



Edited by
Kelly Blewett
Justine Post
Lizbett Tinoco

Reconceptualizing Response

Using Instructor Feedback
to Promote Linguistic Justice

RECONCEPTUALIZING RESPONSE

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EDITED BY

Kelly Blewett, Justine Post, and Lizbett Tinoco

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To Addie and Kaari: Thank you for sharing your writing and perceptions of instructor feedback with me.

—Kelly

To Anne Curzan, for creating the space I needed to surface and interrogate my own assumptions and biases about language.

—Justine

Para mi mamá, papá y familia.

—Lizbett

M—i am so proud of you! For making that ultimate comeback and coming back to school and then getting down like this on top of it! i know i'm supposed to act like a teacher right now and give you some good advice on what to do next with this piece . . . but you got that in the bag cuz you doin the damn thing right here! see what gets kicked up on the blackboard and lace that in too, like you are already doing anyway. keep flowin, holla back and let me know how you doin, and what other help you need from me, ck

—Carmen Kynard's *published feedback to a student*, 2006, p. 381

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FOREWORD

Promoting Linguistic Justice in the Face of Backlash

We Just Cain't Give Up

ELAINE RICHARDSON

I am honored to write the foreword for *Reconceptualizing Response: Using Instructor Feedback to Promote Linguistic Justice*, this well-conceived and forward-pushing collection of scholarship edited by Kelly Blewett, Justine Post, and Lizbett Tinoco. It is encouraging in a time that seems so full of discouragement. A phrase often used by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. keeps us focused on the worthiness of our work: “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice” (King 1958). Blewett, Post, and Tinoco have put together this brave collection, inspired by Baker-Bell, to do what we can in higher education, where we can make a difference, using our feedback in the realization of linguistic justice.

April Baker-Bell’s (2020) powerful book *Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy* was published during the zenith, if you will, of the Black Lives Matter Movement, at the height of the pandemic, when the whole world had just witnessed the suffering of George Floyd and the uncaring nonchalant way in which the police officer Derek Chauvin cut off his life. Whites and other people removed from Black realities have often seemed to be oblivious to the everyday ways Black lives are imperiled, including the murder of unarmed Black people. But then, at that moment, they were eye-witnesses to George Floyd’s murder. This was a time when people of all races,

including masses of white people, showed up for racial justice with and for Black people.

Baker-Bell's book dropped within this context, rehearsing ideas long accepted in Black linguistics, Black studies, critical literacies and linguistics, and culturally sustaining/relevant pedagogy, placing them in conversation with the frameworks of Critical Race English Education, Black feminism, and raciolinguistics and the discourse of the movement for racial justice. Baker-Bell illuminated antiracist Black Language teaching practices in a way that I hoped would usher in widespread creation of teaching and learning experiences that translated into massive social action. Yet, we are still here. Still pushing forward though seemingly standing on shaky ground.

I can't help but speak to the current state of backlash in the United States. I had another personal encounter with Mr. Backlash recently. I was notified that a reading endorsement course that I teach for teachers pertaining to linguistic diversity would be audited due to the impact of legislative mandates. For me, that meant I would have to teach the course prioritizing a "science of reading" (SOR) orientation. Over several decades, there have been various debates about best practices in the teaching of reading. Brief examples include teaching isolated skills versus providing reading experiences; whole word versus systematic phonics; whole language, which includes teaching reading skills and phonics while reading and centering students' contexts to support their language ability; and more (Thomas 2022). SOR is defined by Shayne Piasta (2023) as "the accumulated knowledge base we have from scientific research, as to the reading process, its components, how reading develops, and how we can best support those learning how to read." Piasta is careful to explain that there are misperceptions about what SOR is; a major one is that people think it is a specific method.

Steve Dackin is the director of Ohio's Department of Education and Workforce Development. His statement in a recent news article, "Science of Reading Enacted in Ohio's New Budget," reflects a common perception of SOR: "Explicitly teaching the sounds and symbols of our language and skills for language comprehension creates proficient readers." His understanding is problematic to say the least. We can be sure that by "our language" Dackin is referring to standardized White American English. The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) has attempted to take a stand against the default position of a standardized English and the harm that it can inflict on BIPOC students in its "Statement on White Language Supremacy" (Richardson et al. 2021):

WLS assists white supremacy by using language to control reality and resources by defining and evaluating people, places, things, reading, writing,

rhetoric, pedagogies, and processes in multiple ways that damage our students and our democracy. It imposes a worldview that is simultaneously pro-white, cisgender, male, heteronormative, patriarchal, ableist, racist, and capitalist (Inoue 2019b; Pritchard 2017). This worldview structures WLS as the default condition in schools, academic disciplines, professions, media, and society at large. WLS is, thus, structural and usually a part of the standard operating procedures of classrooms, disciplines, and professions. This means that WLS is a condition that assumes its worldview as the normative one that allegedly everyone has access to regardless of their cultural, social, or language histories (Inoue 2021). WLS perpetuates many forms of systemic and structural violence.

There are some methods I may use in teaching reading that are indicated in the knowledge base of SOR work, and I believe there are well-meaning researchers and educators who use SOR because they want students to be able to read well. However, I reject SOR because it foregrounds science as an objective and superior way of understanding “the reading process,” erasing the fact that school reading and literacy education is mired in inequitable social arrangements that sustain the racial achievement gap, more properly called the education debt owed to BIPOC students (Ladson-Billings 2006).

As a critical Black feminist community-engaged literacy scholar, my agenda includes teaching, researching, and working alongside my community for the linguistic and social justice of Black students, the empowerment of the most marginalized people, and liberty and justice for all. Conservative state actors’ agendas entail advocating for white language supremacist education measures via the distribution of multimillion-dollar state appropriations and provisions to implement their policies while dismantling DEI, promoting colorblind racism, and abolishing affirmative action programs.¹ This situation smacks of the pattern of paternalism that Cameron Becker illuminates in chapter 1 of this volume, which reviews historical response research. Paternalism, Becker finds, “. . . manifests when those holding power assume they are qualified and entitled to define standards, as well as make decisions in the interest of those without power.” Those of us striving to be linguistically just instructors provide feedback to our students to stem paternalistic undemocratic practices in the interest of liberatory social and linguistic justice.

1. For funding measures, see Henry 2024. For the dismantling of DEI, see “What Is SB 83?,” Charles F. Kettering Foundation website, accessed March 9, 2026, <https://kettering.org/anti-dei-laws-and-democracy-what-you-need-to-know-about-ohio-sb-83/#:~:text=SB%2083%20is%20a%20higher,of%20violations%20of%20these%20policies>.

Setting up the framework for this book, Blewett, Post, and Tinoco review the existing composition and writing studies research on response and feedback. They note trends such as the types of comments instructors offered on students' drafts and strategies that experienced teachers gave that might be useful for "harried" instructors. They ask: "Why, then, with all the attention the feedback literature paid to promoting student agency and creating a dialogue with students, were students' racial and linguistic experiences so rarely centered in this work?" (introduction). They further note that the CCCC's "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (SRTOL) had been circulating for years prior to the trend in feedback research.

I would offer that composition teaching has largely focused on "basic writers," a subfield created upon the sociolinguistic construction of linguistically diverse students as conflicted others with wrong attitudes. Mina Shaughnessy (1977, 179) describes the "basic writer" as follows:

[They] have never written much, in school or out . . . they have come from families and neighborhoods where people speak other languages or variant, non-prestigious forms of English and . . . while they have doubtless been sensitive to the differences between their ways of speaking and their teachers', ***they have never been able to sort out or develop attitudes toward the differences that did not put them in conflict, one way or another, with the key academic tasks of learning to read and write and talk in standard English.*** [emphasis mine]

By and large, Shaughnessy's characterization, using colorblind language, explains away the social, historical, economic, political, and racial dehumanization that those basic writers, as she has so casually labeled them, have survived. Rather, their cultural identities and language practices are conceptualized from a deficit framework as errors.

In chapter 4 of this volume, Amanda Hawks and Nick Sanders locate this deficit framing and bring us into more foundational critical work such as SRTOL (CCCC's Committee on Language Statement 1974) and current critical feedback practices informed by Black radical tradition tenets (e.g., Kelley 2003), critical race English work (Johnson 2022), demands for Black linguistic justice (Baker-Bell et al. 2020), antiracist feedback (e.g., Inoue 2015), and more. Hawks and Sanders note that even in praiseful instructor feedback and comments meant to support revision in the writings of students of color, "revision is often conflated to reassert white commonplaces of correctness instead of a focus on rhetorical development" (chapter 4).

This harkens back to "the real components of rhetorical power" that Geneva Smitherman evokes in her 1972 treatise to the profession, "English Teachers

Why You Be Doin The Thangs You Don't Do.” In it she outlines a five-point program based in centering Black students in the racism that plagues society and, beyond that, focusing upon the turbulent, confusing, complex power politics of the United States. Briefly, her fifth point (V) emphasizes Content and Message, Logical Development, Use of Supporting Details and Examples, Analysis and Arrangement, Style, Specificity, Variation of Word Choice, Sentence Structure, and Originality. She guides English teachers by demonstrating that correction-focused feedback on grammar is the least important in persuading audiences. Not only does she write using Black language with originality and rhetorical flair, she also instructs students with feedback that is culturally empowering and liberatory. Smitherman (1972, 65) writes,

I am talking about survival strategies that extend far beyond the classroom. I am talking about the acquisition of those tools essential for thinking through a situation and making decisions. I am talking about telling it like it T. I. IS. So effectively and persuasively that your audience will move in whatever direction you desire. I am talking about teaching Black students that language can be/is power, that they must develop that power, and that ultimately in the struggle for Black liberation, the pen may be/is mightier than the Molotov cocktail.

The type of feedback Smitherman advised disrupts colonized institutional writing instruction.

It is within this spirit that Michelle Cruz Gonzales's chapter (chapter 8) offers an instructor's journey of learning of how to privilege her Latinx student's language, culture, and ways of knowing to promote and affirm critical literacy and rhetorically meaningful writing. Gonzales was inspired by SRTOL and the more contemporary “This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!” (Baker-Bell et al. 2020). Gonzales remembered her own trauma-filled student writing experiences and began to nurture the complex thought and life her student was conveying. Using diverse literary texts and linguistic justice approaches afforded the student opportunities for rhetorically diverse development rather than stifling it by holding her student hostage with prescriptive, culturally alien standardized English conventions.

It is challenging for instructors to provide this type of guidance, especially when they themselves may be contingent laborers or working in two-year colleges. Joanne Baird Giordano and Erin Lehman's chapter in this collection (chapter 13) speaks to ways to deliver impactful instruction in this situation, while working with “first-generation, refugee, dual enrollment, international,

transfer, returning adult, and GED students.” They “teach online because [they] see its benefits—including accessibility, support, and effectiveness—for student learning. The foundation for this student learning to occur begins with instructors and course designers embedding multiple activities that support inclusive and responsive feedback into the structure of a course site. Effective online writing course design creates a foundation for responsive feedback to happen within a virtual learning space.”

The scholarship presented in this book of well-researched essays is hell-bent on upholding lives and literacies that deserve honor and care—the lives of students, instructors, our communities, and our country—finding ways to higher ground in the midst of recurring backlash, and fighting for justice. We just can’t give up.

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RECONCEPTUALIZING RESPONSE

Introduction

KELLY BLEWETT, JUSTINE POST, AND LIZBETT TINOCO

“Addie, your thinking is excellent in this draft; I think many of my comments relate to technical aspects of writing. Suggestion for revision: Correct multiple and varied errors in punctuation.” At first glance, this comment is generally unremarkable. Elise, a white woman with sixteen years of teaching experience, provided fairly standard feedback about surface-level errors. In the draft, Elise recommended that Addie delete unnecessary quotations, correct in-text citations, and double-check her works cited page. For Elise, as for most instructors, this was standard feedback that had nothing to do with the student’s identity.

But for Addie, a Black woman who aspired to become a teacher, this comment was impactful in ways that her first-year writing instructor did not intend or recognize. Addie shared her reactions to her instructor’s comments during an interview in 2016.¹ In this interview, Addie explained that the phrase “multiple and varied errors” pushed her focus beyond the page. Though the student recognized that the comment addressed “technical errors,” which she identified as her most consistent and “biggest problem,” Addie could not separate this feedback from her experiences with Black Language and writing

1. This data was collected by Kelly Blewett as part of a study of feedback in the writing classroom and was presented at the CCCC annual meeting in 2021. For a discussion of the methodology used in this study, see Blewett 2018.

more generally. As she reflected on Elise's comment, Addie explained: "I know my writing style is different. It's influenced by who I am and my experiences, but I guess being in high school and listening to other types of writing from other students—I went to a predominantly white high school—so, I don't know, maybe that's what is influencing that." The contrast that Addie perceived between her writing style and the writing style of her mostly white peers may have contributed to the trepidation she expressed about her writing. On the one hand, Addie felt her voice connected her to her community. "I don't want to deny myself of that," she said. "I don't want to seem like I'm trying to distance myself from any of that." On the other hand, Addie expressed negative beliefs about her spoken discourse, describing the way she talked as "bland" and suggesting that "it doesn't sound educated."

These perceptions created a very real tension for Addie that impacted her approach to writing. "I do want my voice to come across in writing," she said, "but not always, because if I'm talking to certain people, I might not have correct grammar, or the speech patterns may be different." Although Addie clearly valued her voice, she also recognized that her voice was not always valued by others. As a result, she explained that she chose to spend a lot of time "making sure" her writing sounded the way it "should":

Making sure that my writing is, because it's different from writing dialect and writing the way something should be, making sure that my writing is matching . . . I can't put this into words, I'm sorry. Making sure my writing is not resembling the way I'm always talking, because that's switching from time to time . . . making sure that everything is going through the writing process, I guess, to become its best result or product.

It would be easy to dismiss this example as a case of a student overinterpreting her instructor's feedback. When Elise learned about Addie's reaction to this comment, she stated that Addie had "read more into [the comment] than what [she] meant," sharing that Addie "took almost everything [she] said to heart." And Addie herself recognized that her response to this comment was likely going beyond what her instructor intended to communicate. "I doubt if I'm perceiving it from the comments, but it is something that's always on my mind, I guess," Addie said.

Instead of dismissing examples like this one, it is imperative that we explore them. For too long, the feedback literature has studied comments in a vacuum, overlooking the situated experiences that both students and instructors bring to these interactions. Elise was unaware of Addie's ongoing experiences

navigating the writing process in Predominantly White Institutions, including the high school and college she attended in the midwestern city where she grew up. She was also unequipped to respond to Addie's needs.

Addie's reaction to Elise's comment is necessarily situated within the complex dynamics of her language use. Addie's linguistic and racial experiences are intertwined in ways her instructor did not account for when responding to her writing. As April Baker-Bell states, "People's language experiences are not separate from their racial experiences" (2020, 2). Baker-Bell uses the term Black Language, which she juxtaposes against White Mainstream English, to foreground the ways linguistic and racial hierarchies are connected. Her choice to replace terms like Standard English, Standard Edited American English, or Academic English with the term White Mainstream English further emphasizes "how white ways of speaking become the invisible—or better, inaudible—norm" (3). In *Linguistic Justice*, Baker-Bell (2020) illustrates how this privileging of White Mainstream English over Black English leads to antiblack linguistic racism that inflicts violence on Black students and their use of Black Language. Linguistic prejudices are not isolated from other intersecting social identities and they lead to compounding effects of discrimination and racism students face in our classrooms and institutions (Crenshaw 1991).

Addie's privileging of written, edited English over her spoken dialect and her struggle to articulate her experiences with language resonates with what Baker-Bell identifies as the need for students to raise their Black linguistic consciousness. In *Linguistic Justice*, Baker-Bell explains: "What I have learned from working with Janel and many of the Black students I have come to know through my teaching and research was that many of the encounters they had when using Black Language reflected anti-blackness; however, they did not have the precise language to name what they were experiencing, and for a long time, neither did I" (2020, 18).

The feedback Elise provided in this example does not convey antiblackness. However, Addie's reaction demonstrates the power that her other encounters with antiblackness hold over the feedback process. Even nonracialized comments that are not about spoken language conventions can trigger negative ideologies that students have already embodied. In short, it is not enough for instructor feedback to resist antiblackness. If students are going to engage with instructor feedback, we have to help them name what they are experiencing and find ways to mitigate the noise our comments can create.

This work is essential. Addie's story is a best-case example of a student engaging with instructor feedback. Elise described Addie as one of her favorite

students. Addie shared that she planned to take more writing classes from Elise, maybe as soon as the following semester. The two had a strong, positive relationship, and Addie was highly successful in her first-year writing course. And yet, Elise's feedback did not address the underlying tension that Addie experienced throughout her education in white classrooms—and that is a disconnect that all teachers must work to understand and address.

Race, language politics, and identity are coming up in first-year writing classes in ways that instructors often overlook. Addie left her first-year writing course without tools or resources to deepen her understanding of Black Language's unique rhetorical power. Elise left this experience without an understanding of Addie's needs.

For writing instructors to better serve racially and linguistically minoritized students, particularly students like Addie who regularly experience and often internalize antiblack linguistic racism, we must raise our own consciousness of the language ideologies that are entrenched in the spaces around us and reified through our feedback. We must reconsider what makes writing strong and acknowledge our biases (Condon and Young 2016; Garcia 2017; Richardson 1997; Wood 2020). We also need to be aware of the impact our identities may have on how students receive our feedback (Coleman et al. 1991; see also Melzer 2023, 38–39). We must learn to talk about these issues with students. *We must use our feedback to promote linguistic justice.*

This edited collection brings together two disparate bodies of literature—linguistic justice and feedback—to explore how instructor feedback can be used to promote linguistic justice in the postsecondary writing classroom. The chapters in this collection provide tools that enable writing educators to rethink their approaches to response and to identify and dismantle oppressive ideologies in their feedback practices. Doing this work requires us to challenge foundational response research and to challenge ourselves, our attitudes, and our understanding of our students. By offering new perspectives on how students' linguistic and racial experiences can be acknowledged, supported, and celebrated, this collection reconceptualizes response and its role in the writing classroom.

Linguistic Justice in the Writing Classroom

The call for linguistic justice in the writing classroom is not new. Scholars have been promoting linguistic justice, calling out the discipline's complicity with standard language ideology, and enacting antiracist approaches to language

and writing for years (Richardson 1997, 2003, 2006, 2010; Young 2010, Lyscott 2014; Inoue 2015; Watson and Shapiro 2018; Baker-Bell 2020; Schreiber et al. 2021; Richardson and Ragland 2018). These long-standing calls for writing instructors to consider language as an axis of power and affirm language varieties in the writing classroom date back to “Students’ Rights to Their Own Language” (SRTOL), an important foundational text for writing studies and for this book.

