers, and in a great number of more recent studies, e.g., in Severino and Prim's case study (2016) of one online writing center user. As van Lier (2005) pointed out, case studies are capable of shaping the field's theoretical frameworks, and they "speak strongly to teachers, students,

and policymakers,” illustrating the participants’ struggles “in more vivid ways than any textbook treatment or lecture can accomplish” (p. 204).

Research Instruments

My research instruments included distributing instructor and student surveys (Dörnyei, 2010), conducting interviews with student and instructor participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Merriam, 2009), collecting students’ written work and instructors’ teaching materials, and conducting usability walk-throughs (Miller-Cochran & Rodrigo, 2006; Rodrigo & Cahill, 2009) with both student and instructor participants. As my data collection progressed, I came to a realization that my dissertation manuscript will have to exclude certain data due to large volumes of information I was collecting. I decided not to include instructors’ perspectives on their own experiences with teaching OWCs and working with linguistically diverse students. In this manuscript, I only include instructors’ voices when it is relevant to the students’ experiences I am describing. Consequently, in this overview of my research instruments, I focus on the student questionnaire tool, student interview questions, and student usability walkthroughs.

The first instrument to be used in the recruitment step was student and instructor online questionnaires (attached in Appendix A and B). While the main data source for a deeper insight into students’ experiences was student and instructor interviews, these initial surveys provided a broader look at students’ experiences and also allowed me to compare multilingual and monolingual students’ experiences. I designed the surveys following Dörnyei’s (2010) guidelines: I kept the surveys’ length at under 30 questions, varied its length and type from open-ended questions (which were more rare) to multiple-choice questions, rating scale questions, etc. Overall, I tried to construct question as multiple

choice whenever possible; I reserved open-ended questions for topics that required deeper elaboration or where I wanted to avoid what Dörnyei (2010) called “acquiescence bias” or leading students to a particular response through the phrasing of the answers or sometimes the questions themselves. The student survey questions moved from general questions such as students’ age, language backgrounds, and previous experience with English and education in general. I tried to avoid asking students about their legal status; questions such as “are you an international student?” or “are you a permanent resident?” might have been perceived negatively in the current political climate, considering that UNM has a substantial number of undocumented students. Instead, I asked students if they were born in the US or not, and students had an option to specify their country of birth if they wanted to. The middle part of the survey delved into students’ attitudes and beliefs about their OWC and online education in general. I asked students what kind of challenges they were facing in their OWC, how it compared to traditional face-to-face courses, and what kind of support they would like to see in their OWC. Students were welcomed to leave their name and/or email address if they wanted to enter into a \$50 gift card drawing, but otherwise they were free to keep their responses anonymous. One of the last questions also invited students to participate in follow-up interview(s) with me, with a \$20 gift card incentive for each interview.

All surveys were in English as it was my assumption that all students enrolled in an English course at the university would have sufficient language skills to read and understand the questions in English. I tried to avoid complicated or ambiguous vocabulary or sentence structures to ensure greater clarity and accessibility. The surveys were hosted by the *Esurvey* (also known as *Opinio*) service offered by the UNM IT department. All

students' identities were kept confidential; all student and instructor interviewees' names were replaced with pseudonyms.

The next research instrument I designed was student interview questions. I used interviews to elicit new information and to check students' survey responses for accuracy and expand on their responses. I used semi-structured interviews; thus, I created an initial set of 23 questions (see Appendix C) and a short list of individual follow-up questions on students' survey responses, as well as possible follow-up questions to students' interview responses. As Rubin and Rubin (2005) pointed out, "in the responsive interview model, analysis is not a one-time task, but an ongoing process. Interviews are systematically examined - analyzed - immediately after they are conducted, to suggest further questions and topics to pursue" (p. 16). During all interviews I conducted, I kept notes that I used to identify main trends in my preliminary analysis and to prepare follow-up questions for subsequent interviews.

Finally, the last instrument I designed was a student usability walkthrough guide (see Appendix D for a list of usability walkthrough questions). To examine the usability of the OWCs and explore how the students navigated their courses, I followed the framework for evaluating instructional design outlined in Rodrigo and Cahill (2009). Usability is defined as "a fairly broad concept that basically refers to how easy it is for users to learn a system, how efficiently they can use it once they have learned it, and how pleasant it is to use" (Mack & Nielson, as cited in Rodrigo & Cahill, 2009, p. 110). The term comes from usability the engineering field and is often employed in commercial industries; as such, one difference for usability in educational LMSs is that students might be expected to experience some difficulties or challenges that will push them outside of their comfort zones (Rodrigo & Cahill, 2009). Yet the concept is valuable in determining whether the

instructional design of any given class needs to be modified in order to ensure students' easier access to and use of course materials. Furthermore, my goal was to uncover whether multilingual students faced unique challenges working with LMSs and other software tools required in their courses compared to their monolingual peers.

To perform a usability test, I followed a pluralistic walkthrough method described in Miller-Cochran and Rodrigo (2006): I asked students to perform various tasks in their courses on Learn (e.g., posting a response on the discussion board, submitting a written assignment, or accessing instructor's feedback), and I also asked students to walk me through the steps they normally took when logging into their OWC. Throughout the walkthrough, I asked students to think out loud and explain what they were doing; this think-aloud protocol was then supplemented by a video recording of the walkthrough using a screencasting instrument (Camtasia™). I then transcribed the audio part of the recording and saved screenshots of the video that illustrated important moments during the walkthrough.

Data Collection

Data collection lasted two semesters (Fall 2017 and Spring 2018) and started with distributing a student survey. With the help of a multimedia development specialist at UNM's Extended Learning center, I developed a recruitment video of myself introducing my project and encouraging students to participate. With the help of the eComp director, Dr. Bourelle, I shared the video, together with the link to the student survey and a short text description of the project, with all of the instructors teaching in the eComp program. I asked the instructors to share the recruitment materials with their students and encourage them to take my survey.

The survey participants had the incentive of entering into a \$50 gift card drawing, which was completed at the end of the semester, after the survey was closed. The interview participants also received \$20 gift cards for each interview conducted. Despite the incentives, recruiting student participants proved to be difficult. Out of approximately 900 students enrolled in writing courses in the eComp program each semester, only 98 participated in the survey, which represented only 11% of all students. This low response rate can be attributed to a number of reasons; difficulties in reaching out to students was one of the most notable factors. Students were more likely to respond if the link to my survey (accompanied by a short recruitment video) was shared by instructors through course messages, but when the link was posted on a separate page in the course CSM, it was often buried in the course structure and remained unnoticed by most students.

Out of the 98 students who took the survey, 45 students volunteered to be interviewed (24 students in the Fall 2017 semester and 21 in the Spring 2018). In the Fall 2017, I interviewed 10 students, 6 of whom were proficient in more than one language and had spoken English for various lengths of time between 2 and 15 years (see the section below for more details on student participants). Four of the interviewed students were native English speakers, two of whom were non-traditional students in their 30s. In my selection of interview participants, I was limited by the number of case studies I was able to follow at the same time (I limited that number to ten), and I contacted multilingual students first as the majority of students volunteering for the interview were native English-speaking students who did not speak any other languages. Some of the students I contacted never responded, either losing interest in participating or missing my message (there is a chance my messages might have been identified as spam). In the Spring 2018 semester, the process was repeated with new study participants: I first distributed the survey and then

contacted students who volunteered to be interviewed. I was able to recruit 5 students, only one of whom spoke more than one language.

I did three rounds of interviews with most students; two did not respond to my requests for follow-up interviews in the Fall 2017 semester, and one did not complete all of the interviews in the Spring 2018. Thus, 12 students completed all three rounds of the interview. The first interview took place at the end of the first month in the semester or early in the second; I did not want to schedule the interviews too early in the semester as I wanted students to have had more experience with their OWC prior to our first interview. The second interview took place in the second half of each semester, and the third interview was conducted after the semester was over and the students had received their final grades for the course. Usability walkthroughs were typically conducted during the first interview. All interviews and usability walkthroughs were transcribed in full during summer 2018.

Simultaneously with the student surveys, I distributed instructor surveys via email directly to the instructors. I interviewed eight eComp instructors in the Fall 2017 semester and six instructors in the Spring 2018 semesters (see Appendix E for interview questions). I conducted two interviews with each instructor: one at the beginning of each semester and one after the semester was over. As I could not disclose student participants' names to their instructors during the semester in order to avoid influencing instructors' perceptions of or attitudes towards the students, I was only able to ask instructors about student participants after the final grades were posted. Parts of instructor interviews related to student participants are referenced in the chapters that follow. However, not all instructors agreed to be interviewed or gave me access to their online courses, and some granted me access but did not agree to the interview.

Finally, after the end of each semester, I asked for instructors' permission to be added to their course on the LMS. As I already had students' permission to collect their writing submitted as part of the course as well as instructors' permission to use their teaching materials, I was able to collect a variety of data, including students' discussion board posts together with their instructors' prompts, students' written and multimodal work, as well as instructors' announcements, assignments, and other design elements of the OWCs. As Griffin and Minter (2013) pointed out, "the record made possible by online courses offers a wealth of information about writing instruction and student literacy that was not available in the past" (p. 153), and I was able to take advantage of the unique affordances OWCs give researchers. However, as not all instructors participated in the study, I was unable to obtain some data for a few student interviewees. Thus, I was unable to get access to David's class (one of the two NES, non-traditional students in this study) and was unable to collect his discussion board posts. However, I was able to collect his written work as he shared with me the link to his final portfolio website complete with most of the writing assignments he created.

Once all of the interview and usability walkthrough recordings have been transcribed, I had the complete data set which included the transcripts, students' survey responses, writing samples, and teaching materials. All audio and video recordings were deleted to protect the identity of the participants.

Participant Overview

The table below lists all student interview participants and outlines some major details regarding their age and background. In the Fall 2017 semester, I was able to interview ten students who volunteered to participate, and in the Spring 2018 semester, I interviewed five more students. While interview questions and usability walkthrough

procedures were described above, this table provides a general overview of the interview participants' demographics and language backgrounds. Note that all names are pseudonyms; students' and instructors' names, as well as course sections, are omitted for anonymity. I preserved course numbers (English 219 is Technical and Professional Communication; English 120 is the second course in the two-course sequence of first-year required Composition course). I changed the course section numbers by assigning them numbers from 1 to 8 to show which students were in the same course.

Name	Age group	Ethnicity and country of origin	Language background	Semester and course enrolled
David	26-40	White; US	NES; beginner knowledge of Spanish and German	Fall 2017; English 219-1
Tai	18-20	Asian; Vietnam	English as a second language since kindergarten; Vietnamese at home	Fall 2017; English 219-2
Diego	18-20	Hispanic; Spain	Spanish as native language; fluent in French and English	Fall 2017; English 219-3
Camila	18-20	Hispanic; US	Bilingual; Spanish and English	Fall 2017; English 219-4
Sean	18-20	White; US	Monolingual native English (NE) speaker	Fall 2017; English 219-2
Gabriel	18-20	Hispanic; Mexico	Bilingual in English and Spanish	Fall 2017; English 219-3
Richard	26-40	Hispanic, US	NES; beginner knowledge of Spanish	Fall 2017; English 219-5
Anika	18-20	Asian; India	Bilingual in English and Gujarati; fluent in Hindi	Fall 2017; English 219-3
Martin	18-20	Hispanic; Mexico	Bilingual in English and	Fall 2017; English

			Spanish	219-4
Stacy	18-20	White; US	Monolingual NE speaker	Fall 2017; English 120-1
Amina	21-25	Asian; US	NES; conversational knowledge of Urdu and Arabic	Spring 2018; English 219-6
Joe	18-20	White; US	Monolingual NE speaker	Spring 2018; English 219-7
Steve	18-20	White; US	Monolingual NE speaker	Spring 2018; English 219-8
Antonio	18-20	Hispanic; US	Monolingual NE speaker	Spring 2018; English 219-8
Jane	Unknown	White; US	Monolingual NE speaker	Spring 2018; English 120-2

Table 3.1. Interview participants' demographics. (Note that in this table and below, I use the terms as they appeared on my survey.)

Notably, the vast majority of interview participants come from English 219 courses, Technical and Professional Communication. Most of these students were sophomores or juniors (although two were freshmen); interview data thus revealed the experiences of more mature students who had advanced beyond their freshman year and were more confident as writers and as students.

Survey respondents' demographics are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Data Analysis

The preliminary data analysis started concurrently with data collection as I was reviewing students' survey responses and my interview notes. I followed the open coding approach (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Corbi & Strauss, 2008), allowing the themes to emerge from the data rather than trying to force the data into preconceived codes (Ruben & Ruben, 2005). Thus, as I was reading the earliest data, I was looking for emergent themes

and salient topics in students' experiences. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) advocated for a framework that relies primarily on ethnographic and grounded theory methods; in this framework, multiple rounds of coding are conducted concurrently with data collection, followed up by a second cycle of coding based on all the collected data after the data collection stage is complete. In my first rounds reading and preliminary coding, I focused on the themes central to my initial research questions: the experiences of multi- and monolingual students in their OWCs, what roles their language background plays in these experiences; instructors' perceptions of linguistic diversity in their courses in general and of their multilingual students more specifically as well as instructors' strategies for accommodating these students' needs. I paid special attention to the roles technology played in shaping students' and instructors' experiences. During those first rounds of reading and coding, some themes started to emerge which became my main focus in subsequent rounds of reading, coding, and analysis. For all coding, I used the TAMS (Text Analysis Markup System) Analyzer software tool.

Once I had my complete data, I went through the first round of reading trying to identify some of the major themes that were emerging. During the next round of reading, I constructed a list of 20 descriptive codes that I later combined into five main categories: "Technology" (having to do with all aspects of technology use, including navigating the CSM and creating multimodal assignments); "Social aspects" (including student-student and student-instructor interactions, classroom community, etc.); "Online aspects" (including overt and implied comparisons between online and face-to-face courses as well as students' impressions of the unique characteristics of online education); "Course design" (including CMS design and instructors' design of assignments, student interactions, etc.); "Student backgrounds" (codes included students' language background, students'

individual traits that affected their success, and students' beliefs about the qualities that make good online students). I used these categories to code all student interview and usability walkthrough transcripts and all open-ended student survey responses.

After two rounds of coding (Miles et al., 2014), my further analysis focused on triangulating student survey and interview responses with those of their instructors and students' written work and instructors' teaching materials. Each data source provided another piece of the puzzle. Survey responses were most instrumental in getting a broad picture of what the main challenges for multilingual students were and how they differed from the challenges monolingual students commonly faced. My analysis of students' discussion board posts, on the other hand, focused on students' constructions of identity and interactions with their peers. The latter was also a prominent topic in students' interviews and survey responses. Finally, both survey responses and interview and usability walkthrough transcripts provided a detailed look into students' use of technology. As these themes were becoming most prominent in my analysis of the data, I looked for the theoretical frameworks that would be helpful in drawing the conclusions based on my findings. What I discovered is that there is not a single framework that would guide my explanation of the multifaceted experiences of multilingual writers in OWCs. While there have been some important studies on L2 writers' online identities or online communities (e.g., Barton & Lee, 2013; Chen, 2013), this research on the whole lacks a coherent theory of online community or social aspects of online instruction. On the other hand, the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework that has been gaining popularity in online education and OWI in particular (e.g., Stewart, 2018), has paid little attention to linguistic or cultural diversity and power relations in its conceptualization of social presence in online

education. Thus, I decided to adopt both theoretical frameworks and attempt to enrich one with the other. Below, I outline the main principles behind each framework.

Theoretical Frameworks: From Poststructuralist Identity to the Community of Inquiry Framework

Identity in L2 Acquisition and L2 Writing

In the past few decades, identity has become one of the central concepts not only in second language teaching, writing, and acquisition, but in sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and social psychology. A lot of this research grew out of poststructuralists theories of language, which, in Norton and Toohey's (2011) words, viewed language "not as a set of idealized forms independent of their speakers or their speaking, but rather as situated utterances in which speakers, in dialogue with others, struggle to create meanings" (p. 416). A commonly cited influence on identity theorizations are works of Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986) who saw language use as a continuous conversation where new language users were able to contest old and create new meaning. Bakhtin also pointed out how speakers' social positions affected their positioning in communicative acts. In Norton's (2000) study of Canadian immigrant women, she demonstrated how these women's motivation to learn and use the English language was curtailed by the identity positions made available to them by the society they were entering and the unequal power dynamics between language learners and native speakers of that language. Norton (2000) used Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital to argue that language learners invested in language learning in certain situations and settings because they believed having better language skills would increase their cultural capital. Online education has been praised for being potentially more liberating and allowing students greater freedom to defend their language use, construct a more positive identity, or fight against negative stereotypes of them (e.g.,

Canagarajah, 2007, Sujo de Montes et al., 2002). At the same time, there might be obstacles to effective communication in an online course that can hamper students' identity construction, from lack of nonverbal cues to frequent breakdowns in communication and students' possible lack of fluency in formal written English.

While Norton's position is grounded in the sociocultural theory of education, other scholars attempted to unite multiple perspectives on identity. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) provided a framework for analyzing identity in linguistic interactions that brought together identity theories from different fields to offer "a general sociocultural linguistic perspective on identity - that is, one that focuses on both the details of language and the workings of culture and society" (p. 586). Bucholtz and Hall (2005) proposed five fundamental principles for studying identity which I have adopted for analyzing students' identities in this study. While their definition of identity is deliberately open-ended: "Identity is the social positioning of self and other" (p. 586), their five principles provide a useful lens for analyzing students' expression of identity in the OWCs. These principles are: (1) the emergence principle; (2) the positionality principle; (3) the indexicality principles; (4) the relationality principle; and (5) the partialness principle.

The first principle (emergence) postulates that identity is not the product of an individual's mind but is instead born out of discourse and social interactions. Interestingly, this principle was illustrated in a recent study of writers' identity shifts showed that participants internalized traits from their self-presentation only when they did it in front of an online audience and not when the self-presentation was kept private (Gonzalez & Hancock, 2008). The second principle (positionality) argues against using broad social categories such as age or social class as main identity determinants. The authors contended that "identity emerges in discourse through the temporary roles and orientations assumed

by participants, such as evaluator, joke teller, or engaged listener” (p. 591). Thus, Bucholtz and Hall stress the transitory nature of identity shifting depending on the roles engaged in each social interaction. The third principle (indexicality) describes the mechanism by which identity is constructed. Indexicality is a process of creating “semiotic links between linguistic forms and social meanings” (p. 594). These social meanings assigned to linguistic forms are ideologically rooted, i.e. they are constructed by cultural beliefs and values. The fourth principle (relationality) states that “Identities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 598). In other words, identities only exist in relation to other identities in a given social interaction. Finally, the fifth principle (partialness) states that any identity construction is only partially deliberate or intentional, only partially conscious, and always influenced by a range of interactional dynamics, ideological processes, and others’ perceptions. The authors add, identity “is therefore constantly shifting both as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts” (Bucholtz & Hall 2005, p. 606).

These principles can be applied to any discursive interaction to analyze the participants’ identity positioning. I will be using them to analyze students’ identity as it was created in their discussion board posts and other written work. However, Bucholtz and Hall’s framework, while uniting multiple perspectives into one coherent theory of identity construction, is not specifically designed for online spaces. Asynchronous online communication is inherently different from traditional face-to-face communication, and it is important to consider how the identity construction mechanism changes in online spaces. While some principles (emergence and indexicality) might be equally salient in online and face-to-face interactions, others might function in a different way, e.g., having a very

constrained set of roles students can take on in an OWC might alter students' identity construction in unforeseen ways.

Identity is one of the central concepts in the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. However, the CoI framework's conceptualization of identity lacks some the complexity developed in the poststructuralists' work described above. While CoI stresses that there is "a reciprocal relationship between community and motivation" (Garrison, 2017, p. 44) and that a sense of belonging to a community increases students' motivation and, consequently, chances of success, it does not explicitly look into what factors might influence students' sense of being included in or excluded from their online community. Adopting a more complex understanding of identity and how power relations between native and non-native speakers of English can influence community building in online courses can greatly improve our efforts at building effective learning communities that help all students succeed.

Community of Inquiry Framework and OWI

Conceptualizations of identity in L2 writing and composition studies have thus underscored its social nature and the role of social interactions in constructing one's self-image. As my data collection for this project progressed, not only students' identities but also classroom community and peer interactions became a prominent theme in the data I was obtaining. Community building is explicitly addressed in the OWI Principles (2013): OWI Principle 11 addresses the question of community: "Online writing teachers and their institutions should develop personalized and interpersonal online communities to foster student success." The OWI Principles Statement also suggests seven best practices directed at creating a sense of community that range from establishing small class sizes to

providing timely feedback, employing icebreakers, and using “forums, threads, and assessments in which students can have open discussions, either with or without teacher involvement, about course dynamics” (Best Practice 11.7, p. 24). However, OWI literature does not provide a coherent, manageable definition of community, and some researchers conflate it with peer interaction or the emotional aspects of social interactions. And as the survey data in this study demonstrates, direct peer interaction was not perceived by students as being equal to community (this finding is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 and 6).

In my search for a more developed framework for understanding and theorizing classroom community, I came to appreciate the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, developed almost 20 years ago by three Canadian researchers of online education (Garrison et al., 2000). The CoI Framework postulates that learning is a collaborative experience and therefore theorizes online classroom as a learning community (a community of inquiry), or a specific type of community that is focused on educational goals and is conducive to critical thinking and “deep and meaningful learning experiences” (Garrison, 2017, p. 4). The Framework is built on a collaborative constructivist view of teaching and learning, where personal meaning making is inseparable from the social environment (Garrison, 2017). The Framework relies on Dewey theory of knowledge as communally constructed and the inseparability of the social and the personal. Besides Dewey’s ideas, the Framework also adopted Vygotsky’s view that “both individuals and society are mutually produced and reproduced” (as cited in Garrison, 2017, p. 10). Like Dewey, Vygotsky also viewed learning as an interpersonal process from which individuals then construct their personal meaning.

The CoI Framework is both a generative and an analytical tool. It “represents a process of designing and delivering deep and meaningful learning experiences through the development of three interdependent elements - social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence” (Garrison, 2017, p. 24). A visual representation of the construct is presented below (Figure 2.1).

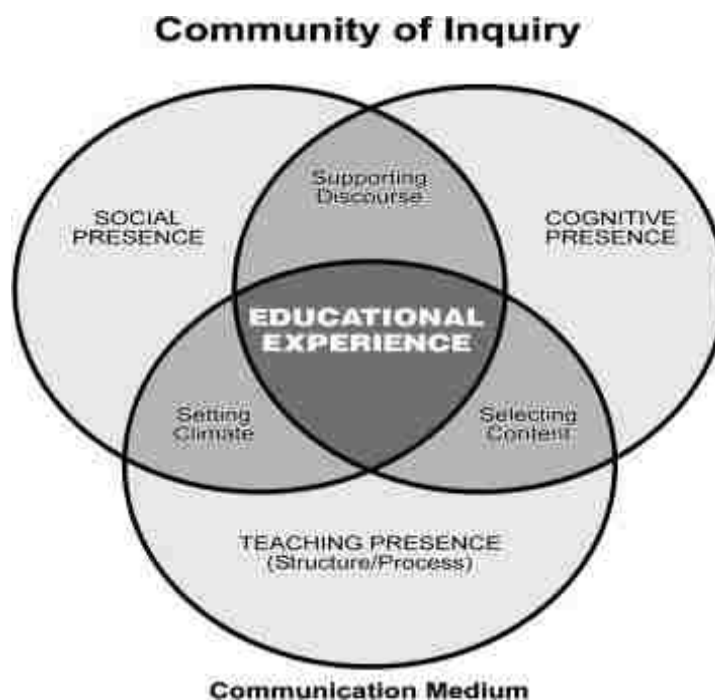


Figure 2.1. Visual representation of the Community of Inquiry Framework (Garrison, Arbaugh, 2007)

These three presences thus overlap to create an educational experience. It is important to note that all participants in an online learning community share the responsibilities for creating all three presences; not one of them is solely the domain of either the instructors or the students. Thus, teaching presence is defined as the “design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes” (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000, p. 97), and the responsibility for its creation can shift from

instructors to students as the latter learn to participate more actively in shaping constructive exchanges or focusing on specific issues and purposes.

Furthermore, cognitive presence is defined “as the extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and discourse in a critical community of inquiry” (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001, p.11). Garrison further explained: “Reflection is consistent with the ability to think critically (rational judgment) while discourse relies on trust, purposeful relationships and communication focused on understanding a dilemma or problem” (Garrison, 2017, p. 26). In other words, cognitive presence is the knowledge and meaning students are able to construct in a course; cognitive presence is what leads to successful learning outcomes in an online course.

Finally, social presence is defined as “the ability of participants in the Community of Inquiry to project their personal characteristics into the community, thereby presenting themselves to the other participants as ‘real people’” (Garrison, Anderson, Archer, 2000, p. 89). Each presence also includes indicators combined into three categories. For social presence, the categories are affective communication, open communication, and cohesive responses. Among the indicators in these three categories are self-projection and expressing emotions through language and other available means of expression (e.g., emoticons), risk-free learning climate and expressions of good will, including use of humor, self-disclosure, group cohesion or a sense of belonging to a group with common goals, and continuing communication with well-established communication channels (Garrison, 2017). These indicators and categories are used by researchers as both codes when analyzing the dynamics and workings of existing online communities and as guidelines when building online courses. More importantly, however, social presence is viewed as a mediator for the other two presences: social presence is thus a prerequisite for higher-order thinking and

learning (cognitive presence) and also for effective teaching presence. And while it is true that some students might not be willing to overtly acknowledge the importance of classroom community to their learning process (the participants in this study certainly did not view the lack of direct interaction with peers as a major challenge), there is a growing number of studies that point to the underlying benefits of stronger social presence; for instance, Hilliard and Stewart (2019) argued that social presence, including stronger interpersonal relations between students and feeling of trust, is especially important for online writing courses where students are routinely asked to engage in peer review and other peer feedback activities.

CoI has been used as an analytical tool in a wide range of disciplines and has received substantial empirical support (e.g., Akyol, Ice, Garrison, & Mitchell, 2010; Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007) and “has formed a theoretical backbone for much of blended and distance learning research” (Halverson et al., 2012, p. 393). However, it is not widely used in OWI studies, with a few more recent exceptions. Thus, Stewart (2017) argued that OWI researchers focusing on issues of community “can use the CoI Framework to assess the extent to which community in an OWC supports student satisfaction (social presence only) or supports collaborative learning (social and cognitive presence).” A number of studies also investigated the effectiveness of various strategies and tools for building social presence, including many that can be easily adopted into OWCs to students’ and instructors’ benefit. For instance, Lowenthal and Dunlap (2010) demonstrated how using digital stories can be used for a variety of tasks from students’ introductions to summarizing a lesson or a reading assignment.

In this study, I do not use the questionnaire developed in the CoI Framework for measuring the effectiveness of the three presences (Arbaugh et al., 2008); however, I rely

on the CoI Framework conceptualizations of community and social presence when analyzing students' experiences with peer interaction, identity construction, and community building. I came to adopt the Framework's concepts after discovering the lack of a consistent or comprehensive definition of classroom community in the OWI literature. As Hewett (2015) pointed out, the definition of community that had been commonly used in the OWI research were often too broad and allowed for multiple interpretations. Some of these interpretations, for instance, conflated community with social presence or with peer interactions (e.g., Snart, 2015). As issues of classroom community were becoming more prominent in the data I was collecting, I sought to adopt a framework that would allow me to explain how peer interactions, students' self-positioning, and a sense of belonging to a learning community or feelings of isolation all intertwined to influence the learning outcomes for the student participants in this study. CoI Framework provided a useful conceptual map to navigate these different facets of students' experiences, allowing me to differentiate between and connect social interactions, classroom community, and students' online identity.

At the same time, I argue that the view of identity and self-disclosure in the CoI Framework is not conducive to analyzing how students' social presence can be affected by the unequal power relationships between participants from different backgrounds and cultural capital. CoI Framework's conceptualization of identity lacks some of the complexity developed in the poststructuralists' work described above and in Chapter 2. While CoI stresses that there is "a reciprocal relationship between community and motivation" (Garrison, 2017, p. 44) and that a sense of belonging to a community increases students' motivation and, consequently, chances of success, it does not explicitly look into what factors might influence students' sense of being included in or excluded from their

online community. Adopting a more complex understanding of identity and how power relations between native and non-native speakers of English can influence community building in online courses can greatly improve our efforts at building effective learning communities that help all students succeed.

Limitations

While the findings discussed above help shed light on what happens when multilingual students enroll in online writing courses, the data is also limited in some respects. The somewhat low survey response numbers might be perceived as a limitation; however, the main aspirations for this project were not to seek greater generalizability but rather greater depths in the accounts of student experiences, which were achieved through the participants interviews. Nonetheless, my findings regarding student identity construction might be limited because in most cases I was unable to ask students about their discussion board posts during our interviews. In order to avoid exercising any undue influence on instructors and the ways they conduct their OWCs, I only asked for access to the courses after the semester (and often the interviews) was over. Finally, there are some limitations that came with the scope of the present study. As I have mentioned in Chapter 1, this study investigates the experiences of students who are proficient in more than one language and how these experiences might differ from those of students who speak English as their native language and have very low or no proficiency in another language. This precise focus excludes those students who might be proficient in more than one dialectal variation of English. One possible direction for future research is further investigating how the experiences and needs of these two types of student populations might overlap or differ.

Nonetheless, the student voices represented in Chapter 5 and the overview of student experiences outlined in Chapter 4 provide an important insight into the unique challenges and experiences of multilingual writers in OWCs.

Chapter 4: Students' Experiences in Online Writing Courses

Introduction

This chapter discusses some of the main findings of this study. It starts with an overview of the survey respondents and some of the important findings based on the survey data and then proceeds with the description of the findings based on student interviews and usability walkthroughs. In my study design, I theorized that multilingual students' experiences in online courses would be different from their monolingual peers'. This chapter demonstrates that it was indeed so for the study participants.

Survey Results: Student Participants Overview and Demographics

I distributed the student survey in the Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 semesters through the courses' LMS, and I received responses from 98 students enrolled in 27 different online sections of English 110, 120, and 219 (50% of the respondents were enrolled in English 219, and the other 50% were enrolled in either English 110 or 120).

