



DIVERSITY AT MASON:

THE PURSUIT OF TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

Authored by:

Jennifer Haan  
Anna S. Habib  
Karyn E. Mallett  
Patricia Maulden  
Terry Myers Zawacki  
Ghania Zgheib

Edited by:

Anna S. Habib  
Karyn E. Mallett

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A George Mason Publication on Diversity

With special thanks to the faculty and students who have participated in  
our research.

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For further information, contact the  
English Language Institute  
George Mason University, MSN 4C4  
Fairfax, VA 22030

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## CONTRIBUTORS

**Jennifer Haan, Ph.D.**, is an Assistant Professor in the English Department at the University of Dayton, and has served as a research associate at the English Language Institute at George Mason University. Her research focuses on factors involved in internationalization and language program development, and her recent publications include a chapter in TESOL's Effective Second Language Writing. She is currently working on projects related to the discourse of internationalization and globalization in university mission statements, as well as the development of intercultural writing programs for international and study abroad students.

**Anna Habib, M.F.A.**, has been teaching composition at George Mason since 2004 and served as Associate Director and then Interim Director of George Mason University's Writing Center from 2006-2010. She is currently English faculty in the Center for International Student Access where she teaches a stretched (year-long) version of Freshmen Composition. Her collaborative academic research is published by the National Council for Teachers of English in *Reinventing Identities in Second Language Writing*. The research also appears in a publication by GMU's Diversity Research Group titled *Valuing Written Accents: Non-native Students Talk about Identity, Academic Writing and Meeting Teachers' Expectations*. A native of Lebanon, Anna is fluent in Arabic, French and English.

**Karyn Mallett, Ph.D.**, is Assistant Director of the English Language Institute at George Mason University where she develops and maintains English language support courses for the Center for International Student Access (CISA) undergraduate ACCESS and graduate BRIDGE-EET programs. Further, as Adjunct Professor in the English Department, she teaches courses in Modern English Grammar and Applied Linguistics/TESOL. Her current research includes a longitudinal study focusing on international students' perceptions of their own linguistic, academic, and cultural development over time in comparison with faculty perceptions of the same international students' development in these areas. Recent publications include a chapter in TESOL's Effective Second Language Writing with J. Haan. Karyn participated in a year-long study abroad program during undergraduate study and later lived in the Philippines as an English language teacher trainer with the U.S. Peace Corps.

**Patricia Maulden, Ph.D.** is Assistant Professor for Conflict Resolution at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution. She works primarily with the undergraduate program on the Fairfax Campus where she also directs the Dialogue & Difference Project. Additional research interests include generational and gendered dynamics in war and peace, peacebuilding theories and practices, and peacebuilding trajectories over time. Areas of research focus include Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi, Mozambique, and Colombia. During the 2010 and 2011 academic year she worked on the University Life Fellowship Project, “Global Roots & Campus Dynamics: Exploring International and University Linkages.”

**Terry Myers Zawacki, Ph.D.** directs George Mason University’s Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program, named as one of the top twenty programs in the U.S., and co-chairs cross-university writing assessment. As an associate professor in English, she teaches graduate courses in composition theory and practice and undergraduate courses in writing ethnography and advanced writing in the disciplines. Her publications include the co-authored *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines: Research on the Academic Writing Life*, the co-edited *Critical Sourcebook on Writing Across the Curriculum*, and articles on writing centers and writing fellows, writing in the disciplines (WID), alternative discourses, writing in learning communities, feminism and composition, writing assessment, and WAC and second language writing, the latter the focus of her keynote talk at the 2010 International WAC conference. She is currently co-editing a special issue of the online journal *Across the Disciplines* focused on second language writers and writing in the disciplines.

**Ghania Zgheib, M.A, M.S.,** Doctoral student in the College of Education and Human Development, GMU, is faculty at the English Language Institute and in the Modern and Classical Languages department. She teaches ESL and Arabic at George Mason, and she is working with Dr. Mallett on a longitudinal research study of ACCESS faculty and students’ experiences. Ghania moved to the United States from Lebanon in 2007, and she has had the international student experience at George Mason without enrollment in a language-supported program. Her research interests are related to developing online tools that could help reduce culture shock for international students. Ghania is focused on studying the barriers and enablers for online learning in developing/emerging countries.

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# PREFACE

Karen Rosenblum

Associate Professor of Sociology

Convener, Diversity Research Group (2004-2011)

Reading essays by international students describing a transformative period in their lives, then listening to those students describe the process of translating that account from English into their home language – surely this is an unusual and exceptionally rich window onto the meaning of “diversity” in higher education. Similar complexity attends explaining, that is, translating, one’s attachment to the flag of one’s real or imagined home, the literal and figurative translations that characterize interaction between students and faculty, and the translation and transformation required to make a “new” university and country familiar. Thanks to the work of Jennifer Haan, Anna Habib, Karyn Mallett, Patricia Maulden, Terry Myers Zawacki, and Ghania Zgheib, this 5th issue of *Diversity at Mason* provides an opportunity to ponder the relationship of translation to transformation.

The *Diversity at Mason* series has been produced by the university’s Diversity Research Group, which consists of an interdisciplinary group of faculty, administrators, and students who have been meeting once a semester since Spring 2004. The group has come together not out of any formal directive, but from a shared interest in the topic.

And the topic? Each meeting begins with the same reminder: George Mason is a highly diverse institution, and it is diverse in ways that are fluid and multidimensional. Our students represent an extraordinary diversity of geographic origin, religion, age, and disability; they are immigrants and the children of immigrants, refugees and the children of refugees, veterans of American military service and the children of those in the military; they represent traditional American race and ethnic categories as well as those forging new understandings of sexuality and gender.

The Diversity Research Group has been founded on the conviction that the breadth of our student diversity merits study. What is the educational impact of such diversity? What does diversity mean in this context? How is this diversity understood by our students, faculty, and staff? Like the other volumes in the *Diversity at Mason* series, this fifth issue shows us the complexity beneath questions.



# FOREWORD

Kathy Trump

Associate Dean, International Education and Programs

This volume in the Diversity at Mason series examines an important aspect of the amazing diversity that is George Mason – our international students. For more than seven years, the Diversity Research Group has focused on learning more about Mason’s diversity. The spotlight in this volume is on international students, how they contribute to our campus, the services that are available to them, and how they view George Mason.

The arrival of international students and scholars at George Mason is not a new phenomenon. By the early 1980’s, with about 200 international students enrolled, the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS) and the English Language Institute (ELI) were created. In part to meet the needs of the international students, and also to showcase their contributions to the university, the first International Week festival was celebrated in 1981. Since their inception, the ELI and OIPS have been welcoming international students to campus; advising them on immigration matters; helping them learn about US culture, including the academic culture; and helping them acquire the academic, language, and social skills necessary for success on an American campus.

Those who’ve been privileged to connect with our international students know the many benefits derived from their presence on our campus. They bring a drive to learn and succeed; first-hand information about 135 different countries; curiosity about other ways of doing, thinking, and believing; and of course wonderful food and dance. Perhaps their most important contribution is that they act as a mirror, allowing us to see ourselves and our own culture more clearly, whether in comparison or in contrast to others.

I was speaking with a small group of students from another country recently, trying to help them understand the phrase “law-abiding citizen” in a U.S. context. As an example, I mentioned that many people in the U.S., especially those of us of a certain age, will stop at a red light at 3:00 in the morning even though there are no other cars on the road. I said that people from other countries might find this behavior strange. The group laughingly stated that this behavior would be viewed as more than strange by people from their country. It was a captivating conversation that offered each of us the chance to reflect on the cultural assumptions we take for granted and to think about what makes us uniquely who we are. As always, I’m not sure who learned more, the students or me.

As you read this volume, you will experience George Mason in a new way – through the eyes, ears, and hearts of the international students who grace us with their presence.

# INTRODUCTION

Karyn E. Mallett  
English Language Institute  
Jennifer Haan  
University of Dayton

“...it seems not unrealistic to claim now, during the early years of the twenty-first century, an education devoid of exposure to people from other cultures can hardly be considered a worthy education at all. The most effective corrective for narrow parochialism...is exposure to people unlike ourselves. So, too, the best antidote to ethnocentricity is getting to know those whose backgrounds are instructively dissimilar from our own.”

- Teresa Bevis and Christopher Lucas (2002)

“...I realized that the students were writing from a position of strength as well as a position of weakness. Although they could not write all the sentences in English that a native speaker could write, they could write sentences--good sentences--that native speakers were incapable of producing.”

- Melissa Allen (1994)

As we conceptualize our work as educators, researchers, and administrators, we shape the university as a place and space for intellectual exchange. At George Mason, we carefully and collaboratively craft this landscape and, as we do, we make decisions about how best to meet students at varied, developing points of intellectual, linguistic, cultural, and academic need. Whatever the discipline, our work requires a clear sense of institutional ethos. Additionally, the work that we do requires certain sensitivities to issues related to diversity and multiculturalism, internationalization and inter-cultural communication. Beyond simply “exposure to people from other cultures” as Bevis and Lucas (2002) point out, successful attempts at internationalization in higher education are ones that foster an environment in which the pursuit of a worthy education involves “getting to know those whose backgrounds are instructively dissimilar from our own.”

At George Mason, we serve our students and we push our disciplinary knowledge forward in the context of twenty-first century globalization. It is in this context that we strive to create and sustain an intellectual space that is as inclusive as it is diverse. In short, diversity at George Mason is not accidental; rather, it is the university’s comprehensive, pragmatic, and intentional response to education within

changing world dynamics. We are preparing the next generation to succeed in a growingly competitive world. Our goal with this issue of the Diversity at Mason publication is to showcase pieces of the collaborative internationalization process, highlighting the work and life of international students as twenty-first century scholars.

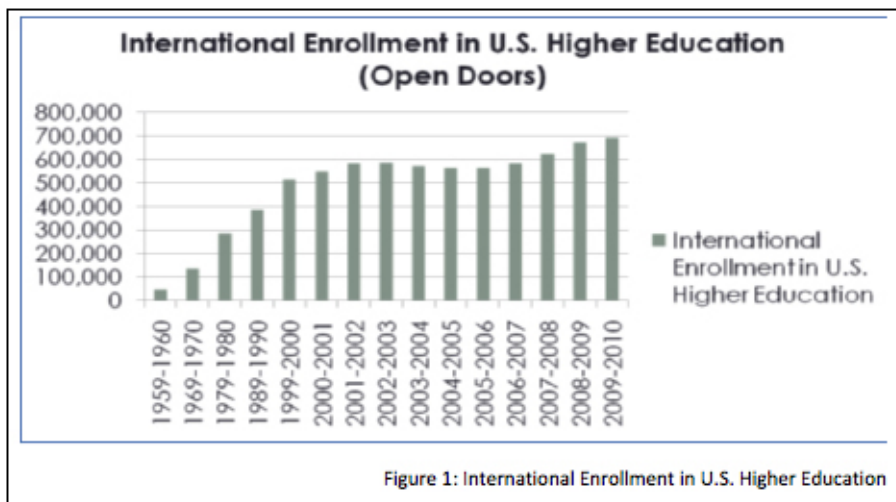
#### INTERNATIONALIZATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In recent years, internationalization in higher education has gained increasing importance. Although the implementation of internationalization practices across campuses is mixed, the overall trends in higher education are leading administrators and faculty to consider the benefits of internationalizing the campus, the curriculum, and the student body. The first, and perhaps the most historically prominent reason for internationalizing is economic. Studies have shown that internationalization brings with it global competitiveness, revenue for the university, and increased job opportunities for graduates. Political rationales have also been proffered throughout the years as motivation for internationalization efforts. International exchange is thought to help with foreign policy and national security, and help equip students to interact with local and world cultures.

Internationalization provides academic benefits as well. Those who focus on the academic benefits of internationalization often reiterate the need for students to engage with and understand different worldviews and cultures, international issues in specific disciplines, and the importance of international perspectives and intercultural communication in a liberal arts curriculum. Perhaps one of the most powerful arguments on behalf of internationalization relates to the intangible benefits that can be gained from it—the understanding that can develop when people from differing languages and cultures work together toward a common goal.

These positive aspects of internationalization notwithstanding, there are certainly some challenges associated with communicating a clear notion of internationalization in U.S. higher education. For example, it should be noted that in much of the talk surrounding internationalization in U.S. higher education, multilingual users of English are presented in terms of their deficiencies: their lack of English language proficiency, their incomplete American cultural knowledge, their inability to meet American academic standards, etc. This deficiency model assumes a relationship in which globalization is cast as the cause of unwieldy, isolated, remediation-focused changes at the institutional level, rather than as a catalyst for rethinking university structures to better serve all students. Furthermore, at the same time that institutions across the United States strive to *recruit* ever greater numbers of international students to meet strategic planning goals and gain reputations as “global” citizens, they often lack the institutional expertise to *support* these students as learners across the curriculum.

In terms of striving to increase international student enrollment, George Mason is not alone. In the chart presented here (Figure 1), it is clear that international student enrollment in U.S. higher education has jumped dramatically over the past 50 years.



At George Mason, international student enrollment numbers have also increased significantly over the years, with projected growth on the horizon. Though we are not alone in our quest to increase international student enrollment, George Mason is unparalleled with regard to its comprehensive and pragmatic approach to internationalization. At the highest levels of administration, university leaders recognize the growing connection and communication among nations and cultures around the world. Put simply, the university realizes globalization as a force which is pushing higher education into the international arena. In turn, the university has conceptualized a way to consciously respond to this push. At George Mason, internationalization fairly emphasizes the agency of the university, focusing attention on specific policies, programs, and initiatives to create an institutional ethos of international engagement across all dimensions of university life.

“EXPAND THE NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS BY AT LEAST 20% WHILE IMPROVING THE INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC STUDENTS IN EXTRACURRICULAR AS WELL AS ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES.”

- George Mason University (2008). Strategic Goals for 2014,

## Goal 5: Strategic Action b.

### INTERNATIONALIZATION AT GEORGE MASON

George Mason's approach to internationalization can be evaluated through a variety of methods and from a range of perspectives. As already noted, successful internationalization in higher education is not accidental; rather, comprehensive and thoughtful approaches to internationalization begin with asking and answering a series of questions that range from the most pragmatic (e.g. "At what level of English language proficiency should prospective non-English-dominant students be for acceptance at George Mason? What tests will we trust to gauge English language proficiency?") to the more ideological (e.g. "In what ways will an internationally-diverse campus foster the advancement of academic and personal development within the George Mason and Fairfax communities? And why are these goals prioritized here and now?").

In 2008, the University stated its commitment to internationalization in the *Strategic Goals of 2014*. This was neither the first nor the only way in which George Mason identified internationalization as a valuable goal, but it should be noted that this exercise—collaboratively constructing a document that makes clear the mission and goals of the university—has had a significant impact on the university. Writing a strategic mission encourages a healthy process of reflection and projection, asking folks to consider a few central questions, including: (1) Where are we in terms of our previously-established goals? (2) What major trends/changes have we witnessed over the past year(s) and how has the university responded to these changes? (3) What are our goals/priorities moving forward given the current and projected state of things?

In terms of the *Strategic Goals of 2014* at George Mason, the university's stated commitment to internationalization meant also a pledge to supporting initiatives that foster a connected, global community in and beyond the classroom. In short, the university document acknowledged the need for a comprehensive approach to internationalization that went far beyond the basic increase in international enrollment numbers. Further, the university identified the goal of fostering a successful global community, preparing domestic and international students to successfully operate in a growingly complex, globalized environment beyond the university.

As contributors to this Diversity at Mason issue and as faculty who are invested in the success of campus internationalization, we believe that the work that we do—as teachers, administrators, and researchers—is motivated by a desire to increase cross-cultural awareness and understanding while reducing instances of linguistic discrimination at the institutional level. George Mason's effective-

ness in constructing a successful global campus that improves “the integration of international and domestic students in extracurricular as well as academic activities” will depend on both its approach to international recruitment and the ability to anticipate and effectively meet the needs particular to international students and scholars. As we purposefully push against the default deficiency model of internationalization (and, therefore, of international students) that so many U.S. institutions of higher education succumb to, we reflect on our high status as a diverse campus community, and we move toward a future in which domestic and international students are prepared to work with one another in the decades that follow university life.

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# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT MASON: REFLECTIONS, TRANSLATIONS, AND TEXTS

Anna S. Habib  
Karyn E. Mallett

The 2010-2011 academic year at Mason included the launch of a new internationalization initiative – the ACCESS Program – directed out of the Provost Office, Center for International Student Access (CISA). In partnership with the English Language Institute (ELI), the ACCESS Program is built upon a language-supported approach to campus internationalization, aiming to meet students at developing and varied points of academic, linguistic, and cultural need. In preparation for the pilot year of the ACCESS program, select English Department and ELI faculty worked together to design a co-taught, year-long model of Freshmen Composition that moves students toward several major goals, including: the development of rhetorical awareness, the expansion of composition skills, and the advancement of English language acquisition.

In order to bring the voice of our international students into this publication, we are featuring three essays by students from the new ACCESS program. Students were asked to remember a pivotal “educational” moment in their life—with education defined rather loosely—and to write a narrative about it. The essays appear in both English and the students’ native languages. The English versions of the three essays went through an intensive drafting process in the Fall semester of the stretched composition course and the final outcomes are examples of the students’ first lengthy college-level essays in English. The writers were also asked to reflect on their translanguaging—their experience writing the same essay in English first and then translating into their first language. The reflections appear in Q & A format at the end of each essay.

The essays in English are meant to give us a glimpse into the students’ diverse literacy, linguistic and cultural histories, while the essays in the students’ first languages help us visualize the richness of their experiences and their linguistic proficiency and flexibility.