In his 2021 keynote address at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), Vershawn Young quoted from SRTOL: “The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for writers and speakers, and immoral advice for humans” (SRTOL, quoted in Young 2021, 630–31). He exhorted the audience to change their attitudes toward language variation, a point that he has made at several moments across his career (Young 2010, 110; 2021, 630; Young et al. 2018, 50), including at a conference specifically designed to explore the intersections between linguistic justice and response, titled “Racism in the Margins.” In his CCCC address, Young quoted Geneva Smitherman’s comment on attitudes: “Tellin kids they lingo is cool but it ain cool enough for where it really counts (i.e., in the economic world) is just like tellin them it ain cool at all. If the problem is not with the kid’s dialect but attitudes toward that dialect, then why not work to change those attitudes? (Smitherman, quoted in Young 2021, 630).” Young concludes: “I find it not so much curious as I find it straight up hypocritical that 4Cs can on the one hand advance position statements like the SRTOL and elect leaders of the organization, whose work clearly defy the hegemony of white standard discursive norms, and on the other hand still promote advice in writing courses that it calls ‘immoral’ . . . [4Cs] must be criticized for its lackluster efforts at urging members to apply that diversity in all levels of writing instruction” (2021, 631).

And Young is not alone in raising these concerns. In “This Ain’t Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!” April Baker-Bell, Bonnie J. Williams-Farrier, Davena Jackson, Lamar Johnson, Carmen Kynard, and Teaira McMurtry provide a long list of position statements dedicated to language, including SRTOL (Baker-Bell et al. 2020). Although more than fifty years have passed since SRTOL was published, these statements demonstrate that much work remains for writing and language scholars to decenter White Mainstream English and make space for what Young et al. (2018) call the “undervalued varieties” of English practiced by students of color and other minoritized and linguistically diverse groups (20). Consequently,

Baker-Bell et al. list a set of demands for scholars in writing studies, including that teachers stop upholding White Mainstream English, stop promoting code-switching, and start teaching “Black students about anti-Black linguistic racism and white linguistic supremacy!” (2020).

Calls to boldly change course learning outcomes to leverage a strong focus on linguistic justice are gaining traction. For instance, Watson and Shapiro (2018) proposed that first-year writing courses should enable students to “recognize the role of language attitudes and standards in empowering, oppressing, and hierarchizing languages and their users” (n.p.). However, these calls are also being met with resistance. In 2020, the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) assembled a task force to update the WPA Outcomes Statement. Ultimately, the process to adopt the outcomes failed, due in part to the longstanding white racial habitus of CWPA (CWPA Executive Board 2021), which is similar to that of other professional organizations in the field (Giamo et al. 2023). The task force presented their revised goals statement publicly under the name of the Institute for Race, Rhetoric and Literacy. In the Institute’s “Abbreviated Statement Toward First-Year Composition Goals,” Beavers et al. (2021) argue that first-year composition goals should “support sustainable, antiracist writing assessment ecologies” (3). They highlight the need to “consider”:

- How to decenter dominant (White, middle and upper class, monolingual) languaging norms and provide ample opportunities for students to embody their own languaging varieties;
- How to seek and find value in students’ languaging experiences;
- How to language with rhetorical dexterity given the multitude of languaging situations students encounter;
- How to address the politics of languaging and its judgment in order to promote healthy critical consciousness. (3)

Half a century of statements, demands, and calls for change demonstrate that much work remains. Stories like Addie and Elise’s—those that look at instructor feedback with particular attention to students’ racial and linguistic experiences—too often go untold. Though feedback is at times the sole source of direct interaction between student and instructor, it has not been adequately explored as a site for promoting linguistic justice. Instead, feedback is a site where standard language ideologies are often reinforced, which can in turn negatively impact students along many axes of inequality in addition to race, including socioeconomic class, ability, and gender.

Why Focus on Feedback in the Pursuit of Linguistic Justice?

At its core, this book asks us to question a pedagogical approach that was heavily researched in the 1980s and '90s and has essentially gone unquestioned since. According to Dana Ferris (2015), research on feedback “appears to have peaked in the 1980s in composition studies” (1). Early studies, such as Nancy Sommers’s “Responding to Student Writing” (1982), Robert Connors and Andrea Lunsford’s “Teachers’ Rhetorical Comments on Student Papers” (1993), and Richard Straub and Ronald Lunsford’s *Twelve Readers Reading* (1995), were designed to uncover what sorts of comments teachers were leaving on student drafts (focusing on the text), what experienced teachers did when they responded to student drafts (focusing on best practices), and what strategies harried teachers could use to respond to student writing (focusing on efficiency). This work, from the beginning, was grounded in the nitty-gritty practice of teaching.

It was not grounded, however, in the sociocultural or racial positioning of teachers or students. This gap in the literature exists despite Geneva Smitherman’s early calls for instructors to do better by Black students through their feedback. In her 1973 piece, “God Don’t Never Change,” Smitherman provided a sample of instructor feedback to a student at Wayne State University. The student was prompted to take a position on the Vietnam War and wrote the following: “I think the war in Viet Nam bad. Because we don’t have no business over there. My brother friend bein in the war and he say it’s hard and mean. I do not like war because it’s bad. And so I don’t think we have no business there. The reason the war in China is bad is that American boys is dying over there.” She recounts what happened next: “The paper was returned to the student with only *one* comment: ‘Correct your grammar and resubmit.’ What sheer and utter nonsense!” (Smitherman 1973, 831).

Smitherman goes on to exhort teachers to “overlook these matters of sheer mechanical ‘correctness’ and get on with the educational business at hand. Don’t let students get away with sloppy, irresponsible writing just because it happen to conform to a surface notion of correctness” (832). This point about pushing students’ thinking forward echoes the SRTOL, which indicated that teachers needed to concentrate on “crucial exactness of content” and forget their own biases about dialect long enough to “recognize and respect this better kind of exactness” (CCCC 1974, 14). These recommendations align with best practices from response scholarship, which advocate for focusing on higher-order concerns in feedback. But Smitherman’s recommendations for teachers

didn't stop there: "In conceptualizing linguistic performance models for Black students," she writes, "our contemporary objectives must be informed by such historical socio-political realities as I have touched upon here. They must also be informed by accurate, comprehensive descriptions of [Black Idiom] BI. Both kinds of information are so highly interrelated as to be virtually inseparable" (Smitherman 1973, 830).

Surely this kind of historical context of the "socio-political realities" of language use and information about Black English should inform teacher response to student writing. And yet, a focus on race, language, and power is absent in most of the bedrock scholarship on response in rhetoric and composition, as Cameron Becker's chapter in this collection points out.

It's notable that the SRTOL was adopted by the executive committee of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1972, and Smitherman's piece was published in 1973, a decade or more before the publication of much of the literature on feedback in composition. Why, then, with all the attention the feedback literature paid to promoting student agency and creating a dialogue with students, were students' racial and linguistic experiences so rarely centered in this work?

The result of this omission was colorblind research that affirmed white discursive norms and denied the "socio-political realities" Smitherman described. The few exceptions act as cautionary tales. Two studies that explored teachers' evaluations of writing in Black English Vernacular (BEV) found that teachers interpreted code-meshing as errors (Richardson 1997; Matarese and Anson 2010).² Richardson (1997) found that teachers struggled with assessing writing that does not follow white discursive norms. Little has changed in the years since these publications. In a more recent consideration of response, Shane Wood pointed out that teachers and students need to interrogate racialized structures and the privileging of white middle-class monolingual English users (2020). These studies highlight the racism that speakers and writers of undervalued Englishes face in the writing classroom.

When feedback is used to uphold White Mainstream English, it functions as a tool for controlling and suppressing students—adding to the chorus of influences that coerce them to deny their linguistic identities and embody white supremacist values. As Baker-Bell (2020) describes, "Much of the language education that students receive in the K–12 and postsecondary education is based on white supremacist values. That is, White Mainstream English (white

2. This finding echoes Joseph Williams's (1981) categorization of BEV as an "egregious error" (see Becker, chapter 1).

linguistic and cultural values) is used as the gold standard in which all students are expected to meet” (20). By not identifying the linguistic and cultural values at play, feedback research and practices contribute to upholding Whiteness and what Baker-Bell calls “the silent and invisible ways which White Mainstream English serves as the unstated norm in our classrooms” (2020, 20). To move forward, writing instructors and scholars need to both *release control* and *reconceptualize response*.

We need to release control over students and their writing in order to promote learning. In a recent analysis of instructor feedback on 240 student portfolios (70 percent from composition and 30 percent from disciplinary writing), Dan Melzer found that instructors positioned themselves as “authority figures to be pleased in order to achieve a good grade” (2023, 88). Melzer observed teachers “often sending students the message that correctness is more important than content and will factor heavily into the final assessment of their writing” (46). What is it, exactly, that students learn in such environments? What purpose does our feedback serve? By examining and letting go of our assumptions about what makes writing good, we can undo the notion that effective writing is restricted to White Mainstream English.

As we release notions that are grounded in linguistic prejudice, we must also reflect on our limitations. We are limited by our own educational experiences, which likely reinforced the necessity of conforming to white discursive norms. We are limited by time and personal bandwidth.³ We are limited by fears and anxieties.

Our limitations have real and profound impacts on our feedback and on our students. For instance, in a recent assessment of feedback studies from educational psychology, Joanna Wolfe found that anxiety about appearing racist caused white instructors to provide different feedback to Black students than to white students (2024, 773). As Wolfe explains, “These dynamics create a vicious cycle of mistrust that can lead Black students to discount all feedback. Because both positive and negative feedback can be attributed to racial motives, Black students do not know what, if any, feedback to pay attention to. This mistrust limits self-development and undermines motivation. Rectifying this mistrust should be a primary agenda for all writing instructors” (773).

3. In a study at George Mason University, researchers found that the primary concern of writing teachers regarding response practices was “speed and workload” and that labor conditions had a real impact on feedback practices (Goldenthal et al., 2022, 61; see also Adams Wooten et al. 2022). These problems do very much live on, as community college professors Joanne Baird Giordano and Erin Lehman evidence by sharing what a full paper load can look like for instructors in open-access institutions today (chapter 13).

As we work to move past our limitations and recognize the harms they have caused, we must ground ourselves in self-awareness and self-compassion. It is critical that we examine and release our assumptions about our students and about ourselves. This is challenging and necessary work in the move toward linguistic justice.

While response research has been colorblind and affirming of white discursive norms, it has also established guidelines and best practices for interacting with students that will facilitate productive exchanges and limit the vacuous focus on surface-level correctness that Smitherman critiqued and Melzer (2023) more recently observed. In her 1982 article, for instance, Sommers recommended that teachers be mindful of the personas they create when they craft responses, avoid contradictory feedback, and focus on offering one lesson at a time. She also advised teachers to see their responses as an extension of the classroom, a point that continues to be emphasized (e.g., see Bowles 2020). Similar best practices were reproduced in Straub's recommendations (2000), Sommers's *Responding to Student Writers* (2012, 44–45) and in both the second and third editions of John Bean's *Engaging Ideas* (Bean 2011, 335; Bean and Melzer 2021, 314). Dana Ferris's 2014 study presented a selection of best practices in a short graphic, citing research that supported the practices that dated from 1995 through 2009 (2014, 8).

This focus on the practical, praxis-oriented aspects of response has continued. For example, in 2026 a new collection on feedback titled *Responding to Writing: A Practical Sourcebook for Instructors* is anticipated to be released by the University of Michigan Press. Its call for papers indicated that new teachers are eager for “‘best practice’ recommendations to make the response process more meaningful, rewarding, effective, and manageable” (Ferris, Eckstein, and Gilliland 2023). If best practices have fossilized, it may well be because they are serving the needs of teachers and at least some students. However, best practices are often decontextualized, presented as though they will work for any student and any teacher at any time. In 2006, Carmen Kynard noted that the feedback literature provided “a critical foundation” for her teaching, but that it lacked attention to “the saliency of every responder’s cultural/social identity as intimately connected to the registers with which we engage . . . our students, our perceptions of students’ political positions, and the inevitable discursive relationships that get constructed between teacher and student by nature of all this writing being passed back and forth among us” (2006, 364). In other words, best practices are a good start—but they don’t go far enough to explain the actual dynamics and stakes of response.

Guidelines for adapting feedback based on instructor or student needs are limited. Ferris (2014), for instance, found a great deal of variety in how teachers implemented the best practices in their feedback. Straub and Lunsford recommend “adapting the comment to the student,” though they provide little guidance for how instructors should do so (1995, 373). The existing best practices do not address how response might be tailored or made culturally responsive to any particular students, such as Black, Latinx, or other minoritized groups, and by not identifying any specific students or teachers, they obfuscate differences that may emerge based on linguistic or racial experiences.

We need to reexamine best practices, not abandon them completely. Hannah A. Franz’s (2024) *A Linguistically Inclusive Approach to Grading Writing: A Practical Guide* offers an entire chapter on commenting strategies. The particular strategies she mentions include the following: use feedback as a conversation, teach through specific positive comments, communicate high expectations, highlight your subjectivity as a reader, ask strategic questions, contextualize prescriptive comments, rethink labels, use correction judiciously, and self-assess your practices (Franz 2024, iv). These recommendations reify points often made in the feedback literature (e.g., Huot on dialogic feedback [2002], Daiker on praise [1989], Sommers on expectations [2012], etc.). What sets Franz’s recommendations apart, however, is the focus on the *why* behind each practice and on mobilizing these practices to affirm linguistic variation, particularly Black English. Franz offers new insights into why feedback practices matter and how they can be employed in inclusive and affirming ways. The companion website, *Students’ Right to Their Own Writing* (Charity Hudley, Dickter, and Franz n.d.), offers exactly the kind of education in Black English that Smitherman called for in the 1970s.⁴ It also shows how dialectical knowledge can inform culturally affirming commentary on sample student papers.

By remaining oblivious to undervalued Englishes and following often reified best practices without thinking about the *why* of doing so—or the ultimate goal of the writing—teachers may be, as James Baldwin said of white Americans several decades ago, “still trapped in a history which they do not understand” (1993, 8). And history may be repeating itself on the margins of student papers. As *Racism in the Margins*, a website of pedagogical materials housed by the University of Connecticut, explains, “The margins of student papers are crucial

4. In their article describing the research-based design of their website and how focus groups have responded to it, Franz and her colleagues note: “Students and their faculty instructors deserve to know about African American English (AAE) so they can make informed decisions about their own language use in academic contexts” (Franz et al. 2024, 647).

spaces for interaction and learning. But the margins are also where instructors' (often unconscious) assumptions about language conventions, authority, and racial frames reveal themselves in ways that may be damaging for student writers" (University of Connecticut Writing Center 2021). We must acknowledge our complicity in this reality and lean into a more capacious vision for feedback and writing instruction.

In this collection, we aim to enable writing scholars, instructors, and administrators to reconceptualize response by critically examining *why* we comment on student writing and exploring the ends our feedback serves. One entry point for this work is to take up Racism in the Margin's call to "evaluat[e] ourselves and embrace the discomfort of asking which of our habituated practices contribute to systems of oppression." By centering language ideology and linguistic justice in our response practices—as Geneva Smitherman called us to do more than fifty years ago—we can increase our individual and collective accountability for dismantling systems of oppression that continue to harm students in the writing classroom.

We notice that the contemporary conversation around feedback within composition does not often engage in this work or acknowledge linguistic identity and positionality as important features impacting the feedback cycle. It is still common to read anonymous corpus studies of feedback (e.g., Melzer 2020 and 2023) and studies that fail to identify the demographics of students or scrub demographic information from the analysis, even in small qualitative studies (for example, Bowden 2018; Bowles 2020; Particelli 2020; Moos 2020; and Harding et al. 2022). Though a recent surge of interest in response and grading contracts is a step in the right direction (e.g., Klotz and Reardon 2022; O'Meara 2022), a focus on grading contracts alone is not enough. We need to think critically about the nuances of the contract so that it can be equitably approached by all students and implemented by teachers (Kryger and Zimmerman 2020; Tinoco et al. 2020; Craig 2021; Carillo 2021; Wolfe 2024; Lewis and Eaton 2024). Furthermore, we need to recognize that the "hold" of the foundational literature remains strong. In interviews with graduate students describing where they learned to provide feedback, Donald Murray and Nancy Sommers continue to be cited as models (Moos 2020, 91). Foundational research pieces are still often cited in literature reviews that inform classroom activities (e.g., Heise 2023) and continue to be reproduced in textbooks that provide students with resources about feedback (e.g., DePeter 2020).

For feedback scholars, this book represents an opportunity to recognize our participation in standard language ideology and white cultural supremacy, and

to consider the outsized role the foundational research continues to play in instructional practice. It's also a chance to explore options for future research that move us in new directions. We need more thick, ethnographic investigations of the way feedback is offered by particular instructors in particular classrooms and how that feedback is interpreted by particular communities of students, like Carol Rutz offered in "Marvelous Cartographers." As Rutz put it in 2004, there are many "untold" stories of response unfolding in the United States. It's time that we start telling those stories with particular attention to students' linguistic and racial experiences as well as other identities that are salient to their experience of feedback in the writing classroom. Simultaneously, we need to educate ourselves in the many varieties of English that come into our classrooms—and learn to celebrate them in knowledgeable ways that equip our students to recognize linguistic prejudice when they see it. Taking these steps will enable us to become more integrated as teachers, to connect our feedback practices to our actual language values, and to attend to "the attitudes" that we present in our feedback, as Young (2021) has exhorted teachers to do. As we release control and reconceptualize response, we move toward linguistic justice.

Linguistic Justice in This Volume

April Baker-Bell defines linguistic justice as "an antiracist approach to language and literacy education that aims to dismantle antiblack linguistic racism and white linguistic hegemony and supremacy in classrooms and the world" (2020, 7). In this definition, the goal of linguistic justice is to eliminate the discriminatory practices and biases that cause great harm to Black speakers and writers and to subvert the power and influence that White Mainstream English holds. Linguistic justice goes much further than simply recognizing language variety in the classroom. As Bethany Davila (2016) has noted, "Even when linguistic diversity is acknowledged, nonstandard varieties are not given equal weight in the writing classroom" (130). Moreover, even students themselves are not given equal weight in the writing classroom. Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa (2015) argue that the linguistic practices of racialized and linguistically diverse students are stigmatized and thought of as deficient, regardless of how close they follow standardized linguistic practices. Linguistic justice seeks to level the playing field by disrupting these harmful practices.