In terms of general demographics, over half of the students were 18-20 years old while students between 21 and 40 years of age constituted a third of all participants. There was an equal number of students aged 25 and older enrolled in English 110/120 courses and English 220 courses. This higher age diversity compared to traditional on-site courses, especially in first-year composition courses (English 110/120), confirms commonly stated views that online courses tend to attract greater numbers of non-traditional students than traditional on-site courses.

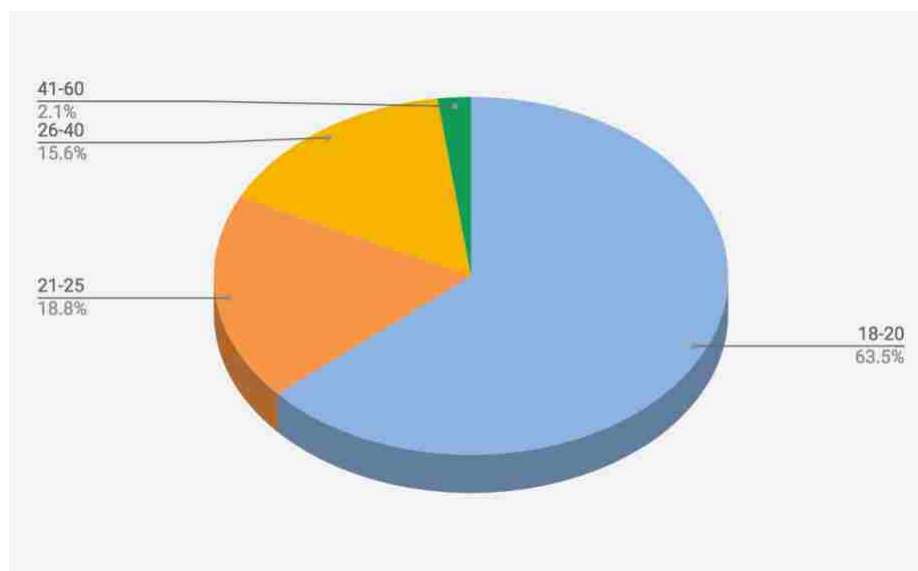


Figure 4.1. Age of student participants (in years).

In terms of residency status, 81 students (or 82%) said they had lived in the United States all of their lives, and only 2 students had been in the US for less than 2 years. The rest of the students indicated that they had lived in the United States either most (n=12) or some (n=6) of their lives. The survey question about students' ethnicity utilized official UNM demographic labels; 46% of students identified as Hispanic, 37% identified as White, and African American, Asian, and Native American students constituted less than 5% of the respondents for each group. This distribution is representative of UNM's overall undergraduate student population: according to the Fall 2017 Official Enrollment Report, 48.5% of students identified as Hispanic, 32.5% as White, 5.6% as Native American, 3.9% as Asian, and 2.5% as African American.

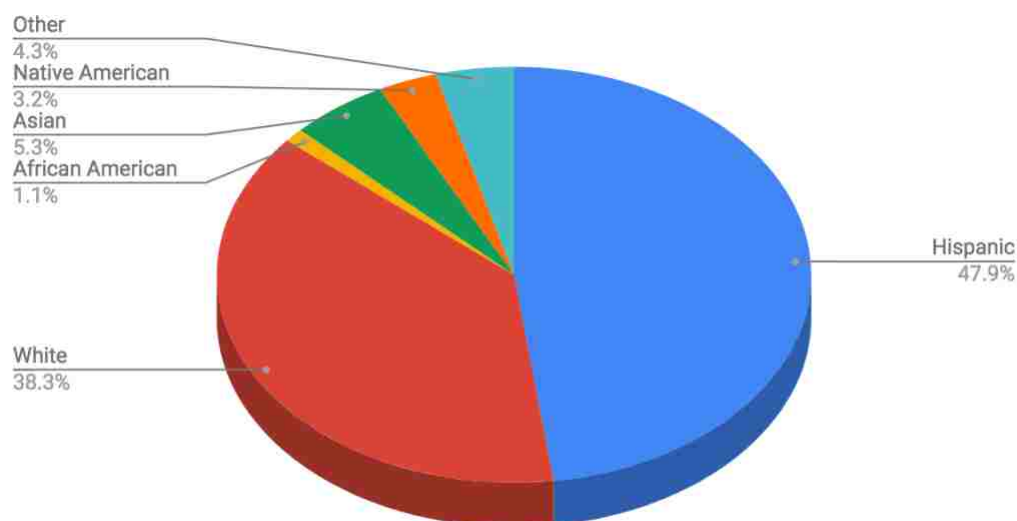


Figure 4.2. Students' ethnicity.

The vast majority of students said they were taking their writing course online because it fit either their school schedule (52%) or work schedule (36%), and only a few students said they did not live close enough to a UNM campus (n=8) or they did not feel comfortable in face-to-face courses (n=2). A few students mentioned that online courses were the only available option at the time they registered for their writing course, and some students said they chose online classes because they liked “learning on their own” or “learned best in online courses.”

Student Participants' Linguistic Backgrounds

Responding to questions about their language backgrounds, 28 students indicated that they were proficient in more than one language. Out of those 28 students, 14 identified English to be their first language (even if they had not lived in the US all of their lives), and 14 said they did not consider English to be their first language, even though many of those students were born and lived all of their lives in the US and were more comfortable with

English than with any other language. Spanish was the most popular second or first language in both ML1 and ML2 groups (n=19), and other languages included Vietnamese (n=2), Arabic, Navajo, Hebrew, German, and Urdu (n=1 for each).

The survey required students to choose whether they considered English to be their first language or not, but it also provided students opportunities to describe their language(s) use in more nuanced detail. As a result, using traditional labels such as “L1” or “L2” or “Generation 1.5” became problematic. For example, one participant who identified English as her first language, Anika (her experiences are described in more detail in Chapter 4), had only moved to the US a few months prior to taking the survey and completed her previous education in India where her home language was Gujarati and the language of education was English. At the same time, another student (Camila, also described in Chapter 5) indicated English to be her second language even though she was born and raised in the US and was more comfortable with English than with Spanish, her first language. While UNM does not officially track students’ linguistic background, it is possible to hypothesize that if the university had kept a record of students’ language status, Anika would have been assigned an “ESL” or “L2” label while Camila - “L1” or “Native Speaker” based on their country of origin, nationality, and previous schooling experience. Chapter 6 details further considerations for identifying students’ linguistic backgrounds and what implications instructors and WPAs can derive from them.

Nonetheless, for the purposes of my analysis, I place all multilingual students (students who were fluent in more than one language) into two subgroups: those who identified English as their first language, and those who identified it as their second. I use the acronym “ML1” (or multilingual group, English as the first language) for the former, and “ML2” (multilingual, English as a second language) for the latter group.

There were some notable differences between the two subgroups. In ML2 group, 6 students were enrolled in a bilingual program at some point in their lives versus only 2 students in the ML1 group. It appeared that students' choice of which language to call their first aligned with their home language as well: in ML2 group, all of the students except for 2 said they were using their other language at home (not English), while over half of the students in ML1 group (n=8) said they used only English at home despite, for example, living with relatives who were also fluent in their second language. Thus, Anika, a student from India who identified English as her first language, reported using mostly English at home even though she lived with her sister who was also fluent in Gujarati and Hindi. One of the most interesting differences, however, lied in how students in ML1 and ML2 groups viewed their multilingualism. ML1 group overwhelmingly (95%) saw their multilingualism as an asset or as something that helped them succeed either in high school or in college, or both, and no students identified it as a negative influence on their studying. For students who considered English to be their second language, however (ML2 group), the results were mixed, with majority of students saying that speaking more than one language had no or an adverse effect on their high school or college careers, and only 5 students (or 38%) said knowing more than one language had a positive effect. In line with these results, all monolingual students who indicated that they had been studying (for various amounts of time) another language also said that knowing another language had a positive influence on their studying. These results point to the importance of knowing students' linguistic background and their attitudes towards it, as students who are likely to be assigned an "ESL" or "L2" label are also likely to have negative attitudes towards it or be reluctant to disclose their background if directly prompted to do so by their instructors. Chapter 6 offers

further considerations of these findings and recommendations for instructors working with linguistically diverse students.

Survey Results: Students' Challenges in Online Writing Courses

Students in ML1 and ML2 group also showed differences in how they viewed their experiences in their online courses, and both groups combined had different experience compared to monolingual NES students as well. Question 17 asked students to choose which challenges they faced in their courses. Students were given 11 options to choose from (see the list in Figure 4.3 below) with multiple choices allowed and an additional write-in option if students wanted to add a challenge not already included.

17. **What challenges or difficulties have you encountered in this Composition class? Check all that apply.**

- ☐ Keeping up with discussions and readings
- ☐ Understanding what is expected of me in assignments
- ☐ Completing written assignments, whether big or small
- ☐ Completing major writing assignments
- ☐ Working with the multimodal components of the course
- ☐ Using online learning tools on Learn and/or other online platforms
- ☐ Working with technology (e.g. for making video or audio recordings, etc.)
- ☐ Not having direct, face-to-face interaction with the instructor
- ☐ Not being able to address my questions to the instructor directly
- ☐ Not having direct, face-to-face interaction with my classmates
- ☐ Lack of a classroom community of students
- ☐ Other:

Figure 4.3. Question 17 on the student survey.

Participants in the ML1 group identified more challenges than ML2 group participants: on average, ML1 group students selected 3.4 challenges each, while ML2 students selected 2.7 challenges. However, both ML1 and ML2 groups identified more challenges than monolingual NES students who chose 2.3 challenges on average. In other words,

multilingual students were likely to identify more challenges than their monolingual peers, choosing on average 30% more challenges than their peers.

There were also some differences regarding which challenges students were likely to identify more often. Overall, the two most common challenges students from all backgrounds were facing were keeping up with discussions and readings and understanding the expectations for their writing assignments (see Figure 4.4 below): 40% of students indicated they faced these challenges. Next, students were most likely to struggle with multimodal components of the course and using technology (29% and 25% respectively). Not having direct contact with the instructor and not being able to ask questions directly were also identified as challenges by 20% of the students. Students were least likely to struggle with completing major or other writing assignments, and only 8% of students identified lack of direct, face-to-face contact with their classmates as a challenge. Interestingly though, more students (14%) said that not having a classroom community of students was a challenge to them, and not all students who identified lack of direct contact with their classmates as a challenge said that lack of a classroom community was a challenge as well. In other words, some students struggled with the lack of a classroom community even if they did not miss the direct, face-to-face interaction with their peers.

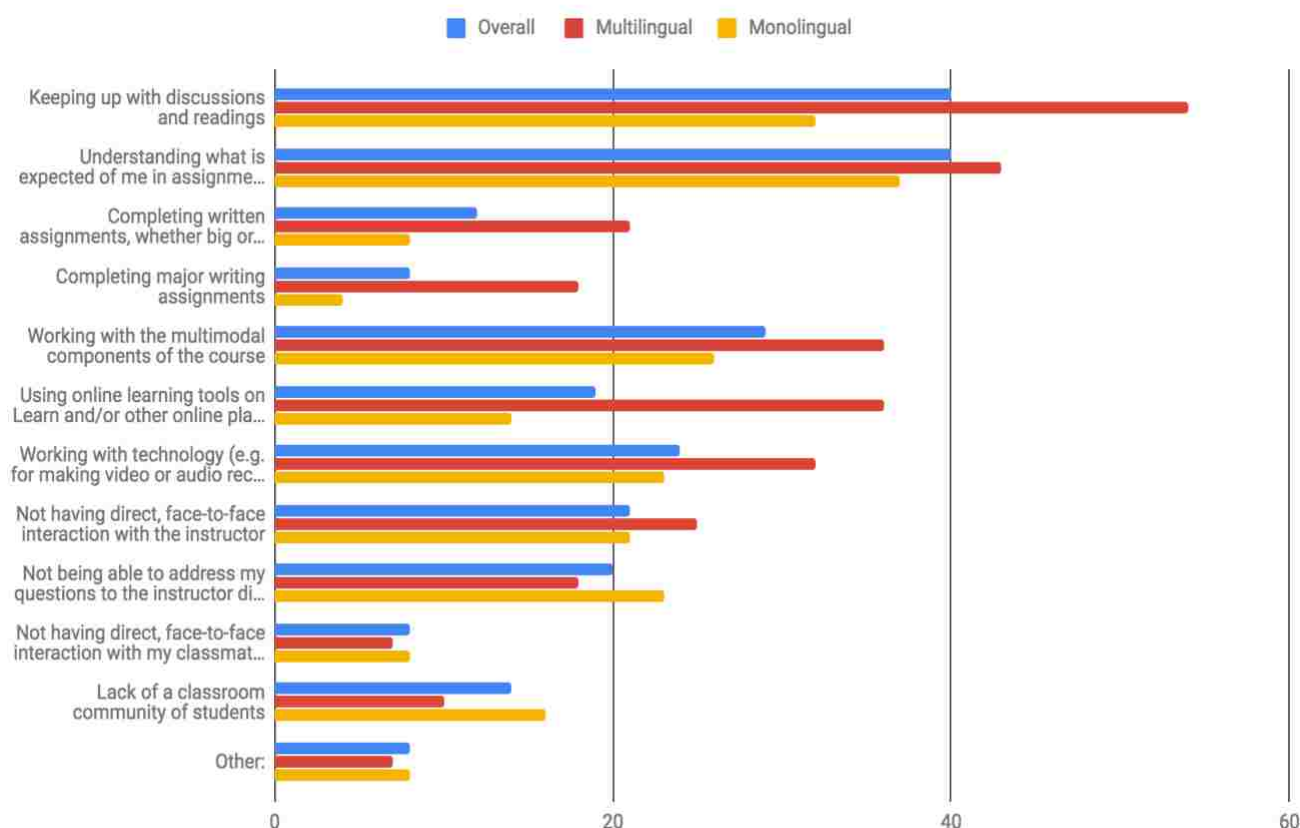


Figure 4.4. Challenges in online writing courses. Students' responses to Question 17 (in percentages).

Notably, there were a few differences between multilingual and monolingual students in terms of which challenges they identified most often (see data for multilingual and monolingual students in the chart above). Multilingual students were more likely to struggle with keeping up with discussion and reading assignments than their monolingual peers (54% versus 34%), with completing writing assignments, major as well as smaller (20% versus 6%), and with working with the online learning tools and the course LMS (36% versus 15%). Multilingual students were only slightly more likely to identify “Working with the multimodal components of the course” or “Working with technology” as a challenge: 36% and 32% of multilingual students saw these aspects of their OWC as a

challenge compared to 26% and 23% of their monolingual NES peers respectively. There were no significant differences between these two groups of students in terms of lacking direct face-to-face contact with instructor or classmates. Though interestingly, monolingual students were more likely to identify lack of a classroom community of students as a challenge than multilingual students (16% versus 10%).

While multilingual students were more likely to identify a greater amount of challenges on average, some students indicated facing considerably more challenges than others. However, there did not seem to be any distinct trends in these students' backgrounds. Among those who identified the highest number of challenges were students from different language backgrounds and proficiency levels, of different ages, and from different sections of English 110, 120, and 219. The only notable trend was that multilingual students who identified the highest number of challenges said they would take the class face-to-face if they had to take it again while most of the monolingual students said they would still take it online (out of 6 monolingual students who identified 5 or more challenges, 5 said they would take the course online if they had to take it again, and only 1 multilingual student out of 6 with similar number of challenges was willing to take the class online again). The same tendency was present in all students' responses, whether they found themselves struggling in their online writing course or not: 25% of all multilingual students said they would take the course face-to-face if they have to take it again (25% more were not sure), and only 12% of all monolingual native speakers said they would take the course face-to-face again (and 14% were not sure).

While the survey responses did not provide more details into students' decision-making process, it is possible that students who faced the most number of challenges and were still willing to take the course online did not attribute those challenges to the online

environment itself but rather to the characteristics of their specific section. It is also worth considering that for some students, taking their writing courses online was the only way to make their school or work schedules fit. As more traditional students who live on or close to campus choose, often out of necessity, to take at least some of their courses online, instructors and WPAs need to be wary of a persisting image of an online student depicted in earlier research as someone who is typically more mature and independent (e.g., Paloff, 2003).

Survey Responses: Comparing Online and Face-to-face Courses

Questions 18 and 19 on the survey asked students if they thought online or face-to-face courses were more challenging and if they could compare the challenges across these two delivery modes. Comparing the challenges they struggled with, a majority of students (62%) said that the different delivery modes brought different challenges. Half of all students said that online and face-to-face courses were equally challenging, and 34% said that online courses were more challenging than face-to-face. 10% of respondents said that online courses were less challenging than face-to-face, and only 6% of students said both face-to-face and online courses were equally easy. There were no notable differences between the responses of multilingual and monolingual students as well as between ML1 and ML2 groups.

In their comments on these two questions, students raised issues of self-discipline, technology use, amount and kinds of work required, and lack of direct, in-person interaction. Students noted that online courses required “greater requirement for self-discipline in organizational capability,” noting that they had to stay self-motivated and “on top of everything yourself.” Several other students remarked that it was “a lot easier to get distracted and go onto different sites and such,” and some said that it was “easier” to forget

about their online classes. Four students added that face-to-face courses provided more “motivation to complete the work” or that “time management is a much bigger challenge online.” However, two students also said that online courses were “less stress,” and one student remarked that “simply being part of a face-to-face course is difficult because constant engagement and willingness to participate is required in these classes” (note that both comments were made by monolingual NES students). Nonetheless, most students seemed to view the lack of direct interaction with their instructor as a challenge rather than a liberating factor, saying that it was “harder to clarify in the moment” or “understand assignments” and “approach the instructor with a doubt or problem.” Students also mentioned that online courses were more challenging in terms of understanding assignments, requirements, and sometimes even due dates.

Another common thread in students’ responses were difficulties related to technology use. Many students noted that online courses required students “to familiarize themselves with new online programs” or that it was “more difficult to navigate the web and turn in assignments.” A few students also mentioned access issues with the LMS (Blackboard Learn), e.g., not being able to access textbook or not receiving course announcements in their email. Interestingly enough, when students rated the amount of support they were receiving from their instructors in various aspects of the course, working with various software tools and navigating Blackboard Learn were two areas that received the most numbers of both positive and negative responses: 66% of students said they were getting enough or mostly enough support from their instructors in these areas, and 18% said they were getting not enough support or no support at all. On the whole, however, survey results did not provide more details into students’ difficulties with technology despite the fact that technology-related challenges were among the most common ones. I

discuss students' use of technology in more detail below, in my analysis of student interviews and usability walk-throughs.

Students' Technology Use: Navigating Online Courses

The vast majority of students (85%) said they used their personal laptops to complete work for their online writing courses, while 11% said they were using a desktop computer, and a few (n=5) said they were using a tablet, a mobile phone, or a combination of all four types of devices. Similarly, 69% of students said they worked on their writing assignments on their personal computer at home, 13% said they worked on their personal computer at school, 11% said they used their personal computers and worked outside of home, school, or workplace, and 5% said they used their workplace-provided computer. There were no significant trends identifiable in students' access to technology that correlated with students' linguistic backgrounds. However, multilingual students were significantly more likely to identify "Using online learning tools on Learn and/or other online platforms" as a challenge (36% of multilingual students versus 15% of monolingual students), and only somewhat more likely to identify "working with technology" as a challenge (32% versus 24%). The survey did not yield more data regarding students' Internet or technology access and use, but students' interviews and usability walkthroughs provided a more nuanced account of students' engagement with the learning management system (LMS), Blackboard Learn, and the digital tools they used in their multimodal work.

As was demonstrated above, difficulties with technology use, both in working with the LMS and while completing multimodal assignments were identified as challenges by 29% of the students. Navigating their course on Learn proved to be challenging, in different ways, for all of the student interviewees: students struggled with accessing assignments or course textbook and materials, finding their instructor's feedback, and keeping up with

course schedule and updates. On the surface, however, students did not consider the LMS as a negative factor or a hindrance, often mentioning that they liked having all of their UNM courses together on one platform. And even when students did encounter difficulties, their attitude was often not contentious: “I don't think it's a difficult or an easy site to use. It's just like there... I mean, it's pretty normal” (David, interview #1). Even if students sometimes complained about certain aspects of Learn functionality, they rarely saw it as a problem that had a resolution and instead treated it as an inevitable aspect of the online experience.

Regardless of students' attitudes towards the LMS, the vast majority of them struggled with it in some ways. One of the most obvious difficulties were frequent outages and service disruptions that affected all UNM Learn courses in the first two months of Fall 2017 semester. As one student described it, Learn was “a little buggy; like the notification that says Learn went down for an hour, like at least once a week” (Sean, interview #1). Two interviewed students also complained about not receiving course announcements through their email or receiving them later than their classmates.

Beyond these occasional technical malfunctions, however, students struggled with navigating their courses, and in the majority of cases, students' language background had less impact than their previous experience working with technology or taking online courses. For instance, navigating Learn at the beginning of the semester proved difficult for David, a non-traditional student who returned to UNM after taking a break from studying for 5 years. As he had not previously used Learn in the same way or to the same extent, he was apprehensive about navigating the LMS: “I didn't know all of the features of Learn and stuff.. so sometimes it's hard to figure it out” (David, interview #1). He further elaborated: “I didn't use Learn as much I think when I first started school, so when I [started coming

again] I had more troubles like figuring out what they were talking about” (David, interview #3). Of all the students interviewed in this study, David was also most uncomfortable with using technology and had access only to an old laptop on which he completed all of his course work (he did not possess a smartphone and had to recruit a friend’s help to make a video for one of the multimodal projects in his writing course). He also complained that “Learn can be complex... I don’t know how to do stuff” (David, interview #2), expressing a general sense of feeling disoriented when navigating all the tools and functions available in their course.

Richard, another non-traditional returning student, had the advantage of taking a few online courses at a local community college prior to coming to UNM and received some training in working with Learn, including how to use Blackboard apps on his phone effectively. His prior experience prepared him for becoming an online student at UNM. Students who take online courses at UNM for the first time would benefit from more extensive introduction to the online tools available to them and online learning more broadly. Such training, however, should not fall exclusively on the writing program instructors and administrators; the university as a whole needs to provide more resources for its online students, whether they are taking all or only some of their courses online (I further discuss these findings in Chapters 5 and 6).

While previous experience with taking online courses and working with different types of technology played a role in how well students were able to navigate their online writing courses, even traditional students who were well-versed in technology and online tools faced some challenges in their writing courses. In some cases, students encountered problems because of their very reliance on Learn’s functionality. For instance, Tai, a sophomore multilingual immigrant student who was very comfortable with using

technology and navigating his online courses, relied on the Calendar feature on Learn to keep track of all of the due dates across his three different online courses (see Figure 4.5 below).

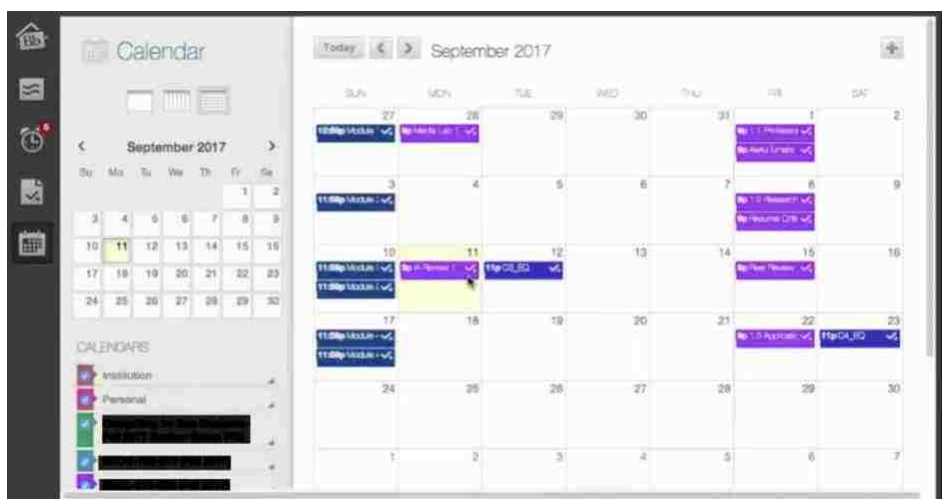


Figure 4.5. A screenshot of Tai's usability walkthrough. The first thing Tai did when logging into Learn was check the calendar function.

Tai enjoyed being able to see all of his due dates in the same place. However, his writing course instructor, Hannah, instructed (and expected) students to use the course calendar posted as a linked Google file on their “Syllabus & Course Calendar” page. For the most part, the course calendar and the Learn Calendar had the same due dates; problems arose when Hannah assigned some lower-stakes assignments (such as posting on the discussion board) without defining a specific due date or number of points assigned through Learn. Tai missed two of these smaller assignments because they were not displayed on the Learn Calendar and he was not consulting the course calendar provided by Hannah. Tai's experience exemplifies an issue that was common in most observed courses: students were

³ Please note that some images are displayed in lower resolution; these images are screenshots taken directly from the usability walkthrough videos; they are thus less high-quality than screenshots of online courses I took directly.

not always using Learn or the course design features in the way their instructors intended. Tai was not the only student participant who relied exclusively on Learn Calendar, but other students also created copies of their course schedules early on in the semester and then did not consult the calendar document even when it was updated by their instructor. Still other students relied on notifications displayed by their smart phones applications tied in with their Learn accounts, developed by either Blackboard or third party developers.

Furthermore, instructors were not always able to anticipate how much guidance and explanations students would need to locate and navigate different course components. Sean, a NES monolingual student enrolled in Hannah's class, described an issue he encountered early on in his technical and professional communication course: "Navigating the website sometimes is a little difficult; um often times in the videos that she puts for each day, she'll say that there's a reading, but sometimes I have difficulties finding it... I actually just found out where one of the readings was from a friend who said it was at the very bottom of the page and like I couldn't even find it" (Sean, interview #1).

While the example above describes a situation that had fairly little impact on students' overall success and grade in the class, a similar problem occurred towards the end of the semester as all students in the class but one failed to complete an important part of their final portfolio, resulting in at least one letter grade reduction in their final grade. As students started working on their final portfolio during the last week in the semester, the instructor, Hannah, posted some guidelines for what they should be accomplishing and also directed them to look at the portfolio prompt that was shared in the beginning of the semester and located in Week 2 folder inside Project 1 page in their course on Learn (see Figure 4.6 below for a screenshot of the complete contents in the last week folder +add a screenshot of where the prompt was located?).

Week 16-12/4-12/10- Last Week!

 **To Do List**

Introduction:
This week we will revise and submit portfolios.

Required Readings and videos:
No readings or videos this week.

Required Activities:

1. Re-read the portfolio assignment sheet and re-watch the portfolio explanation video from Week 2.
2. Re-read the feedback you received on each project from the instructor as well as the IA and your peers. Make sure you have addressed any lingering issues with your revision.
3. Revise! Revise! Revise!
4. Submit your portfolio by 9pm Wednesday.
5. Have a fabulous summer!!! :)

Figure 4.6. The “To Do List,” the only item inside Week 16 in Hannah’s English 219 class.

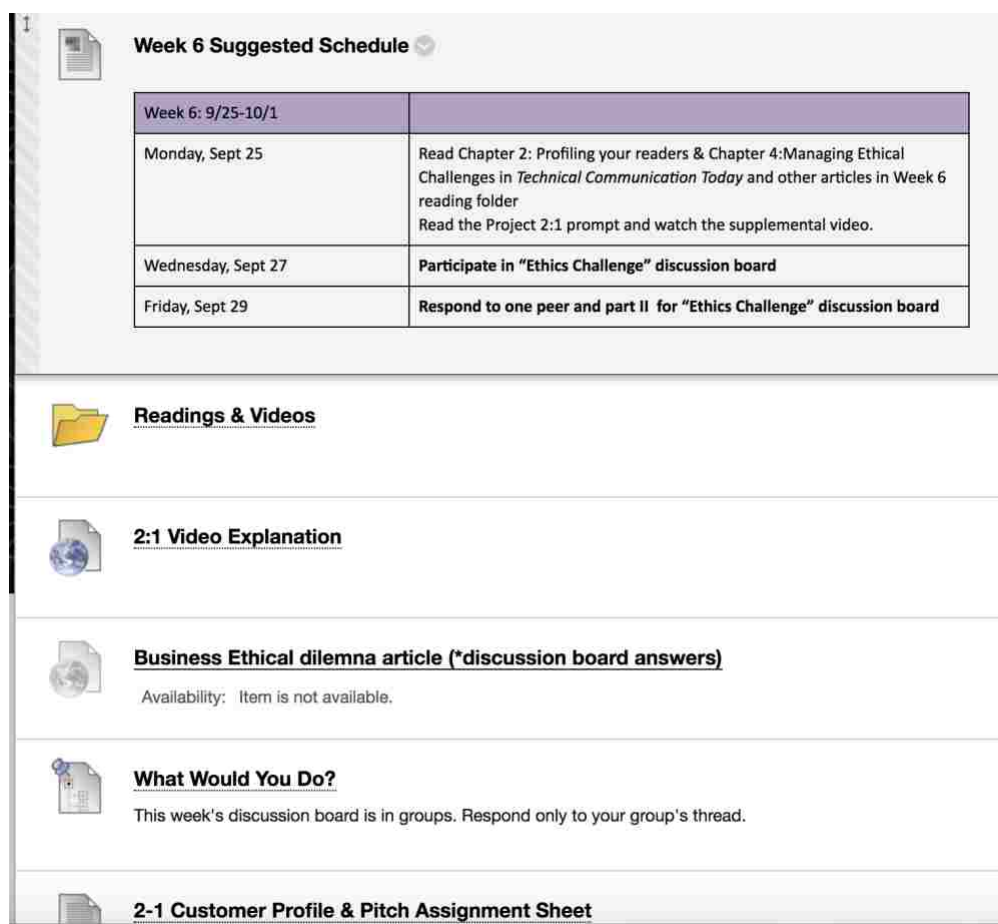
While re-posting assignment prompts and other important documents in multiple places in a class is usually recommended by the advocates for best practices in online instruction (e.g., Hewett, 2004; Warnock, 2009), Hannah relied on her students’ conscientiousness and independence in following her directions exactly. However, one of the two interviewed participants from her class, Tai, did not go back to the portfolio prompt, instead taking Hannah’s direction to “Revise! Revise! Revise!” as the only requirement: “All it said on there was, ‘Revise your projects. Have a great break.’ That was it. That was the one instruction I saw on there, so that's exactly what I did. I went to my previous projects, I saw the note she wrote on them, and then I just revised them basically.” The other interview participant, Sean, did go back to the assignment prompt but ended up misinterpreting the directions it contained: “as I read the prompt, I couldn't really tell any difference between the outcomes for each assignment and the outcomes for the whole thing. I'm not really sure what the difference is because it would just be the same thing. Those are the outcomes. I

think most of the class got off for that, but she ended up giving a five-point curve on it to make up for that” (Sean, interview #3).

