

Code-meshed Texts and Translingual Engagement in a First Year Writing Classroom

Dan Curtis-Cummins

M.A. Candidate, English Composition

San Francisco State University

for Jennifer Trainor; Mark Roberge

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Introduction: Where I Come From

One of my students recently asked me, ‘Why language?’ Such a straight-forward question reminded me of the complexity of where I come from. ‘Well, language is who we are, and how we represent ourselves,’ I replied after some thought. Language is our identity and what we bring to the classroom. After some more thought, and thinking about my father’s influential work for second language learners in elementary school classrooms (Cummins), I believe that language is an important focus because students who come into our classrooms speaking multiple languages, or speaking multiple dialects of English, should not be penalized for who they are. When viewed in this way, it is easier to see that the dominant, standardized academic English expected in school creates a discriminatory environment for multilingual students. What is not so easy to see, and what will be the focus of this paper, is that such monolingual, standardized environments create an ideologically circumscribing learning experience for students from all linguistic backgrounds, including those from so-called ‘standard’ English speaking backgrounds. In other words, from a social justice perspective, that any nonstandard or hybrid dialect is seen as a deficit to the student’s potential in the academic community amounts to an inherently white privileged, limited system of thought that ultimately has drawbacks for the educational experiences of *all students* involved.

Language is who we are and what we bring to the important conversations in our lives, inside and outside of school. I came into teaching composition with the belief that literacy instruction is all about engagement and interaction with the multiple experiences with language that surround our students, with ‘academic’ literacy being one of those important experiences. I came into teaching in general firmly believing that all learning happens through a constructive,

reflective process, through what Freire called a ‘problem-posing’ pedagogy¹. Thus, my First-Year composition courses are framed with critical questions about language use in academic writing. This course theme is posed as a question headlining my syllabus and assignments to start a discussion that negotiates their prior experience with language, their expectations for university standards, and our classroom discourse based on critical inquiry and collaborative knowledge-building.

In this way, meaning-making in my composition courses is a transactional process between myself and my students. While we don’t sit in ‘culture circles’ discussing the labor issues that were central to the experiences of Freire’s students in Brazil, this approach applies in our discussion circles where we analyze language choices that authors make in academic writing and connect them to the rhetorical choices students make in their own academic work. In the pages that follow I discuss what came of this pedagogy in a curriculum focused on language diversity. Through an analysis of student writing surrounding one assignment in particular, I show how my critical pedagogy focused on language issues holds great potential for engaging students in their reading and writing processes, and their active development of academic identities that reflect their language use and choices. While my literature review will support the multiple theories, studies, and pedagogies that establish the benefits of engaging non-dominant discourses for multilingual students, the current discussion highlights the added value of these texts for engaging mainstream, monolingual students, generally focusing on an

¹ As Ira Shor describes of the Freirean pedagogy which has largely influenced my choices as a teacher, “The classroom itself is active and interactive thanks to problem-posing, co-operative learning, and participatory formats. The critical dialogue also seeks action outcomes from the inquiry wherever feasible. Is knowledge power? How do people act on the knowledge and from knowledge to gain power, to change things?” (Shor 33). Knowledge is power, we believe, and according to Foucault, “Power must be analysed [sic] as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain.... individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application” (98). I seek to make my students vehicles of power through their writing, for whatever academic or community purpose is important to them, and by sharing in the learning process becoming mutual producers of knowledge.

active revision of what constitutes 'legitimate' academic discourse and 'standard' academic English.

This paper, then, will frame a discussion of how my particular brand of critical pedagogy adds to the conversation about Standard Language Ideology, dialect difference, and engagement in 'translingual practices' (Canagarajah) in composition classrooms. To frame this conversation about language diversity in Composition Studies, I begin by reviewing the contributions of past theorists and pedagogues since the 1974 Students' Right to their Own Language (SRTOL) Resolution, from various perspectives critiquing Standard Language Ideology (Lippi-Greene; McCrary; Siegel; Gilyard and Richardson; Smitherman; Young), and how these scholars respond with various pedagogies representing hybrid (McCrary), 'code-meshed' (Young), critical awareness (Siegel) and 'translingual' (Canagarajah) approaches.

Following the literature review, I exemplify my own pedagogical approach to counteracting the dispositional effects of Standard Language Ideology on my students in terms of their reading and writing attitudes, as shown through their writing. The stories of the dispositional shifts in their attitudes towards academic language are told through one assignment in particular, the 'rhetorical analysis through difficulty paper.' In this assignment, my students were asked to discuss either Vershawn Young's *Should Writers Use They Own English?* or Gloria Anzaldua's *How to Tame a Wild Tongue* in terms of the writer's academic moves, their intended effects on their audience through their language use, and then reflect on how those effects 'worked on them' in their reading process through a 'close reading' difficulty analysis. In the end, my analysis of student writing samples reveals that students from all linguistic backgrounds benefit from assignments like these, as they become engaged with 'academic' language and the definition of academic writing in new and transformative ways through their critical interaction with 'code-meshed,' hybrid texts.

Literature Review: Framing the 'Translingual' Conversation.

The brief introduction to my teaching philosophy above situates my experience in a progressive tradition to challenge closed, uncritical beliefs about academic writing, including beliefs about fixed forms, and the implications of confining language use within predetermined, hegemonic standards. I have come to understand that a primary vehicle for challenging such an ideology is through engaging students with academic texts that force them to question their preconceptions of 'acceptable' or 'appropriate' academic discourse, with authors that write from diverse, traditionally ignored, stigmatized, and oppressed discourses. To challenge students' definition of standard academic English, I assign texts that use what Vershawn Ashanti Young calls 'code-meshed' language, in what has recently been called 'translingual practices' (Canagarajah) that bridge students' multiple literacies regardless of their linguistic background. The primary function of using these readings is that while students may or may not connect with the language, these code-meshed texts shock their preconceptions of what is allowed in academic discourse, and opens this discourse up to critical dialogue about knowledge construction, meaning-making, and argumentation as the core features of academic writing. In the interactions that students and I had with these texts and languages, in these 'translingual practices' between multiple discourse communities simultaneously, students from mainstream and non-mainstream language backgrounds alike were invited into the academic conversation in ways they never thought possible.

Canagarajah defines translingual practice in opposition to "[p]roduct-oriented, monolingual, and norm-based teaching" (7), where the complexity and significance of the concept lies in the assertion that "'translingual practice' is emerging as a term that accommodates hybrid practices without ignoring the inherent hybridity in products that appear on the surface to approximate dominant conventions. The orientation thus enables us to *discern agency and voice of both multilingual and monolingual writers* in textual products that

have varying relationships to the norm” (4; emphasis added). As the ensuing discussion will show, my particular interest in using code-meshed texts is to address a seeming gap in the research about the benefit of such texts for mainstream, perceivably ‘standard’ English speakers alongside the clear benefit of such texts for engaging multilingual speakers. Through exposure to the new possibilities of ‘academic discourse,’ students from all backgrounds are challenged and enabled to experiment, take risks, and develop their own voice in opposition to the ‘norm of academic writing’ that they came into the classroom with an implicit and sometimes unknowing resistance towards.

Background to the Conversation about Dialect Difference. The use of diverse, hybrid and code-meshed texts has been widely written about in Composition Studies. ‘Translingual practices’ of the past have been mainly focused on the pedagogical benefits for students of color and those from multilingual backgrounds, in validating their experience and including them in the academic conversation. Founded with the CCCC and NCTE’s Students Right to their Own Language (SRTOL) resolution in 1974, a movement was started in Composition Studies that has inspired my critical pedagogy today, based on the value of linguistic diversity for the academic experience of all students. Citing the *SRTOL*, where “the NCTE [National Council of Teachers of English] promote classroom practices to expose students to the variety of dialects that comprise our multiregional, multiethnic, and multicultural society, so that they too will understand the nature of American English” (“Keep Code-Meshing” 141), Young writes that

[t]he debate between teachers who wish to honor students’ native languages and dialects as they teach English language and its various arts —listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and visually representing— and those who believe students must be taught standard English only, since other Englishes are still believed to have limited value, if any, in academic and professional sites, is presently just as intense as it was in 1974. (“Keep Code-Meshing” 141)

With this territory established, Young discusses the value of teaching from a ‘code-meshing’ perspective that resolves the disagreement between the “one side [that] simply refuse to teach any effective language that comes from standard English or academic discourse, because they feel as if such school-based language violates students’ home language” (141-142), and the other, where students are ‘reprimanded’ for ‘blending dialects,’ and “asked to switch from their English to the standard. ...[B]oth accede to the monolithic ideal of standard English” (142).

Code-meshing, which is a concept coined by Young in 2004, is an approach that resolves the seeming conflict between two polarities, strictly standardized or strictly diverse, and recognizes the reality of students’ ‘translingual’ experiences with ‘the nature of American English,’ regardless of their background. The use of diverse, hybrid, ‘code-meshed’ texts, as has been established, is central to my teaching and engagement in the composition scholarship.

To further establish the territory of the conversation I am entering here, the work done by composition scholars since the 1974 resolution re-examines the fundamental issue of dialect difference through sociolinguistic theories responding to Standard Language Ideology (Lippi-Green; Young; Smitherman; McCrary; Siegel; Gilyard and Richardson). These sociolinguistic theories challenge the assumption that non-mainstream dialects are seen as either ‘incorrect,’ lacking the cultural capital of the wider society, or belonging to communities who are perceived to have a cultural deficit. Each of these theorists go on to discuss pedagogical approaches that successfully integrate alternative dialects into student reading and writing assignments, in order to legitimate non-mainstream, code-meshed, or ‘translingual’ dialects and discourses, such as pidgin, creole, Spanish, Chicano, or ‘mestiza’ English, and perhaps mostly studied in the U.S. context of Composition Studies, Black English Vernacular (BEV). The outcomes of these studies and pedagogical directions provides the rationale for the current discussion of how linguistically privileged, mainstream students may engage more richly and critically with non-mainstream, linguistically diverse texts than traditional academic texts, and become more

engaged members of a diverse, social justice-oriented and critically transformative community of scholars in the process.

Standard Language Ideology Defined By ‘Hip’ Composition Scholars. Smitherman calls conservative, old school proponents of Standard Language Ideology ‘Unhip Scholars’, and progressives like her ‘Enlightened’ (21). In the context of her defense of SRTOL, Smitherman defines Standard Language Ideology, without explicitly naming it such, as a

game plan [that] has always been linguistic and cultural absorption of the Other into the dominant culture, and indoctrination of the outsiders into the existing value system (e.g., Sledd 1972), to remake those on the margins in the image of the patriarch, to reshape the outsiders into talking, acting, thinking, and (to the extent possible) looking like the insiders... (25)

Similarly situating her definition of Standard Language Ideology within the larger American ‘game’ of assimilation, June Jordan (as cited in Lippi-Green), makes her point more astutely: “Language is political. That’s why you and me, my Brother and Sister, that’s why we sposed to choke our natural self into the weird, lying, barbarous, unreal, white speech and writing habits that the schools lay down like holy law” (186). For many of our students, the standardized English they experience in school creates an alienating, ‘wierd, lying, barbarous’ learning environment that ‘chokes’ their natural selves, their core identities. In a more political tone, Lippi-Green discusses ‘good English’ as the uncritical acceptance of the ‘standard’:

There is a common conception that there is a good English, and following from that, bad English. Further, there is a good deal of consensus on who speaks good English, and who has the authority to decide what is good ... there is little debate at all about who sets the standards for spoken and written language, standards which have been the focus of legislation, standards which affect our everyday lives. (3)

In a subsequent chapter of her book, *English with an Accent*, Lippi-Green goes on to connect Standard Language Ideology to the Civil Rights Movement, where

AAVE [African American Vernacular English]...seems to symbolize black resistance to a cultural mainstreaming process [and] ...evokes a kind of panic, a realization that desegregation has not done its job. The reasoning seems to be that the logical conclusion to a successful civil rights movement is the end of racism *not because we have come to accept difference, but because we have eliminated difference*. There is no need for a distinct African American (or Mexican, or Vietnamese) culture (or language), because those people will have full access to, and control of, the superior European American one. (183)

The interconnections between culture and language, assimilation and ‘elimination of difference,’ pervades the premise of Standard Language Ideology. Standard Language Ideology is present everywhere in American society as a method of control, assimilation, and discrimination, but nowhere more prevalent than in our schools, and through ‘old school’ writing instruction.

McCrary writes that “[p]rivileging standard English is ‘working counter to the cultural multiplicity that we seek’” (75), and goes on to define Standard Language Ideology in terms of linguistic violence on students. In advocating for hybrid discourse, McCrary contends that “Standard English supremacy wages such a linguistic and psychological assault on other-literate students that it is extremely difficult for many of them to resist its pernicious effects...” (89). Jeff Siegel describes some of the ‘pernicious effects’ of Standard Language Ideology as “the pervasive belief in the superiority of the abstracted and idealized form of language based on the spoken language of the upper middle classes — i.e., the standard variety” (161). Further, “[f]or dominant groups to continue to dominate, they need to convince subordinate groups that the status quo is the natural order of things” (161), which according to Siegel, they do primarily through the formal education system as the hegemonic vehicle of social control. It is only

natural that students resist such an ideology and that as composition teachers we understand where they are coming from. It is also important to keep in mind that these ideologies implicitly shape how mainstream, monolingual, and privileged students feel about academic reading and writing as well, limiting their rhetorical choices and potential to create new knowledge through their writing and interaction with their peers.