ANAISS FLORA ASSALE, Ivory Coast

**Native languages:** French, Agni dialect from the East region and Baoule from the center region.

**Title:** The Lessons of Life Don't Always Come from the People We Love: How my Hateful Half-Siblings Taught me Life

**Pages:** 19-28

FAHAD AL MAHDELY, Saudi Arabia

**Native language:** Arabic

**Title:** The Wrong Choice

**Pages:** 30-37

XIUZHI FAN, China

**Native language:** Mandarin

**Title:** Two Teachers

**Pages:** 39-51

# THE LESSONS OF LIFE DON'T ALWAYS COME FROM THE PEOPLE WE LOVE: HOW MY HATEFUL HALF-SIBLINGS TAUGHT ME LIFE

Anais Flora Assale  
ACCESS Student, Ivory Coast.

Born in Ivory Coast, a small country of West Africa, I have grown up in a simple environment although I was not simple at all. In fact, I was called “crazy girl” in elementary school. The reason? Well! I had developed a passion for being naughty. Every school day, as soon as the bells rang to announce the break, I waited for the teacher to get out of the class and I rushed on the table and danced in front of about thirty classmates. I would jump from table to table pretending that I am Tarzan. Sometimes also, I would put the wooden chair in front of all the class and try to imitate a princess so I lifted my dress slightly before sitting. I would sing, run, bother my friends, draw and jump everywhere, but I did not care much about school and I did not take my studies seriously until an incident that changed the normal course of life: the arrival of my new brothers. Just thinking about this episode of my life gives me shivers down my back. Do not ask me why and do not judge. Just imagine yourself strangling your worst enemy. Do you feel better? Well I do. My brothers were such devils suddenly showing up in the greatest part of a fairy tale: grumpy and hateful. However I keep in mind that life is an awful lot of surprises and each event sad or happy contributes to shape us and make us what we are now.

First of all, I have known my half siblings since my early teens. During my childhood, I lived with only dad, mum and my little brothers since the arrival of my first half-brother who I called “daddy’s little clone” because of his terrible resemblance to dad. One beautiful day of summer vacation while performing my choreography dance at home, I saw dad coming back home followed by another young boy probably nineteen at that time. What automatically dawned on me was the fact that there was quite a strong resemblance between dad and this person. I did not push my analysis deep enough; I stood there staring at them successively from dad to the boy and vice versa. My father greeted us, and slowly I heard these words coming out of his mouth, “This is your brother.” I was about ten and I did not really understand the meaning of these words. For me, it was not a big deal and sincerely I was quite happy to have a brother. Then, another day came; I met a second brother. Again, I did not make a fight. I did not say anything. I gradually learned how to love them and to share my life with them, this life that I had with mom, dad and my little siblings, a life where I needed to create a place

for some half siblings. But, I was so jealous and mad at the same time. At first, I could not bear sharing dad's love just because my brothers and I did not have the same mother. Anger, jealousy and pain were killing me so deeply inside, and I knew that it would not ever be like in the past. It was not anymore about being myself, being the crazy girl I was. I needed to be someone else; I needed to act differently.

I have learned how to be different and how to please my dad and appear more important in his eyes. I knew that he would love me more if I was a polite and hard working person, so I started to care much about him. At night, I would call him to make sure everything was going well; I waited for him to get back home so that we could talk about his day or eat together. When he was travelling, I was the one he would call every day; I could also draw on his legs with my pen sometimes. Increasingly, between dad and me a tie was established, a link that nothing could have broken. My dad trusted me no matter what happened and we would always speak the same language. Nobody could break this tie. Jealousy helped me be different in order to please dad and grab his attention. In return, he has shown me that he would do everything to support me and give me everything I needed to succeed in life.

When I turned eleven, I went to a Catholic boarding school for only girls. There, however, I was kind of hated. When my classmates and roommates were talking about something, I could never enter the discussion. As soon as they saw me walking in their direction, they just stopped talking. I think that is understandable. I was the kind of girl who always denounced her friends. I remember that one day I did not sleep; I looked for the nuns for hours just to tell them that I had seen some of my friends going to the farmhouse to take a drink made of palm juice which was prohibited. Almost every night, some of the girls would get out of the dorms pretending to clean the trash cans. In exchange for one cup of palm juice, the supervisor usually helped them. However, I, the small spy, was always there to get my friends in trouble. Even at school I tried to be another person, from a "crazy girl" to a hard worker sometimes and a spy other times. However, it did not matter to me what people thought about me. Even if I was getting in trouble most of the time because I was hated by my friends, the most important was not to keep friends who did not support me in my studies, but rather introduced me to "drinking palm juice," for example. I knew that I could overcome this situation. I knew that if I was doing well at school my classmates would need me somewhere, maybe for an explanation or a study group. At this moment, I should have screamed that I won, that I had what I had waited for. I had dad, and I had his love more than anyone else did, but...

At the same time, we were facing some problems at home where the relation

between my half siblings and me was getting very bad. They had reached a sensitive point in my heart: my family. They were so often rude with my little siblings, telling them to “Get out of my room,” “You are ugly,” “I will hit you when your mother is not home”. How could you say things like that to a five-year old girl or seven-year old boy? Moreover, the straw that broke the camel’s back was when they made some comments about dad and mom, “Why is your mum always dressing like that?” “Why is dad always listening to your mum?” Those times I fought hard and I never hesitated to tell them what I really thought. I told them that if they cannot put up with our routine they should simply go back because I will not let them ruin my mom’s life nor control our life or change it more than it had already been changed. I was the one who had been living with them since I was born and they did not know them as well as I did so I could not bear hearing bad things about my parents even if it was their dad as well. I confess that sometimes I wished my father had never known their mum. I wished they had never existed before. Damn! Now I began to feel that it was me who was the demon. In fact, they never asked to come into life, or to be my brothers. As I grew up, I understood that they were conceived like me, and perhaps it is much more difficult for them to live with a mother who is not theirs. Maybe they miss living in a complete family with their own mum. I imagined being them and I realized that it is sometimes hurtful being obliged to choose to live with dad or mum and I would not have been able to do that. I should be thankful to them because without them I would not have been what I am now. By hurting my feelings, my half siblings have helped me clarify my vision of life, the way I would like to see myself not only as a successful person, but also as a loved one. With them, I have understood life differently.

I have learned that each moment of my life, even dark ones, have been the important and memorable steps without which I would not have been able to shape myself as a hard worker and a winner. I can keep in mind that nothing is vanity in life. Everything happens for a reason and it is at the darkest moment that we can see the light shining.



# LES LEÇONS DE LA VIE NE VIENNENT PAS TOUJOURS DE PERSONNES QUE NOUS AIMONT: COMMENT MES DETESTABLES GRANDS FRÈRES M'ONT APPRIS LA VIE

Anais Flora Assale  
ACCESS Student, Ivory Coast.

Née en Cote d'Ivoire, un pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest, j'ai grandi dans un environnement simple quoique je ne fusse pas du tout simple. En fait, j'avais été surnommée « fille folle » à l'école primaire. La raison ? Eh bien ! J'avais développé une passion pour les choses bizarres. Chaque jour d'école, dès que la cloche sonnait pour annoncer la récréation, j'attendais que le maître sorte de la classe puis, je me précipitais sur la table pour danser en face de ma trentaine d'amis. Je sautais de table en table en prétendant que j'étais tarzan. Certaines fois aussi, je mettais la table en bois en face de mes amis et je tentais d'imiter une princesse. Je hissais alors ma robe lentement avant de m'asseoir. Je chantais, courais, embrouillais mes amis, dessinais et sautait partout sans jamais me préoccuper de mes études jusqu'à ce qu'un incident chamboule le cours normal des choses : l'arrivée de mes « nouveaux » frères. Repenser à cet épisode de ma vie me donne des frissons dans le dos. Ne me demandez pas pourquoi et n'en faites aucun commentaire. Imaginez vous juste en train d'étrangler votre pire ennemi. N'est ce pas réconfortant ? Eh bien ça l'ai pour moi. C'est incroyable mais mes frères étaient comme de petits démons qui soudainement apparaissaient aux moments les plus magiques d'un conte de fées : grincheux et détestables. Malgré tout, je garde en mémoire que la vie est faite de surprises et chaque situation heureuse ou malheureuse contribue à nous façonner et faire de nous ce que nous sommes aujourd'hui.

Avant toute chose, il est important de préciser que j'ai connu mes demi-frères peu avant l'âge de la puberté. Durant mon enfance, j'ai vécu avec seulement papa, maman et mes petits frères jusqu'à l'arrivée de mon premier grand frère que j'appelais « le petit clown de papa » à cause de la frappante ressemblance qu'il avait avec ce dernier. Un jour d'été, alors que je répétais ma chorégraphie de danse à la maison, je vis papa rentrer du travail. Derrière lui cependant se trouvait un jeune garçon ; probablement neuf ans en ces temps. Je fus particulièrement frappée par la ressemblance de ce garçon avec mon père mais je n'eus pas la présence d'esprit de pousser mes analyses un peu plus loin. Je me tenais juste arrêtée regardant successivement papa puis le jeune garçon. Mon père nous salua tous et lentement, j'entendis ces mots sortir de sa bouche : « voici ton frère ». J'avais juste dix ans en ces temps et je n'aurais franchement pas pu cerner les

sous entendus de ces mots. Pour moi, il n'y avait pas de quoi en faire un drame et j'étais particulièrement heureuse d'avoir un frère aîné. Puis un autre jour vint ; je fis la connaissance de mon deuxième frère. Une fois de plus je ne fis rien, j'acceptai cette situation comme elle me fut présentée. J'ai appris à aimer ces nouveaux frères et à partager ma vie avec eux ; cette vie que j'avais avec papa, maman et mes petits frères. Dans cette nouvelle vie cependant, je devais créer une place pour les nouveaux venus : mes demi-frères. J'étais tellement jalouse et énervée en même temps. Je ne pouvais pas me faire à l'idée de partager l'amour de papa juste parce que mes demi-frères et moi n'avions pas la même mère. Aigreur et jalousie m'affectaient et me tuaient intérieurement ; je savais que rien ne serait comme dans le passé. En fait, il ne s'agissait plus d'être moi-même, cette petite folle que j'étais ; je devais agir différemment.

A partir de ce moment, j'appris à être différente, j'appris à plaire à papa et à paraître importante à ses yeux. Je savais qu'il m'aimerait plus si j'étais polie et je travaillais dur. J'ai alors commencé à me préoccuper de lui. La nuit pas exemple, je l'appelais pour voir comment il allait, j'attendais ensuite qu'il rentre du travail afin qu'on puisse dîner ensemble et parler de sa journée. Quand il voyageait, j'étais celle qu'il appelait tout le temps, je pouvais dessiner sur ses pieds avec mes stylos souvent. Successivement, s'était installé entre papa et moi un lien que personne ne pouvait détruire. Papa avait confiance en moi et quelque soit ce qui arrivait, nous parlions toujours le même langage. Personne ne pouvait briser ce lien. En somme, je dirai que la jalousie m'a permis d'être une personne différente en vue de plaire à mon père et d'attirer son attention sur ma seule personne. En retour, papa m'a montré qu'il ferait tout pour moi et qu'il me donnerait le nécessaire pour réussir dans la vie.

A onze ans, je fus inscrite dans un internat catholique pour filles. Là-bas cependant j'étais particulièrement haïe. En fait, quand mes amies discutaient, je n'étais jamais introduite dans les conversations. Des qu'elles me voyaient marcher en leur direction, elles se taisaient toutes. Je pense que ce genre de comportement est compréhensible. J'étais le genre de personne bavard mais aussi dénonciateur. Je me souviens qu'un jour je ne dormi pas. J'avais passé ma nuit à attendre le retour des religieuses afin de leur expliquer que j'avais vu mes amies sortir du dortoir et aller se procurer du jus de palme à la ferme ; ce qui nous était formellement interdit. A peu près toutes les nuits, mes amies prétendant vider les poubelles et aidées par le chef de dortoir mais en échange d'un verre de jus de palme quittaient le dortoir. Ce qu'elles semblaient par contre oublier c'est que moi la petite espionne était toujours déterminée à les mettre dans de beaux draps. En fait, même à l'école j'essayais d'être différente des autres et me démarquer par mon attitude exemplaire mais peu aimable. De la fille folle que j'étais à une dure laborieuse certaines fois ou une espionne d'autres fois. Et

pour dire vrai, je me fichais pas mal de ce que les gens pensaient de moi même si souvent j'étais haïe par mes amies, le plus important pour moi n'était pas d'avoir comme exemple des filles qui m'entraîneraient à boire du jus de palme. Je savais que je pouvais outre passer cette situation en travaillant bien à l'école de sorte à devenir incontournable pour les groupes de travail ou les séances de révision. A cet instant précis, j'aurais du crier au monde entier que j'avais gagné, que j'avais obtenu tout ce que j'avais désiré pendant si longtemps ; j'avais l'amour de papa encore plus que les autres ne l'aurait jamais mais ! ...

A la même période, les choses ne tournaient pas rond en famille. Certains problèmes avaient surgi entre mes demi-frères et moi. En fait, ils avaient touché un point sensible de mon cœur : ma famille. Mes demi-frères étaient tellement méchants avec mes petits-frères que j'étais très souvent hors de contrôle. Souvent, sortaient de leur bouche des phrases un peu trop dures pour des enfants d'à peine 10 ans. Exemple : « tu es laid », « sors de ma chambre », « je te frapperai quand ta mère sera sortie de la maison ». Néanmoins, la goutte d'eau qui fit déborder le vase fut quand ils s'attaquèrent à ma maman en ces termes « pourquoi ta mère est toujours habillée de la sorte ? », « pourquoi papa écoute toujours ce que ta maman lui dit ? ». Ces fois par contre, je n'ai pas hésité à leur dire ce que je pensais réellement. Je leur ai dit que s'il ne pouvait pas s'habituer à notre routine ils devaient simplement retourner vivre avec leur mères parce que je n'allais pas les laisser changer notre vie plus qu'elle ne l'était déjà. J'étais celle qui avait vécu avec papa et maman depuis la naissance, par conséquent ils ne les connaissaient pas aussi mieux que moi. Je ne pouvais pas supporter d'entendre de mauvaises choses sur mes parents même si c'était aussi leur père. J'avoue que souvent je souhaitais que papa n'eusse jamais rencontré leurs mères. Je souhaitais que jamais ils eussent existé avant. Maintenant, je reconnais que la seule personne qui s'était comportée comme un démon dans ces temps là c'était moi. En fait, mes frères n'avaient jamais décidé de venir au monde ; ils n'avaient jamais demandé à être mes frères. En grandissant, j'ai compris que mes frères avaient été conçus comme moi et peut être que c'était encore plus difficile pour eux de vivre avec une mère qui n'était pas la leur. Peut être que leur maman leur manquait comme ça aurait été le cas pour moi si je vivais la même situation. Je m'imagine souvent vivre à leur place et je réalise que c'est souvent difficile d'avoir à choisir de vivre avec son père ou sa mère. Je sais intérieurement que jamais je n'aurais été capable de faire ce choix. Je devrais leur être reconnaissante parce que sans eux je n'aurais pas pu être ce que je suis aujourd'hui. En heurtant mes sentiments, mes demi-frères m'ont aidé à clarifier ma vision de la vie, et à donner un tournant à ma vie. Ils m'ont permis de me définir comme une dure travailleuse, une gagnante mais aussi une personne aimée. Avec mes frères, j'ai appris à voir la vie différemment.

En somme, j'ai appris que chaque moment de ma vie, même sombre à certains points a été une étape importante et mémorable sans laquelle je n'aurais pas pu définir ma personne comme cette dure travailleuse et cette gagnante que je suis. Je garde en esprit que rien n'est vanité dans la vie. Chaque chose a une cause et c'est dans les moments les plus sombres de notre existence que nous pouvons voir le soleil briller comme jamais il ne l'avait fait auparavant.

## ANAIS' REFLECTION ON TRANSLINGUAL WRITING PROJECT

*When you were first assigned the education narrative in your ENGL 101 class, what did you think about that genre of writing? Had you had previous experiences with it?*

I was quite happy to write something personal because I thought that it was more honest and I would be more engaged in the writing. I also find it easier than other kinds of writing. I did have previous experiences with this genre because I used to write personal narratives in my native language.

*How would you describe the experience of writing that essay in English? (Did you translate from your native language?)*

The experience writing in English was a good experience for me because I found out that sometimes there were things I could write in English but not in French since they sound weird or awkward in French. I won't say that everything was translated from French, but sometimes when I was stuck, I just thought about what I would have said in my own language.

*How would you describe the experience translating your essay into your native language?*

It is weird and the French version of my essay would not have been a very good essay if I had to have a grade for it. The problem is mostly about my sentences. Translated from English to French, my sentences are weak, too simple and my vocabulary is poor.

*How do you think your essay would be evaluated if you had written it in your school in your native country?*

My essay would have been poorly evaluated or at least I would not have had the grade I had with the English version because of my sentence level. I feel that my French version is monotonous; it is not a lively essay. I think that the only thing that would have helped me get an average grade is maybe the story, but not the way it was structured.

*What do you think/how do you feel/did anything surprise you about the final outcome of your essay in your native language?*

I came to the realization that despite the similarities in the English and French writing styles, there are an awful lot of differences. The French writing style uses the same structures (introduction with hook and thesis statement, development with paragraphs, topic sentences and examples, conclusion with summary and opening question). However, I think that the English way is easier when you are good in English than the French way is if you are good in French. If I was able to speak both English and French as a native speaker, I think that I would

have been more comfortable writing in English than French. Writing in French requires to use beautiful and more complex sentences. The sentences in French are sometimes longer than they are in English. In English, you go straight to your point.