While Baker-Bell focuses her treatment of linguistic justice exclusively on Black students, others take a more expansive approach to encompass all

speakers of undervalued Englishes.⁵ In *Linguistic Justice on Campus*, for instance, Brooke Schreiber et al. (2021) focus on “racialized and language-minoritized students” (2). “The learning and well-being” of these students, they argue, “are continuously and significantly compromised by inequities and injustices in the educational system” (2). Consequently, their collection aims to support college writing instructors working toward linguistic justice by sharing examples of “countering linguistic racism, promoting language pluralism, creating space for negotiating language standards and cultivating these practices through teacher training and other writing program administration work” (2). Like Baker-Bell, then, Schriber et al. approach linguistic justice with antiracist and socially just practices that seek to dismantle interlocking systems of oppression.

Baker-Bell calls for frameworks that will “interrogate and examine the specific linguistic oppressions experienced by linguistically marginalized communities of color and account for the critical distinctions between their linguistic histories, heritages, experiences, circumstances, and relationships to white supremacy” (2020, 18). In this collection, our contributors take up Baker-Bell’s call by examining the specific linguistic oppressions embedded in instructor feedback and striving to disrupt these oppressions by offering new and more just ways forward. Some of these contributions fall short of Baker-Bell’s definition of linguistic justice by advocating to uphold the standards of White Mainstream English instead of dismantling them. While these contributions do not achieve linguistic justice, we include them in this collection for the value they offer in moving *toward* justice, a process that, as Ann Ruggles Gere et al. (2021) remind us, is “ongoing, iterative, and collective” (385).

As editors, we made an intentional choice not to establish a unified definition of or approach to linguistic justice across the chapters in this collection. We support our readers in exploring their own approach to linguistic justice by offering a number of tools and frameworks. Some frameworks, like Critical Language Awareness, are well established in the field (see Shapiro and Perrault, chapter 10; and Weaver, chapter 11). Other reflective tools have been designed by our contributing authors for self-assessment (see Beavers, chapter 5; and Fang, Jiang, and Wang-Hiles, chapter 7) or course assessment (see Bradbury and Carter, chapter 6). A number of authors also share pedagogical tools, such as alternatives to traditional rubrics (see Gonzales, chapter 8; and Inoue, chapter 15). In each case, our contributing authors demonstrate how they have used

5. For a more thorough discussion on world Englishes and translingualism, see Canagarajah 2006; Young and Martinez 2011; Ayash 2019; and Alvarez and Lee 2020.

the tools and frameworks they share to deliver feedback that promotes—or creates the conditions in which feedback can promote—linguistic justice. They also give readers the guidance they need to put these tools and frameworks into practice in their own writing classrooms and programs.

Overview of the Collection

This volume brings together a mix of institution types, such as two-year colleges, four-year colleges and universities, small liberal arts colleges, R1 institutions, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Predominantly White Institutions within the United States and Canada. Our contributors write from varied positionalities, like Ming Fang, Xuan Jiang, and Lan Wang-Hiles, who self-identify as Non-Native English Speaking Writing Instructors; Michelle Gonzales, who describes her experience as the first full-time Latina hired in her department; Melvin Beavers, who reflects on his identity as a cisgender, queer, Black American man; and Kelly Bradbury and Genesea Carter, who critically reflect on their positionality as white women in writing program administration roles.

As editors, we became increasingly aware of how our own identities—white and Latina women with backgrounds teaching writing, administering writing programs and centers, and researching feedback and assessment—shaped what we noticed and how we responded to the chapters in this collection.

For Kelly Blewett, this collection represents an important marker on a years-long journey of considering how whiteness has impacted her life, education, career, and cultural habits. Learning from Addie and Kaari, the Black students who participated in Blewett's dissertation study, has been an important part of her journey that she's been processing for several years (Blewett 2017, 2021, 2022). Another key moment was her participation in a DEI Leadership Certificate program run by Indiana University in 2023. Following the program, Blewett intentionally joined multiracial groups in her faith and neighborhood communities. She also became more interested in disrupting white cultural habits within rhetoric and composition through service on the executive board of the Council of Writing Program Administrators. This book contributes to her goal of pursuing more relationally attuned, substantive, and inclusive feedback practices in writing programs and classrooms—and to fostering conversations about these topics in the field of rhetoric and composition.

As a white woman who has spent her entire career learning and teaching in Predominantly White Institutions, Justine Post has been working to reconcile

years of being served by and serving white supremacist culture with her desire to promote equity and justice. Post's journey toward linguistic justice began in graduate school, where learning about language ideologies enabled her to recognize her deeply ingrained racist and classist assumptions about language. The book *Other People's English* (Young et al. 2018) was pivotal in helping her understand the profound injustices that students speaking and writing undervalued Englishes experience. This book led Post to completely restructure the developmental writing course at the small private university where she received tenure and redesign the tutor training curriculum in the writing center she directed. Though she no longer teaches writing, this book is part of Post's ongoing commitment to promote linguistic justice in personal and professional settings.

For Lizbett Tinoco, the focus of this collection and her research on anti-racist assessment validate the feelings she had as an undergraduate student, when she got back a paper with just one comment, stating, "Second language issues, visit the writing center." Her feelings back then were that this feedback wasn't helpful at all, but more importantly, this feedback was racist af. As a result of this experience, Tinoco has spent her career integrating classroom practices and conducting research that celebrates and invites students, especially minoritized multilingual students at Hispanic-Serving Institutions and two-year colleges, to use their linguistic repertoires and navigate ways to resist linguistic racism in and out of the classroom. This collection, for Tinoco, also represents the fact that our assessment practices, such as grading contracts and other forms of alternative grading methods, aren't enough to create anti-racist writing programs and classrooms. We need to consider every part of our assessment ecology, a large part of which is feedback.

While we made efforts to mitigate the impact of our positionalities on each contribution, we also acknowledge the situatedness of our editorial work. As you engage with this collection, we invite you to think with and against the chapters collected here, always with a focus on what's next. It is our hope that across the perspectives represented in this volume, readers will find examples and insights that resonate with and challenge their thinking, as has certainly been true for us.

In this collection we argue that to reconceptualize response, there are four key moves we must make: *looking back* to critically evaluate the origins of our feedback practices; *looking within* to recognize how our positionality, values, and beliefs are communicated through feedback; *looking up* to understand and align our feedback practices with students' needs; and *looking around* to ensure

the entire ecosystem our feedback circulates within promotes linguistic justice. These moves drive the organization of this book and serve as a heuristic to guide readers on their own journeys toward linguistic justice. As you make your way through the collection, we hope that you will ask yourself the same questions that our contributors explore across the various sections.

SECTION ONE: LOOKING BACK

Our collection begins by *looking back* and asking how white supremacist culture has shaped the bedrock literature that most modern-day commenting practices are grounded in.

Cameron Becker presents an analysis of how characteristics of white supremacy culture show up in a sampling of foundational response research, as well as three pieces of scholarship that helped her disrupt these characteristics, which she used when redesigning a professional development course for graduate teaching assistants at Ball State University.

Marci Prescott-Brown argues that the bedrock feedback literature does not do enough to disrupt habits of white language in feedback practices. She identifies key issues in often-cited literature and then analyzes her own feedback to Jagdeep, an international student focused on passing a language proficiency exam, to illustrate how her assessment ecology—including her syllabus, classroom materials, and feedback—explicitly communicated her antiracist and decolonial goals and supported the goals of her international students.

Chris Anson revisits a study he conducted in 2016 to reveal a previously overlooked student's affective responses to feedback. Exploring the case of an outlier in a larger data set—an Indian-American student named Reshmi—Anson uses feedback intervention theory and face threat mitigation to reveal how students can feel misunderstood, stereotyped, or marginalized by feedback. He argues that more fully understanding theories of feedback can encourage higher-level awareness of how to adopt socially and linguistically just response practices.

Amanda Hawks and Nick Sanders offer a counterhistory of the feedback literature and argue that feedback practices must directly engage the call for linguistic justice presented in *Students' Right to Their Own Language*. Centering the Black Radical Tradition, they offer three tenets—imagination, criticality, and a problack ethic of care—that can be used to reimagine the role of feedback as fostering students' linguistic consciousness and criticality alongside skill building.

These authors demonstrate that to promote linguistic justice, we need to take a hard look at the past and critically examine the origins of our feedback practices. As readers explore this section, we encourage you to ask yourself:

- Where and how did I learn to give feedback?
- What impact did the response literature have on my approach?
- What other influences do I need to recognize?
- What do I need to unlearn?
- What do I need to learn?

SECTION TWO: LOOKING WITHIN

We then move to *looking within*. The chapters in this section offer examples of and models for using self-reflection to promote linguistic justice. Collectively, these chapters argue that we cannot offer feedback that promotes linguistic justice without seriously questioning how our own positionality, values, and beliefs are conveyed to students through our feedback.

Melvin Beavers opens this section by offering a M.E.M.E. framework that instructors can use to reflect on the biases they bring into the response process. By *Mapping* their mental state, *Exploring* how their identities show up in feedback, *Managing* biases, and *Embracing* rhetorical mindfulness, Beavers argues, instructors can enact a more mindful disposition as they comment on student writing.

Kelly Bradbury and Genesee Carter offer a four-step reflective tool that instructors can use to examine how they train GTAs to respond to student writing. They demonstrate the value of considering *the past*, including the experiences, values, and positionalities that have shaped their approach to teaching feedback; *paradigm shifts* by reflecting on how linguistic justice alters their understanding of feedback; *the present* by reflecting on how they can use their new awareness to make their feedback more just; and *the future* by reflecting on ideas and questions for the field.

Through qualitative collaborative autoethnographies, Ming Fang, Xuan Jiang, and Lan Wang-Hiles model how exploring their cultural identities, educations, and linguistic backgrounds enabled them to turn what they initially perceived as vulnerabilities into strengths when responding to student writing. They argue that to advance equity and linguistic justice for underrepresented and minoritized students and faculty, the socioaffective dimensions of feedback are key: Feedback should be personally empathetic, equitable, asset-based, and oriented toward long-term growth.

Across this section, these contributors argue that for feedback to promote linguistic justice, we must be aware of what we bring with us into the writing

classroom and mitigate its impact on our feedback practices. In this section, we encourage readers to reflect on the following questions:

- How have my linguistic and racial experiences informed my approach to feedback?
- How do my positionality, values, and beliefs show up in my feedback to students?
- How can I mitigate the impact this has on students?

SECTION THREE: LOOKING UP

Looking up from the literature, from self-reflection, and even from the stacks of papers we respond to enables us to focus on what matters most: our students. We cannot offer feedback that promotes linguistic justice without seriously questioning the purpose our feedback serves for students. In the third section, then, contributors reimagine why we comment on student writing and offer strategies for aligning feedback with students' needs.

Michelle Cruz Gonzales describes how the writing of one student forced her to reconsider hypocrisies in the writing classroom. In response, she argues that instructor feedback should privilege student perspectives, support students in making assignments their own, focus on critical thinking, prioritize ideas over errors, and value risk-taking. To accomplish these goals, Gonzales offers what she calls a “less shitty rubric” that translates these lessons into teaching praxis.

Lauren M. Mecucci Springer, Cynthia Headley, Dawn M. Formo, and Shannon Baker suggest that feedback should answer students' questions. They demonstrate how a question-based pedagogy (QBP) can help instructors move toward linguistic justice by decentering the instructor in the feedback process. Instead of imposing their own standards on students' writing, in QBP, instructors and peers practice carefully listening and responding to writers' needs, creating empathetic communities and promoting writer agency.

Leveraging the central tenets of Critical Language Awareness, Shawna Shapiro and Sarah Tinker Perrault explain that feedback should promote students' rhetorical agency. To accomplish this, they offer four guidelines for instructor feedback: that it should engage with students' goals and choices, be tailored to each student and their writing situation, prioritize choice over voice and clarity over correctness, and balance pragmatic comments with progressive grading.

Combining aspects of Critical Language Awareness and dialogic response, Megan M. Weaver argues that feedback should promote students' linguistic

consciousness of the relationships between language, power, and identity and actively subvert racist and discriminatory language practices. To do this work, she suggests that instructors must challenge their own understanding of good writing, support students in challenging their understandings of good writing, and invite students to draw upon multiple language varieties and rhetorics in their writing.

These authors highlight that we need to look up from the page and at the students in front of us. Key questions for readers to explore in this section are:

- What purpose does my feedback serve for students?
- What purpose should it serve?

SECTION FOUR: LOOKING AROUND

Finally, the book concludes by *looking around* to explore how feedback functions as part of an ecology. Our contributors emphasize that in order for feedback to promote linguistic justice, the entire ecology—including assessment practices, course policies and procedures, and curriculum—needs to promote linguistic justice.

Jennifer Killam explores how the working conditions at community colleges impact instructor feedback practices and offers strategies that instructors in this context can use to take up critical and dialogic antiracist feedback practices. She argues that the needs of community college instructors should be prioritized in the pursuit of linguistic justice and provides direction for training and professional development that could help.

Also working within the community college context, Joanne Baird Giordano and Erin Lehman turn their attention to course policies and procedures in open-access, asynchronous online writing courses. They argue that in order for feedback to promote linguistic justice, it must be accessible to students. They offer sample course policies and a process for using template comments to ensure that students have access to feedback that promotes linguistic justice, even when instructors are managing high workloads.

Jacob Babb and Courtney Adams Wooten demonstrate that new approaches to feedback are not merely needed in the undergraduate classroom but also in the graduate classroom, where it is critical to support students as they discern and pursue their own educational goals. They share curricular strategies for ensuring that both peer and instructor feedback are directed by students, including the use of antiracist editorial practices, student-directed peer workshops, grading contracts, and surveys that capture students' goals.

Asao Inoue argues that to promote linguistic justice, we must re-envision the entire assessment ecology—the material, linguistic, and social conditions that give feedback meaning. He highlights dimension-based rubrics as a tool that can be used to create more equitable and democratic feedback processes and stresses the need to support students so they are able to engage with feedback in linguistically just ways.

These authors make it clear that we can't limit our focus to feedback alone. We need to critically assess our course designs, the ways that we professionalize new teachers and scholars, and the conditions that feedback circulates within to ensure it promotes linguistic justice. As the book draws to a close, we encourage readers to ask:

- How does the ecology of my classroom constrain or enable linguistic justice?
- What else needs to change in order for my feedback to promote linguistic justice?

Limitations

The work of releasing control and reconceptualizing response is inherently messy. In bringing together two disparate bodies of literature, we hope to spark new ideas that build upon and move beyond the ideas that have been captured in the pages of this book. The value of this work lies as much in the questions we ask ourselves as it does in the answers we find. At times, you may find yourself questioning or even disagreeing with the conclusions our contributing authors have reached. In fact, we hope that you do. It is in this messiness that we can best challenge each other, push our collective thinking, and find new questions to explore.

We recognize that feedback is only a part of the pursuit of linguistic justice in the writing classroom. Even with this narrow focus, the treatment of response in this volume is incomplete. There are rich and growing bodies of feedback scholarship focused on translingualism, multilingualism, and plurilingualism. As Dana Ferris (2015) has noted, there has long existed a divide among audiences for response research, with one audience being “teachers/researchers focused on first language (L1) students and another focused on second language (L2) students” (9). We agree with Dana Ferris that these traditions should be brought together, though doing so was beyond the scope of this collection. We also recognize opportunities to engage with rich scholarship from other categories, including social class, disability studies, gender and queer studies, and

other relevant frames that explore the multiple and intersecting identities that are salient in both the classroom and feedback situations. There is still much work to be done. Our goal in this book was to start the conversation about using feedback to promote linguistic justice and to inspire future research.

Finally, we recognize that critical voices are often missing across the chapters in this collection: *students*. We chose to start the conversation about feedback and linguistic justice with a focus on instructors because, as a field, we are only beginning to sort out what it means to use feedback to promote linguistic justice. The chapters in this collection give instructors tools they can use to understand and critique the origins of their feedback practices, to increase their self-awareness, to think critically about the purpose their feedback should serve, and to evaluate how their feedback functions as part of a larger ecology. This is necessary groundwork, but a focus on instructors is not enough. It is essential that future work build upon the foundation this collection has created and explore students' experiences and perspectives on the intersection of feedback and linguistic justice.

Our Hope for Readers

As readers make their way through the following chapters, we hope they will see why social and linguistic justice are necessary elements of feedback that must continue to be addressed. We hope readers will see how feedback continues to be steeped in unjust logics and structures operating in writing programs, classrooms, and student and instructor ideologies. We hope they will embrace the ideas, insights, and questions raised as the *beginning* of a conversation, not an ending. Ultimately, we hope that exploring the questions raised in this book will enable readers to not only begin to see feedback in a new way but also see themselves and their students in new—and more just—ways as well.

Providing feedback that promotes linguistic justice is difficult work. It's embodied work. And it's critical work. It's work that needs to be done together, across institution types and regions. To move toward justice, we must be ready and willing to challenge ourselves, our pedagogy, and our field, as scholars like Christina Michaud and Sarah Madsen Hardy (2023) exemplify. As they explain: "In the past, we argued for close attention to student 'errors' as a way to empower and provide equity for our students, yet we are now feeling called to abandon this approach for the very same reasons" (5). We hope that you will join us on this journey toward justice, and that this collection will help you to both release control and reconceptualize response.

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SECTION ONE

Looking Back

How Has the Literature Shaped Our Approach to Feedback?

1

Reckoning with White Supremacy Culture in Response Research

CAMERON BECKER

I first began responding to student writing in graduate school while working as a course assistant at a community college, easing a little of the workload for instructors' online asynchronous writing courses by responding to discussion boards, grading quizzes, and providing feedback on rough drafts of student writing. Some of the first student texts I responded to were icebreaker discussion board posts that asked students to reflect on how they felt about writing, and about themselves as writers, based on previous experiences with writing instruction. Although I no longer remember the names of the students in the course or the exact language they used, the feeling of reading that discussion board has stayed with me throughout my career. As I waded through vulnerable, thoughtful, vivid posts by student after student who shared that they hated writing because their ideas never seemed as important to their teachers as the grammatical errors or formatting mistakes they made, I realized how unprepared I was as a new teacher to contend with the power my own words would have over the self-image and self-confidence of my students. I think back to that moment often, especially when I'm responding to particularly personal or self-conscious student writing, and those discussion posts remain some of the most important influences on my teaching to this day.