Young offers the most aggressive critique of Standard Language Ideology and compelling calls for integration of diverse dialects in Composition Studies. For Young, Standard Language Ideology represents not only a white privileged composition culture, but the proliferation of racist American attitudes through the divisiveness of a ‘separate but equal’ language approach. Racial difference and language difference “be intertwined” (“Should Writers Use They Own English?” 110) according to Young. Critiquing Stanley Fish’s ‘code-switching’ stance as embedded within Standard Language Ideology, Young writes,

Standard language ideology is the belief that there is one set of dominant language rules that stem from a single dominant discourse (like standard English) that all writers and speakers of English must conform to in order to communicate effectively. Dominant language ideology also say peeps can speak whateva the heck way they want to — BUT AT HOME! (111)

Here Young critiques the popular idea of ‘code-switching’ for its complicity with Standard Language Ideology, and without concrete teaching models for doing so, proposes and exemplifies the idea of ‘code-meshing’ as a way to overcome Standard Language Ideology and integrate non-standard forms of English with standard academic English in composition classrooms. “Code meshing is the new code switching; it’s multidialectalism and plurilingualism in one speech act, in one paper” (“Should Writers Use They Own English?” 114). As already discussed, the concept of ‘code-meshing’ will provide the theoretical framework of the studies and pedagogies that foreground my own.

To further de-bunk Standard Language Ideology and rationalize any attempts to integrate non-standard dialects with standard academic English, many scholars have cited sociolinguistic theories that counteract the ideology's claims to superiority or intellectual supremacy, highlighting the political and economic nature of privileging standard English. Lippi-Green, in her chapter, *The Linguistic Facts of Life*, claims that although there is a variation in linguistic theory, "the statement *All living languages change* is one that no academic linguist would deny" (6). Hence, there can be no standard if the contributions of diverse speakers and popular culture trends are constantly transforming spoken and written conventions of the English language. McCrary writes that "according to deconstruction theory, all language contains fissures, breaks, and absences that reveal the nature of the discourse and allow linguistic penetration" (74), and it is within these 'fissures' that 'other-literate' students can find ways to make contributions to the academic conversation using what he calls 'hybrid texts.' Finally, and ending this discussion where it began, the sociolinguistic foundation of the SRTOL Resolution is based on the assertion written into the Resolution that, "[l]anguage scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another" (as cited in Smitherman 21). These sociolinguistic background theories have coalesced in the concepts of 'translingual practice' (Canagarajah) in which I have embedded my discussion here, and founded a theoretical basis for the linguistic agency I encourage in my pedagogy, recognizing the importance of standard English in academic writing but in critically resistant ways.

The contributions of sociolinguistic theory and the deconstruction of Standard Language Ideology in Composition Studies since the SRTOL Resolution have paved the way for the empirical studies and teaching practices that explore possibilities for integration and 'code meshing.' Various studies and pedagogical practices make the case for integrating non-

mainstream dialects into composition curricula, through code-meshing (Young), the use of 'hybrid texts' (McCrary), Jeff Siegel's 'critical awareness approach,' and the particular case study done by Gilyard and Richardson to research students' use of Black English Vernacular in their writing. All of these pedagogical approaches have influenced my teaching and foreground the discussion of viable pedagogical possibilities and teacher collaborations for future research in light of my experience.

Pedagogies of Hybrid, 'Code-meshed', and Translingual Composition Classrooms. Young proposes 'code meshing' as a way to subvert the dominance of Standard Language Ideology, which creates possibilities for students from non-mainstream discourse communities to enter the formal academic conversation without fully abandoning their language, voice, and identities. As scholars to be discussed below exemplify, this approach empowers students from linguistically marginalized backgrounds without downplaying the importance of standard academic English. Further, as Canagarajah points out about translingual practice and student agency, Young's concept of code-meshing has the potential to expand the canon of 'academic' discourse, transform Composition Studies, and positively impact the reading and writing experiences of *all students* by expanding their literary *and* cultural repertoires, as well as giving them greater rhetorical possibilities in their academic writing (Canagarajah 5).

McCrary proposes a version of Young's 'code meshing' in concrete reading and writing assignments using 'hybrid texts.' McCrary's teaching is concerned with using multiple forms of English in an integrated approach, avoiding the exclusionary language ideologies identified above. McCrary writes,

I'm not saying that students should write exclusively in black English, or any other non-standard English language. Instead, I'm preachin' hybrid discourse, and one of the languages students use should be standard English because that

is the language the academy knows best and successful communication is an important concern. (74)

Hybrid discourse has the potential to transform the ‘language the academy knows best’ by using standard English conventions integrated with non-mainstream dialects and discourses.

McCrary proposes some concrete ways that he breaks down what he calls the “walls of linguistic intolerance” (75) in his classrooms, assigning students to read various literacy autobiographies that exemplify ‘code-meshing’ or hybrid discourse, similar to Anzaldua’s *How to Tame a Wild Tongue* and Young’s more theoretical *Should Writers Use They Own English?*, and encourages students to experiment with hybrid discourse in journal entries to the texts. He then asks students to write their own literacy autobiographies in which they have linguistic options to use, or not to use, multiple dialects.

In an assignment prompt for such a ‘literacy autobiography essay’ aimed at getting students to activate “their own linguistic knowledge” (78), McCrary gives students the following: “For this assignment, feel free to use hybrid discourse; in other words, you may use multiple languages in this essay, keeping in mind the language knowledge of your audience. However, one of the languages that you use should be standard English” (86). Drawing on their underlying linguistic competence in order to teach academic discourse reflects McCrary’s ultimate goals as a composition teacher, to “increase students’ awareness of language, help them to examine language more closely, to recognize structures, words, and styles” (89). Hence, beyond validating students’ home language in their reading and writing situations, when students in McCrary’s classrooms interact with dialect difference through reading, discussion, and writing, his students increase their rhetorical awareness of the English language in general, ultimately making them more effective writers in standard academic English. Canagarajah points out about the “translingual orientation ... that this kind of literacy is intrinsically rhetorical”(5), bringing diverse forms into question, recognizing writers’ cultural backgrounds,

and analyzing writers' conscious rhetorical choices with language, for certain audiences, for specific academic purposes, and carrying an intended message. My further analysis of student writing and ensuing discussion below will clearly relay the benefits of increasing rhetorical awareness for all students based on their engagement with hybrid texts.

In his approach to what Canagarajah would call a translingual pedagogy, Siegel proposes a three-stage 'critical awareness approach' for engaging students with non-mainstream dialects. The 'sociolinguistic component' of his critical awareness approach analyzes and deconstructs the power dynamics of language, including political and historical aspects of what is 'standard,' and the social consequences for those whose language is marginalized. The 'accommodation component' involves reading and interacting with dialect varieties and giving students opportunities to use alternative dialects in writing prompts, "participating with their own voice in areas where they are normally excluded" (168). Third, the 'contrastive component' invites students to study alternative dialects in comparison to standard English, but goes beyond 'code switching'. According to Siegel, this third approach teaches written conventions and "rule governed phonological, morphosyntactic and pragmatic characteristics of their own varieties compared to those of other students' varieties and to the standard" (163), and engages students in 'lexicogrammatical' analysis of their own varieties to gain greater grammatical and rhetorical awareness of standard English. In truly translingual practice, it is important to point out that part of the contrastive component involves students' awareness of their own dialect and development of academic voice, whatever their "relationship to the norm" (Canagarajah 4), in comparison to their classmates, institutional standards, and how this complex interaction plays out in the discourse of the classroom. Siegel's approach helps build the rationale for my student-centered, constructivist pedagogy and the assignment that came out of it (to be described below).

Siegel describes programs in Hawaii, the Caribbean, and Australia with speakers of Creole or Pidgin, and programs in Los Angeles and Chicago with African American students, where through his awareness approach, students generally increased their test scores in standard English and oral language skills, and showed an "increased interest in language in general" (164). In Los Angeles and Chicago, African American students in 'awareness approach' programs have "more relaxed attitudes towards learning, increased bidialectal awareness and marked improvement in performance on standardized tests" (165). By validating and critically drawing on the linguistic competence that students bring to the academic conversation (or translingual *dispositions* that Canagarajah describes), Siegel found that students' academic competence and achievement, as well as '*attitudes* towards learning,' improved as they negotiated and engaged with the institutional realities of standardized tests and grading rubrics.

Similarly positive effects on learning were found in case studies done by Gilyard and Richardson, where they analyzed essays written by 52 African American students at two universities from 1996-1998 for features of BEV style, discourse, and history. These students were all engaged in the same curriculum "featuring Afrocentric topics" (Gilyard & Richardson 39). In addition, their pedagogy included

...instruction in academic writing/rhetorical practices incorporating rhetorical and discursive practices of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) culture [including style, content, discourse, knowledge], (b) examination of the African American literacy tradition through exploration of values, beliefs, and history as presented in African American texts and media, (c) the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, etc.), and (d) writing workshops. (43)

Gilyard and Richardson's study revolved around an experimental curriculum to "address the central question of to what extent African American speech styles can be instrumental to the

development of critical academic writing ... a consideration of AAVE's role in a creative, intellectually engaging, persuasive, and at times revolutionary discourse" (39). In a similar vein as McCrary's use of hybrid texts, although more distinctly focused on BEV, the students "analyzed rap lyrics and studied various media and texts that exemplified Black discourse styles [and] activities and assignments were developed which encouraged students to experiment with these Black discourse and rhetorical patterns" (Gilyard and Richardson 43) in their own writing. Multiple other scholars who could be called 'translingualists,' too many to describe here, focus on 'hip hop' and popular musical genres as a way to bridge discourse communities and expose students to dialect difference to further engage their learning, literacy, and academic reading and writing attitudes (see Sanchez 2010; Milu 2013; Rice 2003; Campbell 2007).

The findings of Gilyard and Richardson's study were based on an essay prompt responding to a controversial passage about Black English, asking students to take a stance arguing for a rhetorical strategy of unity with the larger society through language that appeals to black people and white people, such as spoken by Martin Luther King, Jr., or a strategy of divisiveness to appeal primarily to black audiences. As a model assignment to use in a course utilizing 'hybrid texts,' code-meshing, and the critical awareness approach, this prompt took a different approach than I will describe below, but accomplished the same rhetorically valuable objectives of promoting audience awareness, purpose, and taking a stance on language issues. Further, "[s]tudents specifically were asked to compose college-level responses, using their best prose, including Black discourse styles" (45), promoting integration of Black discourse and standard English. In the majority of cases, students' overall writing scores improved as assessed by outside evaluators on a holistic scale, and reinforced other findings that such critical discussions, readings, and writing through non-mainstream dialects increased student engagement and learning outcomes in academic English for students of those dialects.

Beyond including this study for the models of curriculum and assignments it provides, the results point to the positive effects of including diverse dialect features and alternative discourses in writing classes. Similar to studies of the past such as Smitherman's cited above, which analyze linguistic diversity in composition through African American discourse features, Gilyard and Richardson found that "[b]y making the African American rhetorical tradition the centerpiece of attempts to teach academic prose to African American students, especially those characterized as basic writers, we believe that we increase the likelihood that they will develop into careful, competent, critical practitioners of the written word" (50). Gilyard and Richardson ground their work in the concrete goals of composition - to produce effective writers. They also hint at implications for white students, arguing against "limiting the enormous benefits of studying African American rhetoric to a strictly African American population" (50). In this one sentence, Gilyard and Richardson hint at the gap in research on dialect difference I wish to address in the current discussion, building knowledge of the potentially transformative impact of such assignments for linguistically privileged students.

Implications for the Engagement of All Students. The literature reviewed herein has explored the historical place of language diversity in Composition Studies, deconstructed Standard Language Ideology, and explored possibilities for integrating non-mainstream dialects with standard English through the research and pedagogical experiments of composition teachers. Further, the past research not only justifies 'students' right to their own language,' but also points to other pedagogical benefits for integrating diverse language practices that warrant further research on mainstream, linguistically privileged students. Young cites William Labov's classic sociolinguistic research in which he asserted that

black students were ostracized because they spoke and wrote black dialect. Yet he noted that black speakers were more attuned to argumentation. Labov say that 'in many ways [black] working-class speakers are more effective narrators,

reasoners, and *debaters* than many middle-class [white] speakers, who temporize, qualify, and lose their argument in a mass of irrelevant detail' (qtd in Graff 37)....So when we teach the rhetorical devices of blacks we can add to the writing proficiency of whites and everybody else. ("Should Writers Use They Own English?" 116)

Hence, teaching through multiple dialects can give students from all backgrounds more rhetorical choices in their writing, as well as expand their linguistic and cultural repertoires. Siegel likewise sees the benefits of linguistic integration for privileged white students through his pedagogy: "In a critical awareness approach, students from privileged communities could also learn to critically examine the hidden contradictions and ideologies of their own culture, and the limits and political consequences of their own culture's world view" (170), through critical deconstruction of Standard Language Ideology as a necessary component of a linguistically integrated writing curriculum. Similarly, when using hybrid texts and encouraging students to 'code-mesh,' which Young claims "help[s] them be more rhetorically effective" (116), McCrary writes that "[i]n *Slam*, writers from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds — including many white readers — exhibit facility with hybrid discourse, demonstrating the linguistic availability of both standard and non-standard dialects" (79-80).