Both students would have benefitted from more explicit instructions in that last week folder for what their final portfolio website was expected to look like and include. Both of them did not include a separate page on their portfolio website with a reflective memo discussing their learning in the class. During our last interview, Tai seemed especially disappointed in his final grade: “The English class is what I feel really screwed me over. I was expecting A in English, and I ended up with a B-. Yeah, it was a pretty drastic drop” (Tai, interview #3). Sean, who applied a lot of effort throughout the semester and kept his grades well above average, was also unhappy with how the course ended: “I got a B plus. I was hoping for maybe an A minus, considering from the people I talked to in the class I think I was one of the more proficient, and definitely had higher grades than most of them” (Sean, interview #3). Notably, when I asked Hannah about this incident, she responded that she was going to revise her portfolio prompt but did not mention organizing her assignments or course materials in a way that would make it easier and more intuitive for students to navigate: “I restructured the assignment. So now it's the first thing that's listed. And then below, like all the other things it says, ‘Do not forget,’ on the assignment sheet. And I'm gonna redo the video, at which point I will continue to emphasize [the memo requirement]” (Hannah, interview #3).

In general, Hannah's course exhibited some of the issues common to other courses I observed; these issues often made it more difficult for students to navigate the course as navigating was less intuitive or user-friendly. For example, in Hannah's class, the assignments and activities were grouped in folders based on weeks, and each folder opened with a “Suggested Schedule” table at the top, followed by a list of links to files and

assignments due that week (see Figure 4.7 below). When I asked Tai about the word “suggested,” he responded: “Oh no, yeah, this suggested schedule, it's definitely a deadline.” There were no other deadlines mentioned anywhere in the week’s folder.



Week 6 Suggested Schedule

Week 6: 9/25-10/1	
Monday, Sept 25	Read Chapter 2: Profiling your readers & Chapter 4: Managing Ethical Challenges in <i>Technical Communication Today</i> and other articles in Week 6 reading folder Read the Project 2:1 prompt and watch the supplemental video.
Wednesday, Sept 27	Participate in “Ethics Challenge” discussion board
Friday, Sept 29	Respond to one peer and part II for “Ethics Challenge” discussion board

Readings & Videos

2:1 Video Explanation

Business Ethical dilemma article (*discussion board answers)
Availability: Item is not available.

What Would You Do?
This week’s discussion board is in groups. Respond only to your group’s thread.

2-1 Customer Profile & Pitch Assignment Sheet

Figure 4.7. The view from inside Week 6 folder in Hannah’s English 219 course.

The suggested schedule table also differed from the Week 6 overview displayed on Project 1 page (see Figure 4.8 below); to fully understand what was due each week, students had to alternate between the description displayed on Project 1 page and the suggested schedule table inside the folder.

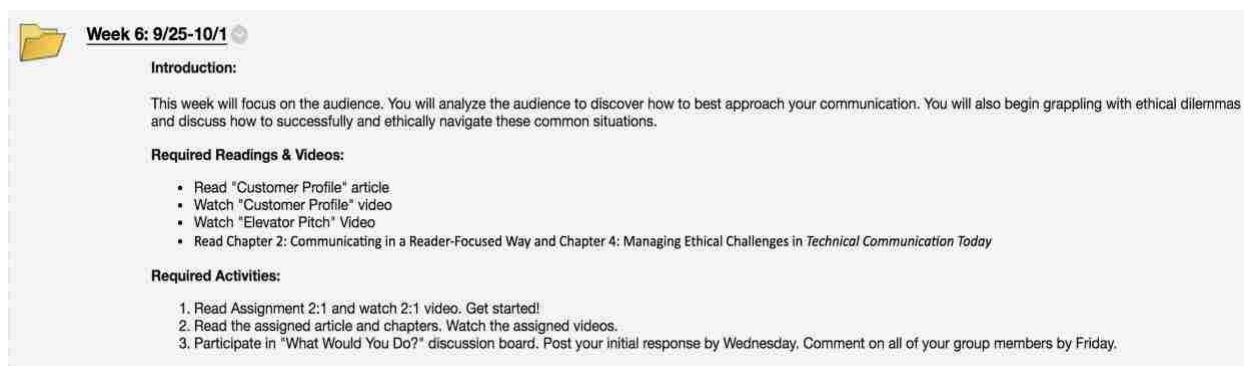


Figure 4.8 The view of Week 6 folder from "Project 1" page in Hannah's course.

Finally, Week 6 folder also contained an assignment sheet, Customer Profile & Pitch, accompanied by an explanatory video. However, the assignment itself was due two weeks later, and there was little work directly related to this particular assignment in Week 6. The assignment sheet was the last document posted in the folder, so it was easy for students to miss it. Yet it was the only place in the course where it was posted; "Turn in assignments here" page contained only links to submit final drafts and references to the folders where assignment sheets were originally posted (see Figure 4.9 below). While some researchers have found that sharing assignments or other documents at multiple locations might confuse students (e.g., Miller-Cochran & Rodrigo, 2006), sharing assignment sheets in only one location and placing them in a way that made it easy for students to miss them was not beneficial, as the incident with the final portfolio prompt demonstrated.

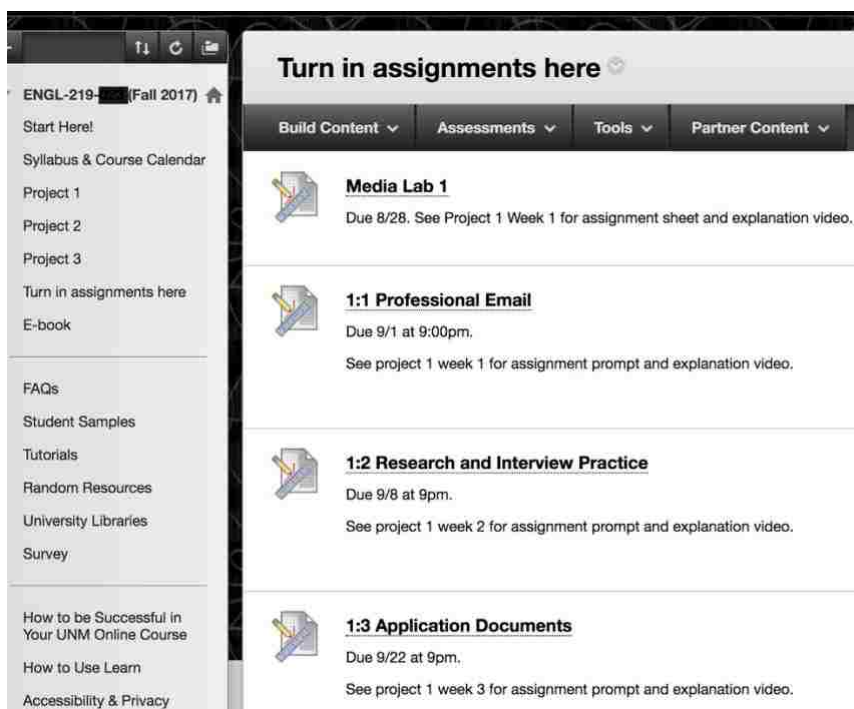


Figure 4.9. “Turn in assignments here” page in Hannah’s English 219 course.

Week 6 folder in Hannah’s course also contained another folder titled “Readings and Videos” with some videos and articles assigned for that week (see Figure 4.7 above). Yet there was a video not in the “Readings and Video” folder, as well as another article (“Business Ethical Dilemma Article”) that was not referenced in either the week’s description, the suggested schedule, or the discussion board guidelines. While Hannah provided her students with a helpful set of supplemental resources in different formats, students often did not make use of them because it was not clear what kind of resources they were, what students could expect from them, or how they would help students in their writing tasks. David, a student enrolled in another section of technical and professional writing, had similar issues; his class contained multiple pages with rather generalized names: “Gallery,” “Tutorial Videos,” “How to be Successful,” “More Resources” (see the orange-colored navigation menu in Figure 4.10 below). When I asked David during our

usability walkthrough what those pages were, he responded, “I have no idea what all this other stuff is here.” Another student from a section that was structured in a similar way, described the additional resources his instructor shared as “a lot of things we’re not gonna need” (Diego, interview #1).

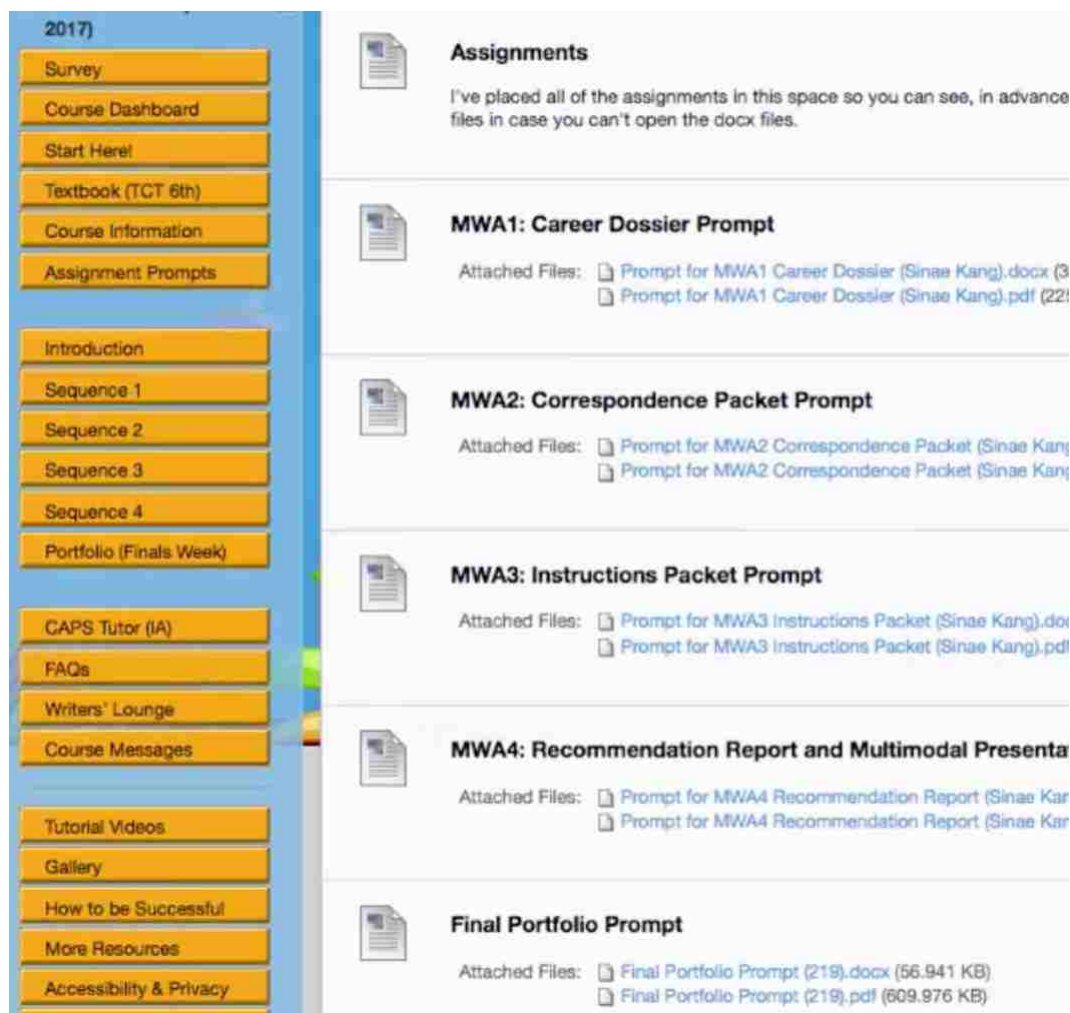


Figure 4.10. A screenshot of Lee’s “Assignment Prompts” page in her English 219 course.

However, when David clicked on one of the pages he talked about, the “Tutorial Videos,” it took him only a moment to figure out what the page contained and how it might be useful to him. When Diego, an international student enrolled in a different section of Technical

and Professional writing course, found himself in a similar situation, it was not as easy for him to figure out what he was required to do or what some course components were.

As all 100 and 200-level writing courses in the eComp program, Diego's course consisted of three sequences (called "Stages" by the instructor); each sequence lasted between 5 and 6 weeks and contained a number of shorter and longer assignments. I conducted the usability walkthrough with Diego during the second half of Week 5 when students had already completed most or all of the assignments in Stage 1 and were moving onto the next sequence. As Diego clicked on the link for Stage 2, it took him to a list of three folders, Week 6 through 8, with no additional description or directions (see Figure 4.11 below for a screenshot from Diego's walkthrough).

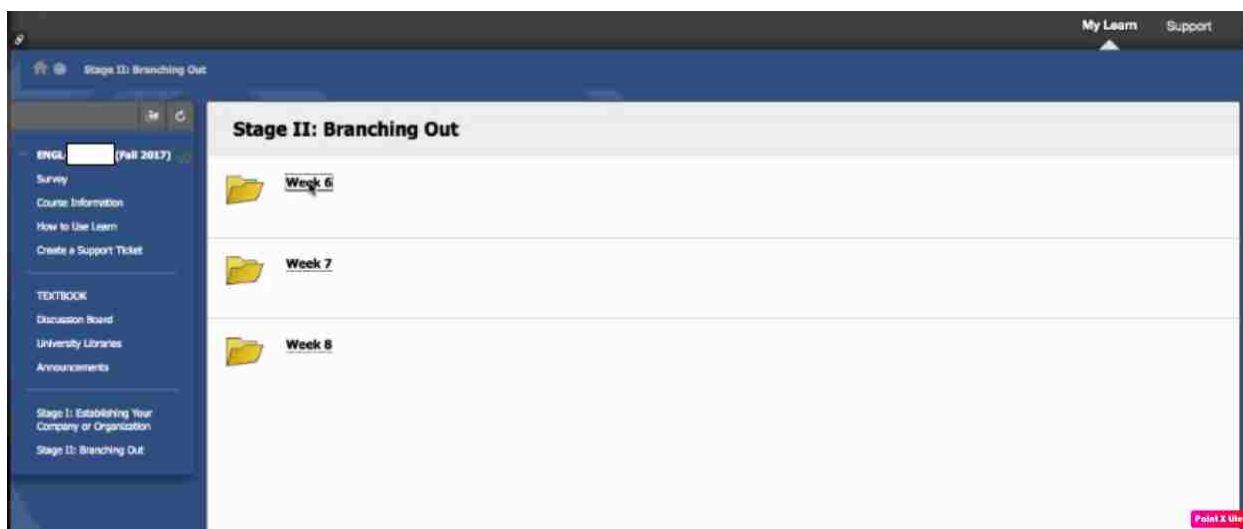


Figure 4.11. A screenshot of Stage II page during Diego's walkthrough.

Diego expected the view to be similar to what Stage I looked like: each folder had a short description of what the main activities were, a list of assignments and deadlines, and some additional directions. What Diego saw on Stage II page was thus confusing for him as he did not know that his instructor, Jessica, made the Stage II page available to students as she

was still building it and adding elements. In fact, the next day, Stage II page looked very different (see Figure 4.12 below for a screenshot of the same page at a later time).

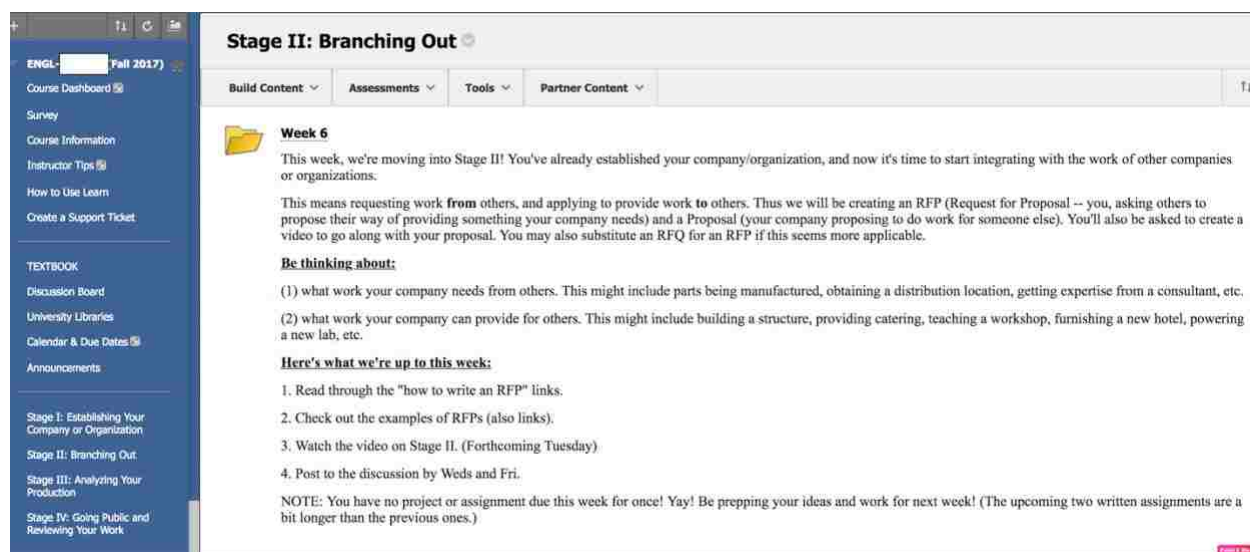


Figure 4.12. A screenshot of Stage II page taken at a later time.

Furthermore, when Diego went inside Week 6 folder (see Figure 4.13 below for a screenshot), it became an even more disorienting experience for him. This page was also still under construction and thus did not contain a calendar or list of due dates either. Becoming frustrated at the lack of directions, Diego asked: “do you think I'm gonna go through all the.. 6 assignments just to know what is the week about?” (interview #1). He was further puzzled by the abbreviations such as “RFP” (Request for Proposal) or “RFQ” (Request for Quotation) or even “APS” (Albuquerque Public Schools) that frequently appeared on the page and that were not easy to decipher, especially for an international student. He further elaborated not only on his instructor’s use of abbreviation but also on the general amount of guidance for working with professional writing genres: “I hate this, I hate when they write things and they think that you know them.. like the, ‘write an EP,’ and I'm like ‘what is an EP?’ and then, unless you go through the whole text, and at the end you realize it's an Elevator Pitch... and then I don't even know what is an elevator pitch. So

I did the whole assignment, and I still don't know what is an elevator pitch. I just wrote whatever.. and... I... I honestly don't know” (Diego, interview #1).

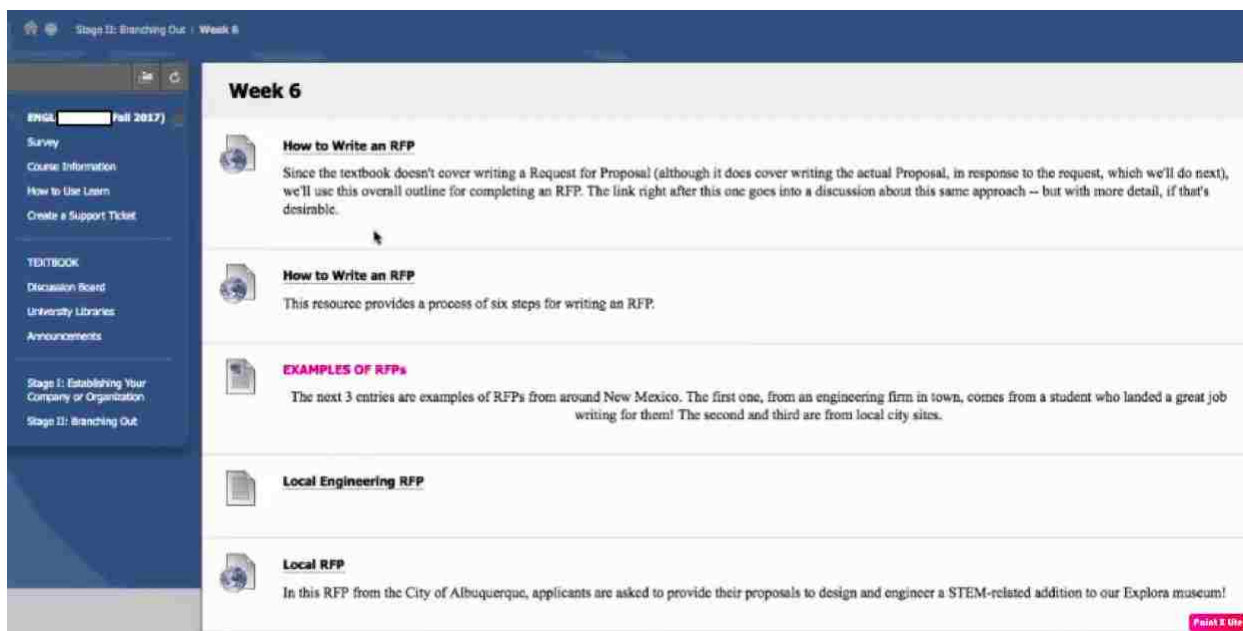


Figure 4.13. A screenshot of Week 6 folder during Diego’s usability walkthrough.

As we were completing the walkthrough, Diego became even more frustrated and declared that he would go talk to his friends who were also enrolled in the same class in order to complete the week’s assignments: “there’s no way I’ll figure this out by myself” (Diego, interview #1). When I asked Diego if his instructor provided a course calendar or syllabus, he responded that he never saw any of these documents. His response can be partially explained by the fact that course syllabus and calendar file was located in the middle of “Course Information” page that was not the homepage for the course and that students probably rarely used after the first week in the class.

However, students’ experiences with course navigation varied significantly depending on students’ personality traits like resilience and independence. Unlike Diego, Anika, another international student enrolled in Jessica’s course, had a very positive attitude towards the course and did not report many problems with navigating it. She was well

aware of what different pages and items in the course were and appreciated the extra resources Jessica shared with the students. Anika also took advantage of the additional opportunities to discuss her work in the class with her peers and instructor. For example, in Week 5, Jessica opened an ungraded discussion board where students could share their ideas for what kind of digital tools they were using to complete their multimodal assignment. While Anika did not post on the board herself, she read through her peers' comments in order to form a better idea of the options available to her. In general, Anika put more effort into figuring out how the course works and completed more reading assignments compared to Diego; she regularly consulted the textbook and supplemental articles Jessica posted, and as she did not have any friends or acquaintances in the class, she relied only on herself.

Nonetheless, even Anika encountered some issues with course design; notably, she was not able to access her instructor's feedback for the first month of the class. Instructors had a variety of ways in which they provided feedback on students' work: as text comments through Learn's feedback function, as comments in the margins on students' PDF or Word files, or as video feedback. When instructors used the comment function that allowed students to see instructor feedback as plain text next to their grade, students did not have any problems with finding or accessing it. However, when instructors chose other ways to provide feedback, students often struggled with either finding or accessing it. For example, David thought that he never received any feedback from his instructor even though the instructor, Lee, created 10-minute long screencast videos for each of the major writing assignments. As we met for a second interview in the second half of the semester, David sounded increasingly disheartened about his writing course:

David: I stopped trying so hard because I don't really think they're grading it.

Interviewer: Oh really?

David: I don't know. It's really confusing because, yeah, the teacher hasn't given us any feedback ever on anything we've done.

Interestingly enough, David met with his instructor in person but did not ask about feedback during their meeting: “I guess I just assumed that if she wasn't gonna grade it, she wasn't gonna grade it” (David, interview #2). During our last interview, David lamented the lack of feedback, stressing that he did not learn as much as he had hoped: “I guess I got good grades, so that was okay. But I just don't feel like I ever really learned that much, or ever learned if I was doing it right, or how to be better” (interview #3). Similarly, Diego was not able to find his instructor's comments in the margins because the size of his laptop computer did not allow him to see the PDF file with comments in its entirety on his screen and he assumed there were no comments in the margins.

At the time my study was conducted⁴, instructors teaching in the eComp program were not required to use a master course and had a significant amount of freedom in how they designed their courses. As a result, there was a variety of ways instructors built, organized, and distributed their materials. Some instructors set up individual weeks as “folders” that each started with a short description of that week's assignments and due dates and then a list of items such as assignments, links to discussion board forums, and attached files (see Hannah's and Lee's examples above). Students thus were able to see all of the folder's contents at once, listed on one page. However, other instructors used

“modules” instead of folders, which meant that students were only able to view one item at a time sequentially, in the order determined by the instructor. Some instructors listed a link to each week in the navigation menu while others combined weeks onto three “projects” pages and listed only the links to the projects, which meant students had to click on the project first and then find the folder or module for the specific week. Instructors had different choices for home pages of their courses; while all courses included a “Start here!” page designed for students to familiarize themselves with the course during the first week of the semester, some instructors retained the page as the home page in the course, which added another extra step for students as they rarely needed the page after the first week or two. Finally, instructors often added a number of supplemental pages to their navigation menus or populated individual week folders with extra resources with little guidance for how or when to use them.

The high degree of autonomy instructors had in designing and structuring their online courses allowed each instructor to personalize their course site and tailor it to their unique teaching style and assignments. However, it also meant there was little consistency in instructional design for students going through the core writing sequence courses online (English 110 to English 120) or transitioning from first year writing courses to 200-level English courses. It also made it impossible for the eComp directors to provide any course navigation guidance for students, and while most instructors created screencast videos or written instructions for their students, these instructions varied in length, amount of detail, and accessibility. Notably, none of the instructors provided video directions for how to access their feedback, even when they gave feedback through screencast videos or

⁴ Since then, the program has undergone a few changes, one of them was introducing a master course, which limited the amount of flexibility instructors had in designing their

comments in the margins; in most cases, instructors gave some written instructions that they distributed through course announcements. As the eComp program moved towards less flexibility in course design for its instructors after the present study was completed, Chapter 6 offers further considerations on standardization and flexibility in instructional design.

Classroom Community, Social Presence, and Peer Interaction

The survey results indicated that students perceived the lack of direct interaction with their instructor as a challenge more often than the lack of direct interaction with their peers or classroom community (20% of students versus 8% and 14%, respectively). This result confirms previous research findings that showed students in online classes disliked not having direct interaction with their instructor more than they disliked the lack of the same interaction with their classmates (Eaton, 2005). Nonetheless, student interviews revealed that both the lack of a classroom community and the lack of direct contact with their instructor were significant factors affecting students' performance in and satisfaction with their online course. At the same time, students also pointed to the unique affordances of online courses for both building a sense of community and enhancing their educational experience.

When asked if they knew their classmates in the online writing courses, most interview participants said that they did not feel like they knew any of the people in the class unless they had known them from previous on-campus courses. For example, this is an excerpt from my conversation with Sean:

Interviewer (I): Do you know your classmates in the 219 class at all? do you have a sense of who these people are?

courses.

Sean (S): I know a couple of them. Um one of them was my freshman orientation roommate.. and another one was a friend I knew from first semester.

I: Ok. So you know some people from before the class?

S: Yeah. And I just recognize them by name.

I: And you don't really know anybody else in the class, just their names?

S: yeah

I: Do you feel like you know them as people or not really?

S: Um not really too much.. Yet..

(Sean, interview #1)

Characteristically, when asked if he knew his classmates, Sean's first reaction was to think about classmates he had known from previous classes, not whether or not he had got to know his current classmates through the online class. Similarly, when I asked David, another NES student, if he felt like he knew the people in his class, he responded, "Oh no, not at all" (interview #1). Knowing who other students were and what backgrounds they were coming from was something that both multilingual and monolingual students missed. Camila, a bilingual Hispanic student, made a suggestion to have a "check box on learn to see who speaks the same primary language" (Camila, survey responses) and also noted that in on-site classes she usually sought out the company of other Latinx students as she felt they would share the same culture. However, students and instructors shared the responsibility for getting (or failing to get) to know each other as instructors did not always create enough opportunities for students to display their personalities, and students were not always willing to take advantage of those opportunities when they were provided.

In most of the courses I observed, the introductory discussion board was the only space for students to talk about themselves and their academic or personal interests, or share some personal details about themselves and their lives. As Blackboard Learn did not allow for students to create profiles the same way social media sites such as Facebook or other CMSs like Canvas did, students had few opportunities to create an online profile that could be easily accessible to their peers or instructor. One way students personalized their online appearance was through the user pictures, but as their size and resolution were not satisfactory, they were impossible to use in order to form a definitive opinion about anybody's identity. Some students not only distrusted the profile pictures but were also reluctant to form any opinion about their classmates by their names, including their ethnicity or gender. Diego described an instance when he assumed somebody from his online class named Sara was a woman when in fact it was a man; after that, he and his friend decided not to assume anybody's gender: "So we're like.. from now, there's no she, there's no he... You can always have a Sara in the class that is a guy" (Diego, interview #1). Students were even more hesitant to make assumption about their classmate's ethnicity or country of origin. For instance, Anika, an international student from India, was wondering if another student from her class whose last name was Bakshi (a pseudonym) was also from India, but she never tried asking the student directly.

As Learn provided very few opportunities for students to personalize their online appearance or build an online identity, introductory discussion boards became ever more important. Unfortunately, not all instructors utilized them in a way that allowed students to express themselves. Some instructors, like Hannah, asked students to share something personal: in the directions for the introduction discussion, she wrote:

College is a choice. We all choose to be here for different reasons. For this discussion board, you have two options.