Over the course of the next several years, as I immersed myself in texts about the theory and praxis of teaching composition, I began to understand that my inexperience as a teacher was not the only problem; my uncritical acceptance of the rules of white language supremacy, my internalization of demeaning messages about my childhood Southern English languaging practices, and my positionality and privilege as a white cis woman with easy access to educational accommodations all represented gaps in my perspective and elements of my embodiment that made me ill-equipped to respond ethically and effectively to students' work. Worse, I had no idea how to construct an approach to responding to student writing that accounted for those gaps. I knew that I didn't want to do harm, but I struggled to see how I could avoid it while using the tools and techniques I had been exposed to in my own academic career. I now understand that what my students were articulating in their discussion board reflections, and what I was grappling with in my own limitations, was the hidden legacy of white supremacy culture in our disciplinary theories and practices for responding to student writing.

As writing instructors, we often enact white language supremacy in response practices every day because we don't understand the origin or impact of those practices, and when we wake up to how problematic our traditional response practices might be, we are often at a loss as to what the root of the problem is and how to identify practical alternatives. This chapter seeks to acknowledge the influence of white supremacy culture in historical response scholarship, identify principles of antiracism in contemporary response scholarship, and recognize opportunities for improving our practices by applying the University of Michigan's "Identifying and Addressing Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture" guide (Frankie 2021) to twenty-eight influential texts in response research. This guide, adapted from Dr. Tema Okun's (2021) webtext (*Divorcing*) *White Supremacy Culture: Coming Home to Who We Really Are*, includes fourteen categories or characteristics of white supremacy culture: perfectionism; the belief in one right way to do things; paternalism; the perpetuation of the myth of objectivity; a false sense of urgency; defensiveness; denial; the prioritization of quantity over quality or the misconception that progress means more and bigger; worship of the written word; binary thinking; power hoarding; fear of open conflict; individualism; and a belief in the right to comfort. I selected the University of Michigan's guide as an analytical framework because it enacts Okun's (2021) invitation to readers to "use this material as a reflective tool to help us all see how we are getting in our own way" and "to help us vision the culture we want, need, and deserve" by putting the

characteristics of white supremacy culture in conversation with some critical principles of antiracist pedagogy: acknowledging racism in local, institutional, and disciplinary contexts; centering structural and personal manifestations of racism; disrupting racism; seeking change inside and outside of the classroom; and focusing on ways to effect antiracist change over time (Frankie 2021, 2).

The following sections address how some of the characteristics of white supremacy culture that Okun (2021) identifies are perpetuated and resisted in prominent texts in response research. The characteristics of white supremacy culture identified in this literature review intersect and overlap with what Asao Inoue (2021) calls “the habits of White languaging”—characteristics like false objectivity, hyperindividuality, hierarchical and rigid relationships, and control, which Inoue calls “elite, White, masculine habits of language [that] are the standards of correctness and appropriateness, of ‘clarity,’ of the ‘logical,’ and are considered what ‘audiences want’” in a white supremacist culture. By revealing the ways in which white supremacy culture and the habits of white languaging have been enacted in our response practices and philosophies, this chapter seeks to enable more critical reflection on the harm those practices have inflicted on our students and provide a foundation for imagining alternative practices that can create more equitable learning and languaging conditions.

This literature review includes works published from 1981 to 2022 that were selected based on their influence within response scholarship. These works were selected by analyzing overlap among prevalent texts in Nancy Sommers’s (2013, 101) “Brief Bibliography” in *Responding to Student Writers*, Richard Straub’s (1999) “Anthology of Readings in Response” in *A Sourcebook for Responding to Student Writing* (97), and Chris M. Anson’s (1989) *Writing and Response: Theory, Practice, and Research*, as well as two recent dissertations in composition response research (Blewett 2018; Neiderhiser 2015) and some personal recommendations from experts in the field. The twenty-eight texts featured here provide the foundation for a conversation about how white supremacy culture has been enacted and challenged in disciplinary response practices over time. I recognize that the methodology of this literature review may leave out important texts or overrepresent others. The literature included in this chapter is impactful and worth reviewing, but there are certainly other pieces related to response that would also be worth reviewing, and this is just one look at some research that I view as significant.

Historically, disciplinary scholarship has prescribed practices for responding to student writing that recreate conditions of white supremacy culture

TABLE 2.1. Influential texts in response literature, 1981–2022

<i>Influential texts in response literature, 1981–2022 (in chronological order)</i>
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Straub, Richard. 1997. "Students' Reactions to Teacher Comments: An Exploratory Study." <i>Research in the Teaching of English</i> 31 (1): 91–119.
Anson, Chris M. 2000. "Response and the Social Construction of Error." <i>Assessing Writing</i> 7 (1): 5–21.
Phelps, Louise Wetherbee. 2000. "Cyrano's Nose: Variations on the Theme of Response." <i>Assessing Writing</i> 7 (1): 91–110. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1075-2935(00)00018-0 .

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TABLE 2.1—continued

<i>Influential texts in response literature, 1981–2022 (in chronological order)</i>
Paley, Karen Surman. 2001. <i>I Writing: The Politics and Practice of Teaching First-Person Writing</i> . Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
Lee, Icy. 2009. "Ten Mismatches Between Teachers' Beliefs and Written Feedback Practice." <i>ELT Journal</i> 63 (1): 13–22. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccn010 .
Flores, Nelson, and Jonathan Rosa. 2015. "Undoing Appropriateness: Raciolinguistic Ideologies and Language Diversity in Education." <i>Harvard Educational Review</i> 85 (2): 149–71. https://doi.org/10.17763/0017-8055.85.2.149 .
Davila, Bethany. 2017. "Standard English and Colorblindness in Rhetoric and Composition: Rhetorical Constructions of Racial and Linguistic Neutrality." <i>WPA: Writing Program Administration</i> 40 (2): 154–73.
Mosher, Stephanie Boone. 2020. "Ideology, Expectation, and Evaluation: How Linguistic Experiences and Attitudes Inform Response to AAE-Strong Student Writing." <i>Pedagogy</i> 20 (3): 431–52. https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=article&id=765007 .
Gere, Anne Ruggles, et al. 2021. "Communal Justicing: Writing Assessment, Disciplinary Infrastructure, and the Case for Critical Language Awareness." <i>College Composition and Communication</i> 72 (3): 384–412.
Aull, Laura. 2022. "Student Interpretation and Use Arguments: Evidence-Based, Student-Led Grading." <i>Journal of Response to Writing</i> 8 (2): 143–65.
Hudley, Anne H. Charity, et al. 2022. "'Put Some Respect on My Name': Students' Right to Their Own Language." In <i>Talking College: Making Space for Black Language Practices in Higher Education</i> . New York: Teachers College Press.
O'Meara, Kat. 2022. "Building Response into Labor-Based Grading Contracts." <i>Journal of Response to Writing</i> 8 (1): 81–91.

and habits of white languaging, and Inoue (2021) argues that instructors must critically engage with these habits, not to demonize or essentialize white languaging practices but rather to create more equitable and just standards in the language arts classroom. Although there are troubling or problematic practices or attitudes in many of these texts and in historical response research in particular, it is important to recognize that these works were created with the goal of improving students' experiences with feedback and that many of these texts contain helpful and well-reasoned advice about ways to create better relationships with students. Rather than presenting this analysis as a wholesale condemnation of these texts and authors, I hope that this literature review can illustrate the insidious embeddedness of the characteristics of white supremacy culture in educational structures and illuminate some of the ways in which we all have room to improve upon our scholarly and pedagogical practices.

The most prominent characteristics of white supremacy culture that are perpetuated and interrogated in response research include denial, the myth of

objectivity, paternalism, the belief in one right way, and perfectionism. In historical response research, which I am defining as research that was published in 2000 or earlier, those characteristics are enacted most evidently in the following ways: (1) the denial of race as an important aspect of a writer's identity and practices; (2) quantitative research methods that exclude people of color's perspectives; (3) talking for and about students, rather than with them; and (4) perpetuating white language supremacy and standard language ideology. The advancements, struggles, conflicts, and resolutions in the following analysis reveal the progress we have made as well as the issues we still face in resisting habits of white languaging in our classrooms and responding to student writing in equitable, accessible, and inclusive ways.

Denial of Race and Racism and the Myth of Objectivity

Denial is perhaps the most pervasive characteristic of white supremacy culture in historical response research. The first principle of antiracist pedagogy is that it must acknowledge racism in local, disciplinary, and institutional contexts. Research that does not do this is participating in denial, "refusing to acknowledge the historical legacy of white supremacy and racism and the structural nature of racial disparities" (Frankie 2021, 10–11). The earliest text in this literature review that engages the topic of race as a critical element of the composing process and the relationship between students and instructors is Karen Surnam Paley's (2001) ethnographic study of expressivist pedagogies. None of the nineteen texts published prior to 2001 acknowledge race as an important part of a student's linguistic identity or writing practices, even when it would seem productive or relevant to do so.

For example, the title of Lil Brannon and C. H. Knoblauch's (1982) article, "On Students' Rights to Their Own Texts: A Model of Teacher Response," mimics the title structure of *Students' Right to Their Own Language*, an early text that advocated for honoring students' identities and linguistic backgrounds, yet the authors do not address students' raciolinguistic identities as factors that would impact students' languaging practices or rhetorical goals. The authors argue that "we must replace our professional but still idiosyncratic models of how writing ought to appear, and put in their place a less authoritarian concern for how student texts make us respond as readers. . . . Necessarily, the emphasis on form that mainly preoccupies us when we think in terms of an ideal model will change to an emphasis on the writer's ideas" (161). They cite students' rhetorical purposes, logic, and organization of ideas as communicative

goals that should be honored when instructors respond to students' texts. However, although they argue against an emphasis on form in evaluating student writing, they do not describe students' languaging traditions as an element of authority that instructors should respect (Brannon and Knoblauch 1982, 161). Additionally, Robert J. Connors and Andrea Lunsford's (1994) qualitative study of over twenty-one thousand graded and evaluated student papers found that a small number of instructors only focused on grammar and mechanics in their responses to student writing and used grammar as a gatekeeping mechanism to justify assigning Fs to student work they deemed unacceptable, but they did not discuss the way evaluating grammar as a gatekeeping mechanism excludes certain student identities or languaging conventions (211).

The literature I have identified as prominent within response scholarship does not acknowledge the role of race and raciolinguistic identity in evaluating and responding to student work, but that is not meant to imply that no such historical scholarship exists. For example, Geneva Smitherman's (1994) chapter, "‘The Blacker the Berry, the Sweeter the Juice’: African American Student Writers and the National Assessment of Educational Progress," not only acknowledges and investigates the role of raciolinguistic identity in evaluating and responding to student writing but also provides practical advice for instructors to adjust their assignment design and response practices to facilitate more successful outcomes for Black students. This advice includes "capitaliz[ing] on the strengths of African American cultural discourse;" "design[ing] strategies for incorporating the Black imaginative, story-telling style into student production of other essay modalities;" and "de-emphasiz[ing] your and your students' concerns about BEV [Black English Vernacular] grammar" (Smitherman 1994, 95). Additionally, in "Can You Be Black and Write and Right?," Elaine B. Richardson (1997) argues that "we must develop ways of incorporating the students' cultural literacy experiences with those needed to enhance their futures and to succeed in a society where only one kind of literacy is valued. . . . One way in which to bridge this cultural gap may be to describe the ways in which students are using language in their texts" (73). Since as early as the 1960s, scholars of color have been publishing research criticizing prominent white attitudes and practices in the discipline as ignoring and devaluing Black languaging practices; however, these scholars and their research are not represented or included in the widely cited response anthologies or other prominent historical texts. (For an account of how Black scholars have organized and resisted white language supremacy in the teaching of English, see Keith Gilyard's [1999] "African American Contributions to Composition Studies.")

Many historical response texts also demonstrate the characteristic of a belief in the myth of objectivity, “the belief that there is such a thing as being ‘neutral,’” and the act of “assigning value to the ‘rational’ while invalidating and/or shaming the ‘emotional’” (Frankie 2021, 7). The most common way of upholding the myth of objectivity is in the way data is collected and samples are treated in response research. Almost all of the corpus analysis and human subject research data in this literature review is aggregated and decontextualized, and none of these studies discuss how racial demographics and dynamics might impact their findings. As Inoue notes later in this volume, “What our words mean and how they function have a lot to do with the conditions in which our feedback circulates. . . . Thus, one important and perhaps obvious element of antiracist conditions for feedback is the people in the classroom, teachers and students” (chapter 15). The study of instructors’ comments on student work conducted by Connors and Lunsford (1994), in addition to leaving unexamined the role race and racism might have played in the feedback relationships between students and instructors, also fails to discuss race or ethnicity in their description of participant demographics or study design. George Hillocks Jr. (1982), Sommers (1982), Richard H. Haswell (1983), W. Michael Reed and John K. Burton (1985), Jill Burkland and Nancy Grimm (1986), and Richard Straub (1996, 1997) all describe corpus analysis or human subject research without discussing the racial demographics that make up their samples. Responses to student writing occur within a relationship between a teacher and a student that is informed by their embodied identities, and students with minoritized linguistic and racial identities have been proven to experience response differently from white students, so anonymous, “objective” studies like these obscure critical factors that inevitably inform these relationships.

Practices that perpetuate the myth of objectivity are often closely related to practices that participate in the denial of race or racism because both practices manifest as researchers neglecting to discuss important sociolinguistic factors in the student-teacher relationship. Refusing to address the racial demographics of a research sample is a problematic practice in historical response research because teachers have drawn—and continue to draw—conclusions about how to relate to students based on these findings, which at best ignore racial and linguistic identity and at worst completely exclude students of color from their samples.

Objectivity is clearly centered in the study designs and collection of anonymous student data in historical response research, and response research has long been criticized for failing to attend to the emotional and relational

dimensions of learning—for example, see Anson et al.’s (2016) piece on the value of screencasting in mitigating face threat. Still, it is important to note that some historical response scholarship does resist the white supremacist focus on objectivity by validating the importance of the emotional and social components of responding to student writing and by prioritizing students’ emotional well-being and holistic wellbeing in response practices. Donald A. Daiker (1989) argues that praising student writing is important for students’ emotional health as well as their writing growth, arguing that “praise may be especially important for students who have known little encouragement and, for that reason, suffer from writing apprehension” (105). Reed and Burton (1985) similarly promote the idea that students’ feelings are a part of their writing process by placing emphasis on increased student confidence as a desirable outcome for response (271). Peter Elbow (1993) goes a step farther by arguing for more low-stakes exploration in writing classes and stresses that this technique works better when instructors like students, get to know them as individuals, develop personal relationships with them, and understand their history and goals (192). These texts emphasize students’ emotional health as part of their learning processes and warn against response tactics that do harm to students’ emotional well-being.

Paternalism

Paternalism manifests when those holding power assume they are qualified and entitled to define standards, as well as make decisions in the interest of those without power and is most evident in the way teachers and scholars speak for and about students in response research (Frankie 2021, 7). Thirteen of the nineteen articles in this literature review published before 2001 analyze instructors’ comments—such as Sommers’s (1982) anonymous study of thirty-five instructors’ feedback on student texts or Straub’s (1996) analysis of tone in teachers’ response to student writing—or prescribe behaviors based on the author’s experience as an instructor (Haswell 1983; Elbow 1993). The perspective of students is largely absent in historical response research, and decisions about how students think or what students need are made without their involvement or input. Reed and Burton noticed this issue in 1985, arguing that “we need to ask our students what kind of evaluation helps them the most, or, better yet, what kind of evaluation offends them the most or helps them the least” (1985, 271). Response research is founded on studies and practices in which instructors evaluate the response practices of other instructors and suppose or imagine what impact those practices might have on student writers,

when a more equitable and perhaps more effective approach would have been to create a canon of response research based on students' stated needs, goals, and opinions about writing instruction in order to better facilitate students' growth toward their learning objectives.

In addition to the lack of student perspectives in response research practices, historical response research also frequently assumes ownership of students' texts, measuring students' work against their own perceived "ideal texts" to judge quality and progress. Instructors often determine whether students are learning based on whether they are complying with instructors' suggested revisions, which undermines students' agency over their own texts. Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) note in their literature review of response research from 1955–80 that early scholarship in this area often assumes that students do not make the revisions suggested by their instructors because they "simply fail to appreciate what teachers are trying to tell them," and not because they do not agree with the feedback or because it would not help them meet their own rhetorical objectives (1). Later, Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) call out paternalism by name, arguing that "teaching from the vantage point of the Ideal Text is paternalistic: the teacher 'knows best,' knows what the writer should do and how it should be done, and feels protective because his or her competence is superior" (159). While these works resist paternalistic ownership of students' texts, they do not discuss how imposing habits of white languaging is one instance of paternalistic infringement on students' rights to ownership of their own texts.

The paternalistic practice of speaking over, about, and for students is disrupted in Reed and Burton's (1985) study utilizing survey methods to collect the perspectives of college freshmen. Their survey found that students would prefer to be given more opportunities for peer review, conferences, and low-stakes gradeless opportunities to write to develop confidence, and that a mix of descriptive, specific positive and negative feedback is most useful (Reed and Burton 1985, 282). Burkland and Grimm's (1986) survey of advanced writers indicates that some of the most effective ways to motivate students include omitting grades, responding to final drafts as if they were still under revision, balancing praise and criticism, and "resist[ing] the impulse to appropriate student texts" (244). Herrington (1997) similarly argues for taking a process-oriented, collaborative approach but emphasizes the importance of coaching and consulting with students in high-stakes writing contexts such as projects to avoid taking ownership of student texts (1997, 71). The focus on honoring students' authority and agency in the creation of their own texts as well as the

representation of student voices in data collection represent early resistance to paternalism in response research.

The Belief in One Right Way and Perfectionism

The belief in one right way, according to the University of Michigan guide, is the idea that “there is one right way to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it” (Frankie 2021, 6). The belief in one right way is an element of white supremacy culture because it leaves no room for cultural, epistemological, social, or languaging practices outside of white standards and judges those practices as wrong. Perfectionism is “linked to the characteristic of one right way, where the demand for perfection assumes that we know what perfection is while others are doing it wrong or falling short” (Frankie 2021, 5). The belief in one right way and perfectionism together manifest under the same ideological umbrella: standard language ideology. By insisting that students must develop proficiency in White Mainstream English or Standard Edited American English, instructors reinforce that there is one right way to speak and write English (see Weaver, chapter 11). When instructors assume that any time a student writer uses language that deviates from White Mainstream English or Standard Edited American English they are making an error, that instructor enacts perfectionism in that there is “little investigation of what is a mistake and why” (Frankie 2021, 5). One right way and perfectionism are significant issues in responding to student writing because they assume that all students have the same goal—to learn the conventions of White Mainstream English—in addition to ignoring students’ rhetorical agency and prioritizing conventions over clarity.