To further embed the past literature in the emerging discourse about translingual practice, Canagarajah writes about students from all backgrounds that participate in 'translingual' practices daily. Speaking of those of us composition teachers interested in issues of language diversity and what our students bring to the classroom,

we are ... finding that people are bringing certain *dispositions* that favor translingual communication and literacy. These dispositions ...constitute assumptions of language, attitudes towards social diversity, and tacit skills of communicating and learning include an awareness of language as constituting

diverse norms; a willingness to negotiate with diversity in social interactions; attitudes of openness to difference, patience to construct meaning, and an acceptance of negotiated outcomes in interactions; and an ability to learn through practice and critical self-reflection (5).

These features of 'translingual' practice that our continuation of the SRTOL conversation reiterates in our current theoretical language are worth quoting at length as justification for a pedagogy that is based on language as it is, not monolingual myths of a standardized past that students resist. The foundations for critical integration of dialect diversity in Composition Studies that has been laid by past researchers has manifested in our shifted focus on the hybrid forms our students use everyday, and the code-meshed language practices that Young identifies happening all over the cultural landscape of U.S. society in the argument he builds in *Should Writers Use Their Own English?*

This further sets the stage for synthesizing the contributions of past scholars in a renewed focus on student engagement, agency, and authority as primary objectives for our composition curricula and pedagogies, in general. Canagarajah writes, "By allowing community [translingual] practices into the classroom, teachers can study the strategies and dispositions students have already developed elsewhere. Building on these resources rather than imposing their own understanding of literacy, teachers can also facilitate spaces for voice for students" (9). Lu and Horner complicate the notion of translingual practice by reframing student writing as always involving language choices, and regardless of seemingly mono- or multilingual background, that student writing involves "the ways in which individual language users fashion and re-fashion standardized norms, identity, the world, and their relation to others and the world" (28). Lu and Horner challenge "the false assumption that agency manifests itself only in recognized deviations from the norm rather than in all language acts" (29). In their translingual approach, all student writers in such a pedagogy are held responsible for negotiating their

academic voice within varying relationships to standardized norms and diverse community-based language practices. Such a translingually-oriented pedagogy is “of benefit to all students (and all writers), including those deemed mainstream monolinguals and those deemed multilinguals” (29). Lu and Horner continue:

By asking students to explore not what to do and not to do, but how they are doing English and why, we put them in a position to probe their responsibility in using the linguistic ‘commons’ that currently constitutes English as a putative global link across different peoples, cultures, and languages. In doing so, we can engage the agency of not just students and writing designated ‘mainstream,’ and not just those designated as outside that ‘mainstream,’ but both. (32)

The discussion of agency and voice, as Young and others have pointed out, cannot ignore the institutional reality of Standard Language Ideology. Canagarajah reminds us that “[i]t is also important for communities and students to be mindful of the power of educational institutions ... monolingualist language ideologies and dominant norms. ...Social and educational success means *engaging* with these norms, though this doesn’t mean uncritical acceptance or conformity” (9). Lu and Horner in the same volume write that “the translingual approach justifies and suggests a pedagogically more productive way to teach minority and multilingual students to produce standardized forms of English” (34), while not underestimating the same benefit for monolingual students in a critical approach. Canagarajah concludes, “It is such critical educational engagement that can also lead to the pluralization of norms and the construction of more democratic social spaces” (10). By embracing linguistic diversity in our classrooms in the many ways explored above, we will eventually shift the ethos of Composition Studies as a whole, restructuring the norms that define our ideologies, and democratizing our field by recreating knowledge on larger scales from the ‘safe houses’ (Canagarajah 8) of our classrooms.

The purpose of this literature review has been to challenge Standard Language Ideology and offer viable alternatives not only for linguistically diverse students, but to ground the point of departure for my research into a seeming gap suggested by the above conclusions for mainstream, monolingual students. The work that has been started by the researchers described herein has valuable implications for future research, shifting the paradigm of Standard Language Ideology still prevalent in the field to a paradigm that reflects an increased value for the diversity in language use and rhetorical choice. The linguistic integration/code-meshing approach explored herein that creates the foundation for future research has larger implications for social justice, constructive learning environments where the contributions of all students are honored, and ultimately increased awareness, sensitivity, and engagement with diversity in our multicultural democracy. The call of the 1974 SRTOL might yet be unfulfilled, but by no means ignored in the critical pedagogies of myself and my colleagues, past and present.

My FYC Course: Essay 2, the 'Rhetorical Analysis through Difficulty Paper'

The important work reviewed above has formed a solid foundation for my curriculum and assignments for the First Year Composition course that began my story here. However, from a critical, 'translingual' process approach to the teaching of reading and writing, I believe these approaches fall just short of addressing the pedagogical and social benefits of engaging all students with diverse texts in self-reflective, consciousness-raising ways, regardless of whether they come from multilingual and diverse, or monolingual and more seemingly 'standard' English backgrounds. In discussing the pedagogical directions emerging from composition scholars concerned with language issues, Canagarajah contends, "We need to focus on practices rather than forms because the translingual orientation treats heterogeneity as the norm rather than the exception" (5). This statement is important when reorienting the goals of composition, in general, to an engagement with multiple cultural traditions of texts representing fluid, unstable,

and unfixed forms that give way to student agency in their own writing, regardless of their cultural background. While the past literature has provided immensely important foundations for paving the way for such an ideological shift, it has merely hinted at the benefits of code meshed and hybrid discourse for mainstream, monolingual English speakers, or for composition culture as a whole.

Before I proceed with my pedagogical reflections and samples of student writing in which first year writers respond to what are sure to be controversial texts to some readers, I cannot overstate the fact, as did my predecessors, that these approaches do not negate the importance of students' knowledge of and facility with the conventions of the university SLOs and standard academic English. By creating critical spaces to discuss standard language through my assignments and classroom discussions throughout the semester, students became more, not less, aware of standard academic English conventions and more rhetorically empowered to make linguistically-motivated choices in their writing. Canagarajah reminds us that "[i]n fact, this perspective makes us even more sensitive to form than in the traditional approaches. In monolingual orientations, form could be taken for granted..."(8). Instead, a translingual "orientation encourages a pedagogy that values students' choices and helps teachers think along with the rhetorical intentions of the students to find their meanings" (Canagarajah 8). Teachers construct knowledge with students through their mutual interrogation, analysis, and engagement with academic texts that take many 'forms,' standard academic English being one of them. And in Canagarajah's visionary pedagogy where teachers are "[b]uilding on these [community literacy] resources rather than imposing their own understanding of literacy, teachers can also facilitate spaces for voice for students" (9), he understands what Foucault was saying about the 'netlike organization of power,' that it is "important for communities and students to be mindful of the power of educational institutions. They reproduce monolingualist language ideologies and dominant norms...Social and educational success means *engaging*

with these norms, though this doesn't mean uncritical acceptance or conformity" (9). When we use a translingual approach to open a critical dialogue about what academic writing means, or could mean, for students based on their own experiences with language and literacy, standard language becomes one form among many that is brought into critical interaction and discussion, added to the repertoire of students' rhetorical choices when they go to write their own academic essays in conversation with the scholars and authors we assign.

The Assignment: Rhetorical Analysis through Difficulty Paper. Essay 2 in my First Year

Composition course at SF State was such an analysis of form that involved students' risky interrogation into what they accepted as 'academic' or not, and whether they trusted my faith in their authority to question the standards that had shaped their educational journey into my classroom. Further, it highlighted their *reading process* through a '*difficulty paper*' genre blended with elements of *rhetorical analysis*. The essay prompt was entitled 'Writers' Moves and Readers' Struggles' and specifically pointed students' attention to the conscious language choices that the authors made in our readings and how these choices affected their experience as academic readers. Although I had clear objectives for the assignment outlined in the syllabus, this prompt was not finalized until the day before handing it out, as I wanted to be sure that the complex expectations of the assignment were approachable and clear to my students.

After discussing the two articles for the unit, Vershawn Young's *Should Writers Use They Own English?* and Gloria Anzaldua's *How to Tame a Wild Tongue* through the lens of the instructional texts on *rhetorical analysis* (using Greene and Lidinsky's *From Inquiry to Academic Writing (2nd Ed.)*) and literature on *difficulty papers* from SFSU's English Department, we brainstormed their questions and anxieties about the assignment. Through the constructive process of my class we finalized the guidelines together and the format of the essay became a letter to a past English teacher describing their reading process of one of these texts, using rhetorical questions and other moves to create a conversation with this past teacher about

whether they thought it was ‘academic,’ and discussing why or why not. Through the difficulty format of “identify[ing] 2-3 passages in the text where you were confused, perplexed, intrigued, surprised, and/or ‘thrown off’ or moved by the language or how it was used” (see Appendix A), students were also asked to “Analyze the language for its rhetorical appeals of pathos, ethos, logos. ...Why did the author make those rhetorical moves in the 2-3 passages? ...For what audience?”(see Appendix A), and other questions to guide their rhetorical analysis and personal reflection of meaning-making and developing definition of academic writing. The assignment was complex, but the nonthreatening format of a letter proved effective, and both their essays and post-unit reflections (assigned after every unit/essay) confirmed to me that the complex assignment was valuable and that students were truly engaged with the texts through the in-class activities and their analyses. Through our collaborations, students were invested in the essay, surprisingly self-reflective about their reading process, and were very engaged in class discussion. Tellingly, many students seemed skeptical about whether or not this was a test, of whether such types of writing were really allowed to be called ‘academic’ as they conceived of it as First Year college students in their fifth week of school.

Categories of Analysis. Not only were the students able to conduct complex, sophisticated analyses (in the familiar language I encouraged them to use as a ‘way in’ to the academic community), their essays showed how critically they questioned and stretched their worldviews about the academic community as they were entering it through my classroom. I should disclose that these samples were taken from their final portfolio, where they had the opportunity to revise from their first teacher draft based on my comments. However, I don’t believe anyone made major revisions; they were all sentence level at best.

For my purposes here and based on my initial analysis for this discussion, I divided the student writing samples into three categories. The first category includes students who came from mainstream, monolingual backgrounds, and who came into my classroom by successfully

approximating 'standard academic English' in high school. For the students in this first category, their attitude and disposition about academic writing was both challenged and enlightened by this assignment. The second category consisted of students who were unsure of their academic competence, 'did not like' academic reading and writing as stated in their reflections, or were otherwise ambiguous towards it. Through Essay 2, these students had a clear dispositional shift, both in their attitude towards my class and participation in it, as well as a seemingly positive shift in how they view the academic community in general and their role in it. The third category I will discuss includes those students who seemed to take advantage of the opportunity this essay afforded them to develop an academic voice that was their own, and that they felt comfortable with. These students showed that they were clearly taking risks (as the other categories exemplify as well), exploring language in new ways within a formal academic essay, with a teacher they were still unsure of (myself) , and in their fifth week of college. The main outcome for all of these categories, and for most if not all of my students, was that they saw academic reading and writing in a new light, they developed "an awareness of language as constituting diverse norms; a willingness to negotiate with diversity in social interactions; attitudes such as openness to difference, patience to construct meaning..."(5), in Canagarajah's words. I could not have described the 'translingual' ethos that this assignment created in my classroom any better.

Dispositional Shifts in High Achieving Students. Walter and Melissa² were both highly motivated students who came from backgrounds of academic achievement, taking AP English and Literature courses in high school. Walter, who chose not to disclose his ethnic background on his student information sheet, spoke 'standard' English, and although he had written about his father growing up "speaking French, English, and Hebrew all under one roof" (Essay 1), did not speak any other languages than English, although he was exposed to them through his father.

² all student names are pseudonyms

Melissa was 'White,' was raised in a home where British English was spoken, and spoke no other languages. I give this brief background to account for the factors that contributed to their dispositional shift towards academic writing through their engagement with Young's article, which both of them chose to write about in Essay 2.

From his privileged and advanced academic background, Walter opened his essay (after a brief introduction within the 'letter' format to his past English teacher), by writing, "College has showed me another way to look at the academic world, especially in my English course. We focus on a multitude of different academic writing styles so each student can create their own identity in their papers. Through the course we are encouraged to stray away from the standard English that we grew up trying to perfect and instead write with our own vernacular" (see Appendix B). Already in both the introduction to his paper, and Week 6 of the course, Walter indicates that he sees the goal of the assignment as it fits into the overall course objective. Melissa opens her letter,

The past few weeks in my English 114 class has been thought-provoking in a way that I would never have expected. You see, the reading we've been doing in class is not written in 'formal' language and it's throwing me off. We are always meant to look for incorrect uses of language in the writing we see and fix them. Our essays must be written in a certain way to be given a good grade. Until this class, in school we have been encouraged to disregard writing that does not meet the formal criteria. ...We read many articles in your classes, but we never read anything like Vershawn Ashanti Young's "Should Writer's Use They Own English?" After reading this article, I am beginning to question the use of 'formal' or 'correct' language. And before you think, '[Melissa], don't listen to Young, there is a wrong and a right way to use the English language', I want you to hear what I learned from this article. (see Appendix C)

Melissa not only identifies a shift in seeing a 'right' and a 'wrong' way to write, that she no longer sees 'correct' forms as achieved through writing that can be 'fixed,' and other misconceptions about academic writing that she reflects on in this letter to her past high school teacher, she specifically sees Young's article as a turning point in her academic experience that 'throws her off.' Melissa uses this text as a way to experiment and develop academic reading strategies for difficult texts, the first of the major objectives for the assignment. "When I first started reading the article I had difficulty comprehending the text due to the vocabulary and spelling. For example Young begins his article with this: 'Lord, lord, lord! Where do I begin, cuz this man sho tryin to take the nation back to a time when we were less tolerant of linguistic and racial differences' (Young 110)" (see Appendix C). Reflecting on her personal reading struggles throughout her life having to do with dyslexia, Melissa came up with a reading strategy that drew on what we did our early peer revision workshops: reading out loud.