1. Take a picture of your inspiration/reason for coming to school. This picture can be a person, a place you want to work, a place you'd like to live, or anything else that inspires and motivates you to do your best at school. Be creative! There are no wrong answers to this question, just incomplete ones. Each response should include a picture and a 200-300 word written response. Please use classroom appropriate grammar.

or

2. Record an introductory video, introduce yourself and show us a picture or an item that reminds you or inspires you to do your best in school. This video should be more than 45 seconds, but less than 2 minutes. Upload your video to YouTube and post the link below. (Hannah, introduction discussion board instructions)

The two students from her class I interviewed, Tai and Sean, both shared something that showed their personality and background. For example, Sean posted a picture of the nuclear reactor operated by the UNM Physics department and explained that “This is a picture of the nuclear reactor that we are lucky enough to have on campus here at UNM. It is this building that motivates me to continue my education at UNM. From since I was very little, I had been highly exposed, no pun intended, to engineering since my father is an engineer” (Sean, Introduction discussion board post). He then proceeded to describe how he got interested in engineering and how studying at UNM would allow him to build a career in nuclear engineering. His introduction showed his passion for engineering, his

commitment to learning, and how serious he approached his studies: he came to UNM from an East coast state specifically because UNM was one of the few schools in the country that possessed a nuclear reactor.

In some courses, instructors were less likely to ask students to share anything personal. For example, Jessica, the instructor in English 219 course in which three interview participants (Diego, Anika, and Gabriel) were enrolled, gave her students the following directions:

During Week 1, please introduce yourself to the class, including the following information:

Your interest in taking English 219: this might include what "school" within UNM you're part of, how you hope the skills of a Technical Communication class will contribute to your future work academically or in your career.

Please explain your major (if you've chosen one).

Please tell us what you hope to practice and learn in this class, as specifically as possible. This could include technical skills, writing skills, etc. (Jessica, discussion board #1 directions)

While these introduction directions helped students set goals for the semester and get an early start on some of the work they would be doing in the class, it also made it difficult for them to share any information of a more personal nature. For example, one of the interview participants enrolled in Jessica's class, Gabriel, shared this introduction:

Hello everyone! My name is Gabriel and I am a sophomore majoring in Computer Engineering. I am taking this class mostly because it is required for my major, but also because I want to improve my writing skills for when

I get a job. My major consists of mostly math and programming, which is why I need a lot of help in the writing part of things. I hope to improve my technical and professional style of writing and be prepared for anything that might come up in the future. (Gabriel, introduction discussion board post)

He did not share any details about his immigrant background, the fact that he was bilingual in English and Spanish, or any other personal details that would have made it easier for his classmates to form a personal connection (unfortunately, I did not have a chance to ask him about his motivation for doing so directly as I only got access to the course long after our last interview). Similarly, Anika also did not disclose her international background even as she wished some other students provided more details about themselves (Anika's strategies for creating an online identity will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5).

However, in some courses students chose not to disclose their language status or immigrant background even when invited to talk about themselves in more detail. This reticence was characteristic of all Spanish bilingual interview participants and also corresponded with students' negative attitudes towards their own language status discussed above. For instance, the directions for the introductory discussion board post in Camila and Martin's courses included the following:

Please introduce yourself to your classmates. Write a brief biography explaining your interests, your major, your career goals, why you are taking this class, what you hope to get out of it, and any other information you want to share. (Please don't share any information that you're not comfortable with your classmates knowing.) After you have posted your introduction, please read your classmates' posts so that you can get to know

whom you'll be working with this semester. (Chris, introduction discussion board instructions)

While these directions did not ask specifically about language, country of origin, or cultural background, it left the space open for students to talk about important aspects of their lives. The interviewees enrolled in the course, Camila and Martin, shared similar background: their parents immigrated to the United States from Mexico and preserved Spanish as the home language for their children. However, neither Camila nor Martin mentioned their cultural background or language abilities in their introductions. In his introduction, Martin wrote:

Hello class,

My name is Martin and this is my third year at UNM. I am currently majoring in business (looking into management) and have a strong passion for music. I am taking this course because it is one of my last English classes required to get into the business program. I am excited to learn more about technical and professional writing, because English has always been one of my favorite subjects to take in school. I expect more experience in writing in different mediums after this course is concluded. (Martin, introduction discussion board post)

He received two responses from classmates who asked him about what kind of music he preferred, but he did not post a response. Not only some students did not respond to the comments their original posts received, a few students admitted not reading their classmates' original posts at all. For instance, David explained that even though his class had an introductory discussion board, he did not read his classmates' posts as it was just

“more reading” for “no credit.” “I think we had an introduction post, but I didn't read anybody's” (David, interview #1).

In general, it rarely happened that students responded back to the questions or comments their classmates left on their original posts. In all of the courses I observed, instructors' directions for discussion board forums was to create an original post and then comment on a certain number of other students' posts. Responding to any questions posted as comments was thus not explicitly required. In addition, students had no easy way to see if their discussion board posts received any responses or questions from their classmates. For instance, when Tai tried to use the “Posts” function on Learn, he could not figure out how to find discussion board posts directed at him. None of the other interviewed students used the “Posts” function; students also did not check the discussion board for possible responses from classmates during our usability walkthroughs when I asked them to follow the steps they usually take when logging into their online courses. At the same time, students interpreted these breakdowns in online discussion as signs of inauthentic communication. For instance, Gabriel described online conversations with his peers in the following way: “I mean, you talk to them online but you talk to ‘em cause you have to, you don’t really... cause you ask ‘em questions but they never answer” (interview #2).

Besides introductory discussion boards, most courses provided opportunities for peer interaction through other discussion board forums such as discussing reading materials or engaging in peer review. Instructors used different ways to organize online peer reviews. Some instructors, like Hannah and Lee, divided students into groups of three or four and directed them to respond to each of the group members' drafts. Others, like Chris, Jacob, or Jessica, directed students to respond to those peers who had not received feedback yet or to respond to a post directly above or below their own.

Instructors' directions for what student feedback should look like or address also varied greatly. Some instructors gave very few directions for content or length parameters. For instance, Hannah's instructions for the first peer review consisted of the following four sentences:

For peer review, you will post your application documents that you created for 1:3. This should be one multi-page word document. You must post your documents by 9pm Monday.

You must review the post directly before (on top of) yours by 9 pm Wednesday.

You must review the post directly after (under) yours by 9 pm Friday.

As a result, student responses differed greatly in length and amount of detail. For both Tai and Sean, the two interviewed students enrolled in Hannah's course, a typical peer review response consisted of around 50 words.

Other instructors set specific expectations for the length, amount of detail, and content parameters. For example, Chris's directions for peer reviews consisted of the following description (note that for all of the three peer reviews of major written assignments, the directions were repeated verbatim):

To receive full credit for Peer Review, you must (a) post your draft here and (b) provide substantive feedback to two of your classmates. I expect the comments you make to your classmates to be thorough, thoughtful, and helpful. At a minimum, you should write at least 250 words of comments. You must provide feedback to TWO classmates. Please try to post comments to students who have not already received feedback. The system is not perfect, and sometimes, because students don't follow directions, you might only end up with one set of comments or—although this happens rarely—no comments from classmates. If this happens, please be heartened that it's the students who shirked their responsibility who will receive a lower grade, not you. Also, this is one of the reasons we have Instructional Assistants provide you with feedback—you're getting help from more than one source.

Here are some questions to help guide you in your peer review:

--How well does the author accomplish the goals of the assignment? What more could the author do to fulfill the assignment criteria?

--What can the author do to improve the clarity and quality of the technical writing?

--How well does the author address his or her intended audience? What can the author do to improve communication with the audience?

--How well does the project fulfill the five elements of design (balance, alignment, grouping, consistency, and contrast) and what could be done to improve the design?

--How well has the author fulfilled the multimodal requirements of the assignment?

--What does the author do well? In other words, what should the author NOT change?

--What other suggestions can you make that will help the author improve his or her project? (Chris, instructions for peer review discussion board)

Notably, student responses consisted of 150 words on average (counting only the responses from two student interviewees enrolled in the course, Camila and Martin), but neither Camila's nor Martin's responses addressed all of the questions included in the directions.

Overall, most interviewed students appeared dissatisfied with the peer review experience. In some instances, students did not receive any peer feedback because not all students participated in the discussion or followed the directions correctly. For example, David described his first peer review experience: "now, we're supposed to get peer editing, but like... if people don't follow the directions right, like I didn't get any peer editing... we're supposed to each do one above you or whatever, just nobody did it" (interview #1). David also considered online peer reviews less effective than face-to-face reviews because of its asynchronous nature and the lack of follow up dialogue described above: "cause when you had the group like sometimes little session, and you read yours, and then people tell you what they think, or when they're peer reviewing you they can say about this, and you can say, 'Wait, why don't you like that?' Rather than they say, 'Fix that paragraph.' You could get more back and forth, so I think for writing it would have maybe been better in person"

(David, interview #3). He described online discussions as less than authentic or genuine: “Cause I feel like when they force you to talk about, they're like, ‘Respond to a person's discussion.’ You don't really care. You're just doing it 'cause you have to. Everyone's just responding to you 'cause they have to, they're not really interested in your post” (David, interview #3).

Similar attitudes towards online peer review were expressed by multilingual students as well. For instance, when I asked Gabriel about his peer review experience, he responded that his classmates “usually” just said “Oh, good job,” adding that “nobody really gives any constructive criticism” (Gabriel, interview #1). Finally, Martin summarized his experience with online peer reviews in his writing class in the following way:

Martin: It was a hit or miss. To be honest some students just respond to get the credit that they need to... if you respond you get credited and this sort of deal-

Mariya: Just to check the box.

Martin: Yeah. There are some students though that actually wanna help you out, and they give you good comments. I remember on my second project, I didn't know I was doing something that I could have corrected better, nothing that would affect my grade too much, but it was like, oh this guy pointed it out. And I was like, "That's good". And I even thanked him for it too. (Interview #3)

Students thus displayed similar attitudes towards online peer review regardless of their language background.

However, despite students' disheartened attitude towards online peer reviews and discussions, some interview participants found discussion board forums, to some extent, a

helpful tool in their writing process. For instance, Sean said that he preferred face-to-face courses because they allowed him to “to ask other people, ‘how did you do this part,’ and kind of look at theirs to get an example or a general idea of what I should be doing” (Sean, interview #1). Nonetheless, he also praised online peer reviews for allowing him to engage in similar interactions with his peers: “I think it's very helpful to both parties. I can see what other people are doing, see what they're doing well, see what they're doing bad and I can take their good things and incorporate it into my project, but at the same time, I can also give feedback to them and help them to improve theirs too. It's a mutual thing” (Sean, interview #2). He described one instance where he used a discussion board forum to compare his work to the work other students were doing. The assignment asked for a commercial or ad for a product, and Sean mistakenly decided to create a product - a smartphone - of his own using a 3D modeling software when the assignment called for simply creating an advertisement, not a product itself. He used the discussion forum to see what other students in his course were doing:

I was looking at some of the other assignments that my peers did and seeing theirs and that's when I started to get the kind of sense that I was doing something wrong because no one was making a full on commercial, they were just like, look at this phone and then using the phones that they actually had. They'd be like it's got this button here and you can do this. I was like, okay that's a little basic, but I guess what else can people do if you don't have any experience with 3D software. (Sean, interview #2.)

In the end, Sean decided not to change his project based on what he discovered his classmates were creating. If this situation had happened in a face-to-face class, it can be assumed that Sean would have discussed his suspicions with his classmates or his

instructor and realized his mistake. In the online course, however, Sean decided to proceed with his 3D model of the phone. His instructor, Hannah, “took off a few points for not following the instructions exactly, but she did think that it was nice that I was able to create my own smartphone” (Sean, interview #2). Gabriel also used the discussion board in a similar way, checking if his posts looked similar to other students’ before posting them: “I just see how long they have them. Because I don't want to write them too long or too short” (Gabriel, interview #2). Finally, sometimes students appreciated the possibilities of the online environment; as Sean created a 277-word introduction post, he noted this about online classroom community: “Honestly, that might be a little bit more than in-class cause in class, we never actually like.. say where we're from or what's our background and that kind of stuff, we just kinda like.. my name is this, and I like to do this, this is my major, and that's about it” (interview #1).

Furthermore, a few interviewed students claimed not to be interested in having a classroom community or getting to know their classmates. Richard, a non-traditional student who was taking all of his courses online, said that he was not interested in peer interaction as he pictured all of his classmates much younger than he was: “I'm in my 30s already, I'm in my mid 30s, and they might be trying to find friends, and working together as a community, then yeah, there's an aspect of that, but not for me. Not at this point of my life. I'm just here. It's a job for me. My goal is to get a bachelor's degree. This is my goal, and I'm here to just do that” (Richard, interview #1). Gabriel, on the other hand, said he did not miss a sense of community or direct interaction with classmates because people in his major were “really awkward... even in class they don't even talk.... So it's pretty much the same thing online and in class for Engineering classes” (interview #3). Similarly, during our second interview, I asked David if he missed peer interaction because his first peer

review post did not get any responses; David said that being introverted, he did not miss social interaction in his online courses:

Mariya: Do you miss that part [direct, in-person interaction]? Especially now you're taking a lot of your classes online.

David: Not really.

Mariya: No? It doesn't really matter to you?

David: No, I don't really talk to my classmates usually. (Interview #2.)

These interview responses support survey findings as well: students were more likely to identify lack of student-instructor interaction as a challenge (20%) rather than lack of peer interaction (8%). As Gabriel phrased it, “it's only the professor's feedback that counts” (interview #1).

Thus, despite being unsatisfied with their peer review or discussion experiences, students often did not overtly place much value on having a class community or forming personal connections with their online classmates. At the same time, those students who had friends taking the same online course with them benefitted from having that support, and multilingual students in this study tended to benefit more and value their communities of friends (or lack thereof) more so than their monolingual peers. For example, Sean and Tai were both enrolled in Hannah’s course; these two students knew each other from a course they took the previous semester. Together with one more mutual friend, they stayed in touch throughout the semester, reminded each other about due dates, checked their progress on assignments, and compared (and sometimes complained about) grades. Similarly, Diego was enrolled in the same course as Gabriel and Anika. While Anika did not know anybody in her class, Diego and Gabriel had known each other from the previous year, and together with three other multilingual students, they formed a close-knit group of

friends. Gabriel appreciated his friends' help, saying, "they reminded me. Sometimes I forgot and you all text each other did you already turn this in or can you check this for me and stuff like that" (interview #3). Diego often relied on his friends' help to figure out assignments, and on some occasions depended on his friends' help to complete them (Diego's experiences are described in more detail in Chapter 5). As he easily became frustrated with the course materials, his friends' help was crucial in his success in the class.

Even if the students interviewed in this project did not acknowledge the importance of community of interpersonal connections, they often expressed their disappointment with lack of interaction or genuine discussions through the courses' discussion boards and peer reviews. However, there was a notable difference between how students viewed classroom community and interactions in English 110 and 120 courses versus English 219 courses. One survey comment summed up an attitude typical of students taking English 219; in response to how the student felt about the course overall, the survey respondent wrote, "Unsatisfied. Online group discussions never go farther than a few paragraphs. It would be nice to have in depth live discussions with other students and the instructor." Similarly, the vast majority of English 219 students I interviewed also expressed dissatisfaction with online interactions.

Students enrolled in English 110/120 (the required freshman composition courses), on the other hand, left more positive comments in response to the survey question: "It's not too hard and there's still a social community. I would take an online class again;" "It's a great class with lots of feedback from peers that helps out a lot;" "The discussions are very useful by interacting with other peers and getting their feedback as well. I enjoy reading others' posts and replying to them." All of these and other positive comments about peer interaction came from students enrolled in either English 110 or 120 writing courses. While

the sample size might still be small, this finding points to an important difference existing between the 100 and 200 level English courses. My conversations with instructors teaching at both levels shed some light into what they saw as the main difference between these courses: in the 100-level courses, instructors overwhelmingly incorporated assignments that asked students to explore their own cultural or linguistic backgrounds and to talk about their past or present experiences. Assignments such as discourse community profile, memoirs, reviews of important places, language identity memoirs, etc. were present in the vast majority of freshman composition courses. English 219 courses, on the other hand, focused exclusively on technical and professional communication, which often did not leave students many opportunities to connect with the assignments or topics on a personal level. The subject matter of the course and the dry, impersonal assignments most often utilized by the instructors, often exacerbated the dehumanizing effect of online instruction. It is also important to note that the majority of the instructors I interviewed said they learned about students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds primarily through the personal writing they completed, with assignments such as discourse community profile often cited as giving instructors the most insight.

Conclusion

As the main findings in this chapter demonstrated, multilingual students' experiences in OWCs indeed differ from those of their monolingual NES peers. Multilingual students perceive more aspects of their courses as challenging, struggle with certain aspects of the course more (e.g., reading and writing assignments and online discussions), and might struggle with some aspects of course navigation. Multilingual and non-traditional students alike are more likely to struggle with navigating the course and using the technology required for it, and it is a joint responsibility of universities and

writing programs that their students are prepared to be successful online students. It is also evident that while students might not appreciate having a classroom community or interacting with their peers as much as having regular communication with their instructors, having a community helped students stay on track and complete the course whereas lack of face-to-face interaction and frequent online communication breakdowns created strong feelings of isolation and disengagement. The next chapter delves deeper into multilingual students' experiences and discusses four case studies of four multilingual students, complementing the findings discussed in this chapter with more detailed accounts of these students' journeys. Finally, the findings from both this and the following chapter are discussed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5: Detailed Case Studies of Multilingual Students in OWCs

Introduction

In this chapter, I take a closer look at four multilingual students' paths through their OWCs: Anika, Diego, Tai, and Camila. I chose these students as they represent a range of backgrounds, experiences, and personalities. Anika was born and raised in India but received all of her education in English. Diego grew up in Spain and Africa and was still unsure of his English language abilities and thus struggling to create an image of a more confident student and language user. Tai was born in Vietnam but immigrated to the US at the age of four. He never learned to read or write in his first language, Vietnamese, and was proud of his immigrant background. Finally, Camila was born in the US (the only one out of the four students) but considered English to be her second language as Spanish was her only language until the age of 5. She was fluent in both English and Spanish but did not disclose her bilingual status or her family's immigrant background. For each student, I describe his or her overall trajectory through their OWCs, the types of writing they created

and feedback they received on it, and the ways they used technology (including CMS). I also analyze more closely their discussion board posts in order to uncover the ways they constructed their identity and the peer interactions that took place. Finally, I also incorporate the instructors' comments regarding these four students as I triangulate student interviews with their written work and their instructors' perspectives.

Anika: Resourcefulness and recent-arrival immigrant identity

Anika was one of the two students who had only recently moved to the US that I interviewed for this study. When I met her in September 2017, she had moved to the US from India only 6 months earlier although she had visited the country a few times before as a tourist and held a green card. Part of her family resided in Albuquerque as well: her aunt, her cousins, and her sister who had graduated from UNM just before Anika started her college career. At the time that we spoke, Anika was living off campus with her sister. She officially started her education at UNM just a month before we first met and was enrolled in an online English 219 course, Technical and Professional Communication. Her ACT test scores were high enough to allow her not to take first-year composition courses (English 110 and 120), which were otherwise required. Her first year in college, Anika was working as a staff member at the Student Government Accounting Office at the university. Her long-term plans included finishing her bachelor's degree in business administration in 3 years and then moving to California to start working and continue her education at the graduate level.

On the survey, Anika indicated that she considered English to be her first language, but during our first interview, she further elaborated that she went to an English-medium school where all of the instruction was in the English language. Anika said that back home, she would speak to her parents in the regional national language, Gujarati, which she also

studied at school, together with Hindi. When asked about the relationship and differences between her three languages – English, Gujarati, and Hindi - Anika explained that she was equally comfortable with Gujarati and English in both writing and speaking, but was less certain of Hindi, especially in speaking.

Since she moved to the US and started living with her sister, she switched to speaking English at home too: “now that I live with my sister, and then since we both are used to talking in English the entire day, so we end up speaking English at home... it's like you get into the habit of speaking English here every single day, so that's just what comes naturally now.” She also further elaborated that English was “kind of” her first language, but it wasn't her “mother tongue,” referring to the fact that she grew up speaking Gujarati at home but now the vast majority of her daily life happened in English. However, she appeared to refuse to consider English her “second” language or be considered an “ESL” speaker and was obviously proud of her education: “It's basically like I was born in the US. I've studied in English.” During our interview, she also mentioned that English-medium schools were usually private and expensive compared to state-run free schools where the language of instruction was Gujarati. She and her family were obviously invested in her education and strove to provide her with better opportunities.

When asked about her past experience with English classes, Anika described studying grammar, sentence structure, and other surface-level features of the language but also explained that her high school English courses relied on reading and writing about literary works. She described her classes as completing the reading first and then being tested on questions related to the books: “in our tests we typically had three sections of reading. They used to give us a comprehension, and then we had to read through the

passage and answer questions. The second was writing where they asked us to write letter article of debate, notice, all that stuff.”

Anika admitted that she was not doing any writing outside of her classes, but stated she was very comfortable very typing and with figuring out various software tools on her own – despite the fact that her school in India did not allow students to use technology in class or for completing homework (she had to write all of her English essays by hand). The school provided a separate class for computer literacy where students learned how to type, use Microsoft Office products, and other basic digital literacy tools. She felt that she was well prepared for completing multimodal assignments in her English course and for the kind of work she had to do at her position in the Student Government Accounting Office. Nonetheless, during the first month of the class, she chose to create a brochure instead of a website when given a choice of mediums. She felt like creating a website would be a more complicated task and went with the easier option. When I pointed out that creating a portfolio website is a requirement for all online English classes, she replied, “I don’t know how to do it right now, but I know I like using Google and I like to figure things out by myself sometimes. Whenever that comes up, I plan on just looking it up on how to do it and then try to work it out by myself.” In general, she made an impression of a very driven and resilient student, willing to put maximum effort into her studying. When she took her first two online courses at the community college over the summer (one in statistics and the other in computer science), she had to learn how to use the online platform, Blackboard Learn, and complete all of her work via various digital tools. Even though it was a drastic change compared to her previous tech-free school, she was able to complete the courses successfully and felt like they had prepared her well for taking the English 219 class online.

During our first interview, she sounded very confident in her language and writing abilities, answering decidedly “I do” to my question of whether she felt she was a good writer. She also seemed to be fairly content with how the class was progressing, stressing that the instructor of the class was answering her questions when she had them and had generally been very helpful. She described her coursework as doing some “readings from the textbook” and then completing an assignment towards the end of the week.

The English 219 course Anika was taking had an overarching series of assignments centered on a fictional company the students were tasked to create. The course focused on “transactional and client-based writing” (course syllabus, citation omitted for anonymity), and the assignments covered a range of professional and technical writing genres from memos and elevator pitch videos to proposals, feasibility reports, and company profiles. Many of the assignments included multimodal components such as creating video presentations, a website, or a promotional video. Each week followed the same schedule: the students were to write a discussion board post on Wednesday and submit a more extensive assignment on Friday. For each discussion board post, students also needed to respond to at least 2 peers’ posts. The class did not include group projects, but students reviewed each other’s drafts or discussed their plans for the assignments.

The course requirement that students create a fictional company for which they would create all of their assignments seemed to work well for Anika as she could envision herself opening a company of her own in the future. She came up with an event planning company, “South West Event Managers,” and did a substantial amount of work to create this company’s image. For one of the first assignments in the semester, students needed to create their company’s profile in the form of a website or a brochure that would describe the company’s services, history, and mission. As I explained earlier, Anika decided to make

a brochure as she had not created a website before. Her brochure might not have looked completely professional from the design point of view, but it employed multiple images and formal tone throughout.

One of the next assignments was an elevator pitch persuading the audience to try out the company's products or services. The assignment asked students to create the pitch in either video or audio format and keep it within 30-60 seconds long; in case of a video, the assignment asked students to use visuals that would "ideally" support or prove their points. The assignment prompt suggested that students "can use web-based software like Screencast, office software like PPT (and then set it to run on its own), iMovieMaker or Windows Movie, or any recording software you choose" (assignment prompt; citation omitted for anonymity). Anika created a PowerPoint presentation that had nine slides with audio recording added over them. The slides used stock images of weddings or short phrases in large print such as "Put your faith in us, we promise not to disappoint."



Figure.5.1. One of the slides from Anika's elevator pitch presentation.

Some of the pictures might have seemed too generic or not entirely professional, but overall Anika's presentation displayed more effort compared to other students' work; for example,

Gabriel - another L2 student and participant in this study - created a PowerPoint presentation with 6 slides, 4 of which consisted of meme images. A few other students in the class, including Diego, another L2 participant in this study, made short videos of themselves using the front camera on their phone. Anika, on the other hand, created 11 slides with text and pictures combined, and showed she understood the genre.

A few weeks later, students had to create another video that would accompany a written proposal paper that would request funding for their fictional company. Anika created a 1-minute long video that combined still images with a 20-second shot of one of Anika's coworkers pretending to be the CEO of a fictional company that utilized Anika's company's services. Anika was able to put together still images with her voiceover, the shot of her coworker, and some background music, which showed a considerable amount of effort and required tech savvy beyond what Anika possessed at the beginning of the semester. Finally, Anika also created a website that hosted her company's "About" page as well as her final portfolio. She used Wix, a website design tool, and set up the company's logo; the website showed appropriate page design and color themes. The website also showed a considerable amount of effort on her part and demonstrated that she was able to learn new technology on her own: in our second interview, she explained that to use Wix, she watched a couple of their tutorial videos and then figured it out by simply working with the platform.

Anika's instructor, Jessica, appeared to be satisfied with her work. Anika's work received a fair amount of positive comments, both on content and on surface-level features. For example, Jessica would point out how Anika did well keeping her sentence structures parallel for items grouped as a list, or how her tone and word choice worked well. There

were occasional comments on grammatical errors, e.g. on Anika's incorrect of the definite article, but on the whole, positive comments far outweighed negative ones.

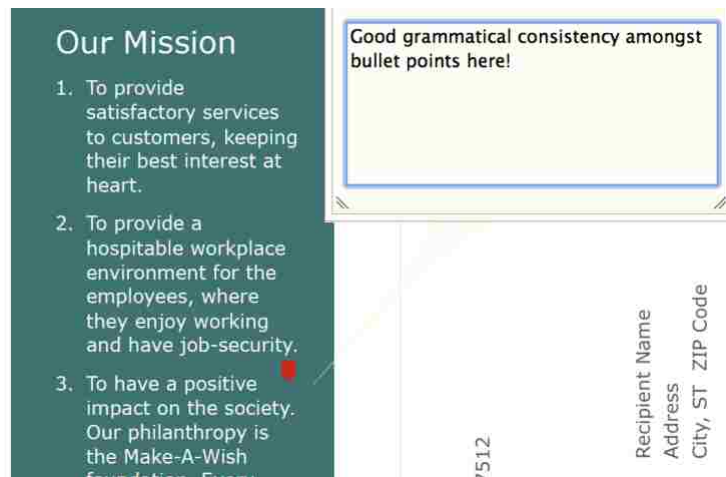


Figure 5.2. An example of Jessica's positive feedback on Anika's use of parallel sentence structures.

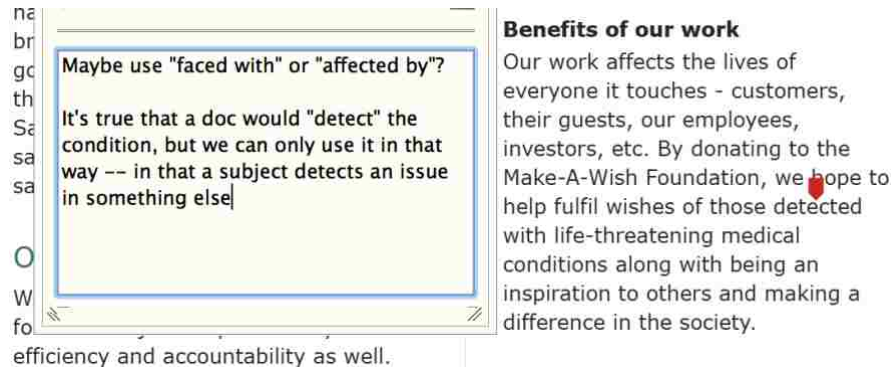


Figure 5.3. An example of Jessica's carefully worded criticism and suggestions for improvement for Anika's word choice.

When I talked to Jessica at the beginning of the semester and asked her about any second language or international students in her class, she did not mention Anika's name (I could not ask about Anika directly prior to the end of the semester as that would violate my research protocol), either simply because Jessica did not think about her at that time or

because she was not sure of Anika's international status at the time. In our second interview, however, I was able to ask about Anika directly, and Jessica described Anika as a diligent student who stayed in almost constant contact with her, sending her questions about upcoming assignments: "it was like she wanted to make a decision about in what way to take the assignment according to her topic, and she'd be like, 'Would it be more useful if I focus on this, or on this?' So she was just trying to pair her topic with the parameters of the assignment . . . It was intelligent stuff, you know, just planning ahead, analyzing what she did before she did it." Jessica seemed to be generally satisfied with Anika's work in the class and described her as a good writer who "had trouble elaborating and getting detailed about things, but she was good with the concision that we were practicing in a tech writing class." Jessica also added that she suspected Anika was from another country because of something Anika had mentioned when she registered for the class, and then she was confirmed in her thinking once they met in person in the first month of the semester. Jessica's feedback thus was (consciously or not) modified by this knowledge and reflected Jessica's philosophy for working with L2 students.

Anika also received feedback from her peers which was, in her words, "sometimes helpful." Students engaged in peer discussion or peer reviews of each other's drafts once a week, and Anika responded to at least 3 students every week. She admitted that she did not know any other students in the class personally and did not feel like she got to know any of them over the course of the semester. One student in the class had first and last name that sounded Indian to her, but as she did not know that student outside of class, she was afraid to ask them about their background directly. She was not aware that there were four other international students in the class. In general, however, she did not seem to miss the social

aspects of f2f classes too much, especially as she did not hesitate to contact the instructor with the questions she had and managed to stay on top of her work.

Overall, Anika had a successful semester and passed her English 219 class with an A. She was satisfied with the grade saying she did not expect an A+ even though she did attempt to revise and resubmit a couple of assignments hoping to raise her final grade. Comparing online and face to face courses, she explained that while both kinds had their own challenges, online courses required a lot more discipline from students. Her success demonstrated that she was willing to apply maximum effort, but she also received a substantial amount of support from her instructor who was available to answer her queries via email, provided her detailed and in large part positive feedback, and was well prepared to work with L2 students. Anika also pointed out that she liked the structured schedule of the course and saw value in creating their fictional companies because she saw herself doing something like that in the future: “I really liked it, which is why it made it more interesting for me, which made it a bit more easier for me.” All of these factors undoubtedly helped Anika succeed in a course that required the use of many new digital tools and did not offer substantial peer support as Anika, unlike most of other L2 participants in this study, did not know anybody in the class.