*How would you describe this whole experience of writing for publication in both English and your native language, of translating back and forth?*

I think that I was more comfortable writing in French, and since it was my own story, I tended not to use the English version or think about my wording or how I needed to structure my sentences. I just wrote. However, I made some mistake that I would not have made one year ago or back home. I realized that writing papers in English all the time made me forget the French structure of some sentences. Sometimes I needed to call back home on Skype and ask if the way my sentence was structured was right and if ever we talk like that in French. I think that it is not easy to translate an essay from one language to another because it is difficult and what make sense in one language sometimes doesn't in another. The biggest challenge for me was the word choice. French and English have some common words. However, the sense is not always the same. Example: in French an argument is just an idea that you use to make your point and you can't say "ils sont en train d'avoir un argument," which means "they are having an argument". However, in English the expression "to have an argument" is correct.

*What changes, if any, would you make to your essay in English? Why?*

I think that I wouldn't make any change to my essay in English because the native English speakers (my teachers) told me that it was the right way of writing in English and since they are the experts, I don't have anything else to say. However, with the experience I had here writing in English, I think that even though my essay in English is not perfect, that is quite understandable.

*What changes, if any, would you make to your essay in your native language? Why?*

I would change the structure of some sentences and add strong vocabulary words. I use the French way while writing in English. So, like in French, I would say: "that problem raises up an interrogation," but in English I say "that problem raises up a question."



# THE WRONG CHOICE

Fahad AlMahdaly  
ACCESS Program, Saudi Arabia

During the last week of my high school, I locked myself in my room and did not go out except for food, water and the bathroom. That week, I was very stressed, and I made the whole house stressed because I was running around bossing people, telling them to keep quiet, shutting off the TV, saying, "It is my final exams! It is either do or die. If I don't pass, I will work in McDonalds!" The only thing that I was worried about was my math final exam. I bought three copies of the textbook: one to study with the teacher, and two for me to study at home. In Saudi Arabia, during finals, the teachers give us special text books just for the final exam. I even had a personal tutor just for math. I was the only one in the house who had final exams that week; all my brothers and sisters had either graduated high school or were in primary school, so I was the only one who had this much pressure. I locked myself in my room for almost three weeks looking at the same wall; the mess in the room was making me crazy. I wanted to clean the room, but I didn't have time. I can still remember the smell; it is what men call a "man smell."

On the first day of my finals, I had my math exam. It is one of the traditions in Saudi schools to have math on the first day. I don't know why. I don't like it, and I think that it makes us more stressed. That day I woke up at four in the morning and I was ready for the whole book, but not for one question. The question was one and half pages long, and I couldn't understand it when I was studying because it was too long and difficult. I was going crazy, so as a last resort I decided to cheat. I had the best plan, so I wrote it behind my calculator with a pencil so nobody could see it from far away. Before they let us go in, they made sure that they searched everybody. They didn't trust us. So I was trying to play it cool. I walked in with confidence, and I kept telling myself "Don't mess it up." Then the principal of the school looked at me. "I'm busted. He saw me!" I thought to myself. He looked away. "Phew! that was close." I was in my seat waiting for the papers to come. They handed them out. I took a quick look through the whole thing. I stopped. I saw it: the only question in the whole book that I couldn't understand. I told myself to leave it to the end. I finished the whole test, and it was easy. I had just one more question to go. I looked around to the other students. They all looked deep in thought. Some looked like they knew what they were doing, and some looked like they were lost; I gave one last look at the teacher. "Okay he is far away. Let me do this." I just started to cheat then another teacher came in from nowhere and saw me. It would've worked if I wasn't so nervous; I never did this before. He said, "Fahad, I never thought you would do that. You're

المدرسة الثانوية يحدد حياتي بأكملها بشكل عام. في امتحان الرياضيات كنت سألجاً للغش ، وهذا جعلني أشعر بشعور سيء اتجاه نفسي. لقد قلت إنني لن أفعل ذلك مرة أخرى وسأحاول جهدي في كل امتحان للحصول على أفضل ما يمكنني الحصول عليه دون الغش. وكانت الفكرة نفسها سيئة بما فيه الكفاية ، وقلت لنفسي لن أكون في تلك الدناءة مرة أخرى في حياتي. في الحياة كل شيء متصل بالآخر ، وإذا فعلت شيئاً واحداً سوف يؤثر على حياتك بأكملها. أنا لم أكن بكامل عقلي و تفكيري الصحيح عندما قررت الغش ، أنا دائماً أفكر ماذا سوف تكون حياتي إذا غيرت تلك اللحظة؟ كيف ستكون حياتي؟ من سوف أكون ؟ و هل كنت سوف أتي بالولايات المتحدة الأمريكية؟

أنا لا أحاول تقديم أي عذر لنفسي ، وأنا أعرف ما كنت أحاول القيام به هو خطأ وينبغي لي عدم التفكير في الأمر. كنت تحت ضغط من الجميع ، من أبي وأعمامي و جدتي. ولكن الشخص الوحيد الذي كنت أخشى أن أخيب من ظنها هي أمي. كنت خائفاً جداً أن أفشل في هذا الامتحان لأن الجميع كان لديهم الكثير من الأمل في. يقولون ، "فهد هو الذكي في العائلة ، وفهد هو الذي سوف يكون طبيباً" الجميع يريد مني أن أكون طبيباً ، لكن ذلك لم تكن رغبتني ، لكنني كنت على استعداد ان أكون طبيباً فقط لجعل الجميع سعداء . الجميع في المملكة العربية السعودية يعتقد أن أفضل شيء يمكن أن تكون هو طبيب. أنا لم أكن أريد ذلك. وأنا أعلم أن هو من الرائع مساعدة الآخرين ومحاولة إنقاذ الأرواح ، ولكن أنا لا أستطيع النظر الى الدم ذلك يجعلني أشعر بالمرض ، وهذا هو السبب الرئيس لعدم كوني طبيباً.

في النهاية ، الحياة هي ما تجعلها لك. و كل شيء في الماضي من مواقف هي فقط حجر الينأ لجعلك الشخص الذي انت عليه الآن. الجميع يختار خيارات جيدة و أخرى سيئة. في حياتي كانت لحظة الغش كنت لحظة أنا أخجل منها ، و أنها كانت واحدة من أسوأ اللحظات في حياتي. لقد كنت في وضع لا أتمنه على أي شخص آخر كنت في وضع لا أحسد عليه كما يقولون : في كلية سيئة جداً ، مكروه من قبل الجميع. و قد سمحت لرغبات الآخرين بالسيطرة علي فقط لجعلهم سعداء. وأنا أعلم الآن أن كل ما يهمني الدنيا هي سعادتي أنا لأنني أنا من عليه العيش مع هذا الخيار. ليس لدي الكثير من الخبرة ، وأنا أعرف ذلك. أنا مازلت صغيراً ، ولكن كل ما اعرفه هو اذا كنت تفعل ما يسعدك سوف تستمر بالقيام به و سوف تكون ناجحاً فيه.

a good student, and I'm not going to fail you, but I'm going to take your calculator from you." I felt so ashamed of myself and I said I would never do it again. I looked at the question and I was going mad, but then I realized that I memorized the formula without realizing it. I wrote it so many times that I just got it. After two weeks, I got my grades back and I got a very good grade on the test. I didn't have to cheat. There were many ways I could have approached this situation better than the way I did. I could have asked my teacher for more explaining before the test in office hours or maybe researched the question more. I didn't, and I did what I did thinking at that time it was the right thing to do. I guess there are two kinds of people in the world -- people who learn the lesson the easy way, or people who learn their lessons the hard way and I sure learned the hard way.

Another thing that made me worried that final year of high school was that the government was trying a new education program in our year. The pilot program was that the school had to acquire the average of the grades from the last two years of high school. The pilot program was proven to be weak and they stopped it the year after our year; it was not benefiting the students. It wasn't a benefit for me because I didn't have very high grades the year before, so averaging the two brought my final grade down. In my year we had to take two tests similar to the SAT, which were requirements. After I finished high school, I applied to every university in Saudi Arabia. I applied to ones I didn't even want to go to, but I did it anyway. The process was like this: I had to apply for the first fifty majors that I wanted to major in and rank them. So I did that and because of my bad luck I got my last five choices of majors.

It wasn't pleasant, but I had to pick the best of the worst, so I had to go to a very bad college in the middle of nowhere because I wanted to major in something that I like and it could pay me good money in Saudi Arabia. I decided to go to a bad university rather than not going to any university. The university was about twelve hours away. After I got there, and I saw the place, I got shocked. I did not know that there is a place as bad as this in Saudi Arabia. Some people there still live in houses made of mud. The school looked like it got hit by a missile and all the pictures that I saw were old pictures. I couldn't stay there because the place was miserable. I had to go home. Everybody there was very rude to me because I was not from the same city. They hated me for not having the same last name that they had; it was racism in my own country, something I did not know about or even thought existed. I stayed there about one month; it was one of the worst months in my life. First it took me about two weeks to find a place to stay, and then I had to find a way to go to my college. All I did with my time was to watch TV at home or eat. I had only one friend and he came with me from my city. We did not start studying really, so I did not have many homework assignments. I did the only thing that I could do. I got closer to my friend, and we became

عدة مرات بحيث اني حفظتها عن غيب. بعد أسبوعين حصلت على درجات الاختبار وأنا اندهشت عندما حصلت على درجة جيدة جدا في الاختبار ، دون ان الجئ للغش. هناك طرق عديدة كان من الممكن ان احل هذا الوضع أفضل من الطريقة التي اخترتها. كان من الممكن ان اذهب الى المعلم للمزيد من شرح قبل الاختبار أو حتى لو بحثت في هذه المسألة أكثر من ما فعلت. لم اكن أفكر وفعلت ما فعلته في ذلك الوقت معتقدا أن هذا هو الشيء الصحيح الذي ينبغي لي فعله. أعتقد أن هناك نوعان من الناس في العالم الناس الذين يتعلمون الدرس الطريق السهلة ، و الناس الذين يتعلمون الدرس بالطريقة الصعبة و أنا قد تعلمت بالطريقة الصعبة بالتأكيد.

هناك شيئا آخر جعلني قلق أنا و فصلي لم نكن محظوظين جدا لأن الحكومة كنت تحاول تجربة برنامج جديد في عامنا. وكان البرنامج التجريبي أن المدرسة نخرج متوسط درجات من السنتين الأخيرتين من المرحلة الثانوية. وقد ثبت هذا البرنامج التجريبي انه فاشل و تم إيقافه في العام التالي، لم يكن يستفيد منها الطلاب. لم يكن فيه فائدة لي لأنني لم يكن لدي درجات عالية جدا في العام الماضي ، حيث عندما تم جمع السنتين اذى ذلك بالاطاحة بمستوي الكلي. في ذلك السنة كان علينا أن نأخذ اختبارين: اختبار القدرات و اختبار القياس ، والتي كانت من المتطلبات. بعد أن أنهيت من المدرسة الثانوية ، قمت بالتقديم إلى كل الجامعات في المملكة العربية السعودية حتى اني تقدمت على عدة جامعات لم اكن اريد الذهاب اليها ، ولكن قمت بذلك على أية حال. وكانت عملية كالاتي : رتب التخصصات كالاتي من الافضل الى الاسوء حسب الرغبة، وبسبب سوء حظي تم قبولي في اخر خمس اختيارات التي لم أكن أريدها لكن تقدمت بها فقط لملاء الفراغ في بعض الأحيان في الحياة قد لا تحصل على ما تتمنى ، وكل ما يمكنك القيام به هو التأقلم مع ذلك وجعله أفضل ما يمكن. إذا لم تستطع العيش مع ما قد حصلت فقط اذهب الى البداية وابدء من جديد ، بحيث هذه الطريقة يكون لديك المزيد من الخبرة.

لم يكن لطيفا ، ولكن كان علي الاختيار الأفضل من الأسوأ ، لذلك اضطررت للذهاب الى كلية سيئة للغاية في وسط الصحراء لأنني أردت أن اتخصص في شيء أحب تخصص قد يأمن لي حياة جيدة في المملكة العربية السعودية. قررت أن أذهب إلى الجامعة سيئة بدلا من عدم الذهاب لأي جامعة.و كانت الرحلة الى الجامعة بالسيارة اثنا عشر ساعة. بعد أن وصلت هناك ، ورأيت المكان صدمت بنا رأيت. لم أكن أعرف أن هناك مكانا سيئة مثل هذا المكان في المملكة العربية السعودية. هناك بعض الناس لا يزالون يعيشون في منازل مصنوعة من الطين. بدت المدرسة كأنما ضربها صاروخ وجميع الصور التي رأيتها في الموقع صور قديمة. لم أستطع البقاء هناك لأن المكان كان تعيسا. واضطررت الى العودة الى مدينتي. كان الجميع هناك وقحا للغاية لأنني لم أكن من نفس المدينة و لم اكن من نفس العائلة. كانوا يكرهوني لأنني لم يكن لي نفس اسم العائلة الذي لديهم ، عنصرية في بلدي و من شعبي ، وهو أمر لم أكن أعرف بوجوده أو حتى التفكير انه من الممكن. بقيت هناك لمدة شهر واحد ، كان واحدا من أسوأ الشهور في حياتي. أولا، لم استطع وجود مكان للإقامة لمدة أسبوعين ، ومن ثم كان علي البحث لوسيلة للذهاب الى الكلية. قضيت معظم الوقت في مشاهدة التلفزيون في المنزل أو تناول الطعام. كان لي صديقا واحدا فقط اتى معي من نفس المدينة. قد كنا في بدايت الفصل الدراسي ، لذلك لم يكن لدي الكثير من الواجبات المنزلية. أنا فعلت الشيء الوحيد الذي يمكن أن أفعله.وهو التقرب من الصديق الوحيد الذي لدي أصبحنا أفضل الأصدقاء. وأصبحنا ندعم بعضنا البعض إذا كنت بحاجة له سوف يأتي مسرعا ، وإذا كان هو بحاجة لي سوف افعل نفس الشيء له. أنا كرهت المكان ، ولكن على الأقل خرجت من هناك بشيء واحد جيد ، صديق جيد.

أناو صديقي اتينا من نفس المكان و من نفس المدرسة ، و من نفس التقاليد. تقليد واحد على وجه الخصوص الذي جعلني انا و صديقي مقهورين. في المملكة العربية السعودية الأسبوع الأخير من

best friends. We got each other's backs. If I needed him, he helped me, and if he needed me, I would be there for him. I hated the place, but at least I got out of there with one good thing, one good friend.

My friend and I came from the same place, same high school, and same traditions, one tradition in particular that made my friend and me nervous. In Saudi Arabia the last week of high school determined our whole education life, and my whole life in general. In my math exam I was going to cheat, and that made me feel really bad about myself. I said that I would never do it again and I would try my best in every exam to get the best that I can because even though I didn't cheat I was going to. The idea itself was bad enough, and I said to myself I would never sink so low again. In life everything is connected, and if you do one thing it will affect your whole life. I was thinking "what if I changed that moment in my life where would I be? What would my life be like? Would I ever have come to the U.S?" Life is like domino, and if you knock one, others will fall too; you just have to pick the right one to push.

I'm not trying to give myself any excuses, and I know what I was trying to do is wrong and I should never have thought about it. I was under pressure from everybody, my father, uncles, both of my grandmothers. But the person I was most afraid to disappoint was my mother. I was so afraid to fail that exam because everybody had so much hope in me. They say, "Fahad is the smart one. Fahad is the one who is going to be a Dr." Everybody wanted me to be a doctor; it was not my desire, but I was willing to be a doctor just to make everybody happy. Everybody in Saudi Arabia thinks that the best thing that you can be is a doctor. I did not want that. I know it is cool to help other people and try to save lives, but the look of blood makes me feel sick.

In the end, life is what you make it. Everything in the past has fallen in position to make me the person that I am now. Everybody makes good choices and bad ones. In my life the cheating moment was not my best. It was one of the worst. I have been in a position that nobody would ever want be in: in a very bad college, hated by everybody. I let other people's desires control me just to make them happy. I know now that all that matters is my happiness because I'm the one who's going to live with that choice not them. I was so afraid of failure that I took the risk of cheating. For a long time I thought being placed in a bad university was a result of my trying to cheat. I don't have much experience. I know that. I am still young, but all I know is if you do something you like you will keep on doing it and be successful in it. A wise man once said, "life is like a building. It could take a while and you have to do it brick by brick, but if you do it right it will be strong and stay forever."

## الخيار خاطئ فهد المهدي

خلال الأسبوع الأخير من دراسته في الثانوية ، حجزت نفسي في غرفتي ، ولم أخرج إلا لأكل الطعام أو لشرب الماء أو لذهاب للحمام. في ذاك الأسبوع كنت متوترا جدا ، وأنا جعلت كل من في البيت متوترا معي لأنني كنت أركض أقول لهم الحفاظ على الهدوء ، أقطع عليهم مشاهدة التلفزيون ، قائلا : "إنه امتحاناتي النهائية! إذا لم انجح سأعمل في ماكدونالدز!" الشيء الوحيد الذي كنت قلقا منه هو امتحان الرياضيات النهائي. اشتريت ثلاث نسخ من الملخص المدرسي : واحد لكتابه مع المعلم ، و اثنان آخرين لأكتبهم في المنزل. في المملكة العربية السعودية خلال الاختبارات النهائية المعلمين يقدموا لنا كتب دراسية خاصة فقط للامتحان النهائي. حتى اني عينت معلم خصوصي فقط لمادة الرياضيات. كنت أنا الوحيد فقط في المنزل الذي كان لديه امتحانات نهائية في ذاك الأسبوع ، قد تخرج جميع أشقائي وشقيقاتي في المدرسة الثانوية أو كانوا المدرسة الابتدائية ، لذلك كان الشخص الوحيد الذي كان عليه ضغط نفسي في البيت. حجزت نفسي في غرفتي لما يقرب ثلاثة أسابيع انظر في نفس الجدار ، والفوضى في الغرفة كنت تثير جنوني. أردت تنظيف الغرفة ولكن لم يكن لدي الوقت. ما زلت أذكر رائحة الغرفة ؛ " رائحة الفوضى" هناك العديد من العناصر التي ساعدتني للوصول إلى المكان الذي أنا فيه الآن ، السنة الأخيرة من المرحلة الثانوية واختيار الجامعة المناسبة لي هما شيان اثنان من العوامل الرئيسية التي ذالك. في رأيي محاولة الغش في الرياضيات و اختيار الجامعة المناسبة لي جعلني الرجل الذي أنا هو الآن. رجل الحكيم قال ذات مرة "الحياة مثل المبنى ، قد يستغرق بعض الوقت للبناء لكن إذا كنت تبنيه جيدا و بطريقة صحيحة ستبقى قوية الى الابد".