As you know my dyslexia keeps me from comprehending words in a normal way. In one way or another, I always struggle when I read. This coupled with the heavy use of colloquialisms in the text had me struggling to keep up. However, I have been dealing with my dyslexia my entire life. I have learned ways to tackle such text as this, which slow me down. My way around this was to read the text out loud. Since this dialect is rarely written down, I've never read it. However, hearing it I was able to grasp it better. I have often found that this method works. I am very much an auditory learner and I usually do best when I can see and hear the words. (see Appendix C)

Through her reflection and analysis with this assignment, Melissa interacted with language in a number of ways she never had before, primarily by strategizing about how to understand the unfamiliar text by Young, in the context of her reflections on her past reading difficulties.

Walter's 'difficulty process' was also very strategic and engaged with the language. While Walter could also be 'seeing through' my objectives for the assignment, he did a very thorough reading process reflection, describing a 'code switching' process he used to translate the dialect into his own so that he could better understand the language. He wrote,

For instance, Vershawn Young was quoting Stanley Fish who he based most of his paper from. He said 'Stanley Fish say he be appalled at blatant prejudice, and get even madder at prejudice exhibited by those who claim it don't happen no mo...'(1) When first reading that line, I had no idea what Young was trying to convey. I read it again and still nothing. It may seem pretty simple to most, but I was having a very hard time deciphering these hieroglyphics. I decided that I needed to break it up into smaller pieces, translate those smaller pieces into language that made more sense to me, and then piece it up together into something that I could understand. (see Appendix B)

Without ever discussing strategies like this explicitly in class, I thought this move was very adept and sophisticated, confirming that I was also fulfilling one of our main Student Learning Outcomes at SF State to integrate reading and writing strategies in our composition courses. This assignment rationalizes the use of hybrid texts to promote college level reading skills, for academic texts that could be 'difficult' in any number of ways. Walter finishes that paragraph, "This process continued for the rest of the paper and after an hour I had finally got to the end. It all made sense. Every innuendo and concept was crystal clear by the last sentence" (see Appendix B).

Although Walter's own 'vernacular' did not shift much throughout the semester, he did use this paper to experiment with a comfortable, individual academic voice much like students in the third major category of this analysis. He writes, "When first reading Young's piece, it's very easy to flat out say he has no background in writing or any intelligence of the topic he is talking

about” (see Appendix B). In this sentence, Walter not only experiments with colloquialisms like ‘flat out,’ through his rhetorical analysis he describes the common assumptions that a mainstream audience may have based on the ‘ethos’ of our culture (although he didn’t use such terminology). Earlier in his analysis, he writes,

The most interesting part of the entire piece is that he practices what he teaches. As a professor, Young obviously knows how to write anything from a simple essay to a long thesis, yet throughout his entire paper he writes with an African American slang with sentences like ‘One of his points almost on da money...’(2) or ‘See, dont nobody all the time...’(2) And even though he doesn’t use the standard academic writing style we were taught from a young age, his punctuation and vocabulary (on non-slang words) is spot on. (see Appendix B)

Again, using terminology like ‘spot on’ not only fit within the parameters encouraged in this assignment, Walter’s choices of language use opened his potential to conduct his highly effective linguistic and rhetorical analysis, combined with a ‘difficulty’ reflection, and holistically his paper signaled the potential of such a translingual attitude shift through texts like Young’s and assignments like these.

In his highly engaged analysis of Young’s argument, Walter reflected on his own high school experience and the implications of both Young’s argument and style. He wrote:

To be perfectly honest, I had trouble reading this paper. It was difficult to the point where I had to reread sentences multiple times to understand their surfaces meaning, but because these repetitious actions I understood the material better than many other texts I’ve read that stayed with the standard academic writing. Along with his use of language, Young also discusses the use of “code meshing” instead of the more commonly used method of “code switching”. Coming from University High School, I could relate to his material because I’ve seen how

administration, teachers, and even other students judge the way some of the students spoke or wrote without seeing their real intelligence. I felt like our classroom was a safe place with the conversations we had on pressing issues in our society, but when it came down to write an essay you still expected students to produce work with syntax rules that don't allow creativity in writing. The intelligence of a writer shouldn't be based on if they use all the "correct" spellings in a dictionary, but the way they convey a message that allows the reader to take something away from the piece. I believe that incorporating code meshing into the strict high school standards will turn regular students into thoughtful and engaged students. (see Appendix B)

Walter is ready for action, seeing a shift in standards at the high school level as beneficial for student engagement and 'creativity.' Concluding his analysis, Walter specifically cites his dispositional shift:

After reading Young's paper, my views of how intellectual someone is based on the way they speak has drastically changed. At first it was hard to see all of the great information and knowledge that was flowing out of Young's paper because I was biased toward the way it was written. The fact that I'm writing this letter to you shows that my perception has changed. During the process of writing this letter, I wrote what felt comfortable to me. (see Appendix B)

I think it is important to point out that Walter's self-defined 'comfortable' writing style was a model assignment in my view; his letter to 'Mr. Eric Eisner' was well structured, with an analysis of the impact of Young's piece that was built around an argument for re-envisioning standards of academic writing in the context of his own high school experience with diverse classmates.

Melissa has a clear dispositional shift through our classroom discussions and her close analysis of Young's text.

Before starting this unit of my English 114 class, I would have argued that 'proper' English or standard language is the only form that should be allowed to be used in "formal" works. Young knows that many people follow this same view ... Young views this Standard language ideology as a limiting factor that is harmful to everyone. Over the past few weeks, I have begun to see that language, no matter what dialect, is a powerful weapon. (see Appendix C)

In further analyzing Young's overall argument against Standard Language Ideology, the real, lived discrimination it enacts, and the proposal for 'code meshing' that he exemplifies and defends, Melissa sees herself, a young, white, standard English speaking and writing female, as part of Young's audience. She writes, "However he is not only trying to refute Stanley Fish, he also wants to change the way his audience thinks about language. Young wants to change the way language is used in our society" (see Appendix C). Melissa goes on to discuss language diversity alongside Young's and her own recognition of its complicity with the struggles for justice among other marginalized identities: "So now it's time for language equality as well, the end of language discrimination" (see Appendix C). And she finishes with a question to her teacher, rhetorically playing on the title of her essay:

So I have a question for you: do you think that Standard language ideology is something that we as a society need? Young has some excellent points, but are they realistic? ...I find myself at a loss. And this is why I am writing to you.

Young's purpose was to connect to people like me who are willing to accept other forms of dialects and through them change the way language is used to judge people. I would love to hear your opinion on the matter. (see Appendix C)

Melissa uses her writing to engage a conversation between Young (and by extension Fish), herself, and her past English teacher, and ultimately raises critical questions that cannot, and should not, be answered easily. She used the reading and writing situation of this prompt to

grapple with real questions about language, diversity, social justice, and her developing understanding of academic discourse, the academic community, and her role in it. She does not accept anything at face value, but her preconceptions about academic writing are drastically challenged, and her essay shows significant engagement in the course and the material, and through an essay that challenged Standard Language Ideology while writing in the markedly 'standard' academic English that reflected her background. This reminds me of Lu and Horner's aims "[t]o disrupt this identification of agency only with the production of recognizable different writing, [to] outline a translingual framework for grasping the agency in all language use" (26). Melissa's interaction with the language used in Young's article, along with how she sets up her essay as a critical conversation challenging her past English teacher to consider his beliefs about standard English, show the benefit of this assignment for promoting literary agency in my students, forcing them to not only make choices in their writing, but their beliefs about writing as well.

Overall, Walter and Melissa's writing show how a translingual pedagogy, and close engagement with a hybrid and 'code meshed' text by Vershawn Young in which he "practices what he teaches" in Walter's words, transformed my classroom in a way that not only increased mainstream, monolingual students' sensitivities to language diversity, but supported Young's conclusion from Labov's study, where Labov "noted that black speakers were more attuned to argumentation" (Young 2010). In Walter's analysis of Young's article in which the foregoing conclusion was drawn, "You see that he has a colorful vocabulary and uses great punctuation when quoting others. His opinions and ideas are organized almost perfectly..."(see Appendix B). Although he concedes that "his language is just so hard to follow" (see Appendix B), Essay 2 allowed Walter to recognize dispositions that are as important for mainstream monolingual English speakers as multilingual speakers from nonmainstream discourse communities, to bring to their literacy practices. These dispositional shifts, or awakenings, are even more important

for mainstream, monolingual writers in their first year of college to increase their appreciation for diversity and open academic writing up to a ‘discourse of possibility’ that Gilyard and Richardson discuss in terms of Giroux’s theories of student agency. Examples of curricular assignments like Essay 2 and the critical pedagogy that encapsulated it throughout the semester are one way in to these transformations in knowledge and dispositions of privilege that I hope my students will continue to enact throughout their academic experiences in the university and beyond.

Dispositional Shifts in Self-Confidence and Competence. Lou and Helen were both students who had expressed negative attitudes towards academic reading and writing, or school in general, as evidenced in the honesty of their written reflections in my course. By engaging in the expanded possibilities with the diverse texts in Essay 2, their academic spirits were lightened and they became more positive both in their writing and participation in class. In her Final Reflective Essay, Helen, a highly motivated, Chinese-American female who spoke Cantonese and Mandarin in addition to English, wrote,

I remember I've [sic] started out hating writing and English class in general because I was REQUIRED to write. Over the course of the semester after having written a number of essays I have come to find the answer to why I've hated writing. I hated writing because of the restrictions that I've had in writing back in middle school and high school. (see Appendix D)

She went on in this reflective essay to quote one of the contributors to her research essay, Essay 3, that said about students and standardized testing: “‘They’re not motivated; they’re not engaged in what they’re doing,’ (58). I wasn’t engaged with what I was doing back then but through this course I was able to find my interests and found that writing was enjoyable at times” (see Appendix D). I believe that Essay 2, where Helen analyzed ‘the writers’ moves and readers’ struggles’ through Gloria Anzaldua’s *How to Tame a Wild Tongue*, was a turning point, where

[r]eading “How to Tame Your Tongue”, ...inspired me to find the answer [to] the question, ‘What is the standard for a certain language?...[for] writing a piece of academic writing, it’s the information that is pointed out from that piece of writing that is important’, and especially as well whether or not it engaged you to write freely about it that was important. Through those essays, I was able to find and research and argue what I thought was unfair. ...In the future, I would be more likely to write, I can understand why people like writing. This class was able to help me discover that writing wasn’t supposed to restrict you to think a certain way. (see Appendix D)

While Helen still struggled with a solid academic voice at the end of the semester, her attitude towards writing was so drastically improved that the possibilities for how she entered the ‘academic conversation’ were ‘less restricted’; I can only infer that this was primarily due to the translingual orientation of my classroom and assignments like Essay 2.

Like Melissa, in Essay 2, Helen wrote a well structured letter to her past English teacher which mimicked a conversation and interrogated her central question, “Does every language have a standard?” (see Appendix E). After describing Anzaldua’s central thesis and purpose, Helen writes,

In many ways this struggle that she experienced when she was young made me think about this particular question, ‘Is there a certain standard for a language?’, the question I started with. What do you think? I believe there shouldn’t be a standard to the language that we can express, just like having the freedom of expression we should be able to express the language we want to speak. But do we have complete freedom at school though? (see Appendix E)

I want to reiterate here that I continually warned them not to assume we had ‘no standards’ in my class, we did regular error analyses and a few pointedly specific ‘grammar lessons’ based

on their common errors, and that our course inquiry was centered on exploring how we all experience language differently. Helen's paper, as a matter of fact, helped solidify this objective as it developed through our collaborative course, as she responds to quotes from Anzaldua: "Are languages supposed to be controlled? With different Spanish dialects that Anzaldua faced, is she supposed to just break off from using Chicano, mix Spanish, and just speak the Spanish passed down from Spanish-Anglo Colonization two hundred fifty years ago? Is there a book written down somewhere with the standard scribbled down, just the same as the hundreds of Chinese dialects that Chinese people have?" (see Appendix E). Helen connects to Anzaldua across vast cultural differences in asking such a question, critically calling out the ambiguous origins of any language, including the 'standard English' she knew was expected 'in school,' that restricted her writing but that she was able to break through in order to find that "writing was enjoyable at times" (see Appendix D).