Self-Positioning and Constructing Identity: Passing for a NES Online

Anika did not talk about her background in her discussion board posts in her English class except once. In her introduction post, in response to the prompt that asked students to introduce themselves and talk about their goals and expectations for the English class, Anika wrote that she was majoring in business and mentioned her occasional difficulties with the English language without disclosing her status as a foreign-born

student: “I am particularly excited for this class as I do often face trouble in professional correspondence. I currently work at the Student Government Accounting Office (SGAO) and I often find myself at a loss of words while typing a formal email. I hope that after this class, it will no longer be a problem.” In all of her discussion board posts, Anika mentioned her home country only once: responding to another student’s introduction that talked about women’s right and education opportunities, she wrote: “I really like your ideas for the company, especially the second one. I am from India where women still face discrimination and injustice in certain rural areas. I am definitely a promoter of women education.”

Overall, Anika seemed to avoid using images or videos of herself in her course assignments more so than other L2 students in this study. Even for her second video assignment, she used her colleague’s help to create a short video interview, and her website did not contain any images of herself either. At the same time, in her introduction, Anika emphasized being a successful student and a university employee: “I am a freshman at UNM but because of my good ACT score, I was placed directly into this class ... I currently work at the Student Government Accounting Office (SGAO)” (Anika, introduction discussion board post).

It is worth noting that Anika did not seem to purposefully avoid the topic of her background or status, and neither was she particularly interested in “blending in” with the US-born NES students. However, had she been seeking a chance to blend in, the online course would have been a good opportunity to do that as her public discussion posts contained minimum or no marked traits that could have betrayed her international background. Her spoken English, on the other hand, had an Indian accent, which would have been noticeable in a traditional on-site classroom. Her instructor, Jessica, said as much in our second interview when she described Anika’s writing in the following way: “

It did not appear to be an ELL student's writing. She could've gotten away with having a teacher not know that it was her second language probably.”

Nonetheless, it appeared that Anika did not talk about her background simply because she considered it irrelevant and did not see a reason to mention it either to her classmates or to her professors. In a later interview, I asked her about disclosing her background to her professors more directly, and she explained it in the following way: “No, regardless of whether I grew up here or there, what I studied, I don't think it was worth mentioning that to the professor, like that I'm not from here because I didn't think it would - it didn't impact what we were studying directly, or how she was going to help me better.” She did not consider asking her professor for help with her English in her other classes either. For instance, in a music appreciation class she took online the following semester, she was struggling with music terminology; she admitted that many of her struggles were due to the fact that she used different terms in her home country. However, she did not seek help from her professor and did not mention the fact that she was not from the US and was unfamiliar with some of the terms to her professor in that class.

When I asked Anika if she ever mentioned her international background to her instructors directly, she replied, “The only time I remember mentioning that to professor, that I'm not from here and I don't have the background for this, was in my honors class.” She further explained that she decided to raise this topic with her professor because she felt she was not prepared for the kind of writing the class required. During that interview, which took place two months after her English 219 class had ended, her reflection on how her educational experience in India had prepared her for college seemed to take a different turn compared to our first conversation:

Yeah, we didn't have paper assignments [in our school]. Like even in my English class, we used to do writing assignments but they weren't like papers. They were like debates or write a speech or that sort of thing. It was like creative writing stuff. So when I do like my first honors paper, it was kind of challenging. So, that's the only time I remember mentioning that to my professor.

Interestingly, this realization only occurred when she took her honors class that required students to write what is traditionally called “essays” in US colleges; the assignments in Anika’s English course had more to do with professional genres.

Furthermore, I was somewhat surprised to hear her say in the same interview, “I’m not a good writer, but I don’t have issues with grammatical stuff;” the statement seemed to go against how she described herself at the beginning of her English 219 course: at the time, she did not seem to doubt that she was a good writer. It seemed that her overall confidence in her writing skills had lessened over time: in our first interview, she felt confident that the types of writing she had done in her school had prepared her well for the type of writing she would be doing in college. In our last interview, she expressed less confidence in her writing abilities overall, but she still felt strongly about being able to write error-free prose. That confidence can perhaps be attributed in part to all the positive feedback on surface-level features that she received from her instructor, Jessica.

Conclusion

As her second semester at UNM progressed, Anika’s confidence in her writing seemed to have lessened as she realized more and more that the amount and kinds of writing she was doing at UNM were different from what her high school prepared her for.

Taking online classes allowed her to “blend in” with US monolingual students to some extent, and she chose not to draw attention to her foreign status as she felt that was not necessary. However, she might have benefitted from more overt discussion of the kinds of genres she would be working with and the amount of writing expected in her classes at the university. Furthermore, compared to most of her classmates, she was at a disadvantage when it came to how much technology she had used for her schoolwork in the past. However, her resilient personality and her ambitious goals helped her overcome the challenges she faced. Even though she did not have a support group among her classmates, the support she was getting from her family members helped her navigate her experience at UNM.

Diego: Building L2 writer confidence can be complicated

Diego was the other international student besides Anika who participated in this project. Diego was in the same English 219 course as Anika, but the two students were not acquainted. Diego’s case is unique compared to the other interviewees in this study because I first met and interviewed him as part of a different research project that focused on the experiences of international students in traditional face-to-face English composition classrooms. Thus, I first met Diego in the Fall 2016 semester when he was enrolled in a traditional English 110 course.

Diego was born in Spain where he attended elementary and part of middle school before moving to Equatorial Guinea; there he completed most of his high school and then moved to the USA. During our first interview in 2016, he explained that he had “just arrived” to UNM in August prior to the Fall semester, but in our second interview in September 2017, he mentioned that he had studied at a high school in Santa Fe, NM for his last year of high school. While Diego participated in the study, he was an international

student by status but planned to immigrate to the US following his mother's and sister's examples. His mother was a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and his sister was a student at UNM, pursuing a degree in architecture and being one year ahead of Diego in her program even though she was his younger sister. Diego lived off campus with his sister and travelled back to Spain during winter and summer breaks. He was majoring in computer engineering and was hoping to transfer to the University of California Berkeley campus because of the prestige of the university and to be closer to his mother.

Diego's first language was Spanish (he pointed out that his Spanish acquired an accent as he had lived out of the country for many years), and he spoke primarily French while living in Africa. His relationship with English seemed to be more complicated, however. He reported that he took ESL classes since he was six years old and studied with "a tutor from New York" in his elementary school, but during our second interview, he complained that the classes did not prepare him adequately for studying in an English-speaking country: "It was just like grammar, we never had writing, we never had speaking, we never had anything like that." However, Diego felt that since coming to the US, his conversational and written English had improved significantly. In our September 2017 interview, he reported being "more comfortable" with speaking and "almost perfect" in writing, while he seemed to be even more confident in our first interview, saying that now he "did not have any mistakes" in his writing.

In our very first interview, Diego appeared to be quite satisfied with his face-to-face English 110 course. He described the instructor as "very helpful" and understanding of the difficulties the international students were having with writing. He said that the instructor corrected his mistakes and always gave explanations for her corrections: "And the teacher always when she corrects my work, she sends me a text saying, 'Hey, this thing is wrong, if

this is how you correct it, and if you want we can meet in my office hours. So I teach you how to improve your English and everything.” During that first semester, Diego seemed to be adjusting to the way his English composition course was taught; in his previous experience with English classes in Africa and in Spain, students would write in class instead of completing their writing outside of class. He was also disappointed his English 110 course was not held in a computer classroom and he was not able to use technology every class meeting because he felt like the class was relying on technology to a large extent: “everything that we have to turn in is by Learn, we should be in a class with computers.” Besides submitting all of his writing through Learn, Diego also had to build a website for one of the course assignments. He admitted that setting up the website was not difficult, but personalizing it or making it look the way he wanted was “the hard thing.” He also described his technology use in high school in Santa Fe as scarce, saying that students were rarely required to use computers and were never taught how to use some common software tools like Microsoft Word or Excel while computer literacy classes were fairly common in his high school in Africa.

Besides not having easy access to computers during class, Diego was disappointed that his class had only a few international students. He was glad to have these other international students, though; as he explained, “Cause you know that I don’t know how to say that, but I know that my friends don’t know either. So I’m not the only one in the class.” He further explained that he felt left out of in-class conversations that revolved around UNM or New Mexico in general: “people here know Albuquerque, so they are like, ‘Students come to UNM because of that thing or...’ the international students were like, ‘Well I came here two months ago, I still don’t know the campus.’” When I asked him if he had considered registering for the only English 110 section for international students UNM

offered at the time, he complained that he was not informed about that section as his advisor directed him to register for any English 110 section and - for whatever reason - did not mention the one for international students. Overall, however, Diego appeared to be satisfied with the class saying that it was one of the best classes he had ever had “because the teacher is very nice.”

When I met Diego a year later, he did not seem as happy with his online English 219 course. It was his first online class, and he did not appear to appreciate the format of the interactions between students: “you have to comment on people in the class, like what can you do better or not.. and sometimes it's like, your rough draft is 2 lines . . . probably my paragraph [of feedback] is gonna be longer than your rough draft,” adding that it was tedious to respond to three people in the online peer review. There was a certain amount of cynicism in his description of the process: “no one reads the peer review, like.. usually you don't care cause like, you do the rough draft in like 10 minutes so that you can do assignment fast, and at the end you're gonna go back to see what some random people just told you, they probably just wanted to finish the assignment fast too.. so the peer review, I mean it is like another homework, but it just doesn't help.” Furthermore, Diego appeared to be dissatisfied with the class schedule, complaining about the tediousness of having to complete assignments on the same day of the week. It seemed that the same aspects of the class that Anika liked, such as the consistent weekly schedule, were disagreeable to Diego.

Engaging with the curriculum and using technology

As students were required to create a fictional company, Diego designed a company that would sell “likes” on social media for companies that sought publicity and recognition on social media platforms (the exact mechanisms or the ethical considerations behind such

an enterprise were never discussed by either the instructor, Jessica, or Diego himself). For his company's profile - an assignment for which Anika chose to design a brochure - Diego created a website using Google Sites. While the website provided the main information required by the assignment prompt, the website design left a few things to be desired, from text positioning and image use to incomplete use of the site's pages (a few pages, as well as the site's title, were left with the text provided by the Sites' developers).



Figure 5.4. Diego's company profile website (homepage). "Nimble" is the name of the theme.

However, when the next assignment students had to create a technical description for a product or service their company offered, Diego interpreted the assignment in the sense that he had to create a physical product that his company would sell. He created a product called "Finder," a Wifi and Bluetooth-enabled device that could help its owner find such often-lost objects as keys, wallets, etc. Diego seemed to be somewhat stressed that he had to create this product when his company was directed towards publicity and media use, yet he did not consider describing a service instead of a product even though he received

questions about the appropriateness of his product for his company as well as read and commented on a few other students' service descriptions. Diego received 42 out of 50 points for that assignment, or 80%, with the following comments from Jessica: "Great ideas here and some really good use of detail. Please see my side comments. I am not sure how this fits in with your "buying likes" business, chosen for this class's topic??" While Jessica's comments in the margins pointed to some issues in the organization and clarity of the description, Diego missed these comments (as will be discussed later) and took Jessica's feedback to mean that he lost points because of the poor coordination between the assignment and his company's specialization. When we talked about that assignment during an interview at the end of the semester, Diego seemed to be upset about his grade, exaggerating the amount of points he lost when he described the feedback he received: "These has nothing related, you did a good job, but it's nothing related to your website' [snaps fingers] - minus 30% off . . . she took 30 points out of 100."

Overall, Diego seemed to be struggling with most of the technology used in the class. He did not feel it was a challenge to create a website as he had done this kind of work in his English 110 and 120 courses; however (even though his website showed some lack of attention or care, as was discussed above). But when it came to creating videos, Diego seemed to be at a loss. For one assignment specifically (the elevator pitch promoting his company's services), he complained that the instructor did not provide directions for how to make a video when the assignment sheet asked for visuals that could be "slides or a screen or a running video for listeners to look at as they hear your pitch." As he never had experience with making videos before, Diego made a video of himself delivering his pitch shot with the front camera on his phone while also submitted a Word document with six screenshots of instagram accounts showing "before" and "after" his company's services.

Diego also described how one of his friends shot his video with the front camera on the phone while holding a paper printout of his company's website to show his company's services, and one other friend submitted a video of himself with no other visuals, which resulted in a lower grade.

While Diego said that he had no directions for which software to use to make the video or how to combine voice and/or video of himself with the required visuals, Jessica did provide some instructions on what tools students could use for the assignment (see below). Indeed, Anika was able to use PowerPoint to create both visuals and a voice recording that accompanied them, and one of Diego's friends (Gabriel, who was also one of this study's participants) also used the recorded presentation feature in PowerPoint. As I did not have access to the course on Learn until after my last interview with Diego, though, I was unable to ask him for some more details on how he and his friends approached the assignment; as such, I can only speculate that he either missed the directions Jessica shared (which would not be surprising as he often skipped over the items in learning modules he deemed non-essential) or did not consider them sufficient or clear enough.

This week's assignment is not strictly written. Rather, I'll ask you to please record your voice as if you were delivering a radio ad, or a marketing pitch in a business, or an actual talk with someone in an elevator! (You only get about thirty seconds in there!)

So, be thinking about what type of tech you'll use to make this happen. Options abound:

- PPT. PPT can actually be a good way to record your voice over a few visuals (slides), and then set the file to run (change through the slides) automatically. It turns out like a mini video that's basically voice-led, but over pictures that support what you're saying.
- Screencast. You've probably noticed my use of this (free) program. It records either you (through your computer camera), or the screen you're looking at, or a combo of both. You can thus deliver your elevator pitch "over" whatever you're showing on your screen.
- Apple or Windows video products. Many of your computers likely come with a video software product like iMovieMaker, etc.

- Your phone. You can potentially use your phone to record your pitch, while using the video part to show things that support it.
- Podcasting software. If you don't want to focus on the visual, but only want focus on what you're saying, you can create a purely aural file. This would limit its use to radio most likely, but it's still very useful.
- Plenty of other free download products. I'm going to make an optional discussion board where you can share ideas about other services I haven't mentioned here!

Figure 5.5. Jessica's instructions for making the Elevator Pitch video. The instructions were posted as an "item" (or fully visible text) inside the week's learning module.

Besides challenges associated with multimodal assignments, Diego encountered multiple issues with Blackboard Learn: during our usability walkthrough early in the semester, he was not able to access a few items necessary to complete the week's tasks; he failed to receive his instructor's announcements in the email; he had difficulties with accessing attachments and sometimes even with submitting his work. He described one instance where he could not access a worksheet that students needed to fill out and post on the discussion board; he figured out a way to use the worksheet another student completed and shared. However, a more important aspect of Learn functionality that Diego had difficulties with was accessing his instructor's comments. Jessica provided both overall feedback through the comment function that appeared together with the grade and the area comments, or comments in the margins. Even though she provided some detailed instructions on how to find her comments (see below), both Anika and Diego had difficulties navigating their grades and feedback. Diego described how he tried to find these comments in the margins for the first graded assignment, but as he could not figure it out, he promptly stopped even trying to find them. It was not until our second interview in mid-

November that he figured out a way to see these comments, and only because he was using my laptop to give me an example of a grade and feedback he received. In a different Internet browser and on a different OS, Learn's feedback window appeared different, and Diego was able to notice where the marginal comments were located. Similarly, it took Anika over a month to figure out a way to access Jessica's comments.

When you open up the graded assignment, you'll find three sort of "columns" going on. (I'd send a screenshot but as a non-student I don't have this exact view.)

Left = the paper you uploaded

Middle = a list of my comments in a gray column, with an "x" in the top right

Right = points # and overall comments

I really want you to be able to see the comments provided in the middle area, because most of my comments are pointing to a specific idea on your assignment. So, please close the middle column by clicking on the "x." This will feel weird/wrong because it seems like you'd be deleting them or their view by closing the panel. However, what it actually does is close the weird gray panel to reveal yellow comment bubbles more of the sort you'd see on a Word doc in track changes. You can then see where I was "pointing to" with each comment.

So, please click the gray "x" and close out the column that ultimately blocks my comment bubbles. It's a strange default in Learn to block the bubbles! :)

Figure 5.6. Jessica's instructions for accessing her feedback. The view

Jessica described here was different from the view Diego saw.

In addition to having difficulties finding Jessica's comments, Diego was dissatisfied with how the course materials were organized. Each of the three big projects in the class included 4-5 weeks of work worth, and each week was posted as its own folder on the project's page. Inside each week's folder, there was schedule summary with a list of

“Required Readings” due and “Required Activities” due, with specific deadlines. Each folder thus included the required readings (if they were outside of the course textbook), assignment sheets, links to discussion board forums, etc. However, each folder also included a number of additional elements not covered on the schedule summary such as supplemental readings or links to resources, instructional videos, etc. Diego seemed to have difficulties navigating all these elements and differentiating between essential and supplemental information. Furthermore, as textbook chapters were assigned for reading, but the reading was never graded and students were not required to do anything with the textbook other than read it for their own benefit, Diego - unlike Anika - never consulted the textbook. Finally, he complained of the additional difficulty with navigating around various acronyms his instructor used in the names of the projects and items on Learn: “PSA, the QRA, the RFP... the letters - tell me what is a PSA,” adding: “I don't know for American students, if they know it, but for internationals, it's impossible. If you don't actually read exactly this thing, you don't know what you're doing.”

Student-instructor relationship: Tension and misunderstanding

As Diego was enrolled in Jessica's course, I expected him to be satisfied with the help he would get from his instructor because Jessica was one of the few people teaching in the eComposition program who had not only fairly extensive experience working with ESL students but also a solid knowledge of Spanish. However, it did not seem to be the case. Perhaps because he was not able to view Jessica's comments in the margins for most of the semester and had to rely only on the overall feedback to interpret the way his work graded, but Diego was convinced that Jessica was grading his grammar unfairly, and he seemed to be resentful about it: “with the grammar, I hate it when she takes points... 4 out of 50 for

the grammar. I mean, you know what, it's 8% for grammar? And then I look at my grammar, and I'm like, you made two mistakes. Two mistakes in a 5 pages? that's 8%? what did I do, I killed someone with your grammar?" He also seemed to think that grammar was the only aspect of his work that was not perfect: "she takes points off and off and off... so like I haven't got a 100 in any assignment cause I did everything correct but the grammar." While Jessica's overall feedback rarely addressed any specific grammatical errors (her comments in the margins did, but Diego did not have access to them), Diego did not seem to appreciate his instructor's attempts to utilize her knowledge of Spanish in her feedback. In one instance, Jessica left the following comment on Diego's paper: "Small tip for verbs like with 'improving': If you already used one verb ('help' in this case), then the next verb is not conjugated. Maybe it is the same in Spanish? 'This project might "me ayuda mejorar..''?? I believe that in both languages, you don't conjugate the second verb." While the correct Spanish phrase would be "me ayuda **a** mejorar," that small error undermined Jessica's credibility in Diego's eyes, further increasing his contentious attitude: "I'm like, you don't speak Spanish at all, don't go to Google translator, and the google translator thing was like completely wrong like... well you just gave me Spanish that's completely wrong . . . so like the only support she gives to me is like using google translate and being like, you should do it like this. I was like, 'no.'"

When I asked Jessica about her policy on grading and responding to grammatical errors and about Diego's work more specifically, she explained her approach in different terms:

Oh, no, I never do that. Yeah. You know, he was ... he came into the class with that fear, and he met with me right away, and said, "I'm a second language learner." Both using that as a worry and as an excuse, you know,

so I was like, "I really just don't grade that way." And he, I think, was always at risk for misinterpreting that, because he did have a lot of those kinds of mistakes, but that wasn't what he was getting marked off on. I mean, he didn't generate content that worked all the time, and so he would get... he got probably some of the lowest grades in the class, but not because of that at all, he just didn't do the assignments fairly. (Jessica, interview #3)

Indeed, Jessica's feedback rarely shows that she took off more than 2-4 points off for grammatical errors on a single assignment even though, in her words, Diego was one of the two students who had "lowest skills in English" out of all the students in the course. Moreover, describing her impression of Diego, Jessica compared him to Anika: "She was proactive. It was one thing, she... like I said, she had a question almost every week. And Diego would more kind of throw anything in there, and be upset about it later, whereas she would approach it from the beginning. So maybe it's just sort of an order of operations thing that would be helpful for students to know." Jessica further described Diego as expecting "the worst out of everything" in the class and mentioned that she rarely had to work with students like him, adding that his "level of skill and autonomy were much lower than your average student." Finally, she also mentioned that it was evident that Diego did not use the textbook because he "would turn in something with an entire half not there, and then would get marked off, and not know why. But obviously, it was in the chapter." However, she never pointed that out explicitly in her feedback on Diego's work.

Diego seemed to be nervous about his grades and dissatisfied with the course throughout the semester. He kept a close eye on all of his grades and built trajectories for what his final grade was going to be; on more than one occasion, he disputed his grade with

the instructor, both in person and via email, and sometimes successfully. However, after the semester was over and he received an A for his final grade, he seemed to be much more relaxed and less oppositional to the class and the instructor, saying that he felt “good about the class” and that the “assignments were nice.” Throughout the semester, though, he seemed very anxious about his grades and was prone to finding scapegoats when his grades were less than perfect, from technology issues to unfair grading or sometimes other students who failed to provide him adequate feedback. It seemed that it was important for him to have a way to vent his anxieties or frustrations about the class; luckily, he was not taking the class alone.

Classroom community: L2 writers sticking together

Diego was taking the class with 5 of his friends, all of which were international or bilingual students coming from Lebanon, Mexico, Thailand, and Russia (one of them, Gabriel, a resident bilingual student, was also part of this research). Diego described how they met the previous year in a face-to-face class taught by an instructor from India and bonded over their common struggle with understanding the instructor’s accent as neither of them had had much exposure to that kind of accent before. In the Fall 2017 semester, all of Diego’s friends were taking most of their classes together as they shared a major as well. Diego reported that they met regularly for studying and discussing their courses. They helped each other with figuring out what was expected of them in assignments, reminded each other about due dates, and often responded to each other on the discussion board. During our first interview in the semester, Diego laughed when he said that the instructor was not aware that these six people knew each other; however, later on Jessica knew that at

least a few people knew each other as some of them, including Diego, visited her during her office hours together.

During our usability walkthrough at the beginning of the semester, we were going through the week's assignments when I asked Diego how he would keep track of all the assignments. He replied that he would just ask his friends about it. Indeed, it seemed that he was dependent on his friends' help more than on his own resourcefulness or his instructor. In some cases, he seemed to be hesitant to come to Jessica with questions but wished there was someone else he could ask other than his friends, who in a lot of cases were as perplexed as he was. He further explained, "and sometimes you don't wanna talk to the teacher cause you're like, what if I'm just asking a dumb question and I don't wanna feel bad cause the teacher's gonna grade it; you can just ask a TA... cause he's a... it's an online course, you're not supposed to know who is in the class, you know. So you have to ask someone, and there should be another person that you can ask." (Jessica's class was one of very few eComposition courses that semester that did not have an instructional assistant.) It was fortunate for Diego that he had his group of friends taking the course with him as both Jessica and himself seemed to have some doubts as to whether he would have had the same success in the class if studying on his own. Moreover, it seemed important for Diego that his friends all had international background as well; he never mentioned developing close friendships with American students.

Besides his group of 5 friends, Diego did not know anybody in the class, and his interaction with his peers outside of his group did not go beyond the required minimum. Diego confessed that he had no idea who any of the students were and further explained that he was afraid to make any assumptions about students he had not met personally. He described an instance when one student turned out to be male even though his name looked

female to Diego and his friends, and a similar case when Diego's assumption about a student's location proved to be very wrong. However, even though Diego met with his small group of friends regularly, their friendship was not apparent based solely on their discussion board interactions. There was little difference between how they addressed or interacted with each other versus other students. The only way their instructor came to be aware of their relationship outside of the online course was when a couple of them came to her office hours together.

Finally, while having a support group of close friends seemed to be important for Diego's success in the class, he did not seem to miss the social aspects of traditional face-to-face courses. In our last interview, he mentioned that he received better grades in his online courses than face-to-face ones. However, for the following semester he did not enroll in any online courses because his mother insisted that he took traditional courses; tell Diego, "you didn't come to America to take classes online, you need the experience of the college."

Diego's online identity: Language learner confidence and insecurity

In this section of English 219, students had fewer opportunities to engage in personal genres than in Hannah's class. However, for their introduction discussion board posts, students were asked to talk about their reasons and motivation for taking the course as well as what they wanted to get out of it. In his post, Diego emphasized his international and ESL status:

Hello everyone! My name is Diego, but my friends call me []. I am from Spain and i am still learning English. I am majoring in Computer Engineering, so there is a lot of vocabulary that i hope to learn this semester,

because i can barely understand when my physics and Programming teachers talk about things that for american students might be easy words but for me it is really hard to understand. My major is for those who enjoy working with computers, programming, creating apps, etc.

I hope this class helps me learning the necessary vocabulary for my major and teaches me how to properly write professional documents. (original spelling and punctuation preserved)

He also mentioned his status in his responses to other students' introduction posts, and sometimes referenced it in peer review discussions when, for example, asking his peers for advice: "I am still learning English, what grammar errors did I make?"

The last statement seems to go against his professed confidence in his writing abilities as he described his writing as "almost perfect" in our first interview. Diego seemed to be at once concerned about his ESL status and proud of the progress he had made in English and the background he was coming from. Some of his anxieties about his English skills were perhaps due to the fact he was embarking on a new semester in a new English course where he had not met the instructor and was not sure what to expect. He also seemed concerned about his legal status: he had to switch from a J visa to F in the summer 2017, and he was unsure about his immigrant aspirations as he was above the legal age that allowed his mother to bring him in as an immigrant together with her. Like Anika, he never referred to his immigration plans in his work or discussions in the class. Finally, Diego seemed to be struggling with defining his immigrant identity within the New Mexican multicultural setting. While he had close friends who were recent or childhood immigrants from Mexico, he seemed to be distinguishing himself from other Spanish-speaking students; for example, he seemed to be upset that the university's writing center did not

hire him as a Spanish tutor, choosing a few Mexican-American students instead. He complained that the university was not interested in “teaching Spanish from Spain.”

While Jessica pointed out that Diego seemed to be using his L2 status both “as a worry and an excuse,” she viewed his English skills as very low, estimating them perhaps lower than they deserved. Diego’s online discussion board posts displayed a higher number of grammatical and spelling errors than his more formal assignments. As in the introduction discussion post quoted above, most of his discussion posts showed lack of capitalization, some easily spotted spelling errors, and lack of punctuation. Most of these errors were not necessarily ESL-marked, however, and seemed rather a sign of informal writing commonly found on social media or in text speak. Diego’s more formal assignments displayed a minimal number of ESL-marked errors, especially for someone who had lived in the country for only 2 years (see example below).

How does it work? Our product works in the following way: A chip in the middle of the device creates a bluetooth signal and also receives a wifi signal. If the [company’s name] finder detects a wifi router it will send a request to the router with the exact coordinates of where the device was detected. In those cases when you left the finder at the beach, the forest, or in the street where there is no internet, your device will send another signal to any phone with bluetooth that has the finder app connected. Our app has been downloaded already by 3+ million users, so the same way someone might find your [company’s name], you may help others find their device too.

Figure 5.7. An excerpt from Diego’s company description.

It seemed that Jessica might have formed a less favorable idea of Diego’s English skills than what they deserved, in part perhaps of Diego’s stated anxiety about his skills and

perhaps in part because Jessica's first impression was formed based on his discussion posts.

Conclusion

Diego had a complicated relationship with English, anxious about his English skills and how his L2 background might affect his grades but also seeing himself as a competent writer. He seemed to be willing to work on correcting his grammatical errors but also resentful when his instructor pointed them out. His main motivation seemed to be his grades and standing in the program, and while he was willing to do only minimal amount of work to earn them, he was willing to negotiate his grades with his instructor and use his L2 status as a reason for his work to be graded more leniently. He was in contact with his instructor a lot (both face-to-face and online), but unlike Anika, he was not proactive in his work and rarely came to the instructor with questions in advance of an assignment due date. Having a support group of friends seemed to be a very valuable resource as Diego relied on their help more than he did on his instructor's.

Finally, what Diego's experience with using technology in his English 219 class demonstrates is that our students, while often being touted as the generation of "digital natives," may in fact not be as adept at using technology as we expect them to. And while the instructor gave some directions for how to create certain products like videos, students needed to be attentive and proactive in order to actually complete the assignment at the expected level of proficiency. What further complicates the situation is the common attitude among students that students taking courses online should be independent and resourceful. Seeking help from their instructor when they need it might seem to them as admitting to their under-preparedness. Diego's desire to have someone to talk to other than the

instructor or his classmates was echoed by other students as well, both L2 and L1, who felt like coming to their instructor with questions might put them in a disadvantageous position.

Tai: When the Outcomes Are Less than Ideal

Tai was a resident bilingual student; he immigrated to the US from Vietnam with his parents at the age of 4. Similar to other Generation 1.5 students (citation), Tai was more comfortable with English than his first language, which he still used at home with his family members, and did not feel like he needed additional language support in his college courses. He could not remember ever being in a bilingual program during his primary education.

On the survey as well as during our interview, he named English as his second language, but added that he “definitely” felt more comfortable with English. He did all of his school education in English and in fact never learned to read or write in Vietnamese, his first language and the language he still used at home. He appeared to be very confident in his writing in English. When asked about his experience taking English 110 and 120 (the prerequisites for taking English 219) face to face, he noted that neither class “really challenged” him, adding that he got a B in his English 120 class only because he got “really lazy.” He also explained that he took AP English in high school, which, he felt, prepared him well for writing in college.

When I met Tai, he was a sophomore student majoring in finance and political science, and Fall 2017 was his first semester taking online classes. Like most of the other participants in this project, Tai had to juggle work and study and was taking two courses online (English 219 and Philosophy 101) in order to make his schedule work; however, he preferred traditional face to face classes because, as he phrased it, he liked interacting with people and “talking with people, like professors and students.” He also mentioned growing

up in very restricted financial circumstances, a factor that seemed to affect his motivation for studying as he placed high value on being able to make money and viewed education as a necessary prerequisite for that. He appeared to put great emphasis on his grades and the progress he was making in his program.