بلدي كان امتحان الرياضيات في اليوم الأول من الاختبارات النهائية. وهو واحد من تقاليد في المدارس السعودية لمادة الرياضيات ان تكون في اليوم الأول. أنا لا أعرف لماذا ، وأنا لا أحب ذلك ، وأعتقد أنه يجعلنا أكثر متوترا. في ذلك اليوم استيقظت في الرابعة صباحا وأنا مستعد لجميع ما في الكتاب بأكمله ، ولكن ليس لسؤال واحد. وكان ذاك السؤال صفحة ونصف ، وأنا لم أتمكن من فهمه ، عندما كنت أدرس لأختبار كانت احسه طويل جدا وصعب. كان ذاك السؤال يثير جنوني، لذلك كملاذ أخير قررت ان ألجئ للغش. وكنت قد حضرت أفضل خطة ، لذلك كتبت الاجوبة خلف الآلة الحاسبة بقلم الرصاص حتى لا يستطيع أحد أن يراها من بعيد. قبل أن ندخل للاختبار المعلمين تأكدوا من أن يفتشوا الجميع. لم يثق بنا. لذا كنت أحاول أن اكون بارد الاعصاب. مشيت في بثقة ، وظللت أقول لنفسي : "لا تنكشف". ثم مدير المدرسة القلى نظره في اتجاهي ، فقلت لنفسي "لقد رأي! " لكنه لم يراني" كانت قريبة أوقفف ". وهكذا كنت في مقعدي في انتظار أوراق الاختبار خائفا. بعد فترة سلموا الاوراق. أخذت نظرة سريعة خلال كل الاسئلة. ثم توقفت، لقد رأيته : السؤال الوحيد في الكتاب كله الذي لم أستطيع أن أفهمه. قلت لنفسي : "اتركه حتى النهاية." انتهيت من الاختبار بأكمله ، وكنت الاسئلة سهلة. كان لي سؤال واحد فقط متبقي في الاختبار. تطلعت حولي لطلاب آخرين. كانوا في تفكير عميق. بدا البعض منهم كما لو كانوا يعرفون كل ما في الاختبار ، وبعض بدو كأنهم ضائعين في الاختبار ؛ ألقيت اخر نظرة لأرى اين المعلم. "حسنا هو بعيد الان سفعل هذا." بدأت للتو بالغش ثم جاء معلم لا اعلم من اين ورأي. الخطة كان من الممكن ان تعمل إذا لم أكن في شدة التوتر ، وأنا لم أفعل هذا من قبل. وقال : "فهد ، لم اعتقد ابدا انك ستفعل ذلك. أنت طالبا جيد ، لم اتوقع هذا منك ، أنا لن أرسبك في الاختبار لكن سوف اصادر الاله الحاسبة منك." شعرت بالخل من نفسي وقلت أنا لن أفعل ذلك مرة أخرى. نظرت إلى هذه المسألة وكنت سوف أجن ، ولكن بعد ذلك أدركت أنني حفظت الصيغة للمسألة دون أن أودرك ذلك. لقد كتبتها

## FAHAD'S REFLECTION ON TRANSLINGUAL WRITING PROJECT

*When you were first assigned the education narrative in your ENGL 101 class, what did you think about that genre of writing? Had you had previous experiences with it?*

First, I have never done something like this in my life, not about my life at least. The genre was interesting to write. It was something new.

*How would you describe the experience of writing that essay in English? (Did you translate from your native language?)*

No, I did not translate it from Arabic. I might have done some translation in some of the thoughts and the speech between me and the teachers, but that's all.

*How would you describe the experience translating your essay into your native language?*

It was harder than I thought it would be. I kind of somehow forgot how to express myself in my own language and the difference between the keyboards was making me crazy.

*How do you think your essay would be evaluated if you had written it in your school in your native country?*

I think it would not have been as hard as it is now because in my country they do not really care about grammar or the punctuation as much as they do here.

*What do you think/how do you feel/did anything surprise you about the final outcome of your essay in your native language?*

I got a good grade on it, so that was nice, and really if someone told me two years ago that I would write a whole essay in English I would say "get out of here".

*How would you describe this whole experience of writing for publication in both English and your native language, of translating back and forth?*

It was different. I've never done it before, and it was nice to see the difference between the two languages because really if you don't translate it right and check it, it would mean a whole other thing.

*What changes, if any, would you make to your essay in English? Why?*

I made a few changes on the essay by adding extra explanations because when I looked at it again I saw that I missed a few details that changed the idea for some people.

*What changes, if any, would you make to your essay in your native language?*

*Why?*

First, I would not write it in a formal way [classical Arabic]. That would have been much easier for me, but if I did [write in my own Saudi dialect], no one but Saudis will understand it.

*Any final thoughts/comments?*

I want to really thank you for giving me this chance to write for you. It just made me feel special. Thanks again.



# TWO TEACHERS

Xiuzhi Fan  
ACCESS Student, China

I looked at the photos. One of them was my favorite picture of my mom. She wore a patterned high-neck sweater. The light makeup on her youthful face made her as beautiful as the coming spring. However, it was her warm smile on her red lips, on her healthy face as well as in her bright black eyes that let me feel the cold winter was getting away from me. Her long black hair was swept up elaborately, but I knew how smooth and straight it is. One of my favorite activities when I was young was playing with her beautiful long hair. She was my mom when she was 26 years old and I was still a little girl puzzled about the world. The other picture was of my grandaunt. She looked much younger than her age, probably because of her regular healthy daily life and her well-respected career dealing with active students. She had black dyed and curly short hair. Her black eyes on her thin and wrinkled face were always concentrated and shining with thinking and wisdom. She wore a pair of old fashioned wire-rimmed presbyopic glasses when she was reading newspaper or correcting students' papers. Her smile was peaceful, just like her patient temperament. When I understand myself better, I saw myself through these two women. The more I grew up, the more I appreciated what they did for me.

My mom liked her things to be organized and clean just like how she took care of her appearance. She cleaned house everyday. The checkered tile floor was always shining and cool. When summer came, my slippers often disappeared mystically because I so enjoyed running around with my bare feet on the cool floor. Things in the house were always in their right place because mom told me everything had to go back to its own house just like every kid went back to their own home. Since I stayed around my mom all the time just like a dragon protected its treasure, I was influenced strongly by her personality. I learned how to do house work since I was around 5 years old even though I was shorter than a broom. I liked to spend time organizing my room and my work which make me feel proud and comfortable.

Actually her personality not only impacted my daily habits but also my study habits. I started to practice writing easy Chinese characters and solving simple math questions instead of playing all the time after I went to preschool. My handwriting was confusing. Strokes were missing and shaking. The homework sheets were dirtied by pencil lead and finger prints. I didn't care how they looked. However things got changed when my mom taught me how to write well by holding my hand in hers. I remembered on a hot summer afternoon I was 'draw-

ing' Chinese characters while laying my head on my left hand. Mom showed up behind me, looked at my writing and said in surprise, "Wow...your writing is like a multicolored cat." I looked at her nervously because every time when I made myself dirty she would say I looked like a multicolored cat. She held my right hand with my pencil in it and started to write slowly. I saw beautiful and clear characters come out under our hands which looked exactly like those my teachers wrote on the blackboard. She said, "Think that the character is a person you created. Your handwriting missed some strokes just like a person missed arms and legs. Your paper sheet is dirty just like a person who has to live in a dirty house. You don't want to lose your arms or legs, or live in a dirty house right? Neither do your characters." Back at that time I didn't really know why mom said characters as a person, but I knew it was a very serious thing if I lost my arms or legs, or mom didn't clean house anymore. Therefore, I tried to write as neat as I could, and used my eraser like my mom's mop.

After I grew up I still insisted on neat handwriting, not because of the childish explanation my mom told me, but because of the real meaning I got out from her words. There is an Chinese idiom "字如其人" which means "the style is the man." A person's handwriting style showed what kind of person he is. Therefore my handwriting shaped a part of my personality. Since I imitated my mom's handwriting at the very beginning of my learning, I inherited a part of her personality.

When I went to 4th grade, I had bad grades at school and my parents were too busy to take good care of my study because of their bigger business and my growing sister. They send me to live with my grandaunt. She was an elementary school Chinese teacher at that time. I could only go back home on weekends and had to leave on Sunday night. That was the saddest moment I felt in my life at that time. No matter how often my parents told me it was good for me, I felt I was abandoned. There was no worse thing I can image than living away from one's parents at that age. Every Sunday night when I walked towards grandaunt's house away from parents' car, my loneliness emerged and spread like the dark night, and tears were dropped like those stars in the sky. However, looking back now, I have to thank them for this decision. It was my mom who led me to shape my fundamental personality, but it was my grandaunt who led me to search a bigger world and pursue wisdom.

I could not write well at that time. I wrote slowly, lacked central ideas and used common words. My writing was just a piece of boring records. I hated writing and didn't see any value in it. I had to write a weekly journal as weekend homework at that time. I always felt I had nothing to write about because everyday was repetitive and not special. But my grandaunt spent hours with me every time

when I wrote. She told me everything had its special meanings and anything around me could be my sources and inspirations as long as I open my eyes, my mind, to see a bigger world, such as my granduncle's cooking, the flower downstairs, or the farm field outside of the window.

Once when fall came, I had to write an essay about the season. I always liked fall, but I hated it now because I had to write a weekly journal about it. I wrote down my first sentence which was, 'I like fall.' Then I added 'very much.' I looked at the sentence for long time, but didn't know how to continue. I asked to my grandaunt, "What can I write? Fall is fall, with yellow leaves, cool air..." She was helping me to make a structure of my paper, "You can think about describing a specific thing to show the fall in your mind." I said agonizingly, "I know, but I don't know what to write." Grandaunt suggested, "You can consider things just around you, something you can see, something you are familiar with, something you have real feelings with and can come out naturally from your heart." I looked outside. Several trees were there. Most of them had yellow leaves already, but some of them were still green. I know yellow leaves means fall, but a leaf was such a small thing. How can I write the whole fall about it? I had no answer and turned my eyes to others. Then I noticed there was a farm field! Crops grow really well. I pointed outside so surprised and happy, "Look! Grandaunt, harvest! That means fall." She looked happy that I found a good thing to write, "So how are you going to write about it?" I thought it was easy because the farm looks big. However again I was stuck with only one thing to say, "crops were yellow, farmers worked hard in the field." Grandaunt stood up and said, "That's not enough, you need more detailed description. But don't worry. Let's go to the farm field and you will find lots of inspirations. Remember use your eyes, your mind as well as your heart."

She took me to the farm field and let me pay close attention to things I saw. I walked in the field. It was so different looking at it from inside. I could see the paddy's beautiful golden color, full and heavy grain liked golden unborn babies who wanted to come out. I could smell the pleasant smell of it and the soil, also the green and yellow wild grasses with scattered wild flowers. When the wind came, I felt it is waving and smiling to me. At that moment I suddenly understood why farmers had smile on their face although they had to bend down and slice the paddy with sickles for hours every day under the flaming sun. I looked around the farm field carefully with the joy in my heart and the smile on my face. I really felt fall was with me and in my heart now. I had so many things and feelings I wanted to write down, to share with others. I went back and started to write quickly under the push of passion. After I wrote down all the thoughts in my mind, grandaunt also tried to lead me to give it a structure with a clear central idea and taught me sentence by sentence how to correct grammar and spelling

mistakes, how to use beautiful and appropriate words instead of oral words, and at the end how to have an attractive title and introduction, and a powerful ending.

Grandaunt not only made me work hard at school work, she also gave me many extra training sessions. Every time when we took a walk, she described the things we saw for me and made me think and practice as well. She really taught me how to observe, discover the interesting side of the world and the life around me, how to connect this with my writing, make my writing alive, and how to let beautiful writing become a tool, a way to express myself. She made me open my mind of thinking and questioning the world, and also made me interested in the art of description. I noticed writing can make things alive, just like a process to create a world of myself. It was great joy and success of a writer that readers could not taste.

The other day, I knocked on my sister's door. She was sitting in front of her desk which is supposed to be white. I walked closer to her. She was doing her summer homework. I noticed she had neat handwriting but very different than mine. She stopped doing homework and looked at me happily. I was welcomed to visit. I put my hand on her shoulder and smiled to her, "Good job, you are studying." However, before her smile got bigger, I spoke again, "Buuut, there is one thing more important I want you to do before you start to do your homework again--- Clean your room." She suddenly bent over the desk and looked at me with an imploring glance, "ohhh nooo...can I do it after I finish my homework? Please..." I looked at her funny face and refused her request, "Nope. You have to do it now. Look at your room: The quilt is unfolded; clothes are thrown around on the bed; books, study tools and little game stuff are everywhere; trash isn't in its place, and you know what, your desk is black now. I don't think you can really concentrate on study in such a messy room. Clean it up and I will look at you." She looked totally down now. She answered me in a weak voice, "ookayyy..."

I sat on her wide windowsill and looked at her organizing things little by little. The sunshine was bright but not that strong. Some cool gentle wind blew to me from the air conditioner. I looked at her childish face and saw it generally covered by another face in my memory—a similar childish face, familiar, little bit strange and far away. At the moment, I felt it was me who was a little girl and was cleaning the room carefully. I was taught to clean my room by my mom when I was little, and how interesting and amazing it was that I was teaching my sister do the same thing now. However, at the same time, I noticed she was not me. She was organizing her room in a different way than I would. She was growing into a different person, and was going to have her own idea of how life would be. We were two intersecting circles that had our own spaces or surroundings although we were a part of each other's lives and shared similarities. That's

probably a part of the reason why my sister gets along with me better than with my mom. I didn't think she was a smaller circle inside of mine and tried to have control. She was an independent existence in the world just like I considered myself to be. That's one of the forces of seeing a bigger world that I understood from my grandaunt. I leaned my head on the window and looked down outside. People looked small from the thirteen floor, but I was thinking how big these people are and how small I am in someone's eyes.



我凝视着手中的照片。一张是我最喜欢的妈妈的照片。相片里的她穿着一件花样高领毛衣，淡淡的妆容令她年轻的脸如春天一般美好。她温暖的微笑停留在她玫瑰色的嘴角上；浮现在健康的脸庞上；荡漾在明亮的眼睛里，为我带走了冬天的寒冷与萧瑟。她黑色的长发盘成了美丽的发髻，让我回想起儿时它们在我手中时的笔直与柔顺。那时的妈妈只有 26 岁，而我正一步步懵懵懂懂地探索这个陌生的世界。另一张照片是姨婆的。或许是她健康规律的生活状态的原因，又或许和她受年轻活泼的学生敬爱的职业有关，她看起来比她的年龄年轻许多。她染黑了的头发微微打着卷儿，瘦削的脸上一双专注的眼睛亮着智慧的光，眼角的皱纹显现着岁月的痕迹。当她阅读报纸杂志或批改学生作业时，她的鼻梁上总会架上一副镶边老花镜。她的微笑总是平和的，如同她温和的脾气。当我日后越加了解自己，我越能发现她们在我身上留下的影子；当我越加长大大，我越感恩她们为我所付出的一切。

妈妈喜爱身边的事物保持干净整洁，就像她的仪表一样。当我还年幼时，她每天都整理打扫房间，使得地板总是凉爽干净。夏天来临时，我的拖鞋总会离奇消失，因为我实在享受在凉爽的地板上四处玩耍打滚的感觉。妈妈从小就教育我哪里拿来的东西要放回哪里去，所以即使我还小家里的每件东西总是规规矩矩地呆在它们该在的地方。小时候，我缠在妈妈身边就像一只龙守着它的宝藏一样，所以妈妈的性格深刻地影响了我。当我还是个比拖把还矮的五岁小萝卜头时，我就学会了和妈妈一起打扫房间。我也喜欢把自己的房间整理成干净舒适的小天地，从而获得巨大的满足感与成就感。

事实上，母亲不仅影响了我的生活习惯，还影响了我学习习惯的养成。当我上了小学以后，每天肆无忌惮的玩乐被学习写字与算术所取代。一开始，我的书写很糟糕，缺横少撇是常有的事，本子上也满是黑乎乎的铅手印。当时我并没有太在意这些，因为我还未能理解字的好坏所表达的意义。但是当母亲握着我的手，一笔一划地写下端正的字体并用幼稚的话语教导我其意义后，我下意识地端正了自己的态度。还记得那是一个炎热的午后，我正趴在书桌上懒洋洋地“画”着字。母亲就在这时出现在我身边，看着我的字迹装作惊讶地说：“哇！你的字真像大花猫！”我紧张地抬头看她，意识到她对我的字的不满。然而下一刻，她握住我拿着铅笔的右手开始慢慢地一边念着笔画一边书写，优美清晰的字体就这样出现在我们的笔下。母亲对着我说：“想象着把每一个字当做你捏成的小人，你的有些字缺少了笔画就像小人们少了手脚；你的本子脏兮兮的就像小人们住在脏脏的房子里一样。如果你不愿意缺手少脚并且住在脏房子里，那你捏的小人，你写的字也是不愿意的呀！”当时的我并不明白为什么要把字说成是小人，但是我知道如果我的胳膊和腿