Some texts, like Haswell’s (1983) treatise on minimal marking, treat language variation as “unquestionable errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar” that must be eradicated so that students can write in Standard Edited American English, without reflecting on whether the variation actually represents linguistic resources students are attempting to develop (601). Joseph M. Williams (1981) seems to argue against perfectionism by stating that if an error does not disrupt our experience or comprehension as readers, it is not really an error; however, he argues that there is a standard students should adhere to, even if it is a less strict one than instructors have been using. Furthermore, his example of language that would be “unfavorable [to] the ordinary speaker of standard English” mimics structures of Black Language: “Can’t nobody tell what be happening four year from now” (Williams

1981, 162). Williams's philosophy merely moves the goalposts to uphold White Mainstream English, instead of Standard Edited American English, as the standard to which all student writers must aspire.

None of the texts in the historical response bibliography directly criticize standard language ideology in response practices or adopt a Critical Language Awareness approach to responding to student writing (see Weaver, chapter 11; and Shapiro and Perrault, chapter 10). Some of these historical texts help move the needle by arguing that we have bigger concerns than grammar (Brannon and Knoblauch 1982) and that teachers should spend less time engaging with students about error and form (Lunsford 1997). For example, Elbow's (1997) grade-free exploratory zones resist perfectionism by allowing students to experiment without fear of judgment. Anson (1997) describes experimenting with recorded verbal response to student writing to shift from a practice of "correcting and judging" to a practice of "coaching and advising" student writers (106). Anson (2000) also notes that an instructor's concept of "error" is subjective and dependent on a variety of social factors, and that whether, when, and how an instructor chooses to mark an error should take into account students' contexts, purpose, and stage in the process of developing their writing (15). Phelps (2000) urges readers to reflect on their own motives and response practices continuously, rather than relying on established theories, to ensure that their response strategies impact student writers appropriately. However, these texts do not address race as a dimension of the dynamics and experiences that inform how students receive feedback from their instructors, despite the many calls from Black scholars over the last sixty years to do just that (Gilyard 1999, 635). It is not until recently that prominent response scholarship has begun to acknowledge and name the damage that standard language ideology has been doing to marginalized students, such as Hannah Franz's (2024) *A Linguistically Inclusive Approach to Grading Writing: A Practical Guide*, Franz et al.'s (2024) "Black Linguistic Justice from Theory to Practice," and the CCCC-sponsored website "Students' Right to Their Own Writing," which promotes Black linguistic agency in student writing and supports both students and instructors in the development and evaluation of such works.

Contemporary Texts and Tools for Equitable Response

The trends of denial, objectivity, paternalism, perfectionism, and the belief in one right way are contested insightfully in contemporary response scholarship. Of the nine contemporary texts included in this literature review, all recognize

students' racial, ethnic, or national identity as important considerations when responding to student writing, which is a marked difference from the nineteen prominent historical texts that deny the role of race or racism in the context of feedback. For example, Bethany Davila (2017) disrupts the characteristics of objectivity and denial by identifying habits of whiteness inherent in standard language ideology through a study of white writing teachers' responses to pieces of academic student writing. Proponents of standard language ideology argue that Standard Edited American English is neutral, clear, and widely accessible, and that it erases authorial identity, but Davila found that instructors who subscribed to standard language ideology attributed strong student writing to white middle- or upper-class male writers and weak student writing to Black women and low-income Black men (Davila 2017, 162). The results of this research disrupt the myth of objectivity by demonstrating that just because a text is anonymous does not mean that instructors are imagining a disembodied writer, which emphasizes the importance of reflecting on the role of race and racism in student-teacher relationships. Lee (2009) also demonstrates that instructors' beliefs influence their interactions with student work and urges instructors to interrogate their beliefs to determine how they might be influencing their response practices.

Contemporary response texts also disrupt paternalism by sharing power with students over how their needs, objectives, and perceptions are represented. Anne H. Charity Hudley et al. (2022) incorporate student voices in the construction of a guide for Black students about navigating college, which includes information about rhetorical agency and advice for instructors looking to respond productively and respectfully to student writing. Stephanie Boone Mosher (2020) collaborates with the student whose work is at the center of her study so the student can describe the linguistic and rhetorical choices she made. Other works in this area tend to speak for and about the student and imagine how a student might have felt or reacted and what might have happened to the student, so it is noteworthy that this author did not perpetuate that method but instead shared power with the student. Laura Aull (2022) also disrupts paternalism and the belief in one right way by promoting student agency and advocating for the implementation of Student Use and Interpretation Arguments (SUIAs), assignments in which students make an argument for how they met their rhetorical goals and assignment requirements and what grade they deserve based on that work. Implementing SUIAs requires students to "account for various domains and course learning goals, gaining practice in metareflective consideration of their writing and their environment" and

“emphasizes that just as writing entails interpersonal, intrapersonal, and discursive practices, responding to it entails these practices, too” (Aull 2022, 151). Kat O’Meara (2022) uses labor- and engagement-based grading contracts to disrupt paternalism by asking students who wish to earn a grade higher than a B to “generate four individualized above-and-beyond criteria for personal achievement over the course of the semester,” which allows students to set, prioritize, and evaluate their own rhetorical and languaging goals, and provides instructors with the material and information necessary to provide feedback that helps students attain those goals.

Mosher (2020) also disrupts the belief in one right way and perfectionism by identifying perhaps the most critical contemporary issue in responding to student writing: Even if instructors unlearn the racist and colonial values of traditional English education and develop antiracist and decolonial linguistic ideologies, they still must have tools or scholarly works available to help them understand how to put these practices into action. If instructors are not familiar with the rhetorical and linguistic elements of African American English, they may still perceive the stylistic, grammatical, and rhetorical moves students make as errors, or as inappropriate for academic writing (Mosher 2020, 442). Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa (2015) provide a useful explanation for why insisting that students need proficiency in White Mainstream English or Standard Edited American English reinforces racist hierarchies in professional, academic, and social spaces, and Ann Ruggles Gere et al. (2021) describe Critical Language Awareness as a necessary alternative to standard language ideology that can facilitate justice in writing response and assessment. These developments demonstrate that response research and practices are moving in a direction that will foster more explicitly antiracist objectives, student agency, and inclusive languaging practices.

Conclusion

Trends in response research have shifted significantly over time. One significant mark of the progress the discipline has made toward enacting antiracist and translingual values in our response practices can be found in the different ways we have learned to share power with students. In the ’80s, with some exceptions, scholars primarily consulted teachers about response or did corpus analysis to draw their own conclusions about types of response. At best, they conducted closed, quantitative experiments on students and reported the results of those experiments without student input or feedback. More recent

texts involve students in the construction of response research, both as respondents and as coauthors (Paley 2001; Mosher 2020; Hudley et al. 2022). Recent texts also advocate for avoiding paternalism by creating response and assessment practices that center students' rhetorical goals (Aull 2022; O'Meara 2022). The most impactful antiracist shift from historical to contemporary scholarship is in the way the discipline understands and constructs error, both in our response to student work and in our construction of research questions. In historical response scholarship, researchers sought to eliminate language variation or required students to develop proficiency in Standard Edited American English as well as their home and heritage languages. Studies considered questions about what type of response is effective in eradicating error or nonstandard language use, and whether students understand instructors' attempts to correct errors in their writing (Haswell 1983; Williams 1981). In recent research, the focus has shifted to investigate how instructors respond to nonstandard language use: whether we profess a standard language ideology or Critical Language Awareness approach to linguistic identity, and how those beliefs relate to the way we enact our response practices (Davila 2017; Gere 2022). However, multiple studies have supported the idea that even instructors who are in favor of diverse language use in academic writing still respond to languages other than White Mainstream English as error, and that students who use Black Language are more likely to be penalized for diverging from standard language use than any other group (Mosher 2020). The results of these studies indicate that because standard language ideology is still so prevalent in the discipline, and because instructors are unlikely to receive the necessary training in identifying and evaluating diverse language traditions, our response practices still unfairly target marginalized students.

This analysis demonstrates that although we have made great strides toward more inclusive teaching, we can fail our students if we only develop a theoretical understanding of antiracist pedagogy without having concrete, actionable tactics to put those theories into action. To combat this potential for continuing harm, tools for recognizing the grammatical, linguistic, and rhetorical moves of language practices outside of White Mainstream English are critical for resolving the conflict between instructors' progressive language ideologies and their regressive response practices. Some of those tools include Smitherman's (1994) suggestions to position Black students' raciolinguistic identities and heritage as resources rather than impediments to their learning, and to develop an understanding of the characteristics of the Black rhetorical tradition to strengthen students' writing through familiar practices and principles.

Research into how marginalized students with complex intersecting identities interpret and interact with responses to their writing could also result in a more nuanced understanding of the language practices and goals of minoritized groups, rather than treating student writers of color as a monolith. A growing number of contemporary texts in response research offer alternatives to the white supremacist practices and attitudes in historical texts (Franz 2024; “Students’ Right to Their Own Writing,” Flores and Rosa 2015; Mosher 2020), and it is imperative that response scholars continue to expand on this body of work by explicitly connecting antiracist pedagogy and Critical Language Awareness with practical techniques and principles for responding to student writing. It is my hope that the works in this chapter, along with the other works in this volume, can provide the foundation for fruitful, inclusive changes in our response research and practices.

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2

From Seed to Fruit

*Extending Established Feedback Practices Through
Antiracist and Decolonial Pedagogy*

MARCI PRESCOTT-BROWN

In the current educational context, writing instructors face tremendous opportunity and diversity—and complex challenges. As Eunjeong Lee et al. highlight, in writing consultations with students, the “inequities and injustice in the educational system” can take a toll on the “learning and well-being of our racialized and language-minoritized” and frequently “linguistically stigmatized” students (2022, 2). Calls for linguistic justice—ensuring that students of all languages, histories, class, and ability status can thrive in higher education and beyond—arise in this context. Writing instructors who heed this call seek to “foreground justice” via their “pedagogy, while simultaneously working against and beyond the harmful ideologies and structures that (re)produce educational and societal inequities” (2).¹ In considering how to be linguistically just, many writing instructors have turned to antiracist and decolonial (A&D) writing pedagogies.

Antiracist writing instruction deconstructs bias and recognizes that all students possess lived experiences of diverse races, orientations, genders, abilities, languages, and cultures. Decolonial approaches, a vital element of antiracist pedagogies (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 224), resist flattening all “lived

1. See for instance Amanda Hawks and Nick Sanders’s discussion of “cultivate linguistic consciousness” via the “Black radical tradition in feedback practice” in this volume (chapter 4).

experiences” by avoiding funneling them through monolingual approaches such as “English only” or “Standard” Academic English (AE) (Rabbi 2023, 338) or supporting white language supremacy (WLS) by making the habits of white language (HOWL) “the standard” of excellence (Inoue 2021). Such approaches recognize the coloniality embedded in “monolingual literacy regimes” (Rabbi 2023, 338) that led to the adoption of English worldwide, which still underpins much international education, resisting the “marginaliz[ation of] . . . language minority students” (Banks 2014, xi) through the “global dominance of English” (Phillipson 1992). When decoloniality is valued, instead of pushing students to “reject their language and culture to acquire White Mainstream English” (Baker-Bell 2020, 9) and treating English grammars and literacies as the “foundation for academic success and knowledge-making” (Rabbi 2023, 339), instructors celebrate students’ language toolkits, and their feedback welcomes all voices.

Instructors who value linguistic justice push against the white racial habitus, the frame that makes “white students [. . . the] ideal students in writing assessment ecologies of the classroom” (Inoue 2015, 47). The white racial habitus is maintained “in discourse, in methods of judging, in dispositions towards texts, etc.” (Inoue 2015, 47) and does not require that the instructor be white. (Indeed, Black instructors such as myself must still actively subvert it.²) It does require centering student knowledges, experiences, languages, and so on, as Felicia Chavez encourages (2021).

Many instructors use the work of Nancy Sommers as a starting point for developing inclusive and student-sensitive pedagogy. Her observation that “composing humane, thoughtful, even inspiring responses [to student work] is serious business” (2013, x) supports the process of destabilizing the teacher–student hierarchy that antiracist writing instruction requires. Yet, as I will describe, A&D pedagogy requires we apply lessons not yet learned in the field when Sommers developed her advice for instructors. In this chapter, I will begin by drawing on Sommers’s work as an example of some of the best practices for feedback. Sommers planted some valuable seeds, but I will discuss how instructors can help them flower. Then, I will share examples of how I seek to integrate a holistic approach via these pedagogies and support linguistic justice for my students based on their specific goals through feedback.

2. I am a Black Caribbean Canadian woman. I am currently assistant professor, teaching stream, in Writing Studies and director of the New College Writing Centre at the University of Toronto, but the examples of feedback and response in this chapter are from when I was a sessional/adjunct instructor at another postsecondary institution in Canada.

I conclude with contemplations of the multifaceted feedback loop we cocreate with our students.

Sommers usefully calls on writing instructors “to transfer the focus of our comments from the paper to the student, from monologue to dialogue, and from teacher-centered commands to teacher–student partnerships.”³ She rightly cautions against “hars[h],” “mean-spirite[d],” and “disrespectful” tones in feedback to students (2013, 5–6), as this can disrupt students’ “agency and passion” (2013, 17). Providing feedback in the context of collaborative, friendly partnerships between teachers and students is necessary for antiracist pedagogy to flourish.

Additional seeds of A&D pedagogies appear in Sommers’s work, such as her openness to students’ lived realities (2013) and her call that instructors encourage students “to write about something that matters” to them (2013, xiii); the implied recognition that when students bring their lived experiences to the page with instructor encouragement their writing may become more personally significant to them is central to antiracist pedagogy (Chavez 2021). She describes instructors as “guests” and acknowledges the danger that *“teachers’ comments can take students’ attention away from their own purposes in writing a particular text and focus that attention on the teachers’ purpose in commenting”* (Sommers 1982, 149, 151; italics original). This positioning and awareness is important to A&D approaches, yet antiracist writing ecologies should be explicit about “the racial politics they promote” (Inoue 2015, 117).

As WLS is the powerful default in most North American postsecondary institutions and instructors must consciously resist it, we should consider that Sommers does not equip us with all the tools for this task—for instance, those needed to address the stigmatizing of non-English languages and varieties of English (VOEs) as impure and other “colonial logics” that allot power based on the perceived lack or attainment of “standard” English (Rosa and Flores 2017, 626). Sommers does not acknowledge that students may come from cultures or experiences where teachers are treated as superior and HOWL/WLS is not explicitly disrupted by her approaches. Destabilizing dominant expectations around how the teacher-student writing facilitation process will unfold needs additional treatment. Thus, she provides only some of the tools to cocreate a multifaceted feedback loop with students.

3. I primarily cite Sommers’s book here, which she described in an interview as a “fuller treatment of the pleasures and challenges of responding” and more “generous towards teachers” than her 1982 article (Sommers et al. 2014, 8–9).

In addition, antiracist commitments must be both explicit and actionable (Diab et al. 2017; Inoue 2015, 2022). When sharing feedback, instructors can welcome students' languages, drawing "on students' histories and knowledges" and empowering them to integrate these resources into their analysis (Iseke-Barnes 2008, 126). While Sommers does acknowledge that "academic writing is not a mother tongue" for any of our students (2013, xii), and this acknowledgment has its merits, it is less explicit than antiracist pedagogy must be. Sommers does not address the fact that students may speak VOEs and other languages or directly challenge the sway of HOWL in most postsecondary institutions. (I refer here, of course, to her written work; her contemporary classroom practices may well be different.) She does encourage instructors to use the language of the classroom in comments to students, because it "connects and unifies various elements—discussions, exercises, assignments, and peer and teacher comments" (Sommers 2013, 7). In particular, she says there is a need for a common language that "evoke[s] a network of associations, suggest[s] specific strategies to guide student writers, and connect[s] the lessons of the classroom with the purpose of comments" because "writing lessons don't end when students turn papers in for a grade; nor do comments begin when our words appear on students' drafts" (Sommers 2013, 8). Indeed, Sommers provides many helpful approaches to viewing feedback and classroom language here.

The flexibility Sommers demonstrates regarding creating a class vocabulary—she notes it "might be the standard language of the handbook, or phraseology created by students and teachers in the classroom"—can be used in A&D feedback approaches. She also sees this shared language as a tool for student empowerment, as they can then use it when reviewing each other's work (Sommers 2013). While a handbook can provide some of the classroom's common language, many handbooks do entrench HOWL; however, there is the potential that the shared language created can push against this default. Unfortunately, Sommers tacitly assumes that students must become proficient in "standard" English. She does not acknowledge the common underlying assumption that—as teachers—we are the best judge of whether the language used is the right fit for the intended audience. Often, this is one of the places where instructors entrenched in HOWL alienate other languages or VOEs on the basis that postsecondary contexts and audiences require what April Baker-Bell (2017) called "Standard Edited American English (SEAE)" (51). Not interrogating this assumption yields the net effect of entrenching the superiority of white language.

The promotion of English advances what Joyce E. King calls “dysconscious racism.” That is, it “tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges” (King 1991, 135). In classes I discuss this, hoping students will bring this awareness to their own choices, where they might resist or utilize certain aspects of language as tools for their own purposes. I also discuss what Baker-Bell (2017) describes as “respectability language pedagogies,” which function by implying the superiority of white languages (104). Inoue (2015) calls on us to “questio[n] why [‘standard’] English is deemed most appropriate or provide ways in the class to examine the dominant discourse as a set of conventions that have been ‘standardized’ by the hegemonic” (50), noting that the position of SEAE as the “dominant academic discourse” easily reproduces racism (51); dismantling such dominance requires “interrogating [SEAE] with students as structuring structures that give us certain tastes in language and thought” (51) and “help[ing] students focus on a fuller range of phenomena for assessing language” (90). Similarly, Vershawn Ashanti Young (2007; Young et al. 2018) points to the problems of asking students to substitute one set of codes for another, particularly when the preferred code is always SEAE. These discussions about the colonial systems that nurture English dominance are important as instructors use them to nourish the seeds Sommers planted such that they grow into a flourishing A&D approach to feedback.