Helen continued to discuss the discriminatory effects that Anzaldua describes in her article as a result of her 'improper' and varyingly 'non-standard' uses of English and Spanish, and connected it to her own grandparents saying that

not following the standard form of language made the person saying it 'lower' in terms of class...It was so hard to understand why such people would think that way. Do you think so? What would Anzaldua say? I'd argue that standards started changing because people wanted a sense of belongingness, they wanted an identity to express themselves, thus they started creating slang and different dialects to communicate just like writing a bilingual book. (see Appendix E)

The connections Helen made with Anzaldua were inspiring, signaling the value for cross-cultural communication that this assignment ultimately implicated, and the positive impact it had on Helen's development of her academic identity that was tied into her Chinese language and

heritage. In her concluding paragraph, Helen encapsulates both the objectives of Essay 2 and the positive effect it had on her academic identity as a first year college writer:

I feel like this type of critical reading process really helped me to find answers. I am finally able to conclude what Anzaldua concluded, 'Until I can take my pride in language I cannot take pride in myself,' (p.39). I am determined to say that I take pride in the language I use, and feel like many of us who are struggling with identifying ourselves will too. It was through reading the narrative, thinking of it as "difficult", and then deciphering what is meant that helped me understand the overall idea she was pointing at. (see Appendix E)

As reflected in her final essay referenced above, the value of affirming her translingual language practices with this assignment and these readings, although and even more significantly by connecting with an author describing a completely different language experience, Helen's entire attitude towards reading and writing improved, and gave her a new perspective on the academic community, 'standards' of languages, and her sense of 'pride' and 'belonging' in the academic community.

Lou, a young man of Filipino descent who spoke with a 'standard' English dialect but was admittedly not the most highly motivated student in his academic habits, nonetheless was an accomplished creative writer who struck me by his seeming lack of confidence in his voice. I saw originality and individualism in his academic voice since the first formal essay of our course. What Essay 2 did for Lou was help him see that he had agency to develop his creativity in his 'academic' writing, regardless of the 'formal' standards that were limiting his sense of potential. In Essay 2, which he entitled, "The Way I Say It," Lou wrote,

My entire life I believed that there was a certain way I had to speak in my academic writing. I always thought that it was the best way of convincing my audience to agree with my points, but after reading this article where the amount

of slang was abundant, I am reconsidering if using such language is necessary. I feel this way because by the end of the article, I was persuaded to agree with Young's views. This came as a shock to me because I have written dozens of essays using "standard" English, as Fish refers to it, thinking my arguments were persuasive, but the reaction of my teachers proved otherwise. Young actually addresses this point while talking about his experience with teaching grad students; he says, "they also tend to try too hard to sound academic, often using unnecessary convoluted language, using a big word where a lil one would do, and stuff"(Young 113). I'm sure you see this in many of the papers you grade. Do you agree with Young? Is there some truth to what he says here? As far as I am concerned I feel that many of my papers would have flowed much better if I wrote in a simpler dialect that I was comfortable with. (see Appendix H)

Here Lou shows a process of discovery in his attitude towards academic writing, and uses Young's argument to support his experience and his new point of view. This passage from Essay 2 shows similar trends to other students, where reading and engaging with Young's piece was 'a shock,' where he was forced to reconsider academic discourse from how it was defined for him in high school, and where through his analysis, he developed a more conversational, 'comfortable' tone which he believes helped his writing.

For Lou, his reflective essay (Essay 5) showed the value of metacognitive awareness in interacting with his own language, that of Young, and his more positive regard for the possibilities of academic discourse. In reflecting on his analysis of Young's piece in his final essay, Lou wrote,

English 114 not only challenged me as a writer but as a reader. We were often given articles that were challenging to read, specifically when writing essay 2. For this essay we were assigned to read Should Writer's Use They Own Language?

written by Vershawn Ashanti Young. In this article Young responds to Stanley Fish's, *What Should Colleges Teach*.^[sic] Fish takes the stance that there is one proper language when writing, and Young writes a counter argument to Fish. To even further his points Young writes in slang. Because of the use of slang this paper was challenging to read. (see Appendix G)

Lou is clearly engaged in an active reading process and reflection on his own process of comprehension. He continues where he left off discussing how Young's article helped him connect his reading and writing processes, beginning with annotation:

When first reading the article I often had to look over lines that did not make sense making the annotating process even more difficult. But moving through the paper it began making more sense. After reading Young's paper I learned many new things about not only reading but writing. I wrote, 'Adding emotion, emphasis, and character never came to mind because I didn't think it would strengthen my paper. Youngs' paper convinced me that it does. When reading his article I did not hear a monotone voice giving me fact after fact or quote after quote, but I saw a man moving in great gestures speaking with passion'([Essay 2]). (see Appendix G)

That Lou reflects on the structure of Young's argument, his difficulty process and strategies used to annotate and "look over lines that did not make sense," and reflected on the rhetorical strategies he took from Young's article into his own writing, all at the end of the semester, shows the level of impact that his analysis of *Should Writers Use They Own English?* had in Unit 2.

The last point about Lou's experience I wish to point out here is his inherently translingual disposition that helped him engage with the text, and enabled the transformations he underwent as a student and writer through the process of Essay 2, and the class as a whole. In particular, Lou displayed a tacit "willingness to negotiate with diversity ...patience to co-

construct meaning, and an acceptance of negotiated outcomes in interactions; and [as shown above] the ability to learn through practice and critical self-reflection” (Canagarajah 5). He writes in Essay 2, “I understand many people will not share the same reaction to Young’s paper as I did. I understand how many people would agree with Fish and his views. Actually, before reading Young’s paper I agreed with some of Fish’s points” (see Appendix H). Working through this negotiation and discussing Young’s legitimacy as a “credible source” (see Appendix H), he comes to the conclusion that, “At first I wasn’t sure, but I began to look throughout the paper. I realized that even though the spelling of some words were wrong and his slang was all over the place, he still had perfect punctuation. Also, the format of the quotations he used were perfect as well. I think that all this was done to again emphasize his point that not all writing has to be written in the same language” (see Appendix H). What Lou does here is use his writing to consider many perspectives, negotiate his own stance through his understanding of the legitimacy of Young’s diverse text, and through his ‘rhetorical analysis’ critically question his stance on Standard Language Ideology, ‘spelling,’ and ‘punctuation’ in relation to the argument Young constructed in response to Fish.

In his final reflective essay, Lou wrote, “During the course of this class I have grown as a reader, writer, and have developed my own academic voice” (see Appendix G). Further, and significant for the positive implications of translingual pedagogy and assignments that encourage this shift for students who previously ‘didn’t like writing,’ or otherwise had low self-esteem due to Standard Language Ideology, Lou reflected, “In Essay 1 I wrote, ‘The dull tone of the class lessons and essay topics was the same tone I wrote my essays with’(Personal Narrative). I used to think that I was just a bad writer. This essay helped me see that my attitude towards writing didn't come from it being challenging, but because I was disengaged with the curriculum of my previous classes” (see Appendix G). Lou’s writing shows the inherently

translingual orientation of my class brought students into a constructive dialogue about academic discourse, and their attitude about academic writing and reading.

The Development of Original Academic Voices. The last category of analysis were those students who clearly took risks in their writing and used Essay 2 to experiment with their own academic voices. For the purposes of space, and the fact that most students fit into this category in one way or another as discussed with Lou and Walter's cases above, I will use one student's paper that stood out to me as exemplary of this trend. Janice was a highly motivated student from a Filipina ethnic background who also spoke 'Tagalog' at home. Janice often tried to 'approximate' a forced academic language in her writing. However, when she opened her letter in Essay 2 with "Howdy Mrs. Martin!" (see Appendix F), she was using Essay 2 to take risks and develop a more comfortable, conversational tone in her academic writing. She went on to write, "Young's phraseology and diction may be seen as unorthodox to some readers, but I actually did not find his writing style that difficult to read. I was able to acknowledge his key points and main ideas, and his word choice did not affect that in any way. The language he used did not take away the significance of his article as a whole" (see Appendix F). This student also used phrases in the introduction to her essay like "...I am pleased with my fellow peers' and teacher's assiduity" (see Appendix F), throwing me off in her word choice, while further on in her analysis, she writes, "As Young is responding to the excerpt, one of his statements stop me in my tracks" (see Appendix F), clearly inserting colloquial language. One of my teacherly instincts was to point out the inconsistency of style, the use of which may work for a language scholar like Young, but maybe not as a First Year writer. When viewed from a translingual orientation, however, she was making conscious choices to 'code mesh' and develop an authentic academic voice that displayed the type of dispositions that Canagarajah describes (5), and I have to appreciate her courage. She wrote a thorough difficulty reflection and analysis, concluding by asking "To sum everything up, what does 'academic' writing even mean? Do you think that this

article is a form of academic writing? In my opinion, I fell [sic] that this definitely is..." (see Appendix F).

I thought it was particularly interesting when she directs her analysis of academic writing towards grammar, stating that "We live in a time where the English language has expanded greatly and is continually growing. Young wants to show us that there really is no "standard" that we all must follow. In your class, Mrs. Martin, a lot of your writing assignments based 30% of our grade just on grammar. I am sure curious to know how you would grade Young's article" (see Appendix F). Here Janice exhibits a "*disposition* that favor[s] translingual communication and literacy ...includ[ing] an awareness of language as constituting diverse norms..."(Canagarajah 5). Janice's critical reflection on the changing nature of language and how she brings it home to the conflicts this created in her standardized high school classrooms led her to the following inquiry project exploring racial bias in the SAT, showing how her engagement with Young's text and our classroom discussions inspired a real sense of investment in the course and further entry into the academic community through her upcoming research project and interview (Essay 3 and 4). Janice concludes her letter with a clever rhetorical device, using Young's words to support her claims throughout the essay while again experimenting with a conversational style: "I'm sorry my grammar was not always as perfect as you wanted it to be, but hey, as Young would say, there definitely is more than one academic way to write right" (see Appendix F).

While I encouraged students to experiment with their academic voices in this Essay, just as McCrary did in his sample assignment prompt described earlier, none of my students took that to mean writing in the 'slang' that they read and wrote *about*, or write in anything that was not their own voice. After discussions of building an academic voice and being comfortable in our writing through daily 'practice writes' and their first essay which consisted of a 'language narrative', Essay 2 gave my students the courage and agency to bridge their "socialization in contact zones and multilingual communities" (Canagarajah 5) outside of the classroom into

their academic voices, and connect with their readers, both the past English teacher they were writing to and myself, through their own academic voice. Canagarajah reminds me that “[t]eachers don’t have to assume that translingual literacy has to be taught afresh to their students. They can tap into the dispositions of their students for such interactions and explore ways to scaffold them for further development” (5). Essay 2 was such an exploration and development of my students’ pre-existing competence with multilingualism, with the hybrid language and translingual practice they use in their everyday lives that gave their academic writing new meaning and importance for them. Again, this is why the letter format for such an essay prompt proved to be valuable, which came from classroom discussion about how this essay would work best in the early stages of the unit and my overall student-centered, constructivist pedagogy.

Unit 2 of my course was a turning point in the semester. Consistent with a central principle of the Integrated Reading and Writing philosophy underlying the composition program at SF State, students in my classroom were ‘treated with sophistication’ (Goen and Gillotte-Troppe 98), treated as if their ‘authority’ and opinion about the legitimacy of such texts mattered. Beyond the students discussed here, the entire vibe of the class lightened as everyone became more involved, and more comfortable voicing their opinions about the language topics we were discussing. Further, after Essay 2, students approached the next assignment, an original research inquiry into an educational or language topic of their choosing, with seriousness and conviction based on the issues we discussed in class and they wrote about in Essay 2. For these original inquiry projects, students wrote about racism in standardized testing (Janice), the involvement of Ethnic Studies in the high school curriculum, divergent learning styles involving language (Melissa), all the way to the role or importance of academic writing for business majors. I provide this brief overview as an indication, for me, that opening up the possibilities of academic language in Unit 2 lead to more authentic and involved engagement in the academic

community that my students were becoming a part of. This community building continued in the the last unit where they conducted interviews of academics at SF State to further investigate their inquiry question based on language and education.

Conclusion: Towards a Transformed Composition Culture

Although the experiences defined above represent those of a very young teacher recently entering a controversial conversation in the field of composition, they have been shaped by experiences with critical pedagogy and the theories of the many courageous language scholars of the past and present bringing resistance perspectives to Composition Studies. The curricular and pedagogical experiences described above pave the way for future classes, teaching reflections, collaborations, and further research, signaling a full Freirean praxis (theory-practice-reflection-transformation) guiding my future collaborations and curricular development. Further, this praxis has the potential for large-scale transformations in the ethos of the composition community and the attitudes of the educational world at large.

My experiences and my intentions in redefining academic discourse and normative language practices in my FYC courses have pointed to the positive dispositional effects of interacting with these texts in process-centered, translingual pedagogies. My FYC course is based on an assumption that our courses should be promoting students' involvement and sense of authority in the academic community. As my students interact with the academic community's diversity in its many forms, specifically through the academic language of diverse scholars in my First Year course, they grapple, grow, and negotiate their position on the threshold of the academic community through this interaction with form, voice, rhetoric, and their changing definition of 'academic.'

The above analysis shows that while certain monolingual students read and write standard academic English in high school and their previous academic experiences, the writing

still is not their own, and I believe fundamentally lacking in a spirit of critical inquiry and discovery. Through assignments like the one described above and the introduction of these diverse voices and rhetorical features into the academic conversation through Anzaldua and Young, not only were students' home languages validated for multilingual and diverse students, the possibilities of an academic identity that students could call their own became real for *all* students. Regardless of multilingual or monolingual background, my students were participating in translingual practices. Moreover, the cultural sensitivities, repertoires, and their sense that they were becoming a part of a diverse, ideologically pluralistic academic community was made available for every student and allowed them to develop their unique voice and academic interests in the reading and writing projects that followed.