Digital Literacy and Technology Use

His writing course included a number of assignments in multimodal genres, from websites to elevator pitch videos to video presentations. Tai did not seem to be put off by the digital tools students were required to use in order to complete these multimodal assignments even though he did not use too much technology in high school. He further explained that in his high school, “every now and then, my English class would go to the library so we could do research on something we were writing on and... the only time I used a computer during high school was like writing papers.” He also added that as his high school made a switch from paper to computer-based testing in his last year, he saw his standardized tests scores drop, which he attributed to the change in how the tests were administered. However, despite his preference for “books and paper,” he pointed out that he adapted quickly and easily. In one of his reflective memos (the instructor required a reflective memo to accompany most of the assignments in the course), Tai described his writing process as he was working on his resume: “I overcame the challenges of creating the resume by taking a quick break from it to research on Google and YouTube how to do certain things within Word. I learned how to insert columns in which was great because I only wanted my resume to be one page therefore I had to condense the ‘Skills’ and ‘References’ and make them into two columns.” While this description betrays a rather limited knowledge of the software tool, it also shows that Tai was prepared to work on

developing his technology knowledge and was able to find resources when he needed them. He was also willing to try out different tools if his first choice proved to be too challenging to work with. For example, Tai wrote in one of his reflective memos that accompanied the first website he built that after trying out Google Sites, he decided to switch to Weebly instead as the latter platform seemed more user-friendly.

Tai noted that most of his courses in college had been using online LMSs (Blackboard Learn and sometimes others), and in general, he had to rely on technology a lot more than he used to in high school. However, he was one of the students who relied on the LMS technology to an extent that sometimes had negative effects. For example, he relied on the Calendar reminders in Blackboard Learn to complete his homework for all of his courses including the English class, but as his instructor sometimes assigned work that would not be displayed as due on the Calendar feature (e.g. by assigning an early ungraded draft for a project that had a later due date), Tai missed a number of assignments that he probably wouldn't have missed had he not relied solely on the Calendar reminders. By using the calendar feature, Tai was trying to simplify things as he would only need to look at one place for all of his courses instead of consulting 5 different schedules for each of them, but by ignoring these individual courses' calendars, he missed a few deadlines. As the semester progressed, he seemed to come to terms with checking the course calendar more often and also came to rely on his friends to remind him of due dates and assignments.

Tension in the student-instructor relationship

Tai was one of the few students in this study who seemed to be doing well in the class up until he received his final grade. In our first and second interviews, he appeared to

be engaged with the course assignments and pleased with the instructor's feedback. The course consisted of three large projects, each comprised of three or more different assignments designed to introduce students to a range of professional writing genres. For the first project, students created a few documents related to job market such as a resume and an application letter and also sent out a few formal email messages to potential employers. For the second and third sequence, students created their own fictional companies (similar to Jessica's class) and completed a number of assignments in multimodal genres that revolved around their companies.

During our first interview, Tai seemed to be interested in the type of work he was completing for the class. He also described his instructor's feedback as helpful. He appreciated that Hannah took the time to add little substantive comments even on short assignments like discussion board posts. Tai also seemed satisfied with the more extensive comments he received on the larger projects: "So a lot of them were actually really helpful comments, like she tells me what I did wrong and what I did right." In her feedback, Hannah did not focus on sentence-level features and typically did not provide any marginal comments. She gave summative feedback using the Learn feedback function attached to the grade; her feedback was a mix of positive and critical comments and often came with a list of suggestions for improvement. However, on some assignments, her comments were rather terse and mostly focused on justifying the grade, e.g. "-5 Reflection. Not 2 pages." Overall though, Hannah seemed to provide fairly detailed and helpful advice for improving Tai's projects.

<p>Too much text on your ad. There should be an English translated version of the ad.</p>

The sentences at the bottom need work. "Now take your cell phone" is clunky.

Nice use of red starburst.

There is no address or phone # or web address associated with this ad. If

Orlando's phones is new to the area, folks will need to know how to find it.

Not sure about the brands represented. Is Google's phone popular enough for it
to be featured prominently?

Simpler is usually better.

Figure 5.8. An example of Hannah's feedback. The comments Tai received on his advertising poster that targeted a Chinese audience and used Mandarin.

At the same time, Tai seemed to grow a bit dissatisfied with what he perceived as unfair treatment from his instructor. In one instance, for example, Tai included a non-working link to a video he created earlier when he submitted his assignment. The instructor took points off for not including the video, and Tai argued that the instructor should not have done it because the video had already been shared (and graded) through a peer review discussion earlier. In another instance, Tai received a lower grade on a discussion board assignment because he accidentally missed a post that he was supposed to comment on.

Nonetheless, Tai seemed to putting good efforts into his work. The only type of assignments he was far from enthusiastic about were the reflective memos that were required with each assignment, minor and major. At the end of each sequence, students were also required to reflect on all nine student learning outcomes stated in the syllabus. It was a higher amount of reflective writing than in most English 219 courses; moreover, the instructor's directions for the reflective memos consisted of questions that prompted students to talk about their composing process and their rhetorical choices (e.g., "What was the most challenging part of this project? How did you overcome that challenge?"), but for the reflections on the SLOs, directions were rather scarce. When I asked Hannah about her

strategies for working with reflective writing, she explained, “I don't give as much direction on how to write reflections. I generally just ask the questions” and further added that reflective writing was not something she was enthusiastic to assign to her students: “that one's not my idea . . . ‘We have to reflect on the outcomes again?’ - ‘Yes. yes you do.’ ‘Why?’ ‘Cause the folks that write my check like people reflecting on the outcomes.’” Tai seemed to be equally reluctant to complete these reflections, saying that they were “really tedious and a waste of time.”

However, Tai's main complaint came at the end of the semester when he received his grade for the final portfolio assignment - a website that was a collection of all the work he had done during the semester. Part of the portfolio assignment was a reflective memo where students were required to make assertions about their learning referring to the course SLOs. The memo accounted for 20% of the portfolio's grade, and the portfolio itself weighed 40% of the final grade in the class. To Hannah's surprise, almost all students in the course did not include the reflective memo. She seemed frustrated about it, pointing out that it was “in the assignment” and in the video that accompanied the assignment sheet. Students were first given the portfolio assignment sheet during the second week of the semester, and during the last week, Hannah's instructions directed students back to Week 2 and prompted them to “Revise! Revise! Revise!” their projects. Tai pointed out that he followed that instruction and did not take another look at the assignment. As a result, he posted all of his work, including his previous reflections, on the website but missed the reflective memo.

Together with some inadequacies in his revisions, the missing memo cost Tai 160 points out of 400, which brought down his final grade from A or A minus to B minus. He felt like he was “robbed of those points” that the instructor was not reasonable with how

she treated the portfolios, especially as none of Tai's friends received an A in the class. In the end, Tai described his impression of Hannah in the following way: "It's really hard to gauge her mood kind of, because other times she's like, 'Yeah, you can redo this.' But other times she's like, 'No, you can't redo it.' So I don't know. I don't know, I was just really if ... I don't really get frustrated with any teachers 'cause I feel like it's all mostly on the students, but I felt so frustrated with Professor [last name], it was pretty bad." In his frustration, he never finished reading Hannah's feedback on his portfolio and did not try contacting her about his final grade. It is worth noting that even though Tai viewed online communication with instructor as inferior to face-to-face conversation, he never tried to talk to Hannah in person even though he was taking a few courses on campus as well. This lack of direct face-to-face interaction perhaps contributed to the lack of understanding that the teacher-student relationship showed.

The final portfolio was the most striking instance of Tai's dissatisfaction with the course; however, he also had difficulties navigating the course throughout the semester. He described one instance when he could not find the assignment sheet for a paper that was due on a Friday. He explained that he was doing most of his assignments after finishing his work. When he started working on the assignment that Friday, however, he realized that he did not fully understand the directions. He sent his instructor, Hannah, a message via email, but she did not respond to him until the following Monday; as Tai explained, "So I just finished it [the assignment] on Friday and then on Monday, she emailed me back, and she was like, hey I don't answer emails on the weekend, so." When I asked his instructor, Hannah, about that policy, she described it as "personal principle," further elaborating on it: "I think a lot of teachers, especially in this building [that hosts the English department] ... the TA's here, generally cause this is the only time that they've taught, they will burn

themselves out, teaching two classes. You have to know how to take care of yourself. This is my 11th year. Y'all are not gonna kill me. And I recognize, it may be a small line, but there it is. No emails on the weekend.” During that semester, Hannah was teaching three courses (only one online) and finishing her dissertation, so her desire to protect her time did not seem too unreasonable.

Nonetheless, Tai was dissatisfied with his instructor’s policy of not checking her email over the weekends. It seemed to be particularly vexing for him as he explained that the weekend was when he was doing the majority of his homework for online classes, reserving the time during workdays for his face-to-face classes. During our post-semester interview, Tai expressed his frustration in especially strong terms: “I feel like for an online class, it's by law that you answer emails during the weekend because that's when a lot of things are due.” At the instance described in above, however, Tai was able to complete the assignment with the help of his friends instead of his instructor’s.

Classroom community: A Little Help from My Friends

Tai had three friends who were enrolled in the same course; he got to know these students during his first year at UNM, and they registered for the English 219 course together. They communicated frequently with each other, checking in on their progress, discussing their homework, and comparing their experiences. In more than one instance, Tai’s friends reminded him of assignments due or helped him find the information he needed to complete a task. Similarly, Tai sometimes helped his friends as well, or as Tai put it: “so one of my friends is really lazy, and he didn't do the past two assignments. And I always tell him, you have to do this. He just doesn't do it.” It is perhaps worth noting that this particular friend ended up dropping the class. Based on Tai’s account of the

interactions between his friends, they helped each other with remembering due dates or clarifying any confusion about assignments, but they did not ask each other for advice when it came to working with the digital tools the assignments required.

Despite discussing the class outside of it, Tai and his friends never overtly referred to their friendship within the online spaces of the class even though they occasionally responded to each other's discussion board posts. Tai was the most consistent out of the four in responding to his friend Jewell (pseudonym) on more than a third of the discussion board forums. Hannah, their instructor, was not aware that these four students knew each other outside of her class; when she grouped students together for online discussions, which happened two times in the semester, she never put them in the same group. One of Tai's friends, Sean, was a L1 student also part of this research project (his experience is mentioned in the previous chapter) while the other two friends (also L1 students) were not; Sean's account of some of the difficulties with the class overall supported Tai's impressions as well.

During our last interview, Tai reported that his friends were similarly dissatisfied with their final grades, feeling that their work did not receive the credit it deserved. Tai described a conversation they had at that point: "We're sitting there, we were like, 'How're we supposed to know these kind of things?'" Having a group of friends in same online course thus provided Tai not only with a support group but also with an outlet to vent his frustrations or issues with the assignments or the instructor.

Tai also explained that it was important for him to have somebody to talk to in any of his classes, whether online or face-to-face; he described his strategy for face-to-face courses: "Cause even when I walk into the class with no one I know, I always try to like pick out a person, I'm like, hey let's exchange phone numbers so we can like, if you have

any questions you ask me, if I have any questions I ask you. I think that's just a really smart thing to do for students.” He also noted that this strategy would not work for online classes because, as he put it, “you're gonna email them, and they're like, ‘what the heck’ [laughs] They're just gonna think you're like a random person trying to get their number.” It was fortunate for Tai to have, in his online English course, a support group comprised of people he had already known.

The group provided an outlet for anxieties and frustration as well as a safety net; however, despite the group’s frequent conversation about their homework and assignments, Tai’s and Sean’s interviews did not reveal that they discussed issues of technology or the digital tools they were using. Based on the students’ accounts of their experience with these aspects of the class, they were used to figuring out how to work with digital tools on their own and seldom sought help either from their peers or their instructors. Nonetheless, Tai’s group of friends functioned as a meaningful community of learning that helped him complete the course despite some of the negative feelings he had about the instructor.

Identity and Positioning: Immigrant Narrative and the American Dream

Unlike other Gen 1.5 students in this study, Tai did not hesitate to acknowledge his immigrant background. For their very first discussion board post, the instructor asked students to talk about their reason for being in college by including a picture of their “inspiration for coming to school,” which could be “a person, a place you want to work, a place you'd like to live, or anything else that inspires and motivates you to do your best at school.” Tai chose to post a picture of a hand holding up a thick pack of one-hundred dollar bills. He explained that money was his “ultimate inspiration and motivator to get my lazy butt to school,” further adding: “I strongly believe that money does buy happiness and I

strive to make as much of it as I can so my children's children don't have to worry about it.” Besides talking about his motivation, Tai also introduced himself to the class in the following way: “You're probably thinking right now that I can't be serious but I'm just getting started. I am 19 years old and was originally born in Vietnam. Other than money, I enjoy many other things such as myself, Taco Cabana, and Game of Thrones. ... I hope y'all enjoy my post and I hope you take everything I say completely serious because everything I say is serious.” Tai was thus one of the few students participants who used colloquialisms or generally informal tone in their discussion board posts. His use of phrases such as “lazy butt” and “y'all” not only signaled his comfort with more informal vocabulary but also helped him position himself as someone less formal, someone who likes to make jokes while also being focused on his career goals.

In the first week of the semester, students also had their first media lab assignment designed to let them test out new technology before they start working on an assignment that necessitated their use of that technology. The media lab assignment asked students to create a personal website with a 300-word introduction to themselves, some pictures, links to other sites, and at least one video. The assignment instructions also asked students to “Use this website to talk about your history, where you grew up, your talents, your hobbies, or your favorite foods or whatever information you feel comfortable sharing.” Students also had the option to share their websites with their classmates through the discussion board, and Tai was one of only five students who chose to do so.

Tai's website's name was “Me, Myself, and I” and featured a large image of himself on the homepage with an introduction that was more assertive of his immigrant identity:

My name is Tai [last name] and I am an American Asian. I am not originally from America but I love this country too much to not identify as an American first and an Asian second. I was born in Phan Thiet, Vietnam and moved to America when I was four. My family was poor when we came from Vietnam but thanks to hard work and the American dream, we build a life for ourselves.

The homepage also featured a quote by Donald Trump with an explanatory line saying, “I’m never afraid to lose or be wrong because it will teach me to be a winner. There are only winners and losers in this world, which one are you?” On another page of his website named “Discover,” Tai posted a few videos of himself performing stunts like deadlifting 400 lbs or jumping into a large cage filled with inflatable balls at Walmart. Tai’s inscription on the page read “I enjoy everything and everyone that is a part of my life. I enjoy documenting the many stupid things I do while I can. I enjoy pushing my body to its limit because I’m young and invincible.” His personal website thus allowed Tai to expand on his immigrant narrative while also stressing his alliance to his new US American identity.

In general, Tai seemed to take advantage of the open-ended nature of the media lab assignments, using it to further establish his identity as a self-confident student with clear goals for his future who is also very enthusiastic about his new home country. In his reflection on the personal website assignment, Tai noted: “Thanks to my narcissistic nature, I had no trouble creating a website that is revolved around me,” further adding that the “most enjoyable aspect for me from this whole assignment was the informality that came with it.” The personal website assignment, however, was the only one where students had the freedom to talk about their personal interests and beliefs or to keep an informal tone.

Despite taking full advantage of the less formal assignments to foreground his immigrant identity, Tai did not utilize his multicultural background for an assignment that required students to research a different culture and create an advertisement targeting a specific group in a different country. Tai did not choose to talk about Vietnam, as one might expect him to do. Instead, he did research on doing business in China and created a customer profile of a Chinese businessman that included traits such as “teamwork and the group as a whole is honored rather than just the individual, include everyone” or “the Chinese loves gifts because it expresses friendship.” Tai cited the website for a shipping company called *More Than Shipping* as his main source of information in this customer profile.

Nonetheless, at the beginning of the semester Tai’s outgoing personality was also evident in the online discussions. He was very direct in his comments on other students’ posts and very assertive in his opinions. For instance, he left the following comment on another student’s introduction that mentioned the student being part of Catholic church:

I was always raised with strict Catholic parents which is probably the reason I hate Catholicism but it doesn't explain why I hate religion as a whole. I strongly believe that religion is the root of all evil because religion itself has separated many people and has started many wars, for example: The Crusades and The Thirty Years War. So my question was always how has something that preaches love be so violent? Maybe you can enlighten me but just to let you know I am still Catholic, but only to make my parents happy. :)

Tai’s comment never received an answer from the original post’s author, and it is unknown if the author saw Tai’s censure of her religion.

The comment featured above, however, was also much more antagonistic than the rest of Tai's replies to his peers' posts. In most of his feedback, Tai preserved a fairly formal tone and left positive comments together with criticisms of the elements that needed the authors' attention (see Figures 5.8.-5.10 below for examples). Tai's early comments were also longer than his classmates' comments on similar posts, but as his responses to other students' posts never received any answers (students were not required to respond to their reviewers or commenters), his later comments became shorter as well. Moreover, Tai's comments on his friends' posts were sometimes slightly less formal in tone. Overall, though, once the course focused on impersonal topics, Tai's comments also became more professional.

Hello Martin,
Your video was very easy to understand and you explained most of the functions that people will be using really well. Sometimes it was a little hard to follow what you were doing when you had the back of the phone facing the camera but other than that, it was a great video.
Best,
Tai

Figure 5.8. An example of Tai's response to a student he was not familiar with outside of class.

Hello Jewell,

Your video was easy to listen to, you didn't stutter or mumble, and you were professionally dressed. You were confident in selling yourself to the employer but you lacked some enthusiasm. I think you could've spoken more about what you can bring to the company and why they should hire you. Other than that I think your video length was perfect and I would give it a 4.

Best,

Tai

Figure 5.9. Tai's response to a friend in the first third of the semester.

Jewell,

Your PowerPoint is gorgeous and your points are really organized. I like the information you presented but you did not do a voice recording.

Best,

Tai

Figure 5.10. Tai's response to a friend's post towards the end of the semester.

Overall, Tai's discussion board comments reflected a more formal (and careful) professional identity than the one displayed in the less formal website assignment even though the instructor never overtly discussed these aspects of the discussion board assignments.

Conclusion

In many aspects, Tai's journey stands in contrast to Anika's. In terms of identity positioning, although both immigrants, Tai did not hesitate to disclose his background and was proud of his family's journey as it followed the American dream ideal, while Anika, as a recent immigrant, did not feel secure enough in her new role and preferred not to disclose it. At the same time, Tai did not rely on his knowledge of the Vietnamese culture when asked to research a foreign audience, which would have portrayed him as an insider to the culture. Unlike Anika, Tai had a group of friends who provided support throughout the semester and helped him persevere when he felt discouraged by the strenuous relationship with the instructor. Having this community of friends seemed especially beneficial to him as he lamented multiple times the lack of direct interpersonal contact.

Camila: Making It on Your Own

When I met Camila, she was in her third year of the biochemistry program planning to go into medical school after graduation. She was enrolled in an English 219 course online, a section taught by another instructor, Chris. She seemed like a very driven student: she was working 30-35 hours a week at the UNM Hospital and at an OB/GYN office as an assistant while being full time student. As she jokingly described herself, "I am a loner; I don't do anything but eat and study." At the time, Camila was living with her parents and three younger brothers because she wanted to save money for medical school. She described her weekly schedule as dividing all of her time between school and work during work days and working on her coursework at a cafe on the weekends. She further explained that she was able to do part of her English homework during downtime at work as well as on the weekends.

Camila was born in the US, but her first language was Spanish as her mother, who immigrated from Mexico as an adult, found it important to pass on her language to her daughter. The family would take regular trips to Mexico where Camila could interact with her relatives in Spanish. Furthermore, Camila was in a bilingual program for her Pre-K and Kindergarten grades and spoke only Spanish until she was 5 years old. However, starting with elementary school, English started to play the dominant role in Camila's schooling. She mentioned that her elementary teachers "frowned upon" her if she spoke Spanish, and the only way she was allowed to use the language in school was to translate for another student whose English skills were much lower. As there were only 3 students who spoke Spanish in the whole school, Camila's chances to practice the language were very limited. At home, however, her mother insisted on speaking Spanish, so Camila's life was divided between the two languages: "No English in the house, no Spanish in school." Despite her strict Spanish-only policy, though, Camila's mother (herself a fluent bilingual who graduated from college in the US) did not want Camila to fall behind her peers in her language skills, so she also insisted that Camila read books in English every day.

When Camila got to high school, she felt that her English was still at a lower point than her peers'. To improve her language skills, she took "AP Capstone classes" which helped her "with speech and presentation-wise." She recounted the following advice she received from a teacher:

My pre-med teacher told me that I should take some extra classes with writing, he told me, he was just like, well... he basically said this blunt, he said, "um.. you're not Caucasian, and that's fine," he's like, "Caucasian women, especially the ones from [name of more prestigious high school] get really special treatment, they have tutors, they have ongoing tutors 24/7,"

and I was just like, "ok..." and he was like, "you need to take an English class, an extra English class just to better your writing to get up to the level of their writing." And I was like, "OK," so I took an extra English class so that I could have better.. because I didn't have the supplemental tutors apparently, I didn't know everybody else had [laughs].

While Camila applied extra effort to further her English skills, she also continued developing her Spanish. She took upper-level Spanish courses at UNM and was generally confident in both speaking and writing in both languages, although she admitted that English has become her dominant language and writing in it came easier to her. Furthermore, she often used Spanish at work with Spanish-speaking patients or research participants. As the only bilingual employee, she would often be assigned to work with people who spoke only Spanish, and she was happy with being able to utilize her language skills.

Camila took English 110 and 120 courses face-to-face during her freshman year. She described both courses as "relaxed" and fairly easy: "you just do your work, just show up, show effort, like do some work and you're gonna get participation credit." She also described the workload being lighter in 110 and 120 courses especially in terms of reading, adding that in her 219 class, she had to read at least a chapter every week, which was more reading than in her previous English courses. On the pre-interview survey, Camila chose "working with the multimodal components" and "working with technology" as the two main challenges she was facing in her English 219 class. She further explained that she rarely used technology in her high school (except for the AP Capstone class where she had to make a video of herself delivering a speech) or in her English 110 and 120 courses. She also mentioned that she preferred to have a print copy of the textbook instead of the ebook

(she opted out of the latter), and for all of her papers, she had write them on paper before typing them up: “I just can NOT work on the computer, I just look at the blank screen and my mind wonders, I have to be looking at a piece of paper, and I'll write out like 2 pages, 3 pages, maybe like the ending-conclusion I can do cause it's just summary and the couple extra things, um but everything getting started, I have to do it on paper.” During our first interview, she seemed apprehensive about the multimodal assignments the course was supposed to introduce. Overall, however, she felt optimistic about the class, praising the instructor for the organizing the materials in a clear way and providing ample instructions.

Interestingly, Chris’s class was Camila’s second attempt at taking English 219. In the previous Spring semester, she enrolled in a 219 section taught by Hannah (Tai’s instructor from the second case study in this chapter), but dropped the course in the middle of the semester. As she explained,

It was just this big combobulated thing, like it would like whole two pages of like stuff, and you'd have to look through when things were due... it's just so-o confusing, so much work for like the amount of online things, and I think it was just a lot of.. it was just a lot of elements that she would request from us, it was just like.. every week, there was like 4 assignments due, and that's fine keeping up with that, but then it's like extra videos that you have to do, and extra discussions, and it all adds up, especially if you don't feel like a.. an online class should be like 3 classes in one. (Camila, interview #1)

By “extra videos” and “extra discussions” Camila seemed to refer to the media labs Hannah introduced in all of her classes. While Tai enjoyed those for the freedom they gave him to talk about personal topics, Camila resisted them as extra work that was also perhaps

particularly stressful for her as she did not feel prepared for working with the technology. Camila seemed to be very happy with Chris's approach to organizing the class. She also did some online research before enrolling in the class, choosing his section based on good reviews on RateMyProfessor.com.

Engaging with the curriculum and technology, interacting with instructor

When we first met, Camila seemed to be interested in the course assignments and content with the amount of support and feedback she was receiving. Chris's course was following fairly standard for eComp layout where each week was presented as a separate page and included a number of tasks to complete as well as a schedule checklist at the very beginning. Unlike Hannah, who posted at least a few supplementary materials or links in each week, Chris did not include any items that were not essential or were not connected to a grade; thus, the weeks only had assignment sheets or submission links, quizzes, and links to discussion board forums. Camila seemed to be very happy with how easy it was to navigate the course. During our first interview, which took place only four weeks into the semester, she was also happy with the amount of feedback she received from the instructor, saying that Chris always explained why he took points off if it was less than a perfect grade and that she felt that he was actually paying attention to their discussion board posts and other low-stakes assignments.

For the first project in the course, students were making multimodal instructions where they described how to perform a task in multiple steps. The assignment asked to create the instructions in either a video or audio format, adding that "While PowerPoint can be used to create videos, I do not want plain PowerPoints—it must play as a video and include sound." Camila was apprehensive about the project but ultimately was able to

create a PowerPoint-based video using Youtube to add music. In her reflection, she mentioned that whenever she was unsure of how to achieve a certain result, she searched for tips on the Internet.

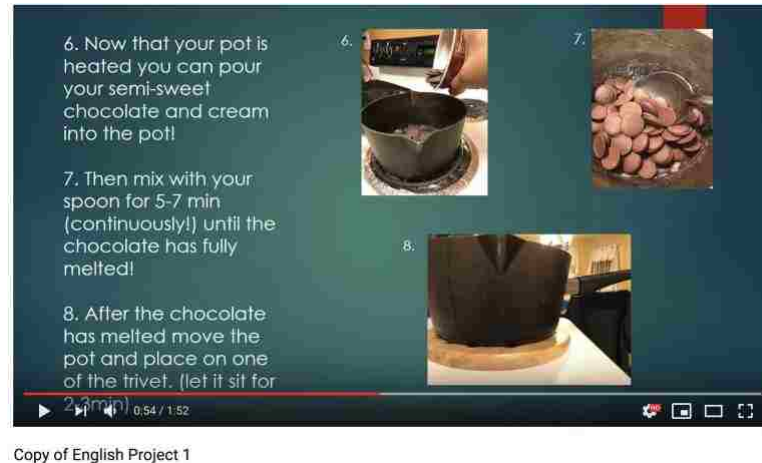


Figure 5.11. One of the slides from Camila's instructional video for how to make chocolate-covered strawberries.

Camila received an A on her instructions and was content with the grade. However, she did not mention receiving any feedback with her grade.

The second project, an analytical report on a local problem, was the most demanding in terms of the amount of work: the assignment asked for a substantial amount of research and had strict format guidelines. Camila wrote her report on the issue of homelessness in New Mexico, including appropriate statistics, graphics, and works cited in her text. In her reflection, she described feeling fairly accomplished about the project but regretting not taking enough time to proofread it or have somebody check the text for mechanical errors.

Many of the people that have mental illnesses suffer from dementia, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression (*Treatment Advocacy Center, 2016*). Most of these people don't have money to buy the expensive medications that they need to treat their disease so they fall deeper into the illness—they fall so far to the point where they cannot help themselves. My uncle has schizophrenia, but we provide him with the correct medications so that he's able to function properly. No one can tell that he's schizophrenic. There is a lot of misconception between mental illness'. No schools within New Mexico teach in depth about these common diseases and how they can be prevented.

Figure 5.12. An excerpt from Camila's analytical report.

She was somewhat surprised when she received a B on this assignment, but what was more aggravating for her is that the grade came with no feedback or explanation. She contacted Chris asking for more comments on her grade, but his response was “very vague,” and she did not want to push for more feedback fearing that might have a negative effect on her relationship with the instructor⁵. Instead, she blamed the grammar mistakes and possible issues with organization. That incident seemed to feed into her overall lack of confidence in her grammar skills. As she explained, she sought feedback on her writing whenever possible: “just because it's my second language, so I do send it to CAPS when I do have time... like even now, my co-worker is an English major, she graduated in English; I have her proofread my emails, like, ‘does this make sense?’ she's like, ‘you're fine Camila,’ and I'm like, ‘yeah, but this comma, I don't know about this’.” Towards the end of the semester, she seemed less sure of her English abilities overall: “English is usually just... overall my weak point.”

While Camila stayed happy with how easy it was to navigate the course and how quickly Chris responded to her email messages, she grew even more dissatisfied with his

feedback towards the end of the semester. She described submitting her final portfolio at 11 pm on the day it was due and receiving her grade (an A) early the next morning, with no feedback or comments. She suspected that Chris did not really read her portfolio but also felt like she was in no position to make complaints about it: “I can’t really fight him on it, be like, [angrily] ‘Why did you give me an A?! You did not grade this!’ [laughs].” She seemed to be disappointed that instructor’s feedback did not provide her with meaningful opportunities to learn. Other opportunities for receiving feedback on her writing yielded mixed results. While the course did not include an instructional assistant, students were required to submit all of their drafts to CAPS prior to submitted them for a grade, but Camila did not always find their feedback helpful: “they were like, ‘keep doing what you’re doing...’ and I’m like, ‘thanks buddy’,” although she did appreciate their help with proofreading. Similarly, Camila only rarely seemed to be satisfied with the feedback she received from her peers. Nonetheless, she was able to find meaningful learning opportunities for herself.

Identity and Community: English-only and a Virtual “Classroom of Three”

Even though Camila had a friend who was taking the same English 219 course, her interaction with the friend did not go beyond reminding them about due dates and generally “serving as their alarm clock.” That meant that Camila did not really have a support group inside the course. However, as the semester progressed, she was able to create an artificial community of learners for herself. She described her strategy in the following way: “the first week we introduced each other, but I don’t look at anybody’s... [laughs] I mean, I

⁵ Note that I was unable to get Chris’s perspective on the class or on Camila’s work as he did not agree to an interview.

looked at the two people that I responded to, and from that point on, I literally only responded to those two people cause I'm just like.. these two people are two people that I'm gonna stick with." In a later interview, she further elaborated on her reasoning behind that choice: "I think the two people that I pick, cause like when I was first picking people, that was the second week, and so I picked people, it was very expansive, I mean they were expansive on what they were saying, and I followed them the third week, I'm like, you guys are expansive, you actually do your work and stuff like that, so that's why I answered."