The Feedback Loop in A&D Pedagogies: Background; or, Setting the Stage

Sommers’s (2013) insight that “responding begins in the classroom, on the first day of class” (xiv) has immense value. In my classes, I stress that so-called Standard English is a myth because English is a living language (Lippi-Green 1997; Greenfield and Rowan 2011); this myth does real harm to English language learners and speakers whose home language is a VOE or another language.⁴ Like Sommers, I see my written feedback as only one variety of feedback students encounter in my classroom; in what follows, I describe three commitments (the numbering and order have no significance) to give readers a sense of how I put A&D into action in my feedback to students throughout my courses.

4. Peter Elbow (2012) refers to students’ home languages as those languages or language varieties that are often “stigmatized” but considered “intimate” and “precious” (329) to the speaker (and, frequently, are spoken at home).

A&D Commitment 1: Sharing with Students That Each Language Is Unique and Holds Distinct Understandings; Academic Englishes Are Not Superior to Other Englishes or Languages

My syllabi and/or instructional PowerPoints in class include this statement, which addresses what I call “Academic Englishes” (AEs, Prescott-Brown 2024, 187): “I have arrived at the term Academic Englishes to acknowledge the differences in writing conventions that are expected and reinscribed in English. For example, we acknowledge that there are similarities between the Academic Englishes expected across academic postsecondary contexts (Writing Across the Curriculum) as well as differences within each respective field/discipline that deploys Academic Englishes (Writing in the Disciplines).”

AEs, then, are dialects. I explain that textisms, VOEs, and other varieties of language are not automatically informal and that I welcome textisms, texting, and speech to text approaches throughout the writing process, just as I do other languages. I explain that I am open to students using their full linguistic repertoire throughout their writing assignments. I explain that every language holds distinct ways of knowing the world (Canagarajah 2006; MacPherson 2003; Motha 2014), ways that may produce solutions to challenges not available in AEs. I encourage translanguaging (“the general communicative competence of multilinguals” [Canagarajah 2011, 403]) and code-meshing, where students engage in translanguaging through mixing one or more languages with English. For some assignments, the final draft is designated for AEs (such as classes designed to teach L2 learners to write in that dialect), and in those cases code-meshing can be used in all prior drafts; in others, it is permissible in final drafts. I tell students that learning English does not mean they have to think in English; they are more than welcome to reflect and analyze various texts in class using the richness of all languages in their possession, and I emphasize this in an in-class activity and throughout lecture materials. I reference my commitment to antiracist, inclusive, and antioppressive pedagogies, reiterating the message throughout the term. This is all the more vital when I teach classes designed for students who have English as an additional language.

Students whose L1 is English mostly ask questions about the various ways that they can integrate textisms and texting, various languages/dialects, speech to text, etc., into the writing process. L2 students often ask if they are “allowed” to do this and what these options can bring to the writing process. They often say they expected to be under high pressure to write everything in English

only, believing that any use of their own language(s) would be seen as undermining their ability to develop their writing in English. In response, I explain that each student has a linguistic toolkit full of resources for writing and give some examples—which I stress are not exhaustive—of what this can look like in various parts of the writing process. These conversations create generative understandings that center the student’s own preference for what to use in various writing tasks. As Inoue (2017) notes, “Pedagogical agendas for [teaching English to English language learners] and some multilingual students and their teachers” are “important” (xvi). He acknowledges the need to tailor our approaches for students who are not “the majority of monolingual and multilingual students” (2017, xvi) who attend university straight from an American high school (2017, xvi). When making this claim, Inoue cites Dwight Atkinson et al. (2015), who point out the problematic trend of treating translanguaging approaches to writing as if they “replac[e]” or “improv[e]” upon L2 writing (384). They point out that translanguaging writing approaches “highligh[t] issues that fall between traditional conceptions of L1 and L2 writing” (Atkinson et al., 2015, 384), but they cannot meet all the requirements of students developing their L2 acquisition on their own.⁵ Atkinson et al. (2015) explain that while “translanguaging writing and L2 writing overlap in their critique of the historically monolingual, English Only focus of composition studies, translanguaging writing has not widely taken up the task of helping L2 writers increase their proficiency in what might still be emerging L2s and develop and use their multiple language resources to serve their own purposes. As a field, L2 writing has also been addressing . . . the task of helping L2 writers develop and use their multiple language resources to serve their own purposes” (384).

Many students in my class reference their specific goal of achieving a high score on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), a vital credential in the Canadian job market, and therefore they request opportunities to practice English (their L2) via what I have dubbed AEs. (They also tell me I have a good reputation for facilitating their achievement of high IELTS scores.) They may choose to use codmeshing, textisms, and dialects/various languages

5. I use the term acquisition intentionally—students can choose to acquire this language as they would a tool to be used for their own goals. Indeed, as Jeroen Gevers (2021) explains in “Two Sides of the Same Coin? The Complementary Role of Fixity and Fluidity Orientations in Writing Studies,” “What is empowering for students largely depends on the linguistic and educational context and students’ personal interests and goals” (93). Powerfully, Gevers reminds us that some students will “direct their attention to fixity,” even when instructors highlight language’s “fluidity” to address various “norms and ideologies” (94). This is important to remember as we consider the authorial choices that students make and seek to center their own goals in the writing process.

in their prewriting and drafting stages but choose to focus on practicing writing in AEs for a final draft even where code-meshing is an option. In line with my antiracist approach to teaching, I fully take on their goal, which makes antiracist pedagogy via feedback all the more important given how strongly exams like the IELTS can encourage HOWL, a point I explain. I teach them how skillful, nuanced language use can be achieved without reinforcing HOWL.

Below I analyze some of my comments on student work in a class in which most students spoke Hindi as their first language; many had arrived in Canada from India weeks before my class started.⁶ In line with students' goals, this class had more final assignments where students practice using AEs, although some assignments allowed code-meshing in the final draft.

Feedback Through 1:1 Conferences and A&D Commitment 2: Leaning Away from HOWL While Centring My Students' Goals, Concerns, and Experiences

A&D commitment #2 plays a prominent role in 1:1 required writing conferences, where I take notes on students' individual needs. The first meeting of the term begins with a linguistic history assessment, then moves to questions and my feedback about the first writing assignment. Students bring their questions, which may be related to feedback or other course content questions, and I ask about their personal learning goals for the course and their experiences with writing. For students who desire grammar instruction or express insecurity about their grammar skills, I acknowledge that there are many ways to express things in English and other languages that they can access and use throughout the course. I also explain that grammar is not fixed; both grammar and spelling continue to develop as English, like most languages, is a living language. My goal is to help students recognize that they can contribute to their own acquisition of grammar, as I also explain that all languages have grammars; that is, their own languages can also enhance their English writing as there are diverse expressions and phrasings that can be pulled into the writing process. When students ask about particular points of grammar, then, I engage them in discussion of all the many ways they might express a particular thought, rather than offer a single possibility of expression. In this process, I ask them to think up a variety of ways they might want to express a point.

6. For the evolution of composition instruction in postsecondary Canadian contexts, see Roger Graves' (1993) "Composition in Canadian Universities" or Roger Graves' and Heather Graves' (2006) *Writing Centres, Writing Seminars, Writing Culture: Writing Instruction in Anglo-Canadian Universities*.

(chapter 1 in this volume, by Cameron Becker, includes a lengthier discussion about resisting the belief in one right way to express a thought.)

My linguistic history assessment includes asking about the range of languages the student (1) knows and (2) feels comfortable writing in. As conferences begin after the first few class meetings, students know about my welcoming approach to students' linguistic toolkits. If they ask me again in a 1:1 conference if I "really" will "let them" use all their tools, I explain that I do not view English as a superior language, even as I understand that their goal is to learn it, and I emphasize that I see all languages as conduits of knowledge and great resources for their communication. Instructors sometimes ask me if students express a desire to assimilate. At the institution that I reference in this article (as well as the one I currently work at), they do not express this desire to me.

All subsequent required 1:1 conferences focus on students' rough drafts, but I always review my notes on their stated goals and intentions from our first meeting. I take notes on their stated intentions and goals for the paper under discussion. I listen and ask questions so I really understand; then, I act as a soundboard for the student's idea, asking questions that help the student discover their own purposes. I remind students to redirect me if I've misunderstood some element of their writing. Frequently, students talk about a concept or word/phrase from their L1 not readily available in English. In such cases, we discuss how the student plans to integrate their chosen term or concept from their language/culture into the writing process. This is a feedback loop that continues in the written feedback I provide later.

Assignment

The assignment I describe below consisted of a short essay analyzing a Toronto Raptors advertisement entitled *We the North*.⁷ The advertisement highlights and celebrates Canada's diversity, which I hoped would make my students feel welcomed into the assignment.⁸ I also hope that my students will analyze the

7. My thanks to Alisha Walters, associate professor of English at Pennsylvania State University, for sharing ideas for creating this assignment with me.

8. It is worth noting that while Canada is celebrated for its diversity, racism and prejudice of all varieties are still apparent here. Undue focus on the state of race relations in the United States can sometimes be wielded to imply that racism is a US problem, but the narrative of Canada as only a safe haven for the oppressed and/or a promised land obscures the reality of Canada's own history and present situation. For more on how this "promised land" narrative often did not prove true in practice, see Benjamin Drew's *The Refugee* (Drew and Clarke 1856), James Walker's *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783–1870* (1993), and Debra Thompson's *The Long Road Home: On Blackness and Belonging* (2023).

world around them, and this assignment was designed to help them recognize that the skills they are using in my classroom are valuable throughout their lives in other ways, too. Most students in the class where I used this assignment had arrived in Canada from India a couple of weeks before the start of the term, and most (as indicated through a show of hands) did not know who the Toronto Raptors were.

Students were to discuss the advertisement's context and then its content. Then, they were to explain what at least two important visual or linguistic features reveal about the advertisement's purpose, message, intended audience, and strategy. Students completed a prewriting phase and a rough draft (for which they received peer review). They then submitted a final draft of this assignment in AEs. Students were explicitly practicing writing a response that drew on the hallmarks of postsecondary writing in English in most North American institutions. While there were a number of assignments in the course where code-meshing and styles of argumentation from other cultures were welcomed throughout the prewriting through final draft stages, because these students desired to practice in the L2,⁹ this assignment was designed for practice in the culturally situated style of AEs apparent in most postsecondary institutions in North America.¹⁰ At the same time, I actively worked against HOWL through extensive discussion of AEs as always evolving and English itself as being deployed differently in some cases between disciplines and specialties. My goal was to help students view English as pliable rather than fixed, and thus to undermine the standardization narrative in HOWL. I discuss my rationale, creation, and framing of assignments within this larger understanding at length later in this chapter. In the section that follows, I share how I seek to center these goals in my writing facilitation practices, offering my interactions with Jagdeep¹¹ as a case study that might illuminate how this works in practice.

Case Study: Jagdeep

In conferences, Jagdeep told me that he wanted to get better at writing essays, which he found challenging. He also shared his desire to strengthen his

9. In all the years I taught at this institution, fewer than twenty students (out of the hundreds of students that I taught) did not identify practicing in English (their L2) as a goal.

10. I have not featured examples of students code-meshing and translanguaging in this article because I feel that this should only be done with the student's consent. Although there are a number of examples that I would love to share, I was not thinking of possibly publishing excerpts of the students' work at the time so I did not ask for consent.

11. Name changed here to preserve student's anonymity.

knowledge of English (his L2) and his nervousness about his language skills, as he had arrived in Canada for the first time one week before my class started. In discussing the assignment, he mentioned doing research on the Toronto Raptors who were unknown to him. He talked about the narration in the ad as a way for him to start to understand the ad's framing and message. He asked me to confirm if he had transcribed the words of the ad correctly, so we went through it together and I provided additional context on the terms to supplement what we had already discussed in class. Jagdeep said that this process helped him to "clear his doubts" about the assignment.¹²

LINGUISTIC JUSTICE: EXCERPTS FROM MY MARGINAL NOTES TO JAGDEEP ON THE FINAL DRAFT

My first comment on Jagdeep's essay stated the following:

You have started the essay with a body paragraph here. If you had never seen the ad before, would you be able to know what your essay is about from this body paragraph? Do you think you can make adjustments that clarify your thesis and your essay's development for the reader in some way? We discussed some strategies for introduction paragraphs in the PowerPoint I taught and then posted on Moodle for Week Five. If you try to revise this and feel stuck or unsure, let's talk in office hours about what you want to do here and strategies that you think might work.¹³

Here, I sought to address Jagdeep's goal of improving his essay writing skills. In a later comment I wrote the following:

This sounds like it's your thesis statement but it's at the very end. For many people, writing is what we do to find out what we want to say. It's completely normal. We can't always control when we figure out all the pieces. But, it is helpful for your reader to be given the thesis early in the paper as it helps to guide your argument. If you figure out what you want to say (if this is what you want to say) late in the writing process, that's fine; however, a thesis given early in a paper is a wonderful guide for a reader. If you choose to let the thesis guide your essay by putting it in the introduction, you can then tweak all of your paragraphs to connect them to this idea you've now realized. As we discussed in class, the "so what"/why part of your thesis, combined

12. Some aspects of my approach to 1:1 conferences with undergraduate students align with Jacob Babb and Courtney Adams Wooten's chapter in this volume about such conferences with graduate students (chapter 14).

13. To exacerbate a chronic pain condition in my dominant hand as little as possible, I type my comments and use handwritten reference numbers on students' paper copies.

with the “how” and “what,” really clarifies the power of your argument for the reader. It’s like a good movie that pulls you into the action in the first scenes and makes you want to watch the rest 😊.

My comment referenced an extended classroom discussion about different expectations in writing in different cultures that preceded the paper. In it, I emphasized that for this assignment, students could bring language varieties into aspects of the writing process but they would be practicing AEs. My guidance to Jagdeep here was to align with his stated goals of retaking the IELTS and to honor a moment in the class where L2 learners could practice writing in the target language according to some of the received expectations for this type of writing in postsecondary Canadian institutions. Thus, here, I attempted to honor both Jagdeep’s goal and one of the goals of the assignment: to practice conventions of essay writing in North American universities.

While I could reproduce our oral discussions around the cultural situatedness of writing stylization in my written feedback, I find this is unnecessary. I view feedback given orally as connected to the feedback that I provide in writing: both types work together to shape the student’s understanding of my response, and, influenced by non-Western cultures, I do not view writing as superior to oral discourse. My students refer in class to both the written texts of feedback that I have provided as well as the discussion we have had in class and in 1:1 student conferences; that is, taken together, my written feedback, 1:1 interviews with students in their conferences, and classroom discourse form the entire tapestry of the knowledges and feedback that I provide to my students. Moreover, as I am continually seeking student input and values throughout my feedback, students are also providing feedback to me that informs how I continue to engage with them.¹⁴

A&D COMMITMENT #3: DO NOT OVERRIDE

THE STUDENT’S AUTHORIAL CHOICES

I used “if” in my comment to Jagdeep about letting his thesis guide his essay because I honor students’ authorial choices as a key A&D commitment. In class,

14. A key part of my feedback loop involves getting feedback via questionnaires (in addition to students’ oral feedback in 1:1 interviews, their comments in class, and their thoughts shared in office hours, etc.) from students that is voluntary and anonymous, commenting on classroom activities and crafted with a focus on A&D pedagogies (Prescott-Brown 2024). For more on the critical language awareness (CLA) approach in this volume, see Weaver (chapter 11), as well as Shapiro and Perrault (chapter 10). For more on considering approaches that place students at the center of the feedback process (specifically through question-based pedagogy), see Mecucci Springer et al.’s (chapter 9) in this volume. For a consideration of navigating students’ negative response to feedback, see Anson (chapter 3).

we discussed at length the many reasons someone might choose to position a thesis nearer to the end of a work, in line with cultural practices in many communities, and also looked at examples where white writers in North America used that structure. Thus, my “if” also drew on the larger context of explanation in class that giving a thesis late in a work is not automatically a sign of an unskilled writer, and that this is a choice. By saying “if,” I attempted to leave the power in the hands of the student writer, who could move the thesis statement up further (a skill we were practicing in this assignment) or leave the thesis statement till later (but rework the earlier portions of writing to demonstrate a skillful approach to this technique).

As this example illustrates, there is constant tension between HOWL and A&D approaches to instruction in cases where an instructor is supporting students to practice in the L2. Even greater is the challenge of including A&D approaches to writing when many students want a higher IELTS score. Telling students that they should not have the goal of improving their communication in the L2 (in this case, English) does not empower them; however, managing the balance between acknowledging and privileging student goals and building the critical context necessary to challenge HOWL and draw in a diversity of analyses, languages, contexts, and writing approaches is difficult. I find it helpful to talk honestly with students about this difficulty. Kelly Bradbury and Genesea M. Carter’s detailed, four-step reflective tool to consider one’s experiences, the lessons learned, and transition that knowledge back into pedagogy to live out linguistic justice also appears in this volume (chapter 6) and can assist in this process, and Melvin Beavers’s chapter shares the M.E.M.E. Framework, which can be used for this kind of reflection (chapter 5). All of these tools can help instructors navigate the tensions I describe here. In addition, Shawna Shapiro and Sarah Tinker Perrault’s chapter offers further consideration of how to “affirm language difference as an asset and empower students to make informed choices as writers” (chapter 10).¹⁵ These considerations can be both challenging and empowering.

I pointed Jagdeep toward class discussions and invited him to schedule another conference with me. I stated my enthusiasm for the idea driving his

15. Also, depending on lived experiences, instructors may want to consider how the personal and professional identities and lived experiences of instructors, particularly “underrepresented minority and NESSWIS (Non-Native English Speaker Writing Instructor Status),” impacts feedback. For more on this, see Fang et al. in this volume (chapter 7). For a consideration of how to navigate some of these tensions with respect to some of the challenges of providing linguistically just writing instruction in a community college context, see Killam (chapter 12), Gonzales (chapter 8), and Giordano and Lehman (chapter 13) in this volume.

essay and my interest in learning more; I shared my reactions as a reader so he could consider them when revising. Consider the following list of comments:

- Could you find more evidence for this claim in the advertisement? Consider if more evidence might help you make this point more strongly. I like what you've started to say here—it's an interesting point. As a reader, though, it doesn't feel like you made this case fully yet.
- Where is your evidence that the CN Tower is viewed as a representation of Canada's strength? This is an interesting idea but you kind of make this statement and move on—as a reader, I'd love to hear more about what in the ad makes you think this. Do you think you can share more on this with your reader?
- You don't speak in depth about who is part of "the North" or even how "the North" is defined in the advertisement, so this point doesn't carry as effectively here as it otherwise would. How could you discuss this in a way that illuminates this for a reader who hasn't viewed the ad previously?
- Good observation. A question though—do you think this is the only thing the Huskies might symbolize? Consider.