丢了，或是妈妈再也不打扫房间了，那会是很可怕的事情！所以我努力地把字写整齐，把橡皮用的像妈妈的拖把一样频繁。长大后，我依然努力保持整洁的书写，却不再是因为我对母亲那个关于字的解释的幼稚的理解。在我学会了“字如其人”这个成语以后，我似乎一瞬间回想起并真正理解了母亲将字比作人的用意——一个人的字体现了他的性格。

在我小学四年级时，我的成绩并不那么如意，父母的督促也因为日渐壮大的生意和逐渐长大的妹妹而减少了。为了提高我的学习成绩，父母将我寄放在了身为小学语文老师的姨婆家。我只有在每个周末可以回家，并且一定得在星期天晚上就返回姨婆家。那成了我当时人生中最悲伤的一刻。无论父母如何解释这个决定会有利于我的将来，我还是觉得自己被抛弃了。离开家，离开父母而生活是我那时能想到的最糟糕的事。每个星期天晚上，当我默默转身离开父母的车子，走向姨婆家，寂寞和悲伤如同繁星一般在黑暗中浮现，眼泪也忍受不住地挥挥落下。而今，当我每每回想过去，我不得不感激父母的这个决定。虽然母亲影响了我最初性格的养成，但是是姨婆引导了我去探索一个更为宽广的世界，追寻令人感动的智慧。

四年级时，我并不擅长写作，文章常常是乏味无聊的流水账。我也总找不到有意义的写作素材，因为我觉得生活就是在每天反反复复地做着同样的事情中度过，没有什么特别的亮点。写作因此成了我最头疼的作业，也令我无法喜欢，而姨婆却不厌其烦地在我写作文时花上好几个小时陪在我身边指导我。犹记得她告诉我说，所有的东西都有它们自己的意义，只要我走出自己的小世界，张大眼睛去看并且开放心灵去体会周身更广阔的世界，身边的所有东西都可以成为灵感的来源，比如姨公的厨艺，楼下的花，窗外的稻田……

那年秋天来临后，老师布置了一篇关于秋天的作文。坐在书桌前，我不假思索地写下第一句话“我喜爱秋天，”想了一会儿又在喜爱之前加上了“十分”。之后写写划划却再没写出什么东西来。我烦闷地问姨婆：“我该怎么写呢？秋天就是秋天，黄色的叶子，凉爽的空气……”姨婆引导我说：“你可以详细描写一件象征秋天的事物，而不是空泛地赞美秋天。”我苦恼地想不出什么具体可写的东西，姨婆又说：“想想你身边的事物，看得见变化的，熟悉的，带给你真实秋天的感受的。”我看向窗外，几棵树孤零零地站立着，不知什么时候叶子也悄悄地黄了。我知道黄叶代表了秋天，可是我要怎么把一整个秋天浓缩到一片小小的叶子里而写成一篇文章呢？越想越没信心的我只好转头看向其他的事物。有时，人往往会忽略一些最靠近身边的事物，就如当时观察间，我惊讶地意识到窗外竟然有着一片长势喜人的农田！我惊喜地指着窗外对姨婆说：“看！秋天是收获的季节！”姨婆为我找到可写的素材而高兴，问道：“那你要怎么写呢？”自信满满的我却又一次受到了打击，

虽然我想到了金黄的稻子，辛勤工作的农民，但是我再一次感受到了词句间的流于表面。姨婆想了想，站起来说：“这样可不行呀。不过没关系，我带你去亲身感受一下农田的气氛，你或许就能得出许多灵感来。记住要用眼睛仔细观察，用心去感受，去思考。

姨婆带着我到了农田，近距离地观察看见的事物。走进农田，我一下子感受到了在屋子里感受不到的东西。我看见水稻美丽的金黄色的外表，丰硕的谷粒犹如想要马上呱呱坠地的黄金娃娃；我闻见水稻的清香和泥土的腥味，连四散的野草似乎也是带着味道的；我听见风吹过的哗哗声，似乎就是前后摇摆着的水稻们的欢笑。那一刻，我忽然理解了太阳下深深地弯着腰耍着镰刀割稻子的农民们脸上隐隐的笑意。带着喜悦的心情与微笑，我仔细地环顾着那片稻田，真实地感受到了与我同在的秋天。憋着心中汹涌着的感受，带着想要与人分享喜悦的冲动，我快步走回了房间开始奋笔疾书。当我一口气写下所看，所感，所想后，姨婆又进一步地带着我明确主题，推敲用词遣句，思考开头结尾。当一篇优美而言之有物的文章最后出现在我的手中时，我爱上了这份努力，这份思考与感动。

姨婆不仅仅在学校学习上给予我巨大的帮助，她在日常生活中也引导我去思考去表达。饭后散步时，她会一路用美丽的语言对我描述她看见的事物，并鼓励我参与进去。她教会我如何观察细节，如何发现身边事物有趣的一面，并指导我将之与写作结合在一起，使我的文章生动有趣，且成为表达自己的一种方式。她引导我开阔视野，表达疑惑，体会一个不一样的世界。她还使我爱上了语言的艺术，令我深刻感受到让笔下的事物变得鲜活的精彩与魅力，体会到身为一个读者感受不到的创作的满足和感动。

一天，我走进调皮捣蛋的妹妹的房间，看见她正坐在她本该是白色的书桌前写暑假作业。我颇觉有意思地看着她与我大有区别的字迹，一手放在她肩膀上笑着说：“不错呀！自觉写作业了呢。”看着她得意洋洋的表情，我咧了咧嘴接着说：“但是！在你继续写作业之前，你还是好好把房间收拾干净了吧。”她一听，立刻从椅子上跳起来，拽着我哀嚎道：“不要吧……等我作业写完了我就整理，行不行？”我好笑地看着她搞怪的表情，拒绝道：“不行，马上整理了。看看你房间，被子也不叠，衣服乱扔，东西乱放，垃圾也不扔了。还有你的桌子都快成黑色的了！这么乱的房间这么专心学习？赶紧收拾干净了，我就在这里监督你呢。”她垂头丧气地答应着，拖拖拉拉地整理起来。

我坐在她的窗边，夏天午后的阳光明亮但不刺眼，空调的凉风吹走了房间里的暑气。我看着她还显幼稚的脸，心中渐渐浮现出有些遥远的记忆中另一张相似的幼稚的脸。一瞬间，我错觉那就是小时候的我在一点点地小心地整理着房间。有意思地发觉小时候的我被妈妈教导着整理房间，而现在我

正督促着妹妹做我小时候做过的事。然而，我同时又清晰地意识到我们之间的不同之处。她用着不同于我的方式整理着她的房间；她有着越来越多的自己的主意；她拥有了自己的生活方式——她正一点点地成长成一个有别于我的人，一个独立独特的人格。我又一次感受到，我和她就像两个相交的圆。我们在共同享有一个家庭和一些相似之处的同时，保有着我们自己独有的部分。或许就是因为我理解并尊重我们之间的不同，妹妹和我总是比她和妈妈更容易交谈一些。在我眼里，她是一个独立的存在，就像我认为我只是我一样。抛弃以个人为中心的想法，去疑惑、去思考、去接受，并最后感动于其他的存在，正是我从与姨婆相处中感悟到的一种看见更宽广的世界的力量。把头轻轻地靠在窗户上往下看，十三层楼下来往的行人如蚂蚁一般渺小而忙碌。我漫不经心地想着，如果此时有人在繁忙的人群中抬头看见我，我在他们眼中又该是如何的轻微呢 •••••

*When you were first assigned the education narrative in your ENGL 101 class, what did you think about that genre of writing? Had you had previous experiences with it?*

The education narrative was my first English narrative writing; most of my other writings were research papers or academic papers. It was a very special experience to write the education narrative. I hadn't known how to write a good narrative in English at all before I was taught step by step in the ENGL 101 class. I also had thought the narrative writing in English would be similar to the narrative writing in Chinese, and the only difference was the language, but after I start to revise my first draft, I realize they were different.

*How would you describe the experience of writing that essay in English? (Did you translate from your native language?)*

Sometimes, during my education narrative writing, I had to translate both languages and the way of thinking from my native language. Because the education stories I wrote about what happened in China, I had to think about the stories in Chinese first and then translate or change the expression into English. When I used the Chinese idiom “字如其人” which means “the style is the man” in my narrative, I had to write many sentences to explain the meaning of it and additionally explain how did it connect to my topic.

*How would you describe the experience translating your essay into your native language?*

Translating the narrative into Chinese was harder than I thought it would be. It was not just changing English into Chinese, but it was almost another draft with similar meaning and different description. The big structure or ideas of the article were not changed, but the details or the ways of expression were totally changed because Chinese grammar, Chinese characters and punctuation are used very differently than English; therefore, most of sentences would not make sense or sound strange if translated directly. So I have to consider sentence structures and pick up appropriate Chinese words all over again. It took me lots of time to do it.

*How do you think your essay would be evaluated if you had written it in your school in your native country?*

I think the education narrative would still be a good article if I write it in my school in China because it had deep thoughts and beautiful language. The only thing I am not sure is that I don't know if people can understand my idea through my narrative or not because I didn't write narratives by “showing, but not telling” before. I really like and agree with the idea-show but not tell-but I was always told to point out or to tell people the purpose at the end when I write in Chinese.

But, I also think it's probably a universal advanced writing skill because when I study famous Chinese authors' articles, they used this skill in their writing and that's why their writings are hard to read.

*What do you think/how do you feel/did anything surprise you about the final outcome of your essay in your native language?*

I was surprised by all the changes I made in the Chinese version. I added more adjectives and adverbs when I wrote in Chinese, and I also used many different verbs for the same meaning because I know more Chinese characters than English vocabulary. I canceled some sentences because they were repeating if translated into Chinese, or they were common sense for Chinese and I don't have to explain it. In the English version, for example, I used the fourth paragraph to explain the meaning of the Chinese idiom “字如其人” and the purpose of using it, but when I translate this into Chinese, I cut it into only three sentences and combined it into the third paragraph because Chinese people all understand this idiom.

*How would you describe this whole experience of writing for publication in both English and your native language, of translating back and forth?*

Translating the article from English into Chinese is not easy or simple, because it is a thing more than just language. When I wrote the English essay, I clearly knew that my audiences were English-speaking people; therefore, although I was thinking in Chinese for my narrative stories, I structured and organized these stories into a form that English-speaking people could understand. When I was translating the English essay into the Chinese version, my audience should be changed from English-speaking people into Chinese as well. It is not just a word that was changed English vocabulary into Chinese characters-I had to make sure my new audience would understand the meaning in my article, not only through the narrative stories but also through the way I wrote them. Changing audience could make the article be valued differently, especially when English-speaking people and Chinese people have very different cultures and social values. But it was impossible for me to make a new article structure that totally fits the right Chinese audience, because it will become too different from the original English version. I only could pick up words and shift sentence structures carefully to lead the article into the form or the meaning that Chinese people could understand. So it is hard for me to make sure my Chinese audience could understand the meaning of my article based on a structure that is formed for English-speaking people. But my Chinese friends said the Chinese version has no problems and they can understand it. So probably I worried too much about it just because it is the first time I wrote for publication in America.

*What changes, if any, would you make to your essay in English? Why?*

I wouldn't make any changes to the English version except grammar because I'm not sure my changes would make it better or worse.

*What changes, if any, would you make to your essay in your native language? Why?*

I changed a lot on the Chinese version, and if I had more time, I would even change it more. I changed and added many verbs, adjectives, adverbs in the Chinese version, and I also move the words around in sentences to make the Chinese grammar correct. Also because Chinese grammar is easier and freer than English grammar, I had more space to change sentences and words in the Chinese version. About the content, I didn't change it in the Chinese version.

When I wrote the English version, I followed "show, but not tell". If I had more time when I translated, I probably would write some new sentences to "tell" audiences my purposes in the Chinese version. But because I wasn't sure if the changes would be smart or bad, I didn't make it changes.



# THE GLOBAL ROOTS & CAMPUS DYNAMICS PROJECT: EXPLORING IDENTITY, REPRESENTATION, AND INTERNATIONAL FLAG POLICY

Patricia A. Maulden  
School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

## INTRODUCTION

George Mason University takes pride in campus diversity among students and faculty. This article, based on the University Life Fellowship Project, Global Roots & Campus Dynamics: Exploring International & University Linkages, provides a brief examination of some challenges of that diversity through the lens of individual and national identity represented by flags as part of Mason International Week. The essay begins with an overview of the project, discusses flags as focal points for symbolic group representation, and then moves to challenges of diversity and identity.

## OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

In recent years, flags as part of George Mason University International Week have engendered conflicts between students, faculty, and groups representing countries or regions struggling with emerging nations and separatist movements. In an effort to explore these conflicts and the reasons behind them, this Project presented three panel discussion and dialogue events examining the (1) dynamics of emerging nations and separatist movements, (2) individual and group engagements as they impact identity construction, and (3) the political and emotional strength of flags as symbolic representations of individual and group identities, aspirations, and concerns. In evaluation documents, students and faculty participating in the series reported gaining increased understanding of flag-related identity and representational issues through panel presentations. In addition, participants remarked that, as part of the dialogue portion of each event, they acquired additional insights through exploring and analyzing differences in perceptions, opinions, and approaches to flag concerns during Mason International Week. Almost half of the participants expressed significant concerns regarding University policy directed at clarifying the issues of flags carried in the Parade of Flags as well as the flags displayed in the Johnson Center. At the conclusion of the series, the evaluation responses and participant comments during dialogue sessions informed suggestions made in the final report. To date, some of these suggestions have been implemented and some are pending further consideration. For exam-

ple, all students may carry their flags during the flag parade. As evidenced in pre-International Week protests, Facebook group activity, and the petition signed by 320 students to include the Palestinian and Kurdish flags among those hanging in the Johnson Center, however, the issue has not, as yet, been completely resolved.

## FLAGS AS FOCAL POINT

The project overview, above, presents a straightforward description of the three events and the outcome for this year's International Week. The intragroup dynamics of each event, however, brought several deeper, more complex issues to the fore – issues that very much impacted student reaction to the flag policy announcement. Flags can be considered as vehicles for meaning, whether the objectification of culture or nationalist discourse contextualized in flag design, coloring, or symbolic representation of a particular history. For students from established nations (Department of State I-20 classification) to accept flags from areas of that nation seeking to emerge as independent states presents several dilemmas. For example, they might have to first struggle with concerns regarding the dilution and loss of national and perhaps individual identity and prestige as well as the subsequent negation of established territorial boundaries and historical distinctions. Students from non I-20 areas that are seeking state status, on the other hand, encounter a different set of challenges as they struggle to display their own flag as representation of who they consider themselves to be. In this case, the flag represents hope for the future and the consolidating of a new national and individual identity. Part of this process involves the delineation of formal boundaries, legitimization of historical distinctions, and eventual international recognition of both. As these sets of seemingly intractable positions play out on the campus of George Mason University during International Week, flags become reflections of cultural and political narratives. Students from emerging nations want to carve out a political space for their history, identity, and hope for the future. Students from established nations want to maintain and reinforce their existing political, cultural, and historical domain. In consequence, symbolic activities such as flag parades allow individuals to behaviorally communicate their identification with a national or emerging group linked to a set of particular political, historical, and cultural dynamics. Symbolic demonstrations, for example flags displayed in the Johnson Center, celebrate the legitimization of particular political, historical, and cultural forms. As was mentioned during the dialogue sessions, to deny individuals access to these activities or demonstrations can be seen as denying these individuals' identity.

## DIVERSITY AND IDENTITY

During International Week, diversity and identity configure and reconfigure as students determine what aspects of their multi-faceted identity framework become most important. Students who are now United States citizens, for example, feel drawn to their origins, expressing pride in countries in which they perhaps once resided or from which their family emigrated. Other students express their identity with particular sections of a country or cross-border region that shares cultural, linguistic, and historical ties, often manifesting in the form of emerging nations or separatist movements. Students not from the United States, those carrying I-20 passports, may feel aligned to their country of origin or perhaps to a section of that country as an emerging nation. Allowing venues for representing each of these diverse personal and emotional constructions of identity during International Week proves extremely challenging. No less so when one identity's representation seems to threaten another identity's representation or when acknowledgement of a symbol from one group can be seen as delegitimizing the symbol from another group. These dynamics all play out against a backdrop of the George Mason University Mission Statement, in particular the value of encouraging freedom of thought, speech, and inquiry in a tolerant, respectful academic setting that values diversity.

## CONCLUSION

This short essay begins a wider discussion of not only what diversity means but also how that diversity may be more fully recognized – actually and symbolically. The Global Roots project served as a point of departure for further dialogue within and between groups and individuals among the George Mason community as we strive to live up to the values expressed in the University Mission.



# MULTILINGUAL USERS OF ENGLISH AT MASON: A STUDY

Karyn E. Mallett

Ghania Zgheib

English Language Institute

In 2010, partially in response to the established internationalization goals of 2008, the Center for International Student Access (CISA) was formed out of the Provost Office. CISA, in partnership with the English Language Institute (ELI), is piloting a new, year-long undergraduate academic program—ACCESS—during the 2010-2011 academic year. In terms of enrollment projections, CISA aims to enroll close to 300 new ACCESS students per year by 2015. The Center provides students with a wide variety of co-curricular, extra-curricular, and complementary programming while the ELI supports ACCESS students with tailored, academic English language instruction aimed to increase students' English language acquisition over time.

As part of the ELI support for the ACCESS program, an HSRB-approved, longitudinal study examining ACCESS faculty and students' experiences has begun. Specifically, the researchers' driving question has been: How do ACCESS students' perceptions of academic, linguistic, and cultural experiences compare with ACCESS-affiliated faculty feedback on teaching academic content/skills across the ACCESS disciplines? The study is comprised of two phases, the first of which involves ACCESS students/faculty during the 2010-2011 academic year and the second of which involves ACCESS students and other multilingual populations at Mason during the 2011-2012 academic year.