Camila responded to these two people whenever the parameters of the discussion board assignment permitted it, only occasionally commenting on other students' posts when their topics caught her attention. Her two chosen students did not always respond to her, though, and she never made her reasoning explicit to the two peers. It is unknown if they noticed her consistent feedback and, if they did, whether or not they found it welcome.

It seemed that Camila enjoyed maintaining this small company of like-minded high achievers. In our interviews, for example, she would compare the work she was completing with her peers' projects, wondering if their grades were comparable. However, she did not express any desire to extend the amount of collaborative work required in the course. She referred to the difficulties of coordinating busy schedules and the expectation that in an online class, students should be able to complete the work at the time most convenient for them. It also seemed that she did not place much value on collaborative work, group projects, or even peer review. At the same time, she described one of the advantages of online classes as being able to see her classmates' work. In a traditional face-to-face course, students were usually guarded about sharing their work, Camila explained, but as students were sharing their assignment drafts through the discussion board, she would peruse her peers' work: "I'd be like, eh, I did better than you.. I hope I did better than you

[laughs] or oh, I need to like improve this, like she got this... and maybe I could've done this stuff like that, so that's nice about an online class, that I can do that and kinda bounce some ideas off.” During our final interview, she stated that she “learned most” from her peers through seeing their work rather from the instructor.

Although Camila did not seem to miss the social aspects of face-to-face classes, she pointed out that her usual strategy for picking partners or friends in a traditional classroom would not translate well into the online courses. She further explained:

whenever you're paired up with somebody, like I mean it's so stereotypical, but like whenever I'm in a face-to-face class, and they tell me it's pair up with somebody, I find another brown kid in the room [laughs] like we can talk about tacos or something, like it's just something that we can connect or share very quickly with, and we can make that correlation . . . it's not that I'm judging anybody, it's just like if I see brown, I'm like, oo-oh, you're a part of me.. [laughs]. (Camila, interview #1)

In her online 219 class, Camila did not know other students' backgrounds and could rarely see their faces. She admitted that she did not know if any other students spoke Spanish or shared her cultural background even though at least one student (Martin, who also participated in this study) shared both the language and the background. Ironically, Camila never talked about her fluency in Spanish or her Mexican-American background, and neither did any of the other two Spanish bilingual students with backgrounds from Mexico. On the introduction discussion board, she wrote about herself:

Hello Everyone!

My name is Camila S! Currently, I am a Biochemistry major with minors in mathematics and Spanish. I am taking English 219 to fulfill the requirement

for my degree program. However, I hope to achieve a better understanding for the structure of English, and enhance my writing capabilities. On weekdays (when I'm not at school) I'm at work. I work at two locations, either at UNMH or at the new OB/GYN clinic. I absolutely love the work I do in the research division, it gives me a new perspective in the medical field. On weekends, I'm at flying star drinking coffee, eating queso fries, tutoring, or studying. I look forward to working with all of you in the coming months.

-Thank you

(Camila, introduction discussion board)

Similar to Anika, Camila emphasized her academic good standing and having a demanding job, but she did not mention anything about her bilingual background (even though she did mention minoring in Spanish) or her family's immigrant past. So other students (e.g., Martin) who might have been drawn to Camila had she disclosed more information about herself, were also left unaware of her bilingual language skills.

In her subsequent discussion board posts and responses, she was always polite and rather formal at the same time as she tried to provide helpful comments. Like Tai though, Camila's length of posts and responses declined over the course of the semester (see Figures 5.13 and 5.14 below for examples). Furthermore, out of all students whose courses I observed, Camila seemed to be least committed to the discussion board assignments. She sometimes forgot to post her original post on the discussion board, and 5 times she did not respond to peers' posts even though it was required. Her occasional lack of engagement can perhaps be explained by her busy work schedule or by the lack of student-instructor interaction she perceived.

Hello Angelica!
 I agree! I enjoyed how the chapter gave diagrams and examples for each conceptual situation. However, my favorite part was the three parts of technical documentation. I felt like they were well explained to the reader, and will help me in the future when I struggle on some concepts. Also, I enjoyed the example that you gave about the furniture. Most, if not all furniture instructions are hard to follow. I believe that furniture companies make instructions hard so that you have to pay the extra fee of shipping/setup.
 Overall this chapter was a great review!
 ~Camila

Figure 5.13. One of Camila's first responses to a peer's post on the discussion board.

This is a great PSA video! It reaches allot of youth (the intended audience) . The people who created this video were very strategic in picking a football player, which most men watch. Men are the most likely culprits of lighting fireworks inappropriately. Overall, you did a really good job on choosing a video that most people can relate to.

Figure 5.14. Camila's last comments on a peer's post.

Overall, however, Camila stayed very formal in her language and tone throughout the semester even as her writing frequently contained some spelling mistakes. She did not shy away from sharing some personal details and events from her life. For example, in her post analyzing a sample how-to video, she mentioned that it was her younger brother who got her to watch that video. While she mentioned her work and her family a few times throughout the discussion board posts, she never referred to her language skills and did not try contacting her chosen classmates outside of the CMS space.

Conclusion

Like David (described in more detail in Chapter 4 above), Camila did not have a social support system in the course and was not satisfied with the instructor's feedback, even though in Camila's case the instructor really did not give student enough feedback. Camila's experience also demonstrated a contradiction common among Latinx students in

this study: on the one hand, she regretted not having a community of like-minded students who shared her ethnicity and/or background, and on the other hand, she (as well as the other bilingual student in her course) was not willing to share any personal information that would help her connect with other students like her. The implications of this contradiction are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 below.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications

The Challenges of Increased Reading and Writing Load

As online education continues to grow, it is imperative that its growth is built on fair access and culturally and socially just pedagogies. The findings described in Chapters 4 and 5 strongly indicate that multilingual students' experiences in online courses differ from those of their monolingual peers' in some important ways. Notably, multilingual students on average identified more challenges than their monolingual peers, which reinforces the necessity for OWI scholars and practitioners to pay closer attention to this population group. As Jaggars & Bailey (2013) pointed out, it is traditionally underserved and underrepresented students who are at most risk of failing in online courses, and the findings of this study confirm that linguistic minority students indeed face greater and more numerous challenges in their online writing courses.

Not surprisingly, the most common challenge for multilingual students was identified by survey respondents as "Keeping up with discussions and readings." As many multilingual students are still working on mastering their reading and writing skills as well as building their confidence in and experience with using Standardized Written American English, the increased reading and writing load of online instruction needs to be taken into consideration. It has long been common knowledge that because in online writing instruction, all instruction and learning takes place primarily through text-heavy mediums, the amount of reading and writing required far exceeds that in traditional face-to-face courses. Furthermore, as Chambers (2016) pointed out, most learning management platforms such as Blackboard Learn were built "by white males for a predominantly white audiences" (p.76), which means, among other things, that SWAE was - and is - the default

language of interface and communication between all participants. Chambers further expands:

Those students who are comfortable communicating in written SE could potentially be privileged over those students who are not comfortable with that form of communication. There are minorities who do not connect well with the written form of communication or their dominant dialect/language is not SE, and these ethnic minority students, if not considered within the development of the online pedagogy, could be marginalized. (p.77)

Chambers suggests multiple ways to diversify the ways students receive information in an online course through using multimodal instruments such as including screen captures to provide students visual clues, “lecture captures” to provide students with tone semantics and nonverbal cues as well as verbal instructions for students who respond to oral communication better. Chambers (2016) also recommends incorporating various instructional videos and clips that can be found on the web, creating presentations with added voiceover, and using both email and phone calls in communicating with students individually.

It would seem only fair to extend the invitation for students to use multimodality in their responses and discussion board posts. As mobile technologies are becoming increasingly common, students can create their discussion board posts as video or audio responses or blogs instead of using only alphabetic text. This strategy might also help break down the perceptions of writing courses as more constricting places compared to public CMC venues such as social media. Furthermore, instructors can find additional ways to make the reading load more manageable for all students. For instance, in “Building Identity through Online Collaboration,” Krueger notes that the way discussion forum threads can

“become quite numerous and can display in a disorganized, branchlike fashion” can “easily cause information overload and discourage students from responding” (p. 245). Indeed, one of the survey respondents described her experience with online discussions in this way: “since there is so many people taking it, the discussion board get very full and I lose interest to read them all.” Krueher suggests some ways instructors can improve students’ experience with discussion boards such as appointing student moderators to “summarize the discussions for a designated time period” or providing a “concept map for the key points generated during the discussion” (p.246). Instructors can also allow for multiple ways for students to engage with the discussion board assignments, such as taking on the role of moderators or commenters instead of original posters from time to time. Given the high number of multilingual students struggling with both the discussion board load (54%) and completing larger writing assignments (20%), it is imperative that instructors find ways to make the load more manageable through the use of technology and multimodality as well as through curricular changes.

These accommodation strategies are supported by the Conference on College Composition and Communication *Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI* (or CCCC OWI Principles, as it is commonly referred to): the first principle states that “Online writing instruction should be universally inclusive and accessible.” The Statement’s authors further elaborate that they “specifically include multilingual learners who may have a different working knowledge of academic English and/or different cultural backgrounds” (p.8). The Example Effective Practices for Principle 1 also suggest that “OWI teachers should determine their uses of modality and media based not only on their pedagogical goals but also on their students’ likely strengths and access” (p.9) and that “Teachers must become acquainted with multimodal means for distributing

and accessing learning materials” (p.10). The Effective Practices also stress that students should have a choice of medium for their instructional materials and their instructor’s feedback and that instructors should make sure of such campus resources as disability centers to provide multimodal materials to their students (p.10).

While the principle and its corresponding example practices point OWI instructors in the right direction, they do not appear to be specifically targeting multilingual students as they try to cover accommodating strategies for students from a variety of backgrounds, including students with “physical disabilities, learning disabilities, multilingual backgrounds, and learning challenges related to socioeconomic issues” (p. 7) Furthermore, the Statement often places the responsibility of requesting accommodations on students, suggesting, for example, that “Students should have a choice about whether to receive an essay response orally (through digital recording) or textually” or that “students request different media” for their learning materials (p.8). Yet because multilingual students’ experiences are often different from those of students with physical or learning disabilities (e.g., Klingner & Eppolito, 2014), multilingual students might be less likely to reach out to their instructors requesting accommodations. Furthermore, even if instructors receive such requests from their students, they might not be able to accommodate them as a lot of the instructional work in an OWC happens before the course even begins. After the course starts, instructors might not always be able to design supplemental materials in different mediums. Ensuring that an OWC is accessible and inclusive to all students needs to be the underlying consideration at every step of the course and curriculum design.

Moreover, while the example practices cited above invite instructors to make use of multimodal instruments in their instructional materials and feedback, the invitation is not extended to the students. However, while allowing - or encouraging - students to use

multiple modalities in their discussion board posts or written assignments will likely help reduce some of the reading and writing load an OWC usually brings, instructors need to be mindful of the potential challenges students might face when using technology. Besides the potential difficulties that have to do with having access to and familiarity with the required technology (more on this in the next section of this chapter), multilingual students might not be completely comfortable sharing video or audio recordings. In my earlier study of multilingual students' experiences in an experimental cross-cultural OWC (Tseptsura, 2018), some international students spent a disproportionate amount of time on recording their video presentations as they were not satisfied with their narration or accent. Overall, however, the benefits of using digital multimodal composing in second language writing or ESL classrooms have been well established in earlier research. Some studies pointed out how using remixing practices can help expand students' voices (Hafner, 2015) or create new literate identities (Vasudevan, Schultz, & Bateman, 2010), how online collaborative blogging can improve students' writing processes (Boas, 2011), or how multimodal composing offers students new authorial opportunities to "engage with language in ways that could contribute to creative and unconventional orchestration of semiotic resources" (Cimasko & Shin, 2017, p.405). As multimodality is becoming the new norm across social media and other public online spaces, using podcasts and vlogs along with other multimodal genres for not just major assignments but in discussion board posts and other small-stakes tasks might benefit multilingual students in both reducing the extensive reading and writing load and offering them new means of expressing their identities.

Usability, Technology, and Navigating the Online Course

Other two related aspects of online courses that multilingual student respondents identified as challenging more often than their monolingual peers were "Using online

learning tools” such as Blackboard Learn (36% versus 15%) and “Using technology” (32 versus 24%). At the same time, 18% of students said that they received very little or no support from their instructors regarding the use of the online learning tools and the CMS. Students’ open-ended survey responses also revealed a common understanding that online courses required greater familiarity with various technology tools; some students noted that “Online students must know more technology face-to-face students” and that “Online classes require the student to familiarize themselves with new online programs” or that it was “more difficult to navigate the web and turn in assignments” in online courses.

The interviews revealed some particular instances of multilingual students struggling with navigating their CMS. Diego, an international student who felt least comfortable in his English language skills, was frustrated when he was unable to figure out abbreviations his instructor was often using in the course shell and across instructional materials. He also was not able to access his instructor’s comments; I believe if it hadn’t been for conducting the usability walkthrough on a different computer, he would not have been able to see them. Diego also had limited exposure to technology during his last year in high school and felt that his school did not adequately prepare him for college. Diego often relied on his friends’ help to figure out where to find or submit assignments; thus, the social connections he formed outside of the OWC played a crucial role in his success. He likely would not have been able to succeed in the course without his friends’ help.

Contrary to Diego’s experience, Anika did not find the CMS too challenging even though he was enrolled in the same course as Diego and, like him, also did not have extensive experience with technology prior to enrolling in college. Unlike Diego, Anika was able to navigate her course with relative ease due to her self-efficacy (in Harklau and McClanahan’s (2012) term). She carefully studied each page of her OWC, kept track of

due dates and assignments, and generally was a very diligent student. Yet, even she was not able to access her instructor's feedback for the first month of the course. The instructor, Jessica, provided detailed comments on students' papers, but because she did not include clear explanations for how to find them, students had difficulties accessing her feedback (Jessica left text instructions for how to find feedback but did not include a screenshot or a video). It is worth noting that when Diego and I looked at a graded assignment during the usability walkthrough, the way it appeared did not match Jessica's description in her instructions.

While some of Diego's or Anika's challenges can be explained by the lack of experience with some commonly used terms (in Diego's case) or lack of instructional guidance for accessing feedback in that particular course, the high numbers of multilingual students struggling with their CMS indicates that the same increased reading and literacy load might also impact multilingual students' experience with online CMS. At the same time, both Diego and Anika had very limited experience with technology in their high schools. Anika was not allowed to use computers in school, and Diego's high school did not provide any instruction for how to use common software tools. Combined with lack of resources specifically for online students at UNM, these structural obstacles in Anika's and Diego's educational paths signify the very real consequences of the digital divide (Selwyn, 2004). This lack of preparation put both students at a disadvantage, and while Anika was willing and able to put in extra effort to learn how to make videos or to look carefully through every page in her OWC shell, Diego displayed less self-efficiency and frequently chose the easiest way out (such as shooting a video with the front camera on his phone instead of figuring out how to make a video presentation) even if it meant the end product did not fulfill all of the assignments' expectations.

It is important to note that it was not solely multilingual students who found navigating their online courses difficult. Non-traditional students like David, as well as students coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, are also likely to struggle with using technology and navigating their CMS as they are likely be coming from schools that would have limited access to technology or instruction in using technology, and they are likely to have fewer and poorer access options outside of school. David took a break from school for almost seven years, during which the use of online tools exploded across disciplines and subjects. As a result, when he went back to school, he found a very different instructional environment. David did not feel comfortable navigating his course; he did not find his instructor's feedback on any of his assignments, which caused him a great deal of anxiety, and he was also unaware of some functionality on Learn such as the global calendar or the extra resources available in his course. David was also at a disadvantage compared to other study participants in that not only did he not use much technology in his previous educational experiences, but he also possessed limited tools for working on his current writing assignments (e.g., he did not have a smartphone and his computer was an older model, which meant some opportunities like video conferencing were unavailable to him). In "Nontraditional Student Access to OWI," Gos (2015) sums up the experiences of students like David: "Lack of frequent opportunities to use the computer educationally in postsecondary work, in addition to the potential lack of a home computer - or, at least, an up-to-date computer - can hamper students significantly in feeling comfortable with the levels of work they need to address online for a writing course" (p. 312).

The analysis of multilingual and older adult (in Gos's term), non-traditional students' experiences in this study makes it clear that online writing programs and instructions need to provide better support for course navigation and technology use. As

Warf (2012) pointed out, the digital divide existed and evolved with each change in technology; moreover, digital divide issues might affect international and resident US students in different ways. While resident students coming from financially disadvantaged backgrounds might lack access to technology and/or experience working with it, international students might be more familiar some kinds of technology but not others, including the CMS commonly used the US and the types of multimodal genres and digital instruments used in creating them. In her chapter on multilingual students and OWI, Miller-Cochran (2015) suggested that instructors “Provide students with the option of using a technology the instructor recommends or using a technology with which they are already familiar” (p. 297). However, it is also possible that international students might have very limited experience with using technology for educational purposes (as was Anika’s case, despite the fact that she went to a more expensive private school). Providing sufficient guidance for how to work with various online and digital tools is thus imperative if OWI programs want to ensure that all students are given equal opportunity to succeed. This seemingly obvious point, however, is complicated by the question who - and to what extent - is responsible for this guidance.

In addition to the *CCCC OWI Statement* Principle 1 that calls for ensuring inclusivity of OWCs, Principle 2 asserts that “An online writing course should focus on writing and not on technology orientation or teaching students how to use learning and other technologies.” At the same time, Principle 10 states that “Students should be prepared by the institution and their teachers for the unique technological and pedagogical components of OWI.” As Gos (2015) explains, Principle 2 “was written (1) to keep the focus on writing over technology in a writing based course and (2) to free teachers from the belief that their job is to teach new technologies in lieu of writing” (p.317). Gos calls for a

range of instructional resources to be available to nontraditional students, including resources on how to navigate the CMS: “OWI teachers should include some orientation exercises that acquaint students with the basics of the LMS features they will use in support of the course, what writing online means, what successful discussion posts look like, as well as how to find and use the OWL” (p.318). Hewett (2015) supported this understanding of the two Principles and stated that “while the institution might have the best resources for developing and delivering an orientation to writing using the LMS at the overarching writing-course level, writing teachers also have some responsibility to help students succeed through early, carefully scaffolded orientation” (p.71). Both Gos and Hewett agree that the responsibility for preparing students for online courses should be shared between the institution, WPA, the IT department, and the writing instructors.

In theory, this distribution of responsibility makes sense: just as on-campus students are provided with orientations to the whole campus and their separate programs, supplied with a range of resource centers, online students should be provided with adequate introduction to and training in how to be an online students, what they can expect from their online courses, what kind of online resources are available to them, etc. Some universities do have well-established fully online programs with various resources for their online students. The problem, however, is that students who take a mix of online and onsite courses are often not technically part of these online programs and may receive little instruction or resources at the institutional level. The responsibility for preparing these students for online instruction thus falls on the departments, programs, and instructors of the online courses they do take, whether it’s one online course per semester or more. The fact that OWC instructors might not have the time or opportunity to find out if their OWC

students are taking all or only some of their courses online, as well as whether they have had any experience with online instruction before, further complicates the situation.

Of all the interviewed participants in this study, only one (Michael) was taking all of his courses online. The rest of the interviewed students were taking a combination of online and onsite courses, and none of them mentioned receiving any training or preparation specifically for online courses from the university. All of UNM courses using Blackboard Learn have a page (included by default) called “How to Use Learn,” which leads to a [UNM Learn page](#) that provides some resources for navigating Learn, creating support tickets, and using some built-in functions of the LMS. During our usability walkthroughs, however, students were not able to explain what that link was, and it was clear they did not try following it. Furthermore, in their “Navigating the Course” videos, instructors in the courses I observed did not mention that link and did not explain what it could provide for the students. But even if students did follow the link and went looking for guidance on how to navigate their OWC, they would have found little help beyond generic tips on accessing grades or submitting an assignment (the guide on accessing grades did not provide either instructions or a screenshot for how to access files with comments attached by their instructors, for instance).

Thus, instructors in this study were left with a disproportionate share of the responsibility for preparing their students for online instruction. In Chapter 3, I noted that instructors in the eComp program had a lot of flexibility in not only creating their assignments but also designing their courses. Similarly, each instructor I observed provided different resources for his or her students. The eComp program had strict requirements for all teaching assistants: their courses needed to have a “Navigating the Course” video, along with videos introducing the course and instructor, explaining the idea of multimodal

composition and feedback process, and the final portfolio assignment. However, each TA had a different approach to making the navigation videos so that each of these videos covered a different range of topics and varied in length significantly. Furthermore, some instructors I observed were not TAs and thus had more freedom in their course design as they were not supervised by the eComp director as closely. For instance, Jessica (Diego and Anika's instructor) did not provide a navigation video and only provided text instructions on how to access her feedback (although to be fair, none of the other instructors I observed provided video guidelines for accessing their feedback).

While it is important for WPAs to give instructors enough flexibility to be able to take authorship of the course, the complications described above call for more consistency between different sections of the same course and between different writing courses that would facilitate WPA work on ensuring easier navigation and access across different sections. As I was conducting my study, the eComp and technical and professional writing program directors were conducting a usability study (Bartolotta, Bourelle, & Newmark, 2017) and came to similar conclusion: "We struggle (as do many other online writing programs) with walking the line between standardization and customization in course design" (p. 297). Since I have completed my study, the eComp director has moved to requiring TAs to use a master course for their courses together with their own assignments. However, even with greater consistency, instructors are unlikely to anticipate all of the ways in which their students might be interacting with and accessing course content.

One way for instructors and WPAs to be better informed about OWC students' actual experiences with and interactions with the course design is through usability tests. Miller-Cochran and Rodrigo (2006) suggested ways instructors or WPAs can conduct usability tests using student surveys, recorded walkthroughs, and think-aloud protocols. In

their study, Miller-Cochran and Rodrigo enrolled 5 participants from a pool of students; they stressed that students participating in a usability study should be “new to the course and instructor,” but the main consideration in selecting participants, the authors stated, was “that participants be representative of students who would take the course” (p. 96). In the usability study at UNM, Bartolotta, Bourelle, and Newmark (2017) also recommended identifying “an appropriate representative sample of students” for a usability test, emphasizing that ideally, usability testers would not have taken online courses before. In both these usability studies, considerations of students’ linguistic background seem to be missing. Given student demographics at UNM (and, increasingly, at institutions across the country), finding a pool of testers “representative of students who would take the course” should include multilingual students. In addition to identifying students not familiar with online courses or with the specific OWC, usability testers need to diversify their participant sample, which would be more beneficial than increasing sample size (both studies agreed that 5 testers was a sufficient sample size for testing one OWC as 5 testers could identify 85% of usability issues, according to previous studies on usability testing, e.g. Nielsen, 1995). As the findings of my usability walkthroughs demonstrated, multilingual students, as well as non-traditional students, might have some unique challenges when navigating their course designs, from lack of familiarity with the LMS to not being able to navigate through instructor’s abbreviations or the multitude of resources shared with insufficient explanation.

Finally, both institutions and instructors need to provide more resources to ensure students from all backgrounds can succeed in online courses. As more students prefer to take a combination of onsite and online courses, institutions need to rethink how they are preparing students for online instruction. More resources such as orientations for online

education, guides for how to work with the LMS, preparing for the increased literacy load of online courses need to be not only available but also more visible. Institutions can require students to complete certain online trainings prior to enrolling in online courses to ensure that students are prepared to access and navigate their courses, are aware of the increased workload, and can make an informed decision on whether or not online courses would be a right fit for them. OWC instructors, on the other hand, need to provide enough guidance to their students to ensure successful course navigation that would be tailored to their specific courses. Usability tests and student surveys can help identify potential navigational and technological difficulties and point instructors and WPAs ways their OWCs can be revised. Finally, if the goal is to make OWCs universally accessible to all students, it is important to conduct usability tests and further studies on how students from different linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds interact with online courses.

Identifying Multilingual Students and Students' Identities

One of the crucial conditions of ensuring linguistically diverse students' success is making sure these students' identities do not disappear into the anonymity of the online environment. However, as the experiences of the multilingual students described above demonstrate, getting to know our students can be more complicated than it might seem at first sight. The major complicating factors are that (1) online instructors might have few ways of learning personal details about students, including their language status; (2) students might not be willing to discuss their language backgrounds, for different reasons, and (3) the CMS might have very limited opportunities for students to personalize their online appearance or create an effective online identity.

When I asked instructors how they learned about students' backgrounds or how they identified multilingual students in their online courses, the most common response was

through students' self-disclosure. Instructors teaching first-year writing courses (English 110 and 120) frequently used assignment prompts that lead students to discuss their language and cultural backgrounds, their previous educational experiences, or other personal background details that let their instructors learn valuable details about their students. Instructors I interviewed often cited these assignments as their main sources of information about their students' backgrounds. In a research project I had carried out a year earlier, I surveyed 22 instructors teaching traditional face-to-face courses in UNM Core Writing program about their approaches to working with multilingual students. "Students' self-disclosure" was again the most common way instructors identified multilingual students in their courses (over 50% of instructors chose it as their answer). In my conversations with instructors teaching both online and face-to-face, I noticed a common apprehension about asking students about their language backgrounds directly. Instructors felt like asking directly would force students to disclose information they might not be comfortable disclosing or assign students labels they don't want to be assigned. Thus, in both face-to-face and online courses, the majority of instructors did not actively try to find out their students' language backgrounds. Considering that online environment also makes it more difficult for instructors to make judgments based on students' spoken accents or appearance (also very common strategies, according to my survey), instructors teaching online are even less likely to be fully aware of the presence of linguistic diversity in their OWCs, especially considering the persistence of the "myth" of linguistic homogeneity (in Matsuda's term) and a common tendency among instructors and LMS designers to design online courses for a "universal user" (Bowie, 2009).

Another factor complicating the task of recognizing linguistic diversity in OWCs is students' restraint in disclosing their linguistic or cultural backgrounds. Out of the seven

multilingual students who were interviewed during this project, only two (Diego and Tai) overtly disclosed their international and multilingual background on the discussion board, letting their instructors and their classmates know about their language and/or immigration status. Students' decisions whether to disclose their backgrounds or not seemed to have less to do with whether they thought it would be helpful for their classmates or instructors to know more about them and more to do with the position in which such disclosure would put students. When students had the discursive means to create a favorable identity, they were more likely to discuss it. In Bucholtz and Hall's framework (2005), positionality refers to the ways identity is constructed by the goals and characteristics of each particular social interaction rather than broader social categories that can be ascribed to the interaction participants. In the OWCs where their classmates did not have access to any identity markers besides their names, students had greater opportunities to choose which identity determinants they wanted to make public or not. For instance, Anika, as well as Camila, Gabriel, and Martin, chose not to make salient their multilingual background. As many previous studies have demonstrated, it might be harder for multilingual writers to maintain a favorable self-image or create an identity of a confident English language user if their school has labeled them "ESL" or their language background has been overtly questioned in the classroom. Online venues might thus possess an advantage over face-to-face classrooms as they allow more flexibility to students to create a more desirable social identity. As Casanave (2004) phrased it, "One of the major benefits of electronic communication is thought to be its capacity for disguising the identities of the interactants, thereby making it easier for students who are normally silent in class to participate in conversations and writing activities" (p.164).

Research on identity in SLA (outlined in more detail in Chapter 2) showed the importance of constructing a positive self-image through available discursive means. While Norton (2000) demonstrated how language learning is tied to students' positionality in their social circles and their ability to create a more desirable identity and thus avail themselves of the cultural capital that speaking the language of their new country brings. Varghese (2012) analyzed in detail how one student was able to rely on certain cultural narratives and discursive resources to create her own agency and a more positive sense of identity. In Bucholtz and Hall's framework (2005), the principle of indexicality similarly describes how identity is constructed through linguistic means imbued with meaning through the ideological work of cultural beliefs and values. Just like the student in Varghese's study, Tai was drawing on the "American dream" cultural narrative to construct his identity. On his website, he told his family's immigration success history: "My family was poor when we came from Vietnam but thanks to hard work and the American dream, we build a life for ourselves," but he also emphasized his sense of belonging to his new country, the US: "I am not originally from America but I love this country too much to not identify as an American first and an Asian second" (Tai, personal website). Perhaps in an effort to highlight his U.S. identity even further, he included a picture and a citation of Donald J. Trump, and he did not use his insider knowledge of Vietnamese culture when asked to talk about a foreign audience in one of the course assignments.

At the same time, Anika, as a recent immigrant, did not have access to the same American dream cultural narrative on which to base her immigrant identity even though at the time of the study she already held a green card and was planning to stay in the US after completing her college degree. She chose not to disclose her immigrant aspirations or international status in her introduction and instead emphasized her record of academic and

professional success: “I am a freshman at UNM but because of my good ACT score, I was placed directly into this class ... I currently work at the Student Government Accounting Office (SGAO)” (Anika, introduction discussion board post). Even though she did not admit to trying to withhold certain pieces of information about herself, it is important to remember the partialness principle (in Bucholtz and Hall’s term, 2005), according to which identity construction is only partially intentional or conscious. Anika, thus, might not have been completely aware of how she was positioning herself. Nonetheless, she chose to create an image of herself as a high-achieving successful student, a more positive and powerful position than an aspiring immigrant who had only been in the country for 5 months.

But perhaps most tellingly, none of the three Spanish-speaking multilingual students disclosed their language status or cultural backgrounds (two students immigrated to the US from Mexico at a very young age, and one student, Camila, was born in the US). In the current political climate, it might be even more difficult for Spanish speaking students from immigrant backgrounds to find a favorable cultural narrative to rely on in constructing their identity. In my previous study (Tseptsura, 2018), one student who grew up in a rural New Mexican community where most of her family members used Spanish or an accented variation of English, described her struggle with coming to terms with her cultural and linguistic identity:

When television and the internet were introduced more into our home in my preteen years, my perspective of my culture and identity shifted. I started realizing I was different. Not like “unique different”, different in an unaccepted way. The people that spoke like me were portrayed in the media as cartel leaders, thugs, prisoners, and dangerous. Most of all, they

portrayed us as uneducated. At the age of 13 I decided I no longer wanted to identify with this dialect or associate myself with this culture altogether. I worked really hard to have an accent like the newscasters on TV and tried my best to not sound like a “Northern New Mexican”. (Elisa, written assignment #1)

Here, Elisa describes what Bucholtz and Hall (2005) call indexicality, or assigning social meanings to linguistic forms through ideological and cultural processes. Other Spanish-speaking bilingual students in that study also recounted instances of being discriminated against or attacked when speaking Spanish in public in the US. It is hardly surprising that given these past experiences with being labeled “un-American,” “dangerous,” or “uneducated,” students choose not to mention their bilingual background in a course that could allow them to remain anonymous or to create a different, more desirable identity. It is especially troubling that none of the resident Spanish bilingual students participating in this study were willing to disclose their language backgrounds, especially in light of research indicating multilingual students might prefer to be in a class with students from similar backgrounds (e.g., Costino & Hyon, 2007).