I sought to provide feedback in keeping with Jagdeep's goals to practice his writing skills in the L2 and to encourage optimism about the revision process. I sought to sound friendly, interested, and kind. I wanted Jagdeep to have the sense that I was really thinking about what he wrote and how I experienced it; I also wanted him to see that he had choices about how to either address some of my comments or put them aside. In class we had discussed that a professor is only one of many readers and that therefore I encouraged students to utilize peer review for this assignment. Lessening the belief that an instructor is the only reader that counts is an element of my antiracist pedagogy that I believe supports a number of my goals. Students received credit based on whether they gave two peer reviews (to others) and received two peer reviews on their work. The grades were not based on the quality of students' comments to their peers, but they still provided abundant feedback to each other. I held multiple peer review classes, which took place online in what was otherwise an in-person class. Breakout rooms, I observed, were chatty spaces where students could get multiple reviews on their work. I had also prepared them with a discussion about the kinds of things they might address during peer review and by reiterating the need for kindness when framing questions and comments.

Of course, to align with students' goals to practice skills that might be valuable on the IELTS, I tailored my comments accordingly, for example in these comments to Jagdeep:

- This is a comma splice (see course key for course materials [referencing a list of options for revising certain grammatical points I provide] about how to fix this).
- Who is "they" in this instance? This is ambiguous for your reader right now.
- Good analysis here, but remember to specify who "they" are in this context etc.
- When editing, be sure to double check that you haven't left out articles etc. This often happens in rough drafts, but by the final version, we can all take another look and make sure we polish up things like article, tense, phrasing, diction, etc.

None of these comments reflect a change in grade. I provided them to respect Jagdeep's own purposes.

When I found it challenging to grasp Jagdeep's meaning, I highlighted this: "This is wordy. How can you say this using fewer words? Consider. Also, is 'all they altogether' the people who experience racism? All people? The fans? Racism and prejudice? As this is unclear to me, think about how you can share what you think here with the reader."

Students could analyze a broad range of linguistic aspects of the commercial. They could use quotations from the ad and analyze the meaning of the narrator's words, examine the interplay between the words and the various scenes, or consider the words in other ways entirely. I said that there were no limits on how they could analyze the linguistic aspects of the film. In addition to marginal comments, I provided brief end comments such as these for Jagdeep:

This was a promising essay. You considered numerous linguistic and visual aspects of the advertisement. There were many interesting points in your analysis and you demonstrated an understanding of some important aspects of argumentation.

It looks to me like you figured out your thesis at the end, which is great! For the revision, you may want to consider moving the placement of the thesis as I discussed in marginal comment#17. You have all the pieces to make a good thesis here; it's just in a spot that doesn't help it to pull the organization and analysis in your essay together more effectively. Some places in this essay demonstrated adequate support for your claims but in

other places, as a reader, I thought your great ideas needed more evidence to be persuasive. For areas where I wonder in my comments if there's more evidence that you can share, you may find it helpful to return to the prewriting strategies we discussed in class to generate more ideas and consider if there are ways you'd like to develop these bits. All of us, including teachers of writing, have to keep revising and editing. You've started that work and I think that you can work a bit more on some of the areas that I mention in the marginal comments to polish your work further. Keep in mind that we can also talk about this assignment and your comments before you submit your revision—you can get more clarity if there is anything I've written here that you don't understand.

Overall, however, I thought many of your ideas were interesting, and attention to key points of evidence and structure will take this essay to the next level if you revise it. With all this said, I look forward to reading your next paper!

I proposed Jagdeep return to the prewriting strategies in part because I explicitly encourage students to use their own languages or VOEs in the prewriting process (but not, for this particular assignment, in the final draft, which was in AEs). As students often do, Jagdeep met with me before submitting the revision. In such meetings, I explore how the student's own aims may have shifted. Students describe how they plan to accomplish their new goals and I can also suggest resources available to them that I believe will support those goals. Jagdeep told me of his ideas and challenges; returning to prewriting strategies to generate ideas to integrate into the revision, Jagdeep was able to integrate many of these ideas into his revision.

Final Thoughts

The feedback we give to students provides clues to how our students might assess the inclusivity we offer. Instructors can ask themselves: How does my feedback to students—from my syllabus, classroom materials, 1:1 conferences, responses to languaging in spoken and written text, etc.—create a feedback loop with students that shows my commitment to A&D goals? The entrenched nature of HOWL can make this tricky. In my own case, students have not questioned my claim of valuing antiracist and inclusive pedagogical practice. I also describe these as my commitments through multiple facets of my courses, of which written feedback is only one dimension. As Inoue shares in this volume, “Linguistic justice ain’t really about how we give feedback. It is much more

about the conditions in which that feedback circulates” (chapter 15). Furthermore, as Inoue explained in his 2019 CCCC talk, students may censor certain languaging practices and experiences in the presence of white bodies. This suggests that being clear about one’s antiracist commitments might be particularly important for white instructors. Fortunately, constant striving to integrate antiracist approaches is likely to bear positive fruit in instructor feedback.

A&D approaches to linguistic justice are so important because they place the very humanity of students—their purposes and language toolkit—at the center of the writing process. Likewise, to solve many of the challenges in the world today, we need all the knowledges that can be brought to bear on key problems, not less; the solutions we need are not in AEs alone. Nancy Sommers offers the seeds of some of the conversation strategies and openness we need to serve our students; as instructors, we can help these seeds bear fruit.

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3

Exploring the Relational in Teacher Response to Student Writing

New Directions for the Study of Linguistically and Socially Just Practices

CHRIS M. ANSON

Listening to Reshmi

A few years ago, my colleagues and I were engaged in IRB-approved studies of how screencasting technology affects teacher response to student writing and how this technology is received by students.¹ In our first mixed-methods study, we recruited four instructors of first-year composition to share their usual written responses to students on the first writing assignment. It was the practice of all four teachers to insert comments in the margins and paste evaluation guides and type summaries at the end. We then showed them how to use Jing, a simple screencasting program with a five-minute recording allowance, to work through students' papers onscreen, highlighting text while talking out their comments and suggestions.² For the second writing project, the instructors provided feedback using Jing. After transcribing the comments, we analyzed the differences in how the teachers responded in the two modes, such as the amount and focus of their commentary.

1. *Author's note:* The research reported here was supported by a grant from North Carolina State University's Distance Education and Learning Technology Applications.

2. Created and marketed by Techsmith, Jing has been rebranded as Techsmith Capture with expanded functionalities.

To gauge the 141 students' experiences with screencasting compared with conventional written response, we administered a fourteen-item Qualtrics survey along with some demographic questions. The survey included Likert-scale items tapping into the affective dimensions of the teachers' response, such as the extent to which the students felt their teacher's comments were or were not helpful, constructive, concerned, friendly, engaged, encouraging, considerate, and caring. Students responded to the items twice, once for comments in each mode.

Although plentiful prior scholarship has argued for or demonstrated the positive impact of voice-recorded feedback (Anson 1997, 1999b; Dagen et al. 2008; Mellen and Sommers 2003; Olson 1982; Sipple 2007; J. Sommers 1989a, 2002, 2013; Still 2006; Warnock 2009; Yarbrow and Angevine 1982), the results of the survey still surprised us. Students felt significantly more positive about the screencast response than the written response, and all six items on the Likert scale question showed statistically significant ($p < .01$) or highly statistically significant ($p < .001$) differences between the two modes. Our further analysis helped to explain why: The teachers spoke seven to eight times more words in five minutes than they provided (in more time) in the written mode, they focused on more global and meaning-related features of the students' papers compared with more surface features in the written mode, and their oral feedback provided more explanations than their written feedback. They also addressed their students by first name in their oral responses (which many students noted), but not in their written comments (see Anson 2018). We speculated that the way audiovisual response directed teachers toward meaning and away from error and other surface features demonstrates the method's potential to value and recognize students' diverse ideas and language backgrounds; further, the impulse to address students by name creates a more personalized and respectful learning environment that can foster a sense of belonging for students, especially those who may otherwise feel marginalized.

We then recruited students to tell us more about their experiences. Of the 141 participants, 17 (12%) volunteered. Our semistructured interviews with these students focused on their experiences and feelings watching their instructor's screencast response. During each interview, we replayed the screencast and asked the student to pause it and comment at any point when they felt something significant and wanted to explain it.

When we analyzed and coded the interviews, the results mirrored those of the survey: Students were far more positive about the screencast comments, they said they learned more, and they pointed to a number of features of

positive teacher affect that influenced how they felt (see Anson et al. 2016 for the qualitative analysis). The students in our study, we concluded, greatly preferred screencast feedback to written feedback.

With one exception.

A student we are calling Reshmi strongly disliked the screencast mode of response. In fact, she hated it. In the language of statistical and probability-based research, Reshmi was an “outlier,” not fitting the pattern reflected in the data. For many empirical researchers, outlier data are messy, undesirable, and often eliminated because they affect what is otherwise a generalizable trend.³ With such positive results from a study like ours, researchers might ordinarily ignore Reshmi’s experience and assume that teachers should widely adopt screencasting as their mode of response. Such overgeneralization—in both theory and research—has historically characterized strategies for response that fail to meet the needs and dispositions of students with diverse backgrounds and histories. Although Reshmi did not fit the norm, her response deserves the attention recommended in qualitative research for “checking the meaning” of outliers (Miles and Huberman 1994, 269–70). Embracing the reactions of students like Reshmi to teacher response practices makes it more likely that we are including the experiences of marginalized and underrepresented students alongside concerns about different ways that students process information.

This chapter delves a little deeper into Reshmi’s response as a way to reveal important issues about diverse students’ affective response to feedback. In particular, Reshmi’s reaction demonstrates the social-psychological dimensions of how students receive, perceive, and act on the evaluative feedback of others, both teachers and, in the case of peer review and collaborative writing, other students. Drawing on Reshmi’s role in our study, I will then move more broadly into work on feedback intervention theory and face threat mitigation and what they teach us about the possibility that students can feel misunderstood, stereotyped, or marginalized even in the context of well-intentioned response, resulting in obstacles to their learning. More fully understanding theories of feedback can encourage higher-level awareness of how to adopt socially and linguistically just response practices.⁴

3. The term itself is suspect, especially in the way it can dismiss the experiences of minoritized people as not conforming to a trend. Yet the term is also ubiquitous in all realms of research and unlikely to be replaced.

4. In the context of this chapter, I use linguistic justice to refer to the equitable treatment of all language communities, ensuring that individuals have opportunities to use, preserve, and develop their language varieties regardless of their position in the broader society. Enacting linguistic justice in response practices means combatting discrimination based on

What Reshmi Taught Us

Reshmi, a second-generation Indian-American student, had submitted her project, “Gay Gene and Human Fitness,” in response to a two-part assignment: first, a rhetorical analysis of a research article from the natural or applied sciences, and then, a rendering of its content into a brief original article for popular consumption. For her scholarly article, Reshmi chose a research report titled “Genetic Factors Predisposing to Homosexuality May Increase Mating Success in Heterosexuals,” published in *Evolution and Human Behavior* (Zietsch et al. 2008). Based on a behavioral and attitude survey of a large sample of twins, the study suggests that “genes predisposing to homosexuality may confer a mating advantage in heterosexuals, which could help explain the evolution and maintenance of homosexuality in the population” (424). The researchers argue that a “homosexual gene” in men or women could enhance “reproductive fitness” by creating opposite-sex attractions (for women, in men who demonstrate feminine traits such as tenderness; for men, in women who demonstrate competitiveness).

Reshmi’s instructor (pseudonymously “Rebecca”) provided a screencast response with an elapsed time of 4:57 of Jing’s five-minute allowance. In it, Rebecca praised Reshmi a total of fourteen times—on her source, her topic, her title, her research, several aspects of the way she represented the content, her rhetorical analysis, her evidence, the interest level of her work, and what she was saying (“wonderful”). She concluded by again praising Reshmi for her choice of article and her translation of it for a broader audience, ending with, “Overall, good job!”

In two of eight comments involving critique, Rebecca focused on audience. Reshmi had opened her popular article version with a quotation from an older (2004) speech by Howard Dean suggesting that if God had thought homosexuality was a sin, he wouldn’t have created gay people. Reshmi continued, “What if homosexual males were, as suggested by Howard Dean, created?” Rebecca wondered why Reshmi had focused on males, since the study included women. She advised Reshmi to “make sure you are not excluding part of your audience there.” She then suggested that the question Reshmi raised about whether homosexuality was created (i.e., genetically determined) was already settled science: “You need to make sure that you’re not going to be offending your reader; it’s not necessarily the idea that they are created is revolutionary, rather

language and dialect and ensuring inclusive and respectful environments where linguistic diversity is valued and celebrated.

it's starting to become a proven fact. . . . So just make sure that the way you're phrasing these questions isn't offensive to parts of your audience." Later, she advised Reshmi to expand her implications section (two comments), develop a more fluid structure with transitions rather than chunks of text with headings (one comment), use in-text citations (one comment), and proofread one final time (two comments). After introductory comments of 26 seconds, Rebecca praised Reshmi for somewhat less than a third of her comments (1:25) compared with her critique and suggestions (3:06), in part because her praise was less elaborated.

Throughout the screencast, Rebecca spoke with a pleasant tone, balancing her fourteen points of praise against her eight suggestions for improvement. On the surface, her recorded commentary is typical of how many teachers respond to student writing, although her focus on superficial matters could be seen as a problematic preoccupation with Reshmi's control of Standard American English (SAE). During our interview, Reshmi explained her negative reaction to the screencast:

I honestly did not like the screen capture. I did not like it at all. And I've done interviews, like, face-to-face with her and I thought that was better because she could tell when I was feeling offended or something like that. So she could change her attitude. But here I don't feel like she did, and it felt very, a little personal, and on top of that it was just very—I guess almost confrontational. . . . It was just the tone and inflections in her voice that really changed how I felt about the video. I felt that when I get writing [written comments], I can usually interpret it to make me feel better, um, so in that way I think it [written commentary] would be easier, because you don't take it as personal, and at the same time I want a face to put with the words.

The interpersonal distancing of written comments compared with the more intimate and personalized features of recorded speech may be one reason that students were so attracted to the screencast mode (see also Ice et al. 2007 on how oral response creates stronger positive nuance). In Reshmi's case, however, this distancing allowed her to "feel better" about her teacher's evaluation, not "taking it as personal." But Reshmi also conceded that having "a face to put with the words" is desirable—as in previous conversations with Rebecca that allowed her to mitigate what she might perceive as "confrontational." In this sense, a one-way teacher-created video was for Reshmi a less effective medium for response, raising a need for us to understand how a teacher's seemingly helpful response can have an unexpected effect.

At one point in our interview, we asked Reshmi what her teacher was suggesting about her paper. The transcript below includes indications of the lengths of Reshmi's hesitations in order to show how challenged she was to recall her teacher's guidance.

RESEARCHER: What do you think was the overall message that your teacher was making about your paper in the screen capture?

RESHMI: Um . . . [2.6 seconds], if I can remember . . . [1.6 seconds], um, the overall message was that I needed to . . . [4.3 seconds], I needed to develop . . . [2.4 seconds], more, I guess, focus on another aspect of the article . . . [2.3 seconds] . . . and I'm not sure if I misheard her or there was a communication error.

When we replayed the screencast, Reshmi paused it after the point when Rebecca cautioned her not to offend part of her audience by mentioning only males and by implying that the genetic basis of sexual orientation is not settled science, and said the following: "In that section . . . I agree with her. My original article wasn't talking specifically about homosexual males and I switched it, so that was an error on my part. But then I thought she continued to talk about it more than she should have, I guess."

Drawing on theories of interpersonal interaction and feedback intervention, my colleagues and I hypothesized that Reshmi was experiencing "face threat" from Rebecca's response (Goffman 1965; Brown and Levinson 1987). In sociological theories of communication (see Grice 1975), "face" is a concept relating to a person's self-esteem and their attempts to preserve it (as in "saving face"). Two kinds of face threats are theorized: positive and negative. Positive face refers to the desire to be liked or agreed with. For example, if someone questions a parent's decision to keep their nine-year-old child out until late in the evening, the parent may perceive a certain degree of positive face threat. A strategy to mitigate such threats can be indirect ("Well, my parents kept me out late a few times when I was that age and I turned out OK"), or it can be more direct ("Wait, are you questioning my parenting decisions?"). Negative face refers to the desire to be unimpeded—to have autonomy and freedom from constraints. Negative face can be threatened when a person feels a socially determined obligation to say or do something, such as make an excuse for behavior. In daily interaction, people constantly monitor the degree of face threat and find ways to mitigate it using cooperative politeness strategies (called "facework"; see Samp 2015). However, sometimes face threat may be

absent, unperceived, or ignored, maintaining the focus on the conversation and not what it is implying about either person.

During instructional evaluation, the potential for face threat is heightened because something about the recipient is being judged, diverting attention toward managing the perceived threat. A student might interpret the comment “This paragraph is garbled and really difficult to understand” as positive face threat if the student believes the paragraph makes sense or is adequately written or wants to be valued as a writer or student. This is especially important for students who bring linguistic diversity to their writing that a teacher may see through the lens of normative linguistic practices, pulling their attention from the student’s ideas. Or the student might interpret the comment “rework this paragraph to make it clearer and less garbled” as negative face threat, obligating the student to do something rather than, in the words of Steven Brown and Salvatore Attardo (2005), be “left alone” (83). Certain kinds of feedback may threaten both positive and negative face at the same time, such as “change this sentence [negative face threat] because it’s poorly phrased [positive face threat]” (see Hiraga and Turner 1996). Instructionally, we might assume that students willingly ignore face threats because they think that teachers are supposed to be advice-givers and judges of quality. But students strongly want to be thought competent and liked, which research has shown is often lacking in teachers’ feedback on their writing (Connors and Lunsford 1993; Daiker 1989; Treglia 2009). And when a teacher’s commentary attempts to take control of a student’s work, the student can experience negative face threat and a loss of agency, giving rise to the familiar question posed by the student, “What do you want in this paper?”