Data collected from participating ACCESS students and faculty include interviews, surveys, classroom observations, samples of student writing, samples of faculty feedback on student writing, and student focus groups. In addition to this project, the same researchers have

How has living in the United States changed you?

*Living in the United States will change the way I decide to raise my children in the future.*

*By living with Americans, I am pushed to learn how to communicate with them and learn what they are like.*

*I have become more independent. I can do many things that I didn't have the guts to do before.*

*I have learned patience. It has provided me with a different view of life, a global view that the world is small.*

*It has changed my mind.*

*Living in a free country where new ideas are respected, I feel I am useful.*

*I have learned how to spend my time when I am alone.*

collected comparable survey data from non-ACCESS international student groups on campus through the ELI and Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS). Preliminary findings from the ACCESS study and comparable survey data are relevant to the general discussion on internationalization at Mason. Specifically, data addresses a series of questions including: (1) What do international students report to be their reasons for coming to Mason? (2) How do enrolled international students perceive and describe their experiences while they are at Mason? And finally, (3) What specific linguistic, cultural, and/or academic challenges/experiences do international students identify?

As faculty and as researchers who are invested in the process of creating a positively-oriented vision of internationalization, the data collected from this project contributes to our understanding of how best to promote principled approaches to language-supported internationalization at Mason. In the socially-situated context that is higher education, it is important to acknowledge the fact that social constructs like “education” and “university” and “foreign” and “good writing” and “the TOEFL” and “American” and “English” evolve. These are not static notions, and the university possesses the agency to put forward a vision of internationalization that recognizes the complexity of the project at hand. What we have determined going into this research project is that the most thoughtful/comprehensive way to address diversity and internationalization at Mason is to engage (rather than reduce) the complexity of the process and the people affected. The data reported here is our attempt to provide readers with some highlights and implications from the study thus far.

I CHOSE MASON BECAUSE...

Singh (2005) argues that models of internationalization are often drawn up and driven by marketing models, clouding the depth and complexity of the topic with an overly simplified map of money exchange. Many transnational students, as Singh refers to them, are scholar-

What are some of the most significant challenges you have faced while studying at Mason?

*I have to do so much more reading*

*Finding real friends is a challenge*

*Language*

*Integration*

*Making real American friends*

*Time management*

*Getting used to the atmosphere*

*Understanding American culture*

*Understanding the text*

*Getting involved*

*Writing essays*

*Being away from home*

*Understanding the American educational system*

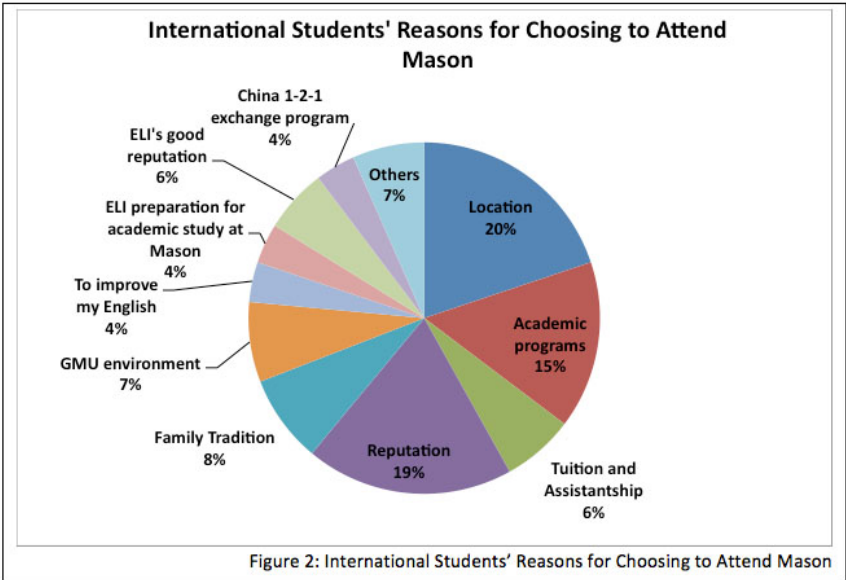
*Confronting new ideas and culture*

investors with a complex set of selection criteria when it comes to choosing the right higher education degree/institution. In order to prepare themselves, their families, and their home countries with the skill set required to compete successfully in the 21st-century global arena, many international students are looking to “extend and deepen their capacity for thinking and acting globally, nationally and locally” and as they research different options for post-secondary study, “they find competing university systems offering contrasting perspectives on, and pathways through, the contours of this ever-changing global/national/local-scape.”

So, how does George Mason fare in this competition for transnational students? While those who are already at Mason are likely to see signs of the university’s commitment to diversity and internationalization, prospective international students often have to gauge the general campus community from afar. What do these students consider when they are in the process of comparing U.S. institutions of higher education and how do their reported criteria compare with Singh’s analysis? What do international students at Mason offer as their reasons for choosing to study here?

“I CAME HERE TO IMPROVE MY ENGLISH, BUT AFTER I SAW THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, I DECIDED TO CONTINUE MY EDUCATION AND GET MY MASTER’S DEGREE.”

In order to address some of these questions, ACCESS, ELI and OIPS students were surveyed during the 2010-2011 academic year. Students were asked whether they had considered applying to colleges in addition to George Mason



University. Of the respondents, 43% reported that they had applied elsewhere in addition to Mason. Of the total group of respondents, the final decision to attend Mason was attributed to a variety of reasons (Figure 2). Mason's location and reputation were top incentives for choosing to study here, whereas academic programs and English language study were significant secondary motivations for attending Mason.

With regard to language study, students mentioned that they had been attracted to the positive reputation of the ELI and a feeling that studying at the ELI would prepare them for academic study at Mason. One student mentioned that she had chosen the ELI, "...because it is one of the highest quality English language institutes. Also, it's on the campus of George Mason University and that means the students may join the university students and get an excellent experience."

Beyond language study, both undergraduate and graduate international students deemed Mason's institutional ranking as a significant selection factor. One student stated with regard to his decision-making process, "First, I was very interested in the master's program in Conflict Resolution, second GMU is ranked one of the best universities, and finally, it is near Washington DC."

**"MASON IS AWESOME. SAFE, CONVENIENT, AND BEAUTIFUL. CAMPUS IS WELL EQUIPPED, AND SERVICES ARE GOOD."**

Several students noted that they valued Mason's reputation for campus diversity. For example, one student wrote, "I decided to attend George Mason because I used to come to the music summer camp at Mason for two years and I had an intimate relationship with Mason. Also, I knew that I was going to be an international student, and Mason is well known for [being a] diverse university; therefore, I really wanted to be a part of it." Another student commented, "[I chose Mason] because one of my relatives was studying at GMU and he told me that GMU has a good reputation and Fairfax is the best city for living."

Data from this research project suggests that Mason is in a position to maintain and advance its standing as a strong competitor among peer institutions (as well as other English speaking countries) with regard to international recruitment. As Singh (2005) noted, in the 21st century, prospective international students do appear to seek out a campus and wider community that offers a variety of perceived benefits, including: a favorable location, a market-valued reputation, a diverse environment, strong academic programs, and opportunities for English language study/support.

“LIVING WITH PEOPLE OTHER THAN MY OWN PARENTS HELPS ME UNDERSTAND THAT SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO PUT UP WITH PEOPLE’S ROUTINES EVEN IF THEY ARE NOT YOURS.”

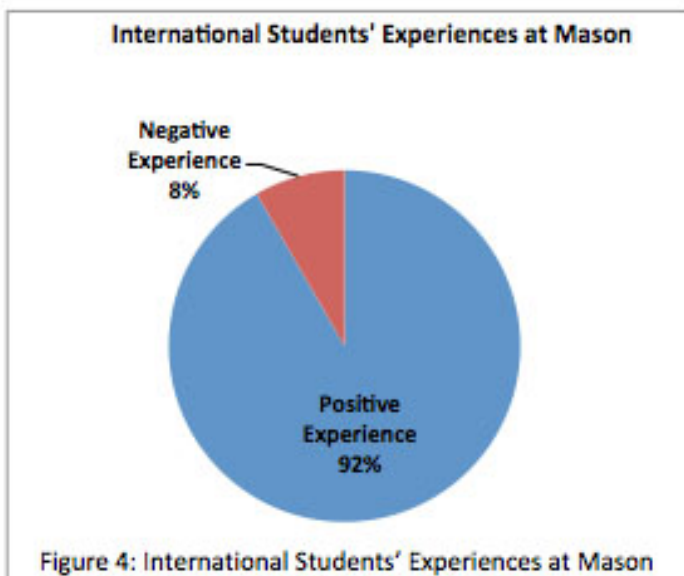
IN THREE WORDS, BEING AT MASON HAS BEEN...

Mason’s commitment to international students extends beyond recruitment, and so we must be cognizant of these students’ experiences throughout their academic careers at Mason. How do international students encounter the university? What are their impressions of Mason culture in and beyond the classroom? Do students have primarily positive or negative experiences while they are here? In order to begin to address these questions, OIPS, ELI, and ACCESS program students were surveyed about their perceptions and descriptions of their experiences.

Specifically, these international student groups were asked the question, “What three words describe your experience as an international student at George Mason University?” Students reported 372 words, 92% of which were coded by the researchers as representative of positive or neutral experiences. Some of the most commonly-reported words are presented in Figure 3.

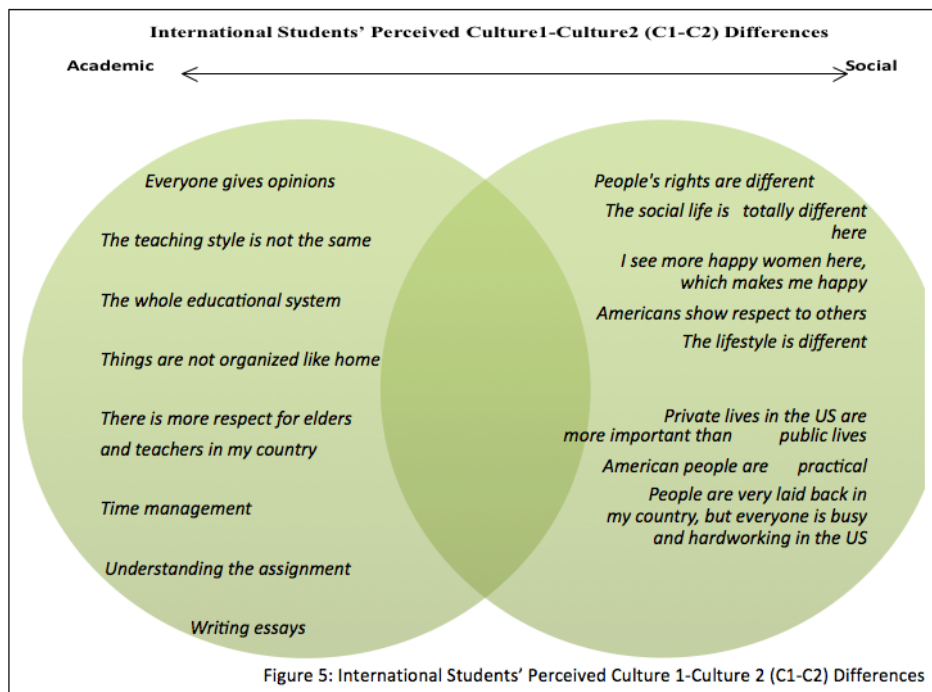
International Students’ Reported Words to Describe their Experiences at Mason	
Positive/Neutral	Negative
<i>exciting, awesome, diversity, fun, challenging, enjoyable, interesting, unique, unforgettable, promising, expanding my horizon, enriching, happiness, adventurous, enlightening, informative, learning English, professional, rewarding, personal growth, new, energetic, relaxing, great, friendly</i>	<i>difficult, exhausting, unorganized, hectic, stressful, boring, unfriendly, tiring, pressure, demanding, lonely, uncomfortable, unpredictable, disappointing, expensive, strange</i>

In addition, participating international students were asked to describe a problem or a bad experience they have had at Mason (if any). Nearly 70% of the students surveyed did not report having problems or bad experiences at Mason. Of the remaining 30%, several students reported a problem dealing and/or communicating with specific offices or individuals on campus. One student reported that he felt that American students looked down on him because he is an international student. Others stated that they have had difficulty communicating with their professors due to language barriers (i.e. “barriers” that were attributed to situations in which the course professor was non-English-dominant and to scenarios



wherein the student and/or professor was multilingual).

Of course, not all international students are from non-English-dominant countries. Some international students reported that they have had difficulty developing friendships with domestic students due to perceived cultural barriers as well. Regardless of where international students come from, adapting to a new culture can pose a considerable challenge. To explore some perceived cultural differences, participating international students were asked the question, “In your opinion, what are two of the biggest cultural differences between your home country and the United States?” Students’ responses naturally varied considerably along a cline of similarity/difference. Figure 5 provides a sampling of student responses, analyzed in terms of how such cultural differences might have an impact on social and academic adjustments (or both).



This and related data on internationalization at Mason is currently being put to use as programs like ACCESS and the ELI discuss ways to further refine and promote a positively-oriented model of internationalization. As the student-identified Culture1-Culture2 differences highlighted in Figure 5 demonstrate, investigations into internationalization in higher education easily generate social and academic implications for students, staff, and faculty to consider. In an ideological sense, everyone within the diverse Mason community is responsible for and contributes to the overall atmosphere of connectivity and integration that the university is known for. In a yet-further ideological sense, a successful global community in this space for intellectual and cultural exchange could lead to a more-integrated and globally-minded world in which conflict is more complicated and attempts to understand one another (across all C1-C2 boundaries) are more common. However, in a practical sense, diversity (in all forms, international or otherwise) can require/foster unpredictable shifts in thinking and approaches to education that affect all aspects of university life.

“THE CLASH OF CULTURES HELPS ME UNDERSTAND HOW DIFFERENT WE ARE AND HOW DIFFERENTLY WE THINK.”

As the university strives to attract the world's top scholars, this ideological stance – that a worthy education in the twenty-first century is one in which students are prepared with cross-cultural and globally-minded sensitivities – requires that the wider Mason community consider the complexity of internationalization and the scope of its effect. Recently, at a faculty retreat for those involved with one particular internationalization initiative on campus, a series of questions driven by the larger, underlying research project reported on here, were put forward for consideration and discussion. Questions were many, including:

- How does teaching academic content to international students compare with teaching the same material to domestic students?
- What are the challenges associated with evaluating multilingual student work?
- What resources would be helpful for faculty across the curriculum with regard to meeting international students at developing, varied points of linguistic, cultural, and academic need?
- What have been your experiences with providing written feedback on student writing?
- Based on your experience working with international students, what are some effective ways for encouraging intercultural communication between faculty and students?
- To what extent should academic faculty purposefully incorporate the teaching of foundational skills (e.g. critical reading, note-taking, navigating the Western education system, process writing, etc.) when teaching international students?
- What are your experiences/thoughts about the relationship between international students' U.S.-based cultural knowledge and their ability to address assignments effectively?
- What, in your opinion, are (or should be) the goals of internationalization at Mason?

These questions sparked several hours of group discussion at and beyond the retreat. Answers were not simple,

*In your opinion, what are some things future international students should know about being at Mason?*

*Every day is a new day where you learn something new about yourself*

*Time management is important*

*Analyze the content of the course rather than memorize*

*Don't be afraid to ask questions when you don't understand*

*Practice taking notes*

*You will have to be strong and never give up*

*You must work hard from the start; otherwise everything will pile up on you*

*Believe in yourself*

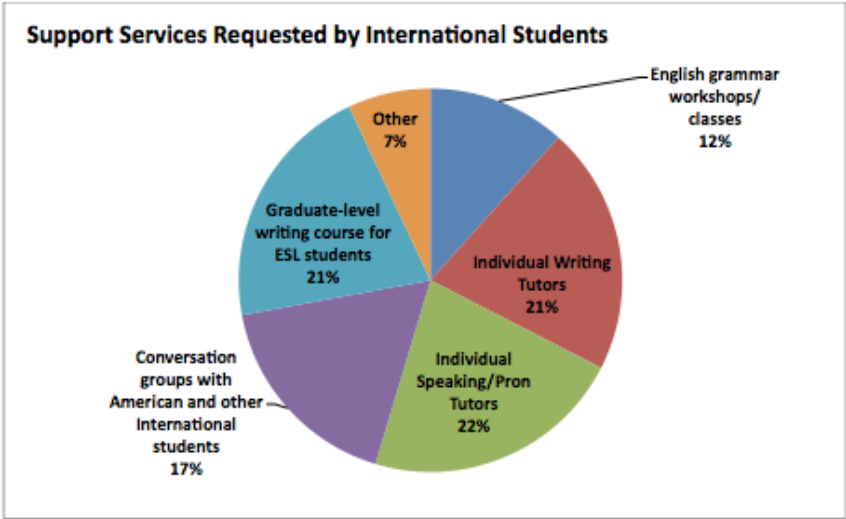
and most recognized the challenge in balancing academic and intercultural goals within the classroom context. Overall, faculty and administrators noted the importance of global exchange programs that prepare students (international as well as domestic) with a new framework for addressing challenges in the twenty-first century context of globalization; in addition, faculty appeared ready to participate in future discussions/workshops on how best to develop practices of teaching/programming around this goal.

**“I HAVE TO BE OUTGOING HERE AND MAKE MANY FRIENDS BY MYSELF. THE MOST USEFUL THING I LEARNED IS THAT I SHOULD MAKE THE MOST OF RESOURCES ON CAMPUS.”**

**STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVES OF SUPPORT SERVICES**

Finally, OIPs, ACCESS, and ELI students were asked to report on the support services they find most helpful and services that they would like to see offered to international students at Mason. Figure 6 provides an overview of those services requested by students, highlighting their desire for a graduate-level writing course for ESL students, the wish for individual speaking/pronunciation tutors, and the want for individualized writing tutors.