Although it is a new concept to me, and Composition Studies in general according to Matsuda, I have shown that my orientation is best described as translingual. In other words, my approach is built on the inherently 'translingual' dispositions of students that are engaged by my student-centered pedagogy. My translingual orientation has been realized by pursuing my educational goals to bridge diverse communities and knowledges with the academic world, to build the academic community as one based on respectful pluralism, multiple worldviews, and critical yet respectful interactions. This approach has played out in my FYC courses by framing students' engagement with academic discourse through multiple language and literacy practices of diverse scholars in the academic community, including those representing 'standard' academic English, transforming students' concept of what this community looks like and what is possible within it. Through assignments such as the one described above and using academic articles like Young's and Anzaldua's, among countless other possibilities, I have begun to see the potential of such classroom practice for bolstering students' sense of academic authority and belongingness in the academic community. And this is just one new chapter in the continuing discussions about language diversity in Composition Studies.

The “renewed interest in Students’ Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL)” (130) that Matsuda discusses has surely continued the conversation started in the preceding literature, founding both my impetus and continued rationale for Essay 2 and my analysis of its effectiveness for my students’ engagement and dispositions towards academic reading and writing. Matsuda describes ‘the new linguistic frontier’ in Composition Studies as “in part stimulated by the continued effort to address the issue of language diversity for linguistic minority students in the United States as well as second-language writers” (Matsuda 130). While there is no denying the importance of transforming the way we teach composition for these student populations, to encourage further engagement and participation in the academic community at large, part of the purpose of this paper has been to show the benefits of engaging students from mainstream, monolingual backgrounds with diverse, code-meshed, hybrid texts, to both engage them with academic diversity and help them develop agency and rhetorical awareness in their academic writing.

Part of what my experience shows me is that Essay 2 allowed students from all backgrounds to embrace their implicitly translingual dispositions. Recognizing the attitudes that students bring “enables us to discern agency and voice of both multilingual and monolingual writers in textual products that have varying relationships to the norm” (Canagarajah 4). By bringing the ‘norm’ of academic writing into critical dialogue, my experience with multilingual and monolingual writers has shown their capacity to negotiate meaning while developing an academic voice and identity, to develop a sense of academic authority as I valued their contributions to large ideological questions of legitimacy and academic credibility. These critical dialogues allowed us to critically recognize that “[h]owever unfair and limited they may be, these norms and ideologies have to be taken seriously. Social and educational success means *engaging* with these norms, though this doesn’t mean uncritical acceptance or conformity” (Canagarajah 9). By inviting this participation from students into such

conversations, it is my hope that they contribute to large scale transformations in academic culture, that, as Cangarajah reminds us again, “such critical educational engagement ...can also lead to the pluralization of norms and the construction of more democratic social spaces” (10).

Why language? Language is who we are and how we construct our realities. I believe that the experience I have constructed here adds a valuable contribution to the development of translingual pedagogies in the scholarly conversations about language issues, and I sincerely hope it is well received by my colleagues and students. My call for further teacher collaborations and curricular development that incorporate diverse, ‘hybrid’ texts for the engagement and dispositional learning outcomes of all of our First year students is driven by the ‘big picture’ vision of a transformation in Composition Studies. Further, that the ‘pluralization of norms’ we enact in our composition classrooms has implications across campus, throughout our communities, and to our democratic society as a whole, points to the potential for translingual pedagogies such as the one described herein to help us fully realize the consciousness-raising, democratic objectives that underlies our liberal arts tradition, in newly critical ways.

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Appendix A

Essay #2: Writers' Moves and Readers' Struggles: *Rhetorical Analysis through Difficulty Paper*

Format: 4-6 pages, 12-point font, double spaced, one-inch margins

Readings: *From Inquiry* pg. 32-46, 241 on 'Rhetorical Analysis'

- Gloria Anzaldua, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (*From Inquiry*, p. 373-382)
- Vershawn Young, "Should Writers Use They Own English?"

So far we have explored our relationship to language in our personal, family, and school 'Discourse Communities.' We have practiced low stakes 'idea drafting' and practice writing, writing and annotating on a public blog platform, and other academic writing that you may not be used to. For this unit we are practicing critical reading strategies of two articles that use language in diverse ways to continue our conversation of 'what is academic writing.'

Essay #2 asks you to enter this conversation as a reader, and embrace reading as the struggle it can often be in academic contexts. Because I ask you to *reflect on your experience* as a reader, this essay bridges the narrative genre with the academic analysis of a text; it is still a type of 'story' about your experience, but a specific experience with a specific text and at a specific time in your academic life - as a first-year college student in your fifth week of school. Moreover, this assignment contains elements of a narrative *difficulty paper* and a *rhetorical analysis* as you combine a reflection of *how you read the text and what it did to you* (narrative), with an analysis of *how and why the author made the moves that affected you as a reader* (rhetorical analysis).

In essence, I am asking you to connect your experiences of difficulty as you read (involving a reflection of your own linguistic background as it relates to your reading), to the various 'moves' the author made with their language that impacted your reading experience.

Prompt: Through a close reading of your chosen text, discuss *how your experience of reading through difficulty* and the *rhetorical moves made by the author* model an academic conversation between you and the author.

- Choose either *How to Tame a Wild Tongue* or *Should Writers Use They Own English?*
- Identify 2-3 passages in the text where you were confused, perplexed, intrigued, surprised, and/or 'thrown off' or moved by the language or how it was used.
 - What made the language or prose difficult to understand, and what strategies did you use to get through it?
- Analyze the language for its rhetorical appeals of pathos, ethos, logos.
 - Why did the author make those rhetorical moves in the 2-3 passages?
 - For what audience? Who is the author trying to persuade in their argument?
 - How did the language make you feel (in that passage and holistically)? Do you think that was the author's intended effect?
 - Did the language affect the overall meaning of the text for you, and in what ways?
 - Finally, relating back to the course theme: is the writing style academic, in your opinion, and why or why not?

By developing strategies to both read through difficulty and recognize the rhetorical moves writers make with their language (constructing an argument to a certain audience, with a clear purpose, and with intended rhetorical effects), we can begin to fully enter into an academic conversation with other scholars, asking questions of unfamiliar authors and texts, and responding with intentional rhetorical choices in our own writing.

Due Dates: refer to syllabus

Appendix B: Walter's Essay 2

Essay #2: Let Them Speak The Way They Want To

Dear Mr. Eric Eisner,

I want to begin this letter by thanking you for changing my perception on English courses. As I begin my college career, I now see the real importance of an involvement with the English language as an essential tool to my success.

College has showed me another way to look at the academic world, especially in my English course. We focus on a multitude of different academic writing styles so each student can create their own identity in their papers. Through the course we are encouraged to stray away from the standard English that we grew up trying to perfect and instead write with our own vernacular.

As I mentioned, our instructor has us read many different forms of academic writing that don't follow suit with the rest of the academic world. One of the essays stuck out to me that I believe you'll find very interesting. Vershawn Ashanti Young, a professor at Iowa State University, wrote a paper entitled Should Writer's Use They Own English? on how using different dialects and vernaculars of English should be supported. He explains that the way you speak or write doesn't allude to your intelligence or prejudices. The most interesting part of the entire piece is that he practices what he teaches. As a professor, Young obviously knows how to write anything from a simple essay to a long thesis, yet throughout his entire paper he writes with an African American slang with sentences like "One of his points almost on da money..."(2) or "See, dont nobody all the time..."(2) And even though he doesn't use the standard academic writing style we were taught from a young age, his punctuation and vocabulary (on non-slang words) is spot on.

To be perfectly honest, I had trouble reading this paper. It was difficult to the point where I had to reread sentences multiple times to understand their surfaces meaning, but because these repetitious actions I understood the material better than many other texts I've read that stayed with the standard academic writing. Along with his use of language, Young also discusses the use of "code meshing" instead of the more commonly used method of "code switching". Coming from University High School, I could relate to his material because I've seen how administration, teachers, and even other students judge the way some of the students spoke or wrote without seeing their real intelligence. I felt like our classroom was a safe place with the conversations we had on pressing issues in our society, but when it came down to write an essay you still expected students to produce work with syntax rules that don't allow creativity in writing. The intelligence of a writer shouldn't be based on if they use all the "correct" spellings in a dictionary, but the way they convey a message that allows the reader to take something away from the piece. I believe that incorporating code meshing into the strict high school standards will turn regular students into thoughtful and engaged students.

When first reading Young's piece, it's very easy to flat out say he has no background in writing or any intelligence of the topic he is talking about. Some people will stop reading after the first few sentences because they might believe that the paper was written by someone without a proper educational background. But then as you start to read his piece in between the lines, you realize that there is a lot more than just a black guy ranting about education. You see that he has a colorful vocabulary and uses great punctuation when quoting others. His opinions and ideas are organized almost perfectly, but his language is just so hard to follow. As someone who came from Westwood, a caucasian utopia, I had a lot of trouble reading his paper and understanding his meaning. Of course, coming from Uni really helped with the amount of diversity we have, but I still had to dissect numerous ideas and take out their meaning. For instance, Vershawn Young was quoting Stanley Fish who he based most of his paper from. He

said “Stanley Fish say he be appalled at blatant prejudice, and get even madder at prejudice exhibited by those who claim it don’t happen no mo...”(1) When first reading that line, I had no idea what Young was trying to convey. I read it again and still nothing. It may seem pretty simple to most, but I was having a very hard time deciphering these hieroglyphics. I decided that I needed to break it up into smaller pieces, translate those smaller pieces into language that made more sense to me, and then piece it up together into something that I could understand. That procedure led me to this statement: “Stanley Fish says he is appalled by blatant prejudice and becomes more mad at when it is exhibited by people who claim it doesn’t happen anymore.” That took me around a minute to do and I felt so incredibly naive for not getting it the first time. This process continued for the rest of the paper and after an hour I had finally got to the end. It all made sense. Every innuendo and concept was crystal clear by the last sentence.

The main question that Vershawn Young answers is how do we, as writers, take the information in our heads and put them on paper? Most instructors of English will recommend “code switching” which Young explains is “ leav[ing] the way they say it to momma on the board and put the standard way on paper”(Young). Young advises against this and recommends “code meshing”. According to Young, “Code meshing is the new code switching; it’s multidialectalism and plurilingualism in one speech act, in one paper.”(5) The use of code switching creates a style for one’s self rather than duplicating the same person when everyone uses the same rules and concepts. You can easily find the person's identity in the paper just by the way they combine different phrases and techniques that they feel comfortable using. Again, their use of language just adds to the character of their work and does not mean that their intelligence is in any different from the next person.

We both know that Uni is an extremely unique school because of the many student backgrounds that it houses. Although your classroom was a fairly open space where students could speak their mind freely in whatever way they felt most comfortable, the school

unfortunately is not. Students are constantly judged for the way they speak and write English. Many are told they cannot join AP English courses, but we both see they love to read and interact with English. Even if your class was the best classroom for student voice, I still found that students had to change the way their voice sounded when they had to transfer their thoughts on paper because at a young age they were told it wasn't proper. I was included in that group who thought that my writing had to follow with the rest.

After reading Young's paper, my views of how intellectual someone is based on the way they speak has drastically changed. At first it was hard to see all of the great information and knowledge that was flowing out of Young's paper because I was biased toward the way it was written. The fact that I'm writing this letter to you shows that my perception has changed. During the process of writing this letter, I wrote what felt comfortable to me. This is the way I speak out loud and all I did was transfer the words from my mouth to the paper. Even though I'm not a professional teacher, I am a student who has seen himself grow by writing in this style. I highly recommend and encourage you to take a moment to read Vershawn Young's paper *Should Writer's Use They Own English?*.

Sincerely,

[Walter]

Your Former Student

Appendix C: Melissa's Essay 2

Essay Two

So I Have A Question

Dear Mr. Wohlenberg,

The past few weeks in my English 114 class has been thought-provoking in a way that I would never have expected. You see, the reading we've been doing in class is not written in 'formal' language and it's throwing me off. We are always meant to look for incorrect uses of language in the writing we see and fix them. Our essays must be written in a certain way to be given a good grade. Until this class, in school we have been encouraged to disregard writing that does not meet the formal criteria. Although in this unit of my English class, we are learning that this trained reflex to see one dialect as 'formal' can be, and maybe should be overlooked on occasion. The writing we've been looking at is heavy with colloquialisms. We read many articles in your classes, but we never read anything like Vershawn Ashanti Young's "Should Writer's Use They Own English?" After reading this article, I am beginning to question the use of 'formal' or 'correct' language. And before you think, '[Melissa], don't listen to Young, there is a wrong and a right way to use the English language', I want you to hear what I learned from this article.

When I first started reading the article I had difficulty comprehending the text due to the vocabulary and spelling. For example Young begins his article with this: "Lord, lord, lord! Where do I begin, cuz this man sho tryin to take the nation back to a time when we were less tolerant of linguistic and racial differences" (Young 110). As you can see it is very different from the normal class readings that you gave in your class. Throughout the nine-page article, Young blends formal English with black vernacular. While I can understand the black vernacular, it was challenging for me to comprehend the text and properly analyze it critically and rhetorically. As

you know my dyslexia keeps me from comprehending words in a normal way. In one way or another, I always struggle when I read. This coupled with the heavy use of colloquialisms in the text had me struggling to keep up. However, I have been dealing with my dyslexia my entire life. I have learned ways to tackle such text as this, which slow me down. My way around this was to read the text out loud. Since this dialect is rarely written down, I've never read it. However, hearing it I was able to grasp it better. I have often found that this method works. I am very much an auditory learner and I usually do best when I can see and hear the words.