Besides trying to distance themselves from possible negative labels or stereotypes associated with their linguistic identity, multilingual students might consider English writing courses an inappropriate venue for expressing their multiple cultural and language identities; for instance, in Schreiber’s study (2015) of one university students’ writing practices on social media, she found that while the student expressed his identity through a range of translingual (in Canagarajah’s term) practices, his “sophisticated textual practices go undervalued in his EFL writing courses, where formal, monolingual, non-digital literacy remains primary” (p.69).

In light of these considerations, it will be inappropriate to require students to disclose their language status in public online discussions. However, there are strategies instructors can employ to ensure better willingness to share potentially sensitive information. First, instructors can use confidential surveys or questionnaires to find out more about their students' backgrounds without making that information open to the whole class. Instructors and WPAs can also work on creating more welcoming atmosphere in the courses by taking an overt stance in support of multilingualism (these suggestions are further discussed below). For example, in my earlier project on designing a cross-cultural OWC (Tseptsura, 2018), I created an introduction discussion board prompt where I asked students to write a short bio in English and in another language, whether they are proficient in it or not (most students in that course had at least a beginner level knowledge of another language). I also modeled that assignment by posting my own introduction first where I talked about myself in English and in Russian. One of the instructors I interviewed for the present study had adopted this approach as well, and she described many students creating their posts in English and another language, adding that "I had one student, Andres B., he actually wrote his whole thing in Spanish, and then I wrote back to him. And to some of them, I responded saying, 'Oh,. interesting word choice,' you know, 'this is how we would say it in whatever Spanish I have, Salvadorian-Guatemalan Spanish'" (Olivia, interview #1). It was evident that encouraging students' use of multiple languages in their introduction and actively supporting it by instructor's own examples and further conversations with students created a much more welcoming atmosphere where more students felt safe enough to talk about their language backgrounds and actually use languages other than English in the OWC space. Furthermore, in the example above, Olivia was able to utilize what Bucholtz and Hall (2005) called the relationality principle, which stated that in any

given interaction identities are constructed intersubjectively, through multiple relations such as similarity/difference, etc. By drawing on the similarities and differences between her own and her students' language use, Olivia was able to create a more inviting space for students to disclose important details about their language backgrounds. Finally, advocating for, embracing, and modeling these "translingual dispositions" (in Lee and Jenks's term, 2016) helps transform the OWC from a formal English-only space into a space more open and conducive to multiple languages, dialects, and registers. This shift, in turn, can help decrease the literacy load of OWCs as students less familiar with the conventions of formal academic writing in the US might welcome more informality or code-meshing in their online discussions.

While the unique affordances of online courses allow students to create the identity they are more comfortable with, students' unwillingness to disclose their language background also influences their instructors' decisions as it might reinforce instructors' perception of the lack of linguistic diversity in their courses. Furthermore, students' reticence influences student-student interactions as lack of self-disclosure interferes with effective construction of students' social presence.

Identity, Social Presence, and Classroom Community

Not having direct face-to-face student-teacher and student-student interactions might be the first major concern novice online writing instructors have to face. However, the findings in this study indicate that students across different backgrounds might have complicated feelings about the lack of direct interpersonal interaction and classroom community: on the one hand, most survey respondents did not see this lack as a challenge, and on the other hand, interview participants often expressed their dissatisfaction with the way peer interactions functioned in their OWC. Only 10% of multilingual students and

16% of monolingual NES students identified “lack of a classroom community of students” as a challenge. More students considered lack of direct contact with the instructor a challenge (25% of multilingual students and 21% of monolingual students identified it as a challenge), which confirms previous research showing students’ placing more importance on direct interaction with instructor: for example, students in Rendahl and Breuch’s study (2013) “did not consider communication with peers as a productive study activity” (p. 297). A more interesting finding is that more students considered lack of a classroom community a challenge than not having direct interaction with other students. In other words, students considered having a classroom community different from simply interacting with their peers in the OWC: only 8% of both mono- and multilingual students considered lack of direct peer interaction a challenge - the lowest response rate out of 11 answer options. This low number has two possible and not exclusive explanations: students might have had sufficient peer interaction and students might not place too much importance on peer interactions.

Whether or not survey respondents considered peer interactions and classroom community an important part of their OWC, most interviewed students were not satisfied with their experience with online peer reviews and online discussions, which affected their overall satisfaction with the course and sometimes their success in it. Students often considered online discussions inauthentic and peer reviews unhelpful (in David’s words, “they only respond to you because they have to”), and online communication suffered often breakdowns (e.g., students’ follow-up questions rarely received responses). Students like David felt especially isolated when they did not receive any responses during peer review or had unsuccessful group projects. At the same time, some students like Camila overtly stated they missed being able to form in-class small groups based on shared interests and

backgrounds. Camila tried to substitute having a face-to-face group with always responding to the same two people in her online discussion board interactions. However, that strategy worked as a substitute only to some extent; the students she chose rarely responded to her posts or comments, and the group still had no communication outside of the formal discussion board activities. On the other hand, multilingual students like Diego and Tai who had a close group of friends taking the same writing course together benefitted from having that community tremendously.

All of these findings together point to the necessity to problematize our definition of classroom community and how community relates to student engagement and satisfaction with the online courses. OWI Principle 11 addresses the question of community directly, and the best practices that accompany the Principle suggest a few ways to help instructors to establish a stronger sense of community in their OWCs (more details on the principle and the best practices are discussed in Chapter 2). However, Hewett (2015) pointed out that the Statement's definition of community is too broad and suggested that instructors create their own definition of community as it applies to their classrooms. Other compositionists, however, equated community with social presence and claimed that when students and/or instructor are unable to be "present" in the course, "Students are less likely to engage; they are prone to participate insufficiently in the course; and, in the worst situations, they lose focus, fall behind and either fail or withdraw" (Snart, 2015, p.117). While social presence has been proven to relate student engagement and satisfaction (e.g., Richardson & Swan, 2003; Rovai, 2002; Zhan & Mei, 2013), conflating community with social presence is not always helpful: building a successful learning community requires more than simply social presence.

A more developed definition of community and social presence was offered in the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (outlined in more detail in Chapter 3). In the CoI Framework, social presence was defined as “the ability of participants in a community of inquiry to project themselves socially and emotionally as ‘real’ people (i.e. their full personality) through the medium of communication being used” (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 94). Garrison (2017) also described the three categories of social presence: affective communication (of which self-disclosure is an important part), open communication, and cohesive responses and group cohesion (these categories were discussed in more detail in Chapter 2). It is important to note that while social presence, in the CoI Framework conceptualization, plays a mediating role between teaching and cognitive presence, Garrison (2017) specifically stated that “creating a cohesive community of learners could not be created based only on establishing social relationships” (p. 37). He further explained that while putting emphasis on interpersonal communication and individual identities might be beneficial at the beginning of the course, as the course progresses a shift needed to be made towards group cohesion and defining common academic goals.

This understanding of how different facets of social presence interact in creating an effective community is corroborated by the findings of my study: survey respondent identified class community and peer interaction in different ways, and even when some aspects of social presence were apparent (such as Tai’s self-disclosure and use of humor), group cohesion did not always follow (Tai’s comments rarely got responses, and he was generally not very satisfied with online conversations). Similarly, in Stewart’s study (2017) of the relationship of the three presences (social, teaching, and cognitive), she observed that OWC students “enjoyed interacting with peers because it made them feel less isolated, but they did not also want to interact with peers in a joint effort to complete learning tasks.”

She further explained that her findings “suggest that the social presence in the course supported student satisfaction but not collaborative learning, despite the explicitly collaborative project design” (Stewart, 2017). To sum up, social presence plays an important role in supporting student engagement and satisfaction with the course, but it is not the only factor in creating a well-functioning classroom community, and it consists of more components than interpersonal interactions. Nonetheless, creating social presence is an important step towards creating greater group cohesiveness that leads to a stronger sense of community.

In the courses I observed, the main obstacles to building social presence were students’ reluctance to disclose their backgrounds, the limited opportunities the CMS had for personalizing students’ online identity, and few and/or restrained opportunities for interaction. Regarding personalizing students’ online presence, the CMS did not let students create a profile or use a profile picture big enough to be clearly identifiable. In the majority of technical and professional writing courses I observed, the only way students could share personal information was through their introduction discussion board posts. Yet some instructors (e.g., Jessica, as discussed in Chapter 3) directed students to discuss fairly impersonal topics in their introductions, thus eliminating the only opportunity students had for sharing some important personal details about themselves. On the other hand, other instructors provided extra opportunities for students to share some background information about themselves. For example, Tai had a chance to create a website all about himself (a website that he also shared with his whole class) for a media lab assignment Hannah used in the first month of the course. It is clear that when the CMS is lacking in opportunities for students to personalize their online appearance, other supplemental measures are highly desirable, such as creating personal websites, blogs or vlogs, expanding students’

introduction discussion posts, or inviting students to connect course materials to their life experiences and perspectives.

The issue of the lack of students' self-disclosure was already discussed above. Considering that self-disclosure plays an important role in creating social presence, it is important that online writing instructors encourage multilingual students to share personal details about themselves. Nonetheless, it is equally important to allow students not to self-disclose. If the instructor creates a welcoming atmosphere as well as multiple opportunities for students to share personal details about their language backgrounds and students still do not come forward about their language status or other background details, it is clearly important for the students to be able to preserve their privacy. Furthermore, the CoI Framework's conceptualization of social presence needs to be problematized to account for the effects unequal power relations, as well as possible internalized deficit views or negative stereotypes, have on creating social presence and identity. This further development of the Framework also calls for further research. What are the factors that promote or inhibit students' self-disclosure? How does the degree to which students reveal personal or sensitive information about themselves influence the sense of community? How can instructors ensure that students consider the course a safe space, especially given that they often expect students' self-disclosure right from the start, in the icebreaking activities? How do interactions in the online spaces change students' self-perception compared to traditional face-to-face classrooms? These are questions that need to be investigated in order for the CoI Framework to account for the presence of linguistically diverse student populations.

Recommendations for OWI Instructors and WPAs

The findings discussed above point to some specific strategies OWI instructors and WPAs can adopt to accommodate multilingual students' needs. Below, I outline these strategies in three key areas discussed above: the increased literacy load, technology and CMS use, and social presence and identity.

Increased Literacy Load:

- It has been suggested before (e.g., Warnock, 2009) that OWI instructors should provide instructional materials in multiple media, e.g. a text-based assignment sheet can be supplemented by a video or audio instructions. While this might help reduce the reading load for students who are still mastering reading skills at the college level, the same invitation needs to be extended to students as well. Inviting students to compose their discussion board posts, reading responses, or more formal assignments using a variety of mediums can both reduce the writing load and prepare students to be more agile in using a variety of composing tools. (Of course, it should be an invitation students can decline; the next section below addresses some of the caveats of the increased use of technology.) Furthermore, engaging with multiple mediums and formats can help break the confines of the text-heavy online classroom and allow students to use the rhetorical strategies they have come to develop in their use of social media and other public online venues.
- Besides encouraging students' use of multimodality, OWI instructors can introduce multiple roles for students to take on in the discussion forums. Students can be forum moderators, commentators, or facilitators - tasks other than creating an original post can allow students to engage with the course material and actively participate in class discussions.

Technology and Course Design:

- Online students need to be provided with multiple resources on how to operate the CMS employed by the university, how to navigate their specific OWC, and how to be successful students taking courses online. The responsibility for this student preparation, however, should be divided between the university, the writing program, and individual instructors. While universities need to provide sufficient resources to all students taking online courses (and not just students in fully online degree programs), writing programs can strive for greater consistency among their courses while also preserving instructors' pedagogical freedom. Greater consistency might also help ensure all courses are equally user-friendly when the programs might not have sufficient funds to evaluate or monitor each course. Finally, instructors need to ensure that their individual courses are easy and intuitive to navigate by, for example, clearly indicated what each item in the course is and what students can get out of it.
- Instructors and WPA can conduct regular usability tests; however, usability testers should be representative of the general student population and should include multilingual students as some potential course design issues might not be apparent to testers who only speak privileged varieties of English (e.g., Jessica's use of abbreviations in the course was confusing to Diego, but that probably would not be identified as an issue by a native English-speaking student more comfortable with common academic genres in English). Of course, usability testing, as well as other strategies online writing programs can adopt, come with a price, and in the situations where lack of programmatic funding is an issue, universities and colleges have to bear the financial responsibility of ensuring the quality of their online

courses. A more streamlined forms of usability testing available to online courses across curriculum could be a very valuable resource.

- While striving to make greater use of multimodality in their courses, instructors need to be mindful of the potential effects of the digital divide. For instance, while video instructions might be helpful to students who are “ear” learners (in Reid’s term), it might also place additional demand on students’ internet access. Similarly, requiring students to compose in multiple media presupposes that students possess the technology and skills to do so. Some students, however, might not have the capabilities or knowledge necessary. Thus, a certain degree of flexibility in mediums should be preserved; giving students a choice of mediums and digital tools to work with can help students coming from less affluent and underserved backgrounds.

Social Presence and Identity

- As was discussed above, social presence is an important factor in any online course just as it is different from peer interaction. To help students create their social presence, instructors need to make sure students have enough tools and opportunities to do so. If the CMS does not provide sufficient space, other venues must be considered (for example, creating course or personal websites). Equally important, course prompts (especially for courses that habitually engage less personal writing) should include enough flexibility to allow students to make personal connections to the genres and topics covered by their writing assignments.
- Instructors and WPAs need to ensure students from all linguistic backgrounds feel welcome in the OWC. Explicit focus on language is one possible solution; providing students with resources to create more positive social identity and using

other variations of English or languages other than the Standardized Written American English are also beneficial strategies to ensure multilingual students' success. Adopting and enacting some of the ideas from the translingual approach (Canagarajah, 2013; Horner et al., 2011) can help fight the impression that OWI spaces are only open to formal SWAE and thus ease some anxieties multilingual students might have.

- Group work is commonly cited as one effective strategy for building social presence and learning community. However, only one course I observed utilized group work for one assignment, and even then the project failed as the student I interviewed (David) was unable to get in touch with his supposed group members. Some researchers (Gos, 2015) claimed that group work should not be used with older adult students whose schedules might be too complicated for handling this additional responsibility. When it comes to using group work in a classroom with multilingual students, other complications might arise as well, even though research on such complications is limited when it comes to online group work. CoI Framework also points out that for better group coherence, it is important to focus on common educational goals and tasks rather than on peer interaction itself.

Concluding Thoughts

It is clear that linguistic diversity is becoming the norm rather than an exception across the US higher education institutions, just as online courses are no longer a novelty that only long-distance students might be pursuing. As this study demonstrates, there are important considerations to be taken into account when these two trends overlap. Writing programs and instructors alike need to adopt strategies that would allow students to engage their multiple literacies – linguistic and technological – in order to decrease the significant

reading and writing load of the online writing courses. Furthermore, writing programs and individual instructors cannot bear the full responsibility for ensuring online students' success. Preparing students for working with the LMS technology and dealing with the most common software tools employed by the university needs to become the norm for any online programs, whether they primarily serve distance students or students taking a combination of online and onsite courses. Finally, writing instructors need to be aware of the potential challenges multilingual students might be facing in their OWCs and be prepared to address and accommodate these challenges. Of course, this might mean additional training and resources that are not always available to most online writing programs across institutions. That is why pedagogical strategies that accommodate multilingual students need to become the default setting for all online writing courses. The strategies outlined above, while targeting multilingual students specifically, will benefit all students regardless of their linguistic or socio-cultural background.

It is equally important to further advance research into linguistic diversity in online writing courses. It is important to note that all except for one interviewee in this study passed their OWCs successfully, and the vast majority of survey participants were also able to complete their courses with a satisfactory grade (according to their instructors). This study thus presents a somewhat skewed perspective: it is the students who drop out, disappear from their online courses, or stop participating in online discussions whose voices were not included. A different study design would be able to trace all students' progression in a given OWC and explore some of the reasons that drive students into dropping out.

Furthermore, more research is necessary to investigate how multilingual students' self-positioning online affects their engagement with the course and their peers. Current

OWI literature does not have a developed comprehensive framework for analyzing or creating online classroom community. Adopting the Community of Inquiry Framework can help instructors and program administrators discover ways to ensure students have more satisfying experiences with such inherently social activities as peer reviews and discussions through building stronger learning communities in their courses.

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Appendix A: Student Survey Questions

1. What is your age?

☐ 18-20 ☐ 21-25 ☐ 26-40 ☐ 41-60

2. How long have you lived in the US?

☐ All my life

☐ Most of my life

☐ Some of my life

☐ Less than 2 years

3. How long have you spoken English?

☐ All my life

☐ Most of my life

☐ Some of my life

☐ Less than 2 years

4. Do you consider English to be your first language?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Do you speak any other languages besides English? If yes, what language(s) is it and how long have you spoken it? Note: if you answer “No” to this question, you can skip next three questions (#6, 7, and 8).

☐ No ☐ Yes, all my life ☐ Yes, most of my life ☐ Yes, some of my life ☐ Yes, less than two years Comment: _____

6. Were you ever in an ESL or bilingual program? If yes, please describe your experience.

☐ Yes ☐ No Comments: _____

7. What role does your other language (besides English) play in your life, personally or academically (check all that apply)?

☐ I speak mostly English at home

☐ I speak other language at home

☐ I only use English in school

☐ I am able to use my other language in school

☐ Other (please specify): _____

8. Do you think the fact that you know multiple languages helps or hinders your success in English composition courses, whether in high school or in college?

	Speaking more than one language has a negative influence on my studying	Speaking more than one language does not have any influence on my studying	Speaking more than one language has positive influence on my studying
High school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
College	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: _____

9. Rate your level of proficiency in English and your second language (if applicable):

English:

Skill	Very uncomfortable	Not comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	Most comfortable

Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other language:

Skill	Very uncomfortable	Not comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	Most comfortable
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Why did you decide to take this course online? Check all that apply.

- ☐ It fits my school schedule the best
- ☐ I don't live close enough to any UNM campuses
- ☐ It fits my work schedule
- ☐ I don't feel comfortable taking face-to-face courses
- ☐ Other: _____

11. What device do you usually use to do your work for your English class?

- ☐ A desktop computer
- ☐ A laptop
- ☐ A tablet
- ☐ A mobile phone

Other: _____

12. Where do you usually do your work for your English class?

☐ On my personal computer at home

☐ On my personal computer at school

☐ On my work computer

☐ On my personal computer or mobile device outside of school, home, or work

☐ Other: _____

13. How do you feel about your eComposition course in general?

Comment box: _____

14. How does your current English course compare to the English classes you took in high school in these different aspects?

	My college English class is harder than my high school English class in this aspect	My college English class is easier than my high school English class in this aspect	My college English class is about the same as my high school English class in this aspect
Use of technology and digital tools			
The amount of writing required			
The amount of reading required			
The expectations for your writing			
The support and attention you get as a student			

15. What challenges or difficulties have you encountered in this Composition class? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Keeping up with discussions and readings
- ☐ Understanding what is expected of me in assignments
- ☐ Completing written assignments, whether big or small
- ☐ Completing major writing assignments
- ☐ Working with the multimodal components of the course
- ☐ Using online learning tools on Learn and/or other online platforms (e.g. building a blog or a website)
- ☐ Working with other types of technology (e.g. for making video or audio recordings, etc.)
- ☐ Other: _____

Comments: _____

16. Do you think the challenges of online writing courses are different from the challenges you might encounter in a face-to-face writing course?

- ☐ Online and face-to-face writing courses are about the same
- ☐ Online writing courses are more challenging than face-to-face courses
- ☐ Online writing courses are less challenging than face-to-face courses
- ☐ Comments: _____

17. Rate the amount of support you get from the instructor and the instructional assistant in your online Composition course in terms of different aspects of the course.

	I am getting enough support	I am mostly getting enough support	I am not sure if I get enough support	I don't get enough support	I don't get any support

Completing writing assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completing discussions and readings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Becoming a better writer					
Working with various software tools for multimodal projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Figuring out how Learn works	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please, provide some comments about your experience: _____

18. What kind of additional support or resources would you like to see in your English course? Check all that apply and/or suggest your own option.

- ☐ More time to complete written assignments
- ☐ More explicit instruction in grammar and sentence-level features of writing
- ☐ More one-on-one communication with the instructor
- ☐ More feedback from the instructor
- ☐ Opportunities to work with a writing tutor
- ☐ Opportunities to work with a tutor who speaks my first language
- ☐ More support in working with technology and/or multimodal assignments
- ☐ More time on peer review and peer work

☐ Other: _____

Comments: _____

19. Do you think the instructor provides enough support for students who speak English as their second language?

☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No ☐ Not sure Comments: _____

20. What kind of additional support do you think your instructor could provide to multilingual students?

Comment box: _____

21. If you were to choose again, would you take this course online or face-to-face?

☐ I'd take it online ☐ I'd take it face-to-face ☐ Not sure Comments: _____

22. What is the section number of English 110 or 120 you are enrolled in?

Comment box: _____

23. What is your ethnicity?

☐ Hispanic ☐ White ☐ Asian ☐ Native American ☐ African American/Black ☐ Other

24. What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female

25. Do you give us your consent to use the papers you've submitted as part of the class for our research project? It will allow us to have a better idea of the writing assignments you've completed and the way your instructor responded to your work. If you give your consent, you will not be required to do any additional work. We will contact your instructor after the semester is over and ask for samples of your work with your instructor's comments on it.

Is you choose “yes,” please provide your name.

☐ Yes Please, leave your name: _____

☐ No

26. Would you like to talk more in depth about your experiences with the researchers? You will be compensated for your time with a \$ _ Amazon gift card. If you choose Yes, please leave your name and contact information. We will contact you to schedule an interview at a time and place most convenient for you. Note that signing up now is not a firm commitment to do the interview; you can always change your mind at any point later.

☐ Yes Please, leave your name and email address: _____

☐ No

Appendix B: Instructor Survey Questions

1. What is your status at UNM Core Writing program?

- ☐ TA
- ☐ Adjunct instructor
- ☐ Lecturer
- ☐ Tenure-track faculty
- ☐ Other: _____

2. What is your primary area of study and/or research?

- ☐ Literature
- ☐ Medieval Studies
- ☐ Creative Writing
- ☐ Rhetoric and Writing
- ☐ Other: _____

Comments: _____

3. How long have you been teaching Composition courses, whether face-to-face or online?

- ☐ Less than 2 years
- ☐ 2-4 years
- ☐ More than 5 years

4. How many online courses have you taught at UNM or elsewhere (including the one you're teaching this semester)?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2

☐ 3-4

☐ 5 and more

5. Why did you choose to teach online? Check all that apply or provide your own reasons.

☐ It allows for a more flexible schedule

☐ I wanted to get experience teaching online

☐ I don't like teaching face-to-face

☐ I wanted to see what it online writing courses looked like

Other: _____

Comments: _____

6. How confident do you feel teaching composition courses online and face-to-face?

	Online	Face-to-face
Very confident	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Somewhat confident	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not very confident	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not confident at all	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. What kind of training for teaching online have you received in the form of courses, workshops, seminars, or anything else?

Comment box: _____

8. Have you had any training for working with linguistically diverse students? If yes, please specify.

☐ Yes ☐ No Comments: _____

9. What is your perception of the student diversity in your class? Do you think students in your class are coming from different educational and linguistic backgrounds? Please, provide some comments.

☐ I don't think there is a lot of diversity in my class in terms of educational, cultural, and/or linguistic backgrounds of my students.

☐ I think there is some diversity

☐ I think my class is highly diverse

☐ I'm not sure how diverse my class is

☐ I don't know

Comments: _____

10. What is your perception of the students' writing skills in your current online class?

Comment box: _____

11. In what area do you think the students need most development? Check all that apply.

☐ Grammar and the convention of academic writing

☐ Analyzing and interpreting rhetorical situation

☐ Using research in their papers

☐ Working with various types of technology and/or software

☐ Performing group work online (e.g. peer reviews)

☐ Revising and editing

☐ Other: _____

Comments: _____

12. Do you think that online writing classes present any particular challenges to you as an instructor? If yes, what challenges can you name?

☐ Yes ☐ No Comments: _____

13. Do you think that online writing classes present any particular challenges to particular groups of your students? If yes, please specify what challenges they might be.

☐ Yes ☐ No Comments: _____

14. What skills and abilities do you think are most important for students to have in order to succeed in an online writing course? Check all that apply.

☐ Perseverance and discipline

☐ Strong writing skills

☐ Good group work skills

☐ Proficiency in using technology

Other: _____

15. What are some strategies you use in order to accommodate linguistically diverse students' needs in your online course? Do your strategies differ in online courses compared to face-to-face ones?

Comment box: _____

16. What role, if any, do languages or dialects other than Standardized American English play in your online class?

Comment box: _____

17. Can we contact you for more details regarding your teaching strategies? We would like to ask you to share some samples of your teaching materials like the syllabus and/or assignment prompts so that we may represent your online classroom in our research more accurately. If yes, please leave your email address.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: _____

18. Would you like to participate in a short follow-up interview with the investigators? The interview will give us an opportunity to hear more details about your experiences teaching online and get your input on how we can improve the eComp program. The interview should take between 30 and 60 minutes.

If you agree, please leave your name and how we can reach you.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: _____

19. What is the section number of online English 110 or 120 that you are currently teaching?

[Drop-down menu with the section numbers.]

Appendix C: Student Interview Questions

1. Where are you from? And where were you born?
2. How long have you been studying at UNM?
3. What is your intended major?
4. Do you consider English your first language?
5. Do you speak any other languages besides English, and how proficient are you in these languages?
6. (If applicable) What language would you say you use the most, in school, at home, or with friends?
7. (If applicable) Would you say you're more comfortable with writing in English or in another language?
8. Do you consider yourself a good writer, whether in English or in another language?
9. What has been your experience with English writing courses, whether in high school or in college?
10. Did you use a lot of technology in your high school English classes? What about other classes besides English? How does it compare to your college courses?
11. Do you have a desktop computer at home or do you have a laptop? What kind of computer or other device do you use to complete your work for your English class? Have you encountered any difficulties in that regard?
12. How do you usually approach working in this English class: do you do everything online, do you print things out? How do you approach your written assignments?
13. Why did you decide to take this English course online?
14. What has been your experience with the English course so far? What are some good and bad things about this course?
15. What has been the most challenging aspect of this class so far, and why? What has been the least challenging aspect, and why?
16. What has been the most challenging assignment to write so far, and why?
17. If you can compare this class to other English courses you took face-to-face, do you think the challenges you face now are different from the ones you might find in a face-to-face class?
18. Do you know if there are any (other) students in the class who speak multiple languages? Do you feel like you know who your classmates are in general?
19. Have you had to work on any group projects or peer review? What has that experience been like?
20. Do you think your instructor provides enough support for you in the class? Do you think there's anything else she/he might do to accommodate students like you more effectively?

21. What kind of feedback do you get from your instructor? Do you think your instructor provides sufficient feedback on your work? Do you think there is anything that should be changed about it?
22. What features of the LMS your class uses are the easiest and the hardest to work with? What changes would you like to see?
23. What changes would you like to see in terms of how this class is structured, its curriculum, or anything else, and why?

Appendix D: Student Usability Walkthrough Questions

1. Log into your English class.
2. What do you normally do when you log into the class?
3. Find the syllabus for the course.
4. Where do you normally find what assignments are due and what their due dates are?
5. Find the learning module for this week.
6. Imagine that you have to complete all of the tasks that are due this week. How will you go about each of them?
7. If your course includes online quizzes, take a quiz or show how you would normally take a quiz.
8. Post on the discussion board.
9. If you have a question about the course, what would you normally do?
10. If you have to contact your instructor, what would you do? And in what cases do you normally contact your instructor?

Appendix E: Instructor Interview Questions

General questions:

1. What is your current status at UNM?
2. What is your main area of studies and/or research?
3. How long have you been teaching Composition, whether online or face-to-face?
4. What has been your experience with teaching online courses?
5. What kind of training have you received for teaching writing online?
6. What has been your experience of working with diverse student populations?
7. Have you received any training for working with diverse student populations?
8. What is your perception of the students in your online writing course this semester?
Do you know what kinds of background your students come from, and how do you know?
9. Do you think that face-to-face courses generally have more or less diversity in terms of student backgrounds (language and cultural) than online courses?
10. What is your perception of your current students' writing skills? What challenges are they facing in terms of developing these skills? Do you think students generally have more challenges in online courses compared to face-to-face courses, and how do their challenges in online course compare to those in a f2f class?
11. What challenges do you face as an instructor teaching online writing courses? Are there any particular challenges that online environments present?
12. What are some ways that you adjust your teaching practices to better fit the online environment?
13. Do you think that multilingual students in writing classes might have different needs from students from monolingual English backgrounds?
14. Do you think you consider the fact that diverse students might have different needs and challenges in designing your curriculum and class activities, and in what ways might you consider that? What are some ways you might try to accommodate diverse students' needs?
15. What training or professional development opportunities would you like to see in the eComp program to help you develop your teaching strategies?

Questions about L2 students:

1. Do you know if there are L2 students in your classes, and how do you know?
2. How does the writing of each of these students compare to other students in your classes? How would you describe these students' language abilities? Have you noticed that these students have any particular struggles with the technology required in the class?
3. Do you think these L2 students need assistance with their written or academic English?
4. Do you think you are able to provide these students the help they need? In what ways have you tried helping them?
5. Do you think there are any elements in your course design that might help L2 students navigate the class or make it more difficult for them?