While Anna Habib and Terry Myers Zawacki present a full discussion on Mason faculty perceptions/assumptions about second-language (L2) writers across the disciplines later in this issue, it is interesting to note a repeated finding from this research project data related to students’ request for individualized writing tutors and a graduate-level writing course for ESL writers. Namely, a repeated finding



across surveyed and interviewed international student groups on campus, 100% of students (in every instance and at multiple points of data collection) reported that grading rubrics are helpful (especially when the teacher reviews the rubric with the class and then sticks with it when evaluating students' work) and individualized teacher feedback on student writing is helpful.

This finding is not surprising given the idiosyncratic nature of second language acquisition. Students recognize the need for feedback that identifies where there are (linguistically and academically) in relation to the course/assignment goal that they aspire to. For those international students who are also multilingual users of English, the experience of producing oral or written text is inherently a bilingual one (as evidenced in the earlier sample student texts, translations, and reflections). As proficient language learners and as experts in the area of transnational education, students who identified the need for individualized instruction/feedback/tutoring in Figure 6 are communicating an experience-based awareness of how language learning (across all skills) takes place most effectively, over time. Together, those who are connected to and/or invested in a successful internationalization model at Mason must consider students' stated requests for additional services as we also address a number of the larger ideological and teaching-related goals of international initiatives on campus.

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# COMPLICATING DEFINITIONS OF ERROR IN L2 STUDENT WRITING: FACULTY PERSPECTIVES ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES

Anna S. Habib

English faculty, *Center for International Student Access*

Terry Myers Zawacki

Director, *Writing Across the Curriculum*; Associate Professor, *English*

“The University will develop more fully its leading role as a global university ... [it will] expand the number of international students by at least 20% while improving the integration of international and domestic students in extracurricular as well as academic activities.”

— *from George Mason’s 2014 Strategic Plan, goal 5*

“In America, when I write totally different style of paper, the professor say, ‘Where are you from? How did you get into this college? Your writing is behind the line, so you can’t really catch up to the class.’ So, I don’t know how to figure that out.”

—Yoon, student from S. Korea

For many of these students, the primary issue is not just grammatical but it’s having the vocabulary, the ability, [to convey] the level of ideas they are trying to express. And sometimes I question whether or not they’re really understanding or just memorizing. While I’m sympathetic to the pressures they face here, I don’t have a clue about how to help them think independently and produce material in their own words.”

—Sociology professor

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The voices above showcase the issues around writing that emerge for faculty and students as our higher education institutions strive towards greater internationalization. As more and more international students enter our courses and multilingualism becomes the norm, our definitions of “standard written English” are also changing. What is “standard English” now that World English(es)<sup>1</sup>, already the standard in a global marketplace, is increasingly becoming the written lingua franca, especially in disciplines enrolling high numbers of international

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<sup>1</sup> A term coined by Braj. B Kachru in “World Englishes: Agony and Ecstasy,” referring to the “universalization of English” as a result of globalization trends that have situated English as the lingua franca.

students? Further, if “error,” as it’s defined by translingual (languages crossing borders) theorists like Suresh Canagarajah<sup>2</sup>, is a “refusal to negotiate” on the part of participants in the communicative interaction, then how are faculty in these disciplines and across the curriculum negotiating with the writing produced by the multilingual students in their classrooms?

Given these questions and the university’s strategic goal to expand the numbers of international students at Mason, we believe it’s crucial to understand how these students are performing as writers in their majors so that students and faculty, like Yoon and the professor quoted above, won’t feel at such a loss. Our research, only part of which is included here, also aims to help faculty appreciate the wealth of linguistic diversity our students bring with them, a point which is sometimes easy to forget when we’re in the throes of grading papers. As one of our faculty interviewees recalled,

A student from Vietnam came to my office to rework something in her paper, and she burst into tears and said another teacher had written on a paper that she was linguistically deficient. And I said “How many languages do you speak?” and she said “Vietnamese and French.” And I said, “And you’ve only been here six months and you already know so much English!” *You are just the opposite of linguistically deficient.*

Still, we can’t ignore the fact that this linguistic diversity, albeit enriching, complicates the way we design our courses and teach our students; we want to respect their experiences and help them bridge cultural and linguistic gaps, but we also need to be realistic about how to best prepare them for success in their majors and in their jobs outside the university. While many of the errors we see in our students’ writing can be negotiated if we’re able to spend time parsing the intended meaning, how do we assess which second language (L2) errors are negotiable in the careers they will enter after college? Answers to this question may vary widely depending upon the students’ major and the faculty members’ sense of how important “standard” written English is in the discipline and the profession. And, of course, individual faculty will also have their own opinions about how correct the writing must be.

In order to reach a more holistic understanding of the question of negotiable error in student writing, we are drawing on our previous research, *Valuing Written Accents*, published in the second issue of the Diversity Research Group’s “Diversity

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, “Multilingual Writers and the Academic Community: Towards a Critical Relationship” and “Multilingual Strategies of Negotiating English: From Conversation to Writing.”

at Mason” series, where we focused on the experiences of multilingual students adapting to the conventions of academic writing in U.S. institutions. As the next step towards understanding, we decided to expand that research to include the perspective of faculty across the curriculum toward second language writers, both international (resident and student Visas) and immigrant students. For the reasons we described above, we’ve been particularly interested in faculty perceptions of the second-language errors they’re encountering and the extent to which they are willing to engage in negotiations around correctness and standard American English. To that end, we conducted hour-long interviews with 18 faculty from 16 different disciplines about what they perceive as the writing challenges their multilingual students face, what errors they believe are negotiable, and what strategies they are using, if any, to help students succeed as writers in the major.

One limitation of our research is that our faculty participants didn’t know how many of the student writers they were describing in their interviews are, in fact, second-language (or third/fourth, etc) writers of English<sup>3</sup>. The writing produced by immigrant students who learned English at some point in their K-12 schooling in the U.S. (often called L1.5 speakers) is often marked by first language-interference errors. While faculty don’t necessarily know whether the students they are working with are Visa or L1.5 students with second-language needs, we do know that many of our Mason students are multilingual and that they are often being sent to the university writing center to “fix their errors” because faculty either do not know how to help them or do not have the time to work with them individually. The writing center usage data indicates that over 49% of all students who attended the writing center in the fall 2010 semester came from first-language backgrounds other than English and 50% of all users were referred to the writing center by a teacher.

Since our faculty respondents themselves said that they often refer students to the writing center when they are at a loss for how to negotiate meaning from consistent errors, and since the writing center data reinforce the notion that a large number of students are referred directly by teachers, we decided to conduct most

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<sup>3</sup> The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) position statement on Second Language writers identifies them as “international visa students, refugees, and permanent residents as well as naturalized and native-born citizens of the U.S. and Canada. ...many have grown up speaking languages other than English ...; others acquired English at a very young age alongside their native languages...; many are highly literate in their first languages, while others have never learned to write in their mother tongues or are native speakers of languages without a written form.” (While labels may obscure individual diversity, they also can mark some differences quite clearly; that is, the advantaged positions of some students, e.g. foreign Visa students who tend to come with strong social, economic, and/or intellectual capital and academic skills, in contrast to first and second generation immigrant students who tend to be less educationally and economically advantaged.)

of our interviews with faculty teaching in the majors enrolling the largest numbers of international students at Mason, according to 2009-2010 George Mason *Factbook*<sup>4</sup>. These are engineering/computer science/IT, business with largest numbers in accounting and finance, economics, nursing and social work, and biology. We interviewed four faculty from engineering, three from business, one from math, one from economics, one from nursing, one from social work, and one from geology, in addition to others from psychology, sociology, anthropology, art and visual technology, and English.

While many L2 writing concerns emerged in our faculty research, e.g. students not understanding disciplinary conventions or expected genres, for this chapter we're going to focus on errors occurring at the sentence level—syntax, grammar, word choice—concerns mentioned by all of the faculty we interviewed. Are these errors caused by a lack of comprehension, as many faculty feared? What errors should be addressed and when, faculty frequently asked, while also often saying that they feel ill-prepared to explain these mistakes when they don't have the right terminology (a concern that is of course not limited only to the writing of L2 students). Further complicating the error discussion are the debates in the professional literature about the most effective approaches to L2 error. Some say editing a students' paper is not a useful practice, particularly since teachers often correct minor errors and miss more serious ones; some argue that less serious errors should be ignored, as language acquisition takes time and practice. Further, excessive focus on error can make L2 students think teachers don't care about what they are saying, only how it is said. On the other side of the debate, however, research shows that L2 students often interpret a lack of feedback as laziness and that L2 writers improved grammatical accuracy only when such feedback was given (Casanave 2007, Ferris 2003).

Before we move on to a discussion of the kinds of L2 sentence-level errors that our faculty interviewees described, we want to take a step back to note that the errors we see in our L2 students' writing—whether Visa or L1.5—are not necessarily, or only, due to a developing language proficiency. Buker (2003) for example, shows that there are five domains that affect international student writing. Errors may be *culturally coined*, emerging from a divergent understanding of rhetorical frameworks like audience, context, purpose, etc<sup>5</sup>. Errors may stem from a problem differentiating between genres of academic writing, which she

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<sup>4</sup> This data reflect national trends, as do the data on countries from which students come. In fall 2009, Mason enrolled 1,764 international students, the largest numbers of whom come from India, China, South Korea, Saudia Arabia, Pakistan, Vietnam, Nepal, and Turkey. (George Mason *Factbook 2009-2010*)

<sup>5</sup> In *Valuing Written Accents*, we focused most of our discussion on “culturally coined” and “domain-specific” errors.

calls *domain-specific procedural*. *Content-specific* errors are caused by students' struggle to access the content about which they are writing. *Foreign language* interference may have a significant effect on writing fluency and accuracy, as do *general-linguistic* problems with grammar and syntax, which very closely resemble the types of error L1 students often make (Buker cited in Kam and Meinema 2005).

Buker's parsing of these five domains give us a lens to understand the struggles of L2 students with academic writing and the faculty interview data. However, for this chapter, we're focusing on Buker's *content-specific*, *foreign language*, and *general linguistic* domains, in order to narrow our discussion to the kinds of errors that seemed to give the faculty we interviewed the most pause—errors that disturbed meaning and that could stem either from a lack comprehension of the course content and/or struggles with the syntax and lexicon of the English language. In our analysis of the interview transcripts, we also returned to the idea of translingual error as “a refusal to negotiate” and looked for instances where faculty seemed to see some errors as non-negotiable and others as possible to overlook. In both cases, as we'll explain, there were a range of reasons for their “readerly dispositions” (Horner 2011).

#### DISTURBING ERRORS: DOES THE WRITER UNDERSTAND THE CONTENT AND THE MATERIAL?

Errors in lexicon (word choice), syntax, and grammar disturb not only the meaning of the student's written text, they also disturb the faculty reader who is often left wondering whether the student writer is struggling with the disciplinary lexicon or whether s/he is just struggling to comprehend the material. Many of the faculty we interviewed said they were most concerned about the errors that caused them to stop and question whether the student understood what s/he was writing or was “just throwing words on the wall to see what sticks,” as one faculty member said. Another explained that “for many of these students, the primary issue is not just grammatical but it's having the vocabulary, the ability, [to convey] the level of ideas they are trying to express. And sometimes I question whether or not they're really understanding or just memorizing.” A Management professor put it this way: “Sometimes you can't tell if it's just poor writing skills or a lack of understanding and that's what's really disconcerting with these things. How much has the kid missed the boat on what we're talking about here?” If the written text is supposed to demonstrate the student's grasp of the content knowledge but the writing itself is unclear, then the purpose of the assignment is not achieved, according to many of the faculty we talked to.

One of our most interesting interviews was with a bioengineering

professor who is herself a multilingual speaker/writer, from Brazil with a doctoral degree from a German institution, and who expects her students, no matter what their first language is, to produce error-free writing. Here she explains why:

**NP:** I'm sort of upset by the grammatical mistakes, but worse than that if I can't understand half of [what is written]. I feel like I'm losing so much. I have to trust the writer completely understands and ... it's like watching TV, but half of the pixels are gone. So, if on this screen half the pixels are gone, you could see the image, but it's not [clear]. You could make some other image.

**TZ:** So they might understand the study, the work they've done, the experiment, but you can't trust the language that they are conveying it accurately?

**NP:** That's right. I cannot understand their study unless the channel is transparent.

As an example of the problem, she read from a student report: "Since the concentration of NA which is sodium increases it causes the brain to polarized'." "At that point," she said, "I don't even know if it's right or wrong, you know, because I can't understand it."

While errors that disturb meaning aren't easy to negotiate, it's important to note that many of the errors we may see in our L2 students' essays are the same types of errors we see from our L1 students. Both WAC and L2 writing professionals have compared the process of learning to write in a discipline to learning to write a second language, with native and non-native writers facing similar challenges when they encounter the "strange" languages of disciplinary discourse. They are "strangers in strange lands," as Lucille McCarthy (1987) put it in her study of a student's experiences of writing in courses across the curriculum. For L2 students, however, sentence-level errors may be more apparently caused by interference from their first language as they struggle to acquire not only the phrasing expected by the discipline but also the correct English phrasing. Even those who may have acquired the lexicon of the discipline—the "bricks," as Ann Johns (2001) calls it—may not yet have acquired the "mortar"—the syntactic and grammatical structures to hold the words together. A Psychology professor described this as "[something other than] correctness per se but those sorts of unwritten rules about the words that are appropriate to convey a particular point. Maybe other words would work, but they aren't conventional, and so readers will have to stop and say 'What do you mean?' rather than flowing through the logic.

The “what do you mean?” moment that faculty may have while reading their students’ writing may be an opportunity for the writer and reader to negotiate meaning and overcome confusion. That negotiation, L2 writing scholar Canagarajah argues, is the type of negotiation that happens more often than not in the globalized business world where the participants in a transaction have a stake in understanding one another. While teachers do want to understand what their student writers are trying to say, the students must also take care to show that they understand what’s being asked. In an interview with three School of Management faculty, they discussed a lexical error in a paper that one of them had sent to all of us in advance as an example of the kinds of issues she sees in L2 writing. For the assignment, the student was asked to develop a “job recruitment strategy,” to include a “sufficient overview of the job, including the *essential* duties, *skills*, knowledge, etc. and “evidence of value-added *research*.” We’ve italicized the words “essential,” “skills,” and “research” since it appears that the student writer may have been echoing these words from the assignment without having a clear sense of what they might mean in the context of the recruitment strategy she was describing.

**Speaker 1:** In the second paragraph, this is where I said, “What are they talking about? This student chose to recruit for a job as a singer in a restaurant, so the first sentence of the second paragraph says, “One of the research essential skills is an audition.”

**Speaker 2:** She’s definitely a second language writer, and she’s not using the right terms “research” or “essential” or “skills.”

**Speaker 3:** What she wants to say is that we would make candidates audition.

**Speaker 2:** Or one of the essentials is .... I know what she wants to say but she’s not using the right word. She wants to say part of the research in finding a good singer is to have an audition, you know, so if you think of research in that way ... which we don’t.

**Speaker 1:** No, the term research is not even close to being right. [Nor is] describing skills as an audition. The audition is the way to measure skills. I was so frustrated [by this paper] because I could see the ideas throughout were not completely bad [but] they are not doing their job if they can’t explain this to me.

**Speaker 2:** This is a perfect example [of a paper that] conveys a

lack of understanding of what they think the audition is in regards to human resource management. It's like I'm just throwing words out there but I don't really understand what I'm saying.

The type of error that the SOM respondents are negotiating above may not specific to L2 students. Many native English speakers make similar errors as they try to appropriate the language of the discourse community they are entering by incorporating key terminology from the course. While clearly distracting for the reader, leaving him/her to decipher the writer's intention and to negotiate the meaning, this may be an opportune learning moment for the student if faculty are willing and have the time to discuss the writer's choices with the student and help him/her navigate the lexicon of the discipline successfully. The SOM teachers, in fact, talked about how they try to help L2 students negotiate unfamiliar terms on essay exams by giving them permission to ask about terms that are not specific to course concepts. One student asked, for example, what it means to "harness" energy. The teachers keep lists of words students ask about and vet them on future exams.

We want to conclude this section on "disturbing errors" by offering a perspective on both lexical and syntactical errors from another L2 faculty respondent, this one from geology, who observed that the "scientific vocabulary is easier for people coming from my side of the world [Italy] because it's Latin or Greek based. However, I've noticed that a lot of my students from the Middle East or Asia have a really hard problem with the technical terms, so where you come from can affect your grasp of scientific vocabulary."

When she began writing in English for graduate school in the U.S., after having learned English in college in a non-credit course, she realized that she was still using the constructions of a typical Italian sentence. "I go back and review that," she said, "and now, when I read it with an English mindset, it sometimes doesn't make sense even to myself." When she submitted the first draft of her dissertation, her committee told her it sounded like she was telling a story and that it was not scientific writing. "No one ever told me we don't understand what you're talking about," she said. Instead, the comments were on the style of the writing, and this is what they helped her to negotiate her way through to meaning and correct phrasing.

WRITING IN "STANDARD AMERICAN ENGLISH": FOR WHOM DOES IT MATTER AND WHY?

As we discovered in our interviews, faculty expectations for students to write papers in correct standard American English are quite varied, with the variables

ranging from teachers' individual positions on errors to their sense of what the discipline and/or the field requires. Regarding the former, the faculty respondent from economics, for example, said he does not tolerate errors because "concision" and "precision" are important to him in contrast to most of his colleagues, who, he said, don't want to be bothered and so "let the mistakes go." In describing why she's so tough on errors, especially in the writing of her L2 students, the bioengineering teacher said:

I frequently ask myself why is this bothering me so much? Is it because it's also my mistake? You know a lot of people say if you have this particular problem and someone else has that same problem, you are very upset with that. So I've often asked myself I get so upset by some of these mistakes because I made them or made something similar. This could be.