Before starting this unit of my English 114 class, I would have argued that 'proper' English or standard language is the only form that should be allowed to be used in "formal" works. Young knows that many people follow this same view. "Standard Language Ideology is the belief that there is one set of dominant language rules that stem from a single dominant discourse (like standard English) that all writers and speakers of English must conform to in order to communicate effectively" (Young 111). Young views this Standard Language Ideology as a limiting factor that is harmful to everyone. Over the past few weeks, I have begun to see that language, no matter what dialect, is a powerful weapon. Whether you were using texting language, or Spanglish, or Shakespearean English, maybe even a dyslexic infected language, all languages work in the same way. Any dialect from any discourse community can deliver complex ideas.

Young's article is an appropriate example of this. As he makes his statements on the subject of language use, he furthers his point by speaking in a language he is trying to support. One of his purposes for writing this article is to make a counter argument against Stanley Fish. "Stanley Fish say he be appalled at blatant prejudice, and get even madder at prejudice exhibited by those who claim it dont happen no mo (Fish "Henry Louis Gates"). And it do happen—as he

know—when folks dont get no jobs or get fired or whatever cuz they talk and write Asian or black or with an Applachian accent or sound like whatever aint the status quo" (Young 111). He take Fish's quotes and makes the reader feel just as offended as he is. Having not read Fish's side of this, I am completely on Young's side by the way he interprets Fish. "And Fish himself acquiesce to this linguistic prejudice when he come saying that people make theyselves targets for racism if and when they dont write and speak like he do" (Young 111). It is safe to say that Young sufficiently turned his audience against Stanley Fish

However he is not only trying to refute Stanley Fish, he also wants to change the way his audience thinks about language. Young wants to change the way language is used in our society. "I say we teach language descriptively. This mean we should, for instance, teach how language functions within and from various cultural perspectives. And we should teach what it take to understand, listen, and write in multiple dialects simultaneously. We should teach how to let dialects comingle, sho nuff blend together, like blending the dialect Fish speak and the black vernacular that, say, a lot—certainly not all—black people speak" (Young 111) It's 2015, equality has been given to all different races and religions and sexual orientation (yes I know these are all arguable but you get my point, it's better than it has been in the past). So now it's time for language equality as well, the end of language discrimination. Young wants everyone to accept all forms of language, all discourse communities in any community: "...we all should know everybody's dialect, at least as many as we can, and be open to the mix of them in oral and written communication." (Young 112). Young's wish is to start 'mixing' language like we have mixed everything else in our society.

As you can see, he brings up some very good arguments as to why all discourse communities should be able to be used in any community. Language is powerful in many more for than one. I

agree with Young's arguments, however I do not know if the things he desires will be able to come to pass anytime soon. Changing everyone's system would be very challenging. And I am wondering if having one standard language would be more beneficial. When I read things that Stanley fish have to say I strongly believe that all different dialects of our language should be accepted. However when I truly think about what Young is proposing, it seems a bit too difficult to manage. When you really think about it, we would all have to learn different dialects to do simple tasks such as read the news.

So I have a question for you: do you think that standard language ideology is something that we as a society need? Young has some excellent points, but are they realistic? How would this affect you as a teacher? Wouldn't it be 10 times harder to teach English especially with society accepting so many different forms of language? I find myself at a loss. And this is why I am writing to you. Young's purpose was to connect to people like me who are willing to accept other forms of dialects and through them change the way language is used to judge people. I would love to hear your opinion on the matter.

Sincerely Yours, [Melissa]

Appendix D: Helen's Final Reflective Essay (Essay 5)

Final Portfolio

ESSAY 5-

A Pair of Locked up Wings: Writing

Dear Ms. Galang,

In the beginning of the semester I wrote a letter to you telling you about learning rhetorical analysis through analyzing an article in my English 114 Class with SFSU professor Dan Curtis Cummins. I am writing another letter this time, and it is to conclude and summarize what I've gotten out of this class and the personal interest that I have developed towards writing. I remember I've started out hating writing and English class in general because I was REQUIRED to write. Over the course of the semester after having written a number of essays I have come to find the answer to why I've hated writing. I hated writing because of the restrictions that I've had in writing back in middle school and high school. Like Kiersten Weir said in her article "Questionnaire: A New Kind of Smart" , "You can stick people in a decontextualized, sterile testing environment like an IQ test, but you're not really capturing what they are capable of achieving intellectually. They're not motivated; they're not engaged in what they're doing," (58). I wasn't engaged with what I was doing back then but through this course I was able to find my interests and found that writing was enjoyable at times.

For most of my life, writing wasn't an easy task and it still isn't but through the process of researching and writing processed essays I was able to accept that writing wasn't that bad after all, in fact it is a good way to open yourself up and not being locked in.

All through Middle School and High School I've hated writing because in class we were given certain prompts to choose from which restricted my thinking but in College, in this class especially I was able to select what I was interested in to write about, which sparked my interest in writing. Back in High School when we had essays, we were given certain prompts to write

about, but often times those prompts weren't enough to engage me. Those prompts in my opinion were: stressful, boring and most importantly wasn't what I wanted to write about. They required you to answer certain questions and didn't give us any way to expand on that. So I came to the conclusion after getting feed back and scores that weren't satisfying that, "English was always foreign to me. For me it required following what the teacher told me to do, compared to having to observe the world around me,". I was told that writing was supposed to make me think and expand but in class it was what limited me confined me into a cube. "I believe there shouldn't be a standard to the language that we can express, just like having the freedom of expression we should be able to express the language we want to speak,". I ended up stressed and instead started giving up on writing, and the only thing that move me on at that point was just to complete the assignment without any thought, like a robot. I remembered, "When I finish the paper, I would toss the skill of writing away in a closet somewhere until another writing assignment would come along and then digging it out and continue my process of rush and toss," . I was locking myself up with writing assignments like those and it worked in the beginning, but in college it didn't. I started to realize a new way to writing. Writing about things that I was not interested and being scored on it was hard and made me less wanting to care because it wasn't something I was passionate about.

Once in College though, my English class was less restricting with what I wanted to write about and since we were writing what we were more passionate about it made me understand that writing wasn't restricting at all. For my third essay, I was supposed to research a topic that I was interested in and wanted to write about relating to academics. I chose to research myself on whether or not Standardized Tests were fair. It was after, " 'Reading "How to Tame Your Tongue", [that] inspired me to find the answer the question, "What is the standard for a certain language?...[for] writing a piece of academic writing, it's the information that is pointed out from

that piece of writing that is important", and especially as well whether or not it engaged you to write freely about it that was important. Through those essays, I was able to find and research and argue what I thought was unfair. I was able to also talk to a professor that was passionate about the issue, Nathaniel Whitaker, my Communications Professor. I wasn't limited to talking about something that I didn't like. I also didn't analyze quotes I didn't agree with and saying I agreed with it because it was easier to write about. It was just like opening the door and I was able to find something I liked doing: Writing about something I liked.

As of now, writing essays may still not be my most favorite assignment, its ranking still has improved from being probably ranked top one for most dreaded to now not a ten but close. Through this class I was able to write with the passion that I had locked up and restricted and now I am finally able to write without the stress because I had just wanted to please the teacher back then.

"I feel that with writing one person can never change their habit when told by others, but by your looking at your own actions you think about what needs to be changed. That is where you start to focus and probably then will writing be a lot easier than without the focus." I've finally found my focus. In the future, I would be more likely to write, I can understand why people like writing. This class was able to help me discover that writing wasn't supposed to restrict you to think a certain way. I hope I didn't bore you Ms. Galang and I hope you are proud of me for finding this answer.

Sincerely,

[Helen]

Appendix E: Helen's Essay 2

ESSAY 2-

"Creating Standards"

Dear Ms. Galang,

I am currently enrolled in First Year Composition 114 at SF State with instructor Dan Curtis Cummins. In class we read two articles, "Should Writer's Use they Own English" by Vershawn Ashanti Young and "How To Tame a Wild Tongue" by Gloria Anzaldua. This unit's main focus was to practice critical reading strategies to help us understand what academic writing is. What I am focusing on in this letter is Gloria Anzaldua's "How To Tame a Wild Tongue" to answer this question that I had, "Does every language have a standard?". To give you some context, Anzaldua was a school teacher and a writer, "who concerns herself about nations, cultures, classes, genders, and languages," (p.33). She is of Mexican descent and as a child struggled with the standards of Spanish. The main problem was that Anzaldua's community did not encourage mixing languages because it broke a certain standard. In her personal narrative she incorporated different Spanish dialects arguing that there was no standard to language and that it was never a shame to accept your language. Even though she remembers her mother telling her to do the opposite, " 'I want you to speak English,'" (p.34). In many ways this struggle that she experienced when she was young made me think about this particular question, "Is there a certain standard for a language?", the question I started with. What do you think? I believe there shouldn't be a standard to the language that we can express, just like having the freedom of expression we should be able to express the language we want to speak. But do we have complete freedom at school though?

From reading the first line of the narrative the quote that confused me was, "'We are going to have to do something about your tongue,' I hear the anger rising in his voice. My tongue keeps pushing out the wads of cotton, pushing back the drills, the thin needles," (p.33). My first

question for this piece includes, why did she decide to use this example that is completely unrelated to “language”. Thinking about the typical writing passages that I’ve read in the past, I remembered that authors try to help the readers understand the overall message by incorporating analogies. My guess is that she wanted to relate language to the tongue that a person has and by doing that we are able to understand that some people believe it is important to control the tongue, similarly to the language that we express. What this means to me is that for some people there is a standard. How are we able to control the language we express? What is freedom of expression then at places like school? What is your opinion?

Just as I was questioning the idea of having a standard to language, another passage came along that was difficult to analyze, “Wild tongues can’t be tamed, they can only be cut out,”(p. 36). My reaction was: Are languages supposed to be controlled? With different Spanish dialects that Anzaldua faced, is she supposed to just break off from using Chicano, mix Spanish, and just speak the Spanish passed down from Spanish-Anglo Colonization two hundred fifty years ago? Is there a book written down somewhere with the standard scribbled down, just the same as the hundreds of Chinese dialects that Chinese people have? After reading on, I would argue that people need to be able to communicate like human beings, like Anzaldua said in the article, “A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves,” (p.36). From that side I feel like the standard could always be argued against. From one side it can be argued that we can try to control it, we can also identify it and we can also completely break all ties with it. I feel like problems like this all depends on the discourse community we are in, for example in school we are supposed to control how we speak to teachers and to them with respect. What do you think people should do in cases like these? What will you do?

I was pondering through this question about the standard of language, and was struck with confusion from the various points of views there was. Then I looked at the narrative again with

less speed going over the words, and found, “For days I walked around in stunned amazement that a Chicano could write and get published. When I read *I am Joaquin*, I was surprised to see a bilingual book by a Chicano in print. . . I felt like we really existed as a people,” (p.38). Why did it take that long for bilingual books to be published? What made it okay to publish it now? Was it because people’s point of view changed, which caused us to reconsider this? I remember what my grandparents said that was similar to what Anzaldua’s parents told her, that there was a standard to language. They said not following the standard form of language made the person saying it “lower” in terms of class, because they didn’t bother to practice the language the proper way. Just like how Anzaldua was looked down upon, “Chicanas who grew up speaking Chicano Spanish have internalized the belief that we speak poor Spanish. It is illegitimate, a bastard language,” (p.38) It was so hard to understand why such people would think that way. Do you think so? What would Anzaldua say? I’d argue that standards started changing because people wanted a sense of belongingness, they wanted an identity to express themselves, thus they started creating slang and different dialects to communicate just like writing a bilingual book.

Reading “How to Tame Your Tongue”, inspired me to find the answer to the question, “What is the standard for a certain language?” It actually does not have a standard but it was the way we viewed language caused that controversy. Like writing a piece of academic writing, it’s the information that is pointed out from that piece of writing that is important and along those lines the grammar to connect the ideas. Don’t you agree?

Looking back, I would totally recommend this narrative to other people who are having trouble defining for themselves “the standard of language”. I would highly encourage you, Ms. Galang, to read it for yourself as well and decipher what was difficult for you to understand. I feel like this type of critical reading process really helped me to find answers. I am finally able to conclude what Anzaldua concluded, “Until I can take my pride in language I cannot take pride in

myself,” (p.39). I am determined to say that I take pride in the language I use, and feel like many of us who are struggling with identifying ourselves will too. It was through reading the narrative , thinking of it as “difficult”, and then deciphering what is meant that helped me understand the overall idea she was pointing at. Thank you for taking the time to read this long letter, and feel free to tell me your thoughts after reading this. I actually hope you liked this letter even though it was long. Did it make you want to read the narrative? Please do read it and write back to tell me about what you got out of reading her narrative.