She added, however, that she's very careful with corrections when the student writers are American because she wants to be "100% or 200% sure" that what she's correcting is a mistake. "But when they are not American, I am correcting everything. ...and sometimes they complain [because] the Americans don't get as much red marks. But my grades are based on content, not on the language." In several cases, faculty respondents explained why lexical accuracy was important to the field. While L2 writing specialists generally recommend not focusing too much attention on helping students understand the idiosyncrasies of English articles and prepositions, understanding article usage is crucial in mathematics, as the math professor pointed out in the interview:

English allows for a degree of vagueness, which is generally bad in communicating mathematical ideas. It's a precise discipline, so if we say that there is "a" solution, we know that there may be another solution, but if we say "the" solution, that means there cannot be another solution. So in this case knowing the articles is very important and this goes back to how they translate their thinking to English.

Similarly, the faculty member from social work told us that, while "there are always minimal mistakes," if students

are going into health care, they have to make sure that what they are writing is exactly what they are meaning to say; any case records that they do and any community agency has to reflect exactly what they mean. So people aren't reading between the lines for those kinds of things

She also suggested a situation, however, where the reader and writer can negotiate error when the use of language is tied to cultural differences. “I try not to be too hard on students if they’re using words that we wouldn’t necessarily use here, but the usage is based on their culture.” For example, the word “abuse,” she said, is sometimes “overused relative to what we mean by it here and in other countries.” “Abuse” can be perceived differently based on how children are disciplined or elderly people treated in other countries.

In systems engineering, the faculty respondent told us, the “hardest part of the job for a requirements engineer is finding out what everyone is doing and getting the problem down and making sure that the user is happy. The easy part is the quantitative stuff.” Clear communication, in this case, is critical, so, when she grades the papers, she applies the same standards to everyone; she doesn’t look at the name of the writer. “No one’s going to give them a break when they’re working because they’re from wherever,” she said. “You just get left behind. So why not get told that now when you’re a student rather than get hit in the face with it when you get out there working.” For much the same reason, faculty in the School of Management also expect students to be able to produce writing in standard English with few mistakes. They are supported in this position by their dean, who speaks and writes Spanish as his first language, and by the accreditation standards for the field.

On the other hand, a civil engineering professor, also multilingual, told us that, while he cares about standard English, he takes off only a small percentage for poor writing. In talking about his expectation for correctness and student writing, he said, “I want to talk about engineering not writing.” As much as writing is important, he said “There’s not much bang for the buck to work with undergraduate writing” he said. “They can learn on the job. They need a certain level of intellect to survive the rigors of engineering. An engineering major who can’t write still has the job. The English major doesn’t.”

#### NEGOTIATING ERRORS AND READERS’ DISPOSITIONS

In our interviews with faculty, several mentioned reflective writing as a kind of text that L2 students were able to write fluently, “perhaps because the reins are looser,” as one respondent said. In this case, the genre itself—self-reflection and reflection on one’s thinking and writing process—seemed to evoke a different “readerly disposition”<sup>6</sup> from the faculty. “Because it’s not really like right and wrong,” the SOM professor said. “It’s more like a self-discovery process. I don’t go in there with any expectations. And it’s not such a technical piece, although some students are very technical, it can be very personal. I tell them I want to hear your voice come through if possible in this paper. I don’t want it to be so

formal, you know.”

The reflective process is crucial in social work assignments, the professor told us, noting that students “are even better at [reflection], or at least it’s easier for me to assess because I don’t worry about the grammar and sentence structure as much. And I think because of that too, they’re more free to just write what they’re thinking.” She added, however, that while reflection is easier, “it may be harder for them in terms of language translation.” We’re particularly interested in that observation given that much of the second-language writing research indicates that drafting and free writing may be harder for L2 students who are also struggling with phrasing in English.<sup>7</sup> Their writing is never altogether “free,” in other words.

#### WHAT TO DO ABOUT ERRORS: WHERE ALL THIS TAKES US

While many of us recognize the various factors that are influencing our students’ writing, we also feel the pressures of preparing students for writing in their careers and work places. Many of us know all too well what writing scholar Mina Shaughnessy articulated in her 1977 seminal work *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*, which set out to understand the logic of the errors produced by “basic” writers at the City University of New York, at that time a newly designated open- admissions institution to the consternation of many of the faculty. She wrote:

In a better world, it is true, readers might be more generous with their energies, pausing to divine the meaning of a writer or mentally to edit the errors out of his text without expecting to be rewarded for their efforts, but it would be foolhardy to bank on that kind of persistence except perhaps in English teachers or good friends (12).

But “this is not to say,” she also reminded us,” that the

boundaries of error do not shift nor to suggest that certain battles along those borderlines are not worth waging. English has been

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<sup>6</sup> In a talk on translingualism at the 2011 College Composition and Communication convention, Bruce Horner suggested that a reader’s disposition plays a key role in how and what translingual texts will be negotiated. As we know from research on response to student writing, teachers often notice and remark on errors in student papers because they are reading with a different disposition than they would read their colleagues’ texts (see Williams’ “Phenomenology of Error,” for example).

<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the often heard advice to read aloud to catch errors is not always effective for L2 writers who have not yet developed an ear for the English language.

robustly inventing itself for centuries—stretching and reshaping and enriching itself with every language and dialect it has encountered (13).

What constitutes an error is becoming even more complicated in our increasingly internationalized institutions. Our desire to have students produce “standard English” is further complicated by the fact that faculty feel unqualified to recognize the root cause of every student error, whether “culturally-coined,” “domain-specific,” “content-based” or “general linguistic.” Most of our faculty respondents, however, felt strongly that our students should be able to write prose that is mostly free of error if they are to be successful in their careers outside the university, despite arguments, like Canagarajah’s, that errors are commonly negotiated in globalized business and technical environments.

In large part, what our interviews with international and immigrant students across the curriculum (published in *Valuing Written Accents*) revealed about their errors is that these struggles stemmed from a lack of experience writing in a new discipline and a different culture. While writing in English was a significant challenge for our student respondents, by graduate school many had acquired the ability to self-correct with confidence. Kanishka, a graduate student from Sri Lanka, talked about what surprised him most about writing for the American academy:

By the time I came here [GMU] I was okay with my writing. When I was first at [another U.S. institution] that is where I had my initial friction between the cultures and I was told over and over again you have to cut down, clean up your paragraphs. To me I was very offended because I came with a lot of confidence behind me and suddenly I find that it’s totally different. But it didn’t take me long to catch up though.

One thing I realized in my academic writing was that I had to really keep my sentences short for one thing. And not use colorful words, you know, just take in the least possible number of words and very directly and very simple words too. For me, I have a problem because I think [my] language has so much richness, which is lost in doing that. But for my academic purposes, I don’t mind doing that. That is an adjustment I had to do when I came here.

Haifeng from China, also a graduate student, noted that what helped him learn to write according to the American conventions of his field was “getting feedback on his writing and suddenly [understanding] that all my sentences could be

expressed in a better way.” He followed up by saying that the professor who gave consistent feedback was

very responsible and just [did] all the things he thinks can benefit [his students]. Besides grammar and writing mistakes and [highlighting] awkward English, he definitely [gave] us suggestions on topics. Before we start to write the paper, the professor tells us how to write an academic paper with the introduction, background, the methodology. He already showed us how to do this from scratch.

To begin to address error effectively in our students’ writing, we can recognize the many factors that may be interfering with their clarity and accuracy and, at the same time, consider our own instruction and feedback practices. When we are grading our L2 students’ writing, we can ask ourselves which errors are negotiable and which will significantly hinder communication in their future jobs. We can try to discern when the student may be struggling to produce “native-like” English phrasing and/or the expected jargon of the discipline. We can reflect on which errors might be personally distracting but don’t confuse the message. With these questions and considerations comes another: How can we target our instruction to help our L2 students overcome these linguistic challenges while also valuing the rich linguistic and cultural experiences they bring to our courses? Ultimately, our goal as instructors is to help our students mature as academic writers in their fields, to help them to reach the place that Ayesha, an undergraduate student from Pakistan, has reached:

“When you are given a topic, the more you read about it, and the more research you do about it, the more it broadens your vision. And I really enjoy that everything is so new to me (...) I get so excited. I’m like, okay, I am going to learn something new today (...) And it feels so light when I have done my research properly and then I write something down. I just feel so good.”

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# SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT MASON

Ann Schiller

Vice President, Global & International Strategies, Provost Office

Office of Global and International Strategies

4400 University Drive, MSN:3A2

Mason Hall D111G

Fairfax, VA 22030

George Mason is a university characterized by global vision, global presence, and global accomplishment in outreach, education, and research. Mason's new Office of Global and International Strategies provides leadership and support to a university committed to realizing its global goals. It assists faculty, students, and units to pursue international activities, including through coordination of efforts across units and beyond borders. The office represents Mason's global interests to governmental and non-governmental agencies, business and community leaders, and educational partners around the world. It also serves as an incubator for innovative projects through which Mason faculty and students engage with counterparts across the globe. Some specific responsibilities of the office include facilitating institutional agreements with international partners, hosting international guests, and conducting embassy and community outreach. The Global Office staff includes Directors of China, Korea, and Russia Programs, an international grants writer, and a global relations specialist. The Center for Global Studies, a center that promotes multidisciplinary research on globalization and international affairs, is also affiliated with the Global Office.

Immediate priorities include working with Mason's academic leadership, faculty, and staff to inventory international activities and make that data easily available to the Mason community. Another is establishment of internal and external advisory boards as well as area studies interest groups to promote international research and networking. The office will lead the effort to craft a Global Strategic Directions statement in keeping with Mason's Strategic Plan, and looks forward to facilitating university-wide discussions about our global future.

Nicole Sealey  
Director, Center for International Student Access (CISA)

Center for International Student ACCESS  
Provost Office  
4400 University Drive, MSN:3A2  
Mason Hall D109B  
Fairfax, VA 22030

The mission of the Center for International Student Access, working in close partnerships with George Mason University's academic departments and the English Language Institute, is to combine the best elements of teaching excellence in the areas of academic English language support, customized general education courses, and specialized student services and programming to create distinguished preparatory programs for students with international education backgrounds at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The Center for International Student Access endeavors to serve as a resource and advocate for international student needs at Mason. The Center will accomplish this by providing students with developmental academic support and acculturation to Western educational styles in a manner that both respects and celebrates individual cultures and epistemology while preparing them for personal and academic success. The Center's ultimate goal is to promote the development and retention of well-rounded, culturally conscious, and engaged international student-citizens who are able to positively contribute to the local and global community.

The Center is poised to support collaborative efforts that strengthen cross-cultural opportunities for domestic and international students. We offer programs such as the Peer Learning Partnership and Peer Mentorship, as well as co-sponsor co-curricular events with offices across campus that challenge students from all over the globe to learn, experience, and grow together. Further, the Center plans to promote international interests by providing a research collaborative network through existing university resources related to international education, English language learning, institutional culture and diversity within the field of higher education.

John Pope  
Director, English Language Institute

English Language Institute  
4400 University Drive, MSN:4C4  
108 Northern Neck Hall  
Fairfax, VA 22030

The English Language Institute (ELI) at Mason was established in 1981 with the mission of providing instruction in English as a Second Language to develop the language and academic skills, as well as the cultural awareness needed for academic, and/or professional purposes of its students. The ELI offers two distinct programs: the Intensive English Program and the Support Services Program. The Intensive English Program serves international students who come to the US to study English in preparation for academic study at Mason or elsewhere. New intensive program students participate in a placement test designed to assess their knowledge of English in the areas of listening, grammar, vocabulary and writing, and are placed into an appropriate level of instruction. Full-time students attend class 20 hours per week in a variety of courses integrating the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). Average intensive program class size is 15 students.

The Support Services Program serves non-native English speaking immigrant and international students who are currently enrolled in degree status at Mason, as well as international faculty, visiting scholars, and teaching assistants. The goal of the Support Services is to provide help so that linguistic and cultural backgrounds won't hinder academic success. Support Services programs include: an ESL Summer Institute for entering domestic freshmen with strong academic backgrounds but difficulty with English; provision of an ESL specialist and tutor for the Mason Writing Center; assessment of oral language skills of international teaching assistants before they begin working with students and the provision of tutoring focusing on pronunciation and oral presentation skills for those TA's who need to improve their spoken English; as well as workshops for Mason faculty on many aspects of working with non-native English speaking students in the classroom.

Judith Green  
Director, International Programs and Services

Office of International Programs and Services  
4400 University Drive, MSN: 4C3  
4300 Student Union Building I  
Fairfax, VA, 22030

To support and promote the University's mission, the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS) provides services for both institutional compliance and student development.

We are responsible for ensuring the University's compliance with laws and regulations governing international tax and non-immigrant students, faculty and staff. This means that we oversee the issuance of visa documents and the certification of eligibility for benefits for non-immigrant students and scholars. When the University sponsors a faculty member for an employment visa or a green card, OIPS coordinates the process. We also review payments to foreign nationals and foreign vendors to ensure that the University's tax obligations are met. Although our compliance mission may seem to be purely administrative in nature, it is essential to the University's most important goals—preparing our students to shape a global community and promoting excellence in teaching and research. The presence of students and faculty from around the globe (over 130 countries) enriches our campus and expands the perspectives and experiences in the classroom. OIPS makes this possible by ensuring that the University continues to recruit and retain highly qualified international students, researchers and teachers.

Equal in importance to OIPS' compliance role is our student development role, providing opportunities for students from many countries to interact and learn from each other. This process begins during our orientation program offered every fall and spring to new international students. We mobilize a team of returning international peer volunteers to assist new students in adjusting to the US and to Mason so that they can position themselves for personal and academic success. We also sponsor and co-sponsor events that promote interaction among students and with the community, including campus events (Thanksgiving Luncheon, International Education Week, President's Reception, International Week, etc.) and community excursions (museums, tours, events and performances). We provide advising and consultation to students, faculty and staff on a broad range of topics related to cultural adjustment, cross-cultural communication, and crisis intervention.

International activities and administrative functions at Mason are highly decen-

tralized. University President Alan Merton has referred to this (non-) structure as the “happy chaos” of internationalization. But there is good reason to keep international activities spread throughout the administrative structure, because doing so ensures that the University’s global mission is a collaborative responsibility and a shared commitment. OIPS provides the administrative support that underlies certain aspects of internationalization and works to promote the interaction and outreach that make connection and communication possible.

Kathy Goodkin  
Acting Director, University Writing Center

The Writing Center  
4400 University Drive, MSN: 2G8  
Robinson Hall A, Room 114  
Fairfax, VA 22030

49% of clients who use George Mason University's Writing Center speak English as a second (or third, or fourth) language. Our clients come from more than thirty different language backgrounds, and many different academic traditions. Many of George Mason's ESL students already have a sophisticated grasp of concepts in their disciplines, and need support and encouragement to bring their English communication skills to the same level. Along with the challenges of learning the ins and outs of writing and speaking in English, international students must also gain access to the conventions of American academic writing, which differ from other academic traditions, and vary from discipline to discipline.

The Writing Center employs two levels of support specifically designed to help English language learners with writing and communication issues that are particular to their academic experiences. All Writing Center tutors are trained to be aware of the concerns of international and ESL students; additionally, the Writing Center employs a staff of ESL specialists, whose sole purpose is to help with issues of grammar and convention that are particular to students coming from other language backgrounds. To address the sentence-level needs of beginning English language learners, the Writing Center has recently developed an "Opt-In Program," in which students sign up for weekly or bi-weekly appointments with the same ESL specialist. The appointment structure for Opt-In students differs from the traditional writing center appointment structure in that ESL specialists focus the session primarily on instruction and practice of sentence-level issues (grammar and mechanics) whereas non-Opt-In appointments are less directive and focus on learning the conventions of argument and organization that are particular to their discipline in the American academy. The specialist helps Opt-In students identify error-patterns, teaches the student to correct these errors, and then provides the student with appropriate practice exercises. The semester-long program is designed to assist Mason's L2 writers without being limited to one particular assignment. This consistent feedback has demonstrated marked improvement in students' sentence level communication after one semester of work.

Previous publications in the *Diversity at Mason* series include:

*Diversity at Mason: Student Reflections*. Edited by David W. Haines, Samuel Brase, Alejandra Gonzalez-Arias, Celine Kemp, Tiffany Newsome, and Razia Tajuddin. June, 2006.

*Valuing Written Accents: Non-native Students Talk about Identity, Academic Writing, and Meeting Teachers' Expectations*. Authored by Terry Myers Zawacki, Eiman Hajabbasi, Anna Habib, Alex Antram, and Alokparna Das. June, 2007.

*Diversity at Mason: The Fulbright Experience*. Edited by Sandarshi Gunawardena and Karen E. Rosenblum. June, 2008.

*Diversity at Mason: Student Research on Student Identity*. Edited by Karen E. Rosenblum, Naliyah K. Kaya, and John N. Robinson III. August 2009.

For additional information on the Diversity Research Group, see the DRG website at:

<http://drg.gmu.edu>

At George Mason, we serve our students and we push our disciplinary knowledge forward in the context of twenty-first century globalization. It is in this context that we strive to create and sustain an intellectual space that is as inclusive as it is diverse. In short, diversity at George Mason is not accidental; rather, it is the university's comprehensive, pragmatic, and intentional response to education within changing world dynamics. We are preparing the next generation to succeed in a growingly competitive world. Our goal with this issue of the Diversity at Mason publication is to showcase pieces of the collaborative internationalization process, highlighting the work and life of international students as twenty-first century scholars.

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