Sincerely,

[Helen]

Appendix F: Janice's Essay 2

[Janice]

ENG 114

Dan Curtis-Cummins

November 25, 2015

Dear Mrs. Katie Martin,

Howdy Mrs. Martin! I chose to write to you because I believe that you have influenced my writing structurally, comprehensively, and gave me a more authentic style. It's been a very long time since we last talked. I am pretty sure the last time we have ever spoken was when I was a freshman back in high school. Yes, I am a college student now, can you believe it? Time goes by so fast with the blink of an eye, doesn't it? I now go to school at San Francisco State University and I must say, I love it here. To be honest, I love this weather so much and I love the city life, even though I do not actually live in the city, but more by Fremont. Whenever I think of the city, I compare it to my own life and how much it relates to it, always busy and never lifeless. Anyhow, it's not easy adjusting to college life, although I definitely am getting there slowly, but surely. You are probably wondering why I am writing this letter to you, but you probably already guessed it. Yes, I am writing to you for one of my English assignments (such a surprise), which is to inform you of my difficulties while reading this specific article and ask you for advice on how to address my problems.

So far, my English class has been well-organized and I am pleased with my fellow peers' and teacher's assiduity. The atmosphere of the classroom emanates a welcoming and encouraging vibe. Reading is prominent throughout all the assignments in this class. We have been practicing annotations and analyzing details and phrases at a much deeper level. I feel that this method/process has improved myself as an avid reader. Despite that fact, I still have

some issues reading and interpreting a few of the texts. For this assignment, I am going to be introducing a maybe new writer and article to you, and it is called “Should Writer’s Use They Own English?” by Varshawn Ashanti Young.

Young composed an ingenious article, explaining the prejudice hardships between different discourse communities and emphasizing the importance of a mixed language both oral and written. Throughout his paper, he is constantly making an argument against a man named Stanley Fish. For example, Young disagrees with Fish’s belief that there is only one way to speak and write to get ahead in the world. Young believed that any language can be applicable to writing so long as it is able to be understood by the readers. Also, he questions why Ebonics is looked down upon and why everyone has so much negativity towards it. Young’s main idea and belief is for everyone to learn everybody’s dialect/language. He encourages the aesthetic of work, home, and school to be utilized in academic writing. In addition, he rebels against the “standard” English and what is expected.

Young’s phraseology and diction may be seen as unorthodox to some readers, but I actually did not find his writing style that difficult to read. I was able to acknowledge his key points and main ideas, and his word choice did not affect that in any way. The language he used did not take away the significance of his article as a whole. I can see how some readers may have trouble reading thoroughly. Even though I was able to grasp his central goal to the audience, I still found myself rereading sentences so that his ideas can be much clearer and I would be able to make connections to them.

I feel that the author’s purpose was to open up the reality of language prejudice to all of the world and have them recognize the ignorance of other languages that is not English. It does not matter what dialect anyone speaks or where they come from, any expression that they feel fits his/her writing best, then so be it. As long as the article is able to reach out and touch the audience, then at that point, the writing style does not matter. Basically, Young wants to

emphasize the importance of allowing other dialects and background to come together and blend so that we can become a stronger community. With that fact, I absolutely agree with him because I strongly support the idea of self-expression, cultural background, and mixed communication.

When I finished reading Young's article, I found myself quite appalled by some of the beliefs of the people he mentions throughout his text. Specifically, I completely disagree when Young wrote that some people say, "You cant mix no dialects at work; how would peeps who aint from yo hood understand you?" (Young 111) It's disgusting that people believe that one's identity should be completely stripped from them. I mean, that is what they are basically saying. Taking someone's right to their own language is exactly the same as taking away their culture and background. Mrs. Martin, how would you feel about Fish's statement? Knowing you, I am sure you would find it so absurd and selfish of the people supporting the idea someone taking away someone's culture/identity.

One section that was difficult for me to read and understand was the very beginning. The article kicks off with a passage from "What Should Colleges Teach? Part 3" written by Stanley Fish. Basically, Fish states that students should clear their mind of any dialects and cultures that may be applied to their own identity and style. Responding to Fish, Young writes about how Fish believes that there is only one way to write. As Young is responding to the excerpt, one of his statements stop me in my tracks. I was reading along fine until he wrote, "He say dont no student have a right to they own language if that language make them "vulnerable to prejudice." (Young 110) I tried reading the next sentence after that one to see if I could better analyze how Young's response was suitable for the text. After reading that sentence many, many times, I was able to understand what he actually meant and I figured out what the statement meant just by itself. Although, I still cannot discern how Young's statement fits in that context and how it relates to Fish's excerpt. I reread Fish's piece and I tried to interpret it, but I

still was not able to find how it caused Young to interpret the text in such a contrasting way. With that, I guess Fish's passage affected Young on a much profound scale and connected to him in a different way that led to Young seeing far below the surface. How would you respond to the excerpt written by Fish? Are you able to understand Young's response as well? If I were to ask you to help me analyze Young's response to Fish's passage, how would you help me understand?

To sum everything up, what does "academic" writing even mean? Do you think that this article is a form of academic writing? In my opinion, I feel that this definitely is academic writing and I feel that the meaning of it means much more than its superficial definition. I believe that academic writing is just being able to connect to the readers. So long as the article is able to be understood and the audience can take away the vital details and main idea, then there is no need to label writing. Young expresses his culture through his writing and he did have purpose to that decision. He wrote this article specifically for the whole world, and especially the modern day society. Today, our society is more relaxed and not really strict. We live in a time where the English language has expanded greatly and is continually growing. Young wants to show us that there really is no "standard" that we all must follow. In your class, Mrs. Martin, a lot of your writing assignments based 30% of our grade just on grammar. I am sure curious to know how you would grade Young's article. I know grammar meant a lot to you because you believed that writing should always have correct grammar, spelling, and "standard" English. If you ever come across Young's article, I hope that it leaves some thoughts in your head on whether you should change your guidelines or not. Even if you still choose to count grammar as 30% of your students' grades, then at least you learned to understand and respect where Young's ideas come from. I'm sorry my grammar was not always as perfect as you wanted it to be, but hey, as Young would say, there definitely is more than one academic way to write right.

Best wishes, [Janice]

Appendix G: Lou's Final Reflective Essay (Essay 5)

Essay #5

The English 114 Affect

For my freshmen year first semester courses I feel that I have learned many new things. Not only have I learned about the curriculum but also about myself as a student. The class that I feel truly helped me grow the most is my English 114 class. During the course of this class I have grown as a reader, writer, and have developed my own academic voice.

The course started off different comparing to any of my previous English classes. Instead of writing a research paper about a novel or debate we able to write about our selves. Our first essay made us evaluate our selves as a reader and writer. Personally I learned a lot from myself when writing this essay. When typing about my middle school English classes I wrote, "Reading my classmates' papers made me try and force new words into my writing; I would place big words where they sounded best, not knowing if it fit the sentence correctly"(Personal Narrative). Looking back at who I was as a writer helped me see the problems I have with my writing today. Evaluating myself not only helped me to find problems with my writing, but helped me find why I struggle in this area of my academics.

In Essay 1 I wrote, "The dull tone of the class lessons and essay topics was the same tone I wrote my essays with"(Personal Narrative). I used to think that I was just a bad writer. This essay helped me see that my attitude towards writing didn't come from it being challenging, but because I was disengaged with the curriculum of my previous classes. After learning this I found where I strive in writing and that is creative writing. I wrote about how my experience with writing screenplays helped me understand who I am as a writer. I learned that my writing style is better suited for story telling and being descriptive.

English 114 not only challenged me as a writer but as a reader. We were often given articles that were challenging to read, specifically when writing essay 2. For this essay we were assigned to read *Should Writer's Use They Own Language?* written by Vershawn Ashanti Young. In this article Young responds to Stanley Fish's, *What Should Colleges Teach*. Fish takes the stance that there is one proper language when writing, and Young writes a counter argument to Fish. To even further his points Young writes in slang. Because of the use of slang this paper was challenging to read. When first reading the article I often had to look over lines that did not make sense making the annotating process even more difficult. But moving through the paper it began making more sense. After reading Young's paper I learned many new things about not only reading but writing. I wrote, "Adding emotion, emphasis, and character never came to mind because I didn't think it would strengthen my paper. Youngs' paper convinced me that it does. When reading his article I did not hear a monotone voice giving me fact after fact or quote after quote, but I saw a man moving in great gestures speaking with passion"(Personal Narrative)

This class has helped me improve in many areas such as interacting with classmates, revising essays, annotating articles/novels. But also I feel that this class has influenced my future. As I wrote before creative writing is a big part in my life, and after taking this class I want to continue my work in the area. Overall this class has made a huge impact not only in my academic career but in my everyday life.

Appendix H: Lou's Essay 2

Essay #2

[Lou]

Mr. Cummins

English 114

September 24, 2015

The Way I Say It

Dear, Mr. Oelschlager

I was hoping you could help me with understanding an article I was assigned for my English class at San Francisco State University. The article we were assigned is called, "Should Writer's Use They Own English" written by Vershawn Ashanti Young. The entire article is a response to another article titled "What should Colleges Teach?" written by Stanley Fish. In Fish's article his point is that there is one standard English, and that anything otherwise makes someone "vulnerable to prejudice". What Young expresses in his article is that writers should not conform to a standard of writing or speech, but to use their individuality help express their own voice. To emphasize his point even more, Young writes his entire article in a slang dialect. Because of this format the article came with new challenges while reading.

The reason I am writing to you is because of all my prior English teachers, you had displayed the widest variety of dialects. During my freshman year you showed the class many different genres of writing styles such as short stories and poems. The purpose of the class was to learn about the structure of a research paper, but I won't forget how you stressed the importance of reading. Also, I had you for my senior short story class. In this class we again read short stories, but we were able to create our own pieces with our own language. Because of these two classes, I know that you are not foreign to the language used in different of writing styles.

My entire life I believed that there was a certain way I had to speak in my academic writing. I always thought that it was the best way of convincing my audience to agree with my points, but after reading this article where the amount of slang was abundant, I am reconsidering if using such language is necessary. I feel this way because by the end of the article, I was persuaded to agree with Young's views. This came as a shock to me because I have written dozens of essays using "standard" english, as Fish refers to it, thinking my arguments were persuasive, but the reaction of my teachers proved otherwise. Young actually addresses this point while talking about his experience with teaching grad students; he says, "they also tend to try too hard to sound academic, often using unnecessary convoluted language, using a big word where a lil one would do, and stuff"(Young 113). I'm sure you see this in many of the papers you grade. Do you agree with Young? Is there some truth to what he says here? As far as I am concerned I feel that many of my papers would have flowed much better if I wrote in a simpler dialect that I was comfortable with.

Another aspect of this article that surprised me was how Young wrote with such emotion and emphasis. From the beginning of his article, Young spoke with such intense language saying, "Lord, lord, lord! Where do I begin..."(110) After reading through the article I asked myself, 'Why would Young begin his response with such a grand opening?' I came to the realization that he is setting up the tone of the entire paper. In a sense, he drew a picture for his audience of the voice that he chose to write in. This further supports his argument because by using this type of language, with the help of evidence and reason, he is still able to get his points across clearly. In all my papers I lack emotion. How am I supposed to be excited about writing a four page paper about the American Revolution? Before reading this article I thought that research papers are based off of facts; the more facts I have the better my article is supported. Adding emotion,

emphasis, and character never came to mind because I didn't think it would strengthen my paper. Young's paper convinced me that it does. When reading his article I did not just hear a monotone voice giving me fact after fact or quote after quote, but I saw a man moving in great gestures speaking with passion. At times the tone of the paper sounded as if Young had spite towards Fish. The way Young wrote gave me an impression of what Young thought of Fish's views. In many different areas in the text I felt an aggression or attitude that Young was displaying. Young says to Fish, "But did you read Campbell's book, Fish? What about Geneva Smitherman's *Talkin and Testifyin*(1977)? Is you readin this essay?"(116) While reading this I didn't understand the purpose of this language. I asked myself, 'How does this support Young's article?' The only thing that I came up with is that it gives him a voice with passion. It allows the audience to empathize with him. Still, I don't see how it strengthens his article; at least it isn't significant enough to impact the direction of the paper. What do you think of this writing style? What significance or effect does it give to one's paper?

I understand many people will not share the same reaction to Young's paper as I did. I understand how many people would agree with Fish and his views. Actually, before reading Young's paper I agreed with some of Fish's points. I feel the reason I agree with Young more is not only because his argument was very persuading, but also because he is supported by the fact that he is professor of rhetoric. At the beginning of reading his paper I had no prior knowledge to who Vershawn Ashanti Young was. He could have been a guy in prison who decided to write a paper for all I knew, but once I read, "In my own own experience teachin grad students,"(113) I understood that the person writing this essay is a credible source. After realizing this I asked myself, 'Would I agree with this paper as much as I do if he never mentioned his history of teaching?' At first I wasn't sure, but I began to look throughout the paper. I realized that even though the spelling of some words were wrong and his slang was all

over the place, he still had perfect punctuation. Also, the format of the quotations he used were perfect as well. I think that all this was done to again emphasize his point that not all writing has to be written in the same language.

I have taken a lot from reading this article. Many of my points of view on writing styles have been supported and many of them have changed. I have always felt that having to write a certain way when writing academic papers was absurd, but it was the only way I was taught to write. I feel that many young writers in school share the same mindset as I once did. They write in the way that they feel their teachers want them to hear, and not the way they wish to be heard. Young's paper proves that one's voice and passion can be used as a tool when writing papers, and that by sheltering them one may lose what they are trying to say. Young emphasizes individuality, and shows that by conforming to a specific dialect, people lose their voices.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I hope you enjoy what I have written, and I am really looking forward to hear your response to my questions and hearing your own views on the subject. Thank you

From,

[Lou]