The concept of face has been instrumental in analyses of how certain features of response can affect learning. Reshmi’s perception of her teacher’s feedback (what she referred to as “miscommunication”) blocked what could have been a more helpful learning experience, diverting her attention toward her feelings and away from her paper—as evidenced in her difficulty remembering Rebecca’s suggestions and her sense, on replay, that Rebecca had “gone on too long” about her beginning.⁵

A related concept of stereotype threat may also have been working to affect Reshmi’s reaction. As Claude M. Steele and Joshua Aronson (1995) define it, stereotype threat “is being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative

5. Rebecca’s comment about not offending the audience by excluding women lasted only 28 seconds, and her comment about not offending the audience by implying that the genetic basis of sexual orientation is not settled science lasted only 23 seconds.

stereotype about one's group" (797). As Sabrina König et al. (2023) explain, stereotype threat is "a potential explanation for inequalities in language competencies observed between students from different language backgrounds" (841). Typically, stereotype threat affects groups based on race, culture, gender, or sexual orientation, but it can apply to any marginalized group. Like face threat, stereotype threat can affect performance and achievement (see Steel and Aronson 1995, but also Sackett et al. 2004). When communicative threats to face are brought together with stereotype threats, students with diverse linguistic backgrounds may assume that the imposition of normative linguistic standards on their writing comes from stereotyped racial or cultural assumptions and "deficit framing" (Hawk and Sanders, chapter 4)—a phenomenon a colleague and I documented in a study of white instructors commenting on the essays of Black students (Matarese and Anson 2010).

Response and Feedback Intervention Theory

Among the complexities of interpersonal interaction, face threats and stereotype threats may be only one dimension of learning distractions that come from managing the relational. Students and teachers perceive each other based on tacit assumptions about a host of personal characteristics that are part of identity construction (Kluger and DeNisi 1996). These assumptions lead to relational perceptions that can divert students' attention and affect their learning and motivation. Yet affective and relational concerns are absent from most early studies of teacher response. In spite of calls for inquiry into students' perceptions of teacher response (see Anson 2012; Knoblauch and Brannon 2006; N. Sommers 2006), large amounts of foundational research focused on the discourse of teachers' responses and not their psychosocial effects on students. (More recent scholarship, however, has taken this up; see, for example, Blewett 2018, 2020.) The lack of focus on students' perceptions is even more puzzling in the context of work advocating for and exploring the role of affect and emotion in writing studies, especially among minoritized students (Brand 1985; McCleod 1997; Newkirk 2020). Nowhere in the teaching of writing does the affective realm come into play more fully, and importantly, than in response and evaluation.

Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT), based on studies of interpersonal communication, including those of face, proposes instructional response strategies that enhance students' abilities to focus on their work. As described by the theory's founders, Avrahan N. Kluger and Angelo S. DeNisi (1996, 1998), FIT was

initially based on a large meta-analysis revealing the frequent failure of teacher feedback (whether positive or negative) to improve learning or subsequent performance. As DeNisi (2018) puts it, “Feedback that directs attention to the self . . . diverts cognitive resources away from task performance and produces affective reactions that can interfere with task performance” (671; see also Ryan and Deci 2000). Ample additional research has supported this claim (see especially Kerssen-Griep et al. 2003).

To mitigate face threat, “facework” or “face support” refers to the “ways people cooperatively attempt to promote both the other’s and one’s own sense of self-esteem, autonomy, and solidarity in conversation” (Spiers 1998, 25). Research has shown the positive effects of instructors’ facework on students’ learning and performance. Jeff Kerssen-Griep, April R. Trees, and Jon A. Hess (2008), for example, found a strong relationship between perceived instructional face support and students’ positive perceptions of being mentored—and these perceptions extend to students’ sense of being in a productive learning environment (Jameson 2004; Jussim et al. 1992). Additional studies have shown that students find feedback more helpful and easier to understand when teachers are sensitive to issues of face and provide face support (Anson et al. 2016; Trees et al. 2009).

For instructors, learning about research on FIT and facework can be somewhat unsettling because it challenges and complicates a seemingly straightforward (and centuries-old) inherited stance: A teacher with knowledge, expertise, and authority offers advice and evaluative feedback to novices on their work, sometimes critical, sometimes supportive. But ordinary feedback interventions may not enhance students’ performance, especially when identity or sense of self is threatened, even when the feedback is positive. For example, the common relational advice to writing teachers to “be sure to find something to praise” can be insufficient as facework, as demonstrated in Rebecca’s feedback to Reshmi. In addition, some types of praise (such as general comments that students may find disingenuous) can do little to offset substantive criticisms. If students’ learning is affected by their perception of face threats and stereotype threats, instructors need principled ways to mitigate the threats so that students can be more motivated to focus on their work. As Courtney B. Cazden (1979) has put it, this principled instruction “requires the management of interpersonal relationships and the accomplishment of classroom control in face-saving ways” (147). But what can teachers do to act on these general recommendations when responding to students’ writing?

Toward Positive Relational Practices: Revisiting the Concept of Control

Scholars of FIT have suggested a number of instructional facework strategies. Based on their research, Tae-Seop Lim and John Waite Bowers (1991) offer three: maintaining *solidarity* (referring to strategies that respond to students' need to be included, marked by empathy and understanding); showing *approbation* (referring to strategies that address students' need to have their abilities, performances, or selves appreciated and valued); and demonstrating *tact* (referring to strategies that show respect for the student's autonomy and freedom to act). A comment such as "Your opening paragraph seems hastily written and it's in an inappropriate register; rework it until it reflects correct college-level writing" violates all three strategies: first, by implying that the student is excluded from the evaluative situation; second, by ignoring the student's need to be valued (and positioning the student as not conforming to normative discourse); and third, by authoritatively mandating action (causing negative face threat). The assumption that a paragraph was "hastily written" ignores the possibility that the student spent time on it but still introduced some nonstandard forms of language, while the command to rework it ignores the possibility that the student needs support. Keerssen-Griep, Trees, and Hess (2008) suggest that teachers "mitigate anticipated face threat by calibrating the directness and positive or negative redress in their feedback messages." This can be accomplished by "emphasizing solidarity and respect" while "sharing the reasoning behind advice" (327–28).

In another study of facework, Kerssen-Griep (2001) identified seven teacher communication strategies that enhance students' motivation to learn—communication that:

1. encourages participants' ownership of and investment in the class;
2. maintains a climate safe for independent thought and risk-taking;
3. expresses respectful interest in students' classroom contributions;
4. encourages application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of course knowledge;
5. encourages and respects autonomous thought;
6. exhorts students to trust their own judgment about applying course knowledge outside of class;
7. focuses on improvement (265).

Although these communication strategies apply to general classroom work and interaction, they can easily be adapted to response to writing, such as

encouraging students' ownership of their work and expressing respectful interest in their ideas. Other strategies include "message sequencing" (structuring response by identifying a problem first and then offering advice; Goldsmith 2000) and the use of hedging (expressing a certain degree of uncertainty to urge students to make their own rhetorical and textual decisions), although as Fiona Highland and Ken Highland (2001) point out, the resulting indirectness can sometimes lead to misunderstanding.

Turning back to Rebecca's screencast, we can see that she is using—consciously or unconsciously—some of these strategies. She addresses Reshmi by name. She invites her into her evaluation: "What I'm going to do now is go through the rubric *with you* and *discuss* some of the comments that I had about the paper" (italics added). And she gives several points of praise, albeit mostly general. Yet still Reshmi perceives face threat, suggesting that strategies experienced teachers like Rebecca use when commenting on student writing can still be inadequate to foster learning and can lead to perceptions of stereotype threat. What additional factors might be responsible?

In the application of FIT to writing instruction, the concept of control takes on new importance. An enduring perspective on response had its origins in what Lil Brannon and Cy Knoblauch (1982) and Nancy Sommers (1982) called the "appropriation" of student writing. Based on their research, these scholars suggested that well-meaning teachers are often tacitly locked into controlling students' work by comparing it to "ideal texts." As Brannon and Knoblauch put it, the trouble with the "paternalism" of this control is "the teachers' assumption that they always and necessarily know what writers mean to say and are therefore always reliable judges of how well writers actually say it" (159). Sommers similarly argued that "the teacher appropriates the text from the student by confusing the student's purpose in writing the text with her own purpose in commenting" (149). Because linguistically corrective response shows authority and takes less time than response to meaning, many teachers fall into it without recognizing how it appropriates the student's text and simultaneously calls into question their language differences.

Fourteen years later, Richard Straub (1996) took up the concept of control in greater detail, unpacking the dichotomy between "directive" and "facilitative" response—between "bad" response (judgmental and dictatorial, masculine and authoritative) and "good" response (sympathetic and friendly, feminine and supportive) (224). Drawing examples from his and Ronald F. Lunsford's (1995) study of twelve expert teacher-scholars' responses to samples of student writing, Straub showed how the teachers shifted between directive and

facilitative response depending on their focus, but also how specific teachers were oriented toward more or less control in their feedback. Straub argued that students should “be allowed to develop their own ideas and . . . make their own writing decisions and learn to make better choices. Comments that recognize the integrity of the student as a learning writer and that look to engage [them] in substantive revision are better than those that do not” (Straub 1996, 247–48). (See Underwood and Tregidgo 2006 for the importance of control and Tardy 2006 for further critique of appropriation and agency in L2 writing.) Today, these scholars’ work takes on new significance as educators more fully consider how control can ignore or deny students’ varied linguistic backgrounds, sending the message that something in their home and community languages is “wrong” or “corrupt” (for a recent example, see Rickford and King 2016; for a broader treatment, see Baker-Bell 2020).

In spite of Rebecca’s generally supportive response, she clearly controls Reshmi’s text in ways akin to Cameron Becker’s description of paternalism in response (chapter 1). Linguistically, Rebecca uses command forms that could easily serve as negative face threats in the absence of solidarity and the freedom for Reshmi to control her writing:

You need to be very careful . . . [audience focus #1]

Make sure that you’re not excluding . . . [audience focus #1]

You need to make sure that you’re not going to be offending . . . [audience focus #2]

Just make sure that the way you are phrasing these questions isn’t offensive . . . [audience focus #2]

I would have liked you to use in-text citations . . . [citation focus]

You could have a more pointed implications section . . . [implications focus]

Focus on the implications of the research that you found . . . [implications focus]

You need to make sure that you are proofreading very carefully. . . . [proof-reading focus]

You need to make this a fluid paper with transitions . . . [structure focus]

In addition, Reshmi’s positive face is clearly threatened by Rebecca’s concern about readers:

... for some reason you have chosen to only target homosexual males ...

... it's starting to become a proven fact [that homosexuals are created] ...

Although Rebecca appears to focus on the *textual* characteristics of Reshmi's paper—objectifying and isolating it as an artifact of thought—Reshmi justifiably could not distance herself from her *authorial* and personal perception of the response: “You (Reshmi) are excluding; you (Reshmi) are offending; you (Reshmi) don't care about standard English. . . .”

The concept of control helps us to think about how Rebecca might have enacted facework in her response. An especially useful strategy is to cede agency to students in response and evaluation (now advocated in new instructionally oriented work on inclusive teaching, e.g., Addy et al. 2021). For example, many years ago Jeff Sommers (1989b) developed the “writer's memo,” a parallel text in which students describe their intentions and/or ask the instructor questions to guide their response. The writer's memo was designed not only to encourage metacognition, reflection, and “reader-based” prose (Flower 1979) but also, more important, to help teachers “adopt a constructive role as respondents, rather than judges, while guaranteeing the students' rights to their own texts” (J. Sommers 1989b, 175). This and similar instruments give greater control to the student and compel the teacher to respect that role when responding because the student is helping to frame the response. Sommers (1989b) offers this excerpt as an example of a student explaining her process when writing a critique of a play: “At first I was going to write all the praise in the first paragraph and then go into my criticism but I opted for mingling the two. In the first three paragraphs there is something positive said as well as something negative” (178–79). Similarly, in “Behind the Paper” (1988), Sommers provides examples of students asking specific questions about their drafts.

Let's imagine that Rebecca had asked her students to submit writer's memos. Imagine further that Reshmi had explained how she conceived of her audience in ways not entirely recoverable from her paper: “I am imagining a public audience that could include those who believe that homosexuality is unnatural and a sin, and that homosexuals are born heterosexual and then are corrupted.” Now her rhetorical choice in posing the question, “What if homosexual males were, as suggested by Howard Dean, created?” makes more sense from the position of her imagined readers' naivete or discriminatory ideology, which might have precipitated a somewhat different and to Reshmi less “confrontational” or command-like response: “Interesting construction of your audience, Reshmi. This meets part of your audience where they are; I

wonder how others more knowledgeable about the genetic basis of homosexuality would respond—do you think they would realize your strategy or would want a bolder statement about the facts?” Or imagine that Reshmi had asked Rebecca about her representation of homosexuality: “Do you think my popular version of the research article does justice to the authors’ perspective on homosexuality?” The directionality of response (from Reshmi to Rebecca first) would minimize the face threat. Instead, Rebecca’s control gives Reshmi the sense that, as “one part” of her audience, Rebecca herself is “offended.” Allowing students to explain their intentions and ask for specific kinds of response compels the teacher to attend to the student’s needs, reducing both positive and negative face threats as well as the perception of stereotype threat. G. Stoney Alder (2007), for example, found that students were more eager to improve when instructors gave them more control over their feedback.

Of course, ceding control means building higher-level rhetorical understandings into writing instruction, including an appropriate lexicon, threshold writing concepts (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 2015, 2019), and ways of talking about writing. Still, even without these, Reshmi might have asked questions that could have led Rebecca to frame her suggestions in less face-threatening ways by using hedging devices, phrasing comments as questions, and minimizing directives. In addition, the audiovisual mode offered Rebecca more opportunity to effectuate this kind of response than is usually the case in writing—which could have changed Reshmi’s impression of its affordances.

The Need for Research, Teacher Knowledge, and Reflective Practice

Among recent innovations in antiracist pedagogy, relinquishing control has additional value. First, it refocuses response toward meaning construction and away from surface features of writing that, when reflective of dialect or L2 language features, can be discriminatory or stereotype-threatening. Correcting or miscorrecting features assumed to be tied to students’ dialects can enact stereotype threat when the students feel that their identities, as manifested in their language choices, are being questioned or criticized.

More generally, when teachers learn about some of the research on face-work, they are more likely to unearth tacitly held beliefs and attitudes toward different groups of students, leading to more principled feedback interventions (see Young 2021). Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson (1987) initially posed theories of face and politeness as universal, but further scholarship has explored the intercultural manifestations of these theories (see, for example,

Ting-Toomey 1988, 1997; Ting-Toomey and Kurogi 1998). Analyses of face in different cultures show significant variations in politeness strategies and the effects of positive and negative facework (Kádár 2017). These variations need to be understood more fully in classrooms where students from different cultures and linguistic backgrounds constitute “contact zones” (Pratt 1991). Further research on audiovisual response could explore diverse students’ feelings about these modes compared with conventional methods.

As these and other inquiries are conducted, new opportunities arise for teacher development. As Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon (1995) have put it, “There is no faceless communication.” Successful examples, such as the cross-racial, cross-mentoring programs described by Jeff Kerksen-Griep and Karen Eifler (2008) and by Kelly Bradbury and Geneesea M. Carter (chapter 6), could be developed more widely in teacher education, alongside discussions of other contemporary work, including Frankie Condon and Vershawn Ashanti Young’s *Performing Antiracist Pedagogy in Rhetoric, Writing, and Communication* (2016); Bobbie Harro’s (2018) focus on the cycle of socialization and how it impacts language ideologies; more general perspectives such as American University’s policy and practice recommendations (Dennis et al. 2022); Hannah Franz’s (2024) linguistically inclusive approach to evaluation; and classroom strategies such as those described by Marci Prescott-Brown, Melvin Beavers, Michelle Cruz Gonzales, and others in this volume.

This chapter has only scratched the surface of ways to research facework and integrate its principles into response to writing to ensure that students can focus most of their attention on their writing and learning.⁶ Perhaps more important, teachers of writing need time and space to engage in critical reflection on their practices. There will always be occasions when nothing a teacher does will avoid a negative response or divert a student’s attention away from the relational and toward their writing and learning. But reflective practice, applied to teacher response (Schön 1983; Anson 1999a; Edgington 2020) and informed by understandings of FIT and facework, will go a long way toward helping students like Reshmi to realize their full capacities to learn and respect language differences they might bring to that learning.

6. Greater diversity in the area of response research is badly needed, especially of instructors and students. For example, the team that conducted the initial screencast research involving Reshmi consisted of two straight white cisgender women, a straight Latin American cisgender woman, and me, a straight white cisgender man. Three of the initial instructors were straight white cisgender women and the fourth was a straight white cisgender man. Of the seventeen students interviewed in the qualitative stage of the study, Reshmi was the only person of color.

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4

Fostering Linguistic Consciousness Through Feedback Practices

Contributions from the Black Radical Tradition

AMANDA HAWKS AND NICK SANDERS

For more than a half-century, writing and rhetoric scholars have debated the roles of language—and linguistic justice—in the teaching of writing. These conversations have been divided on whether or not writing teachers ought to honor students’ out-of-school literacies and languages, which often gets caught up in debates between code-meshing and code-switching pedagogies (Canagarajah 2006; Wheeler and Swords 2010; Young 2009). This fundamental split reflects dueling histories in the foundations of the field. One positions the work of the teaching of writing as teaching students to assume the “codes of power” in which the legitimizing force is White Mainstream English (Baker-Bell 2020)—a “missionary-model of literacy education” (Kynard 2013, 78). The other positions language as intimately coupled with identity and the function of language and literacy as an emancipatory practice. The latter was “spearheaded by the Black Liberation Movement” (Smitherman 1999, 66) and is tightly connected to the landmark resolution of “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” (*Students’ Right*) (Conference on College Composition and Communication 1974).

Students’ Right has served as a disciplinary anchor in the battle for language rights. Unsettling popular lore about language and “pure English” as “good character” (Crowley 1985), *Students’ Right* was anchored in the socially

constructed school of linguistics and had three broad goals: “(1) to heighten consciousness of language attitudes; (2) to promote the value of linguistic diversity; and (3) to convey facts and information about language and language variation that would enable instructors to teach their non-traditional students” (Smitherman 1999, 67).

The resolution serves, in many ways, as a call to center linguistic justice as we reimagine teaching, assessment, teacher education, and the intracollege role of writing curriculum. More recently, “This Ain’t Another Statement” (Baker-Bell et al. 2020) demonstrates the stakes for Black language pedagogies and demands that the field “challenge the multiple institutional structures of anti-Black racism you have used to shape language politics.” Thus, *Students’ Right* is a policy toward antiracist politics. We have also read the legacy of *Students’ Right* as a practice of coalition for writing programs and writing centers (Sanders et al. 2023). For further pedagogical and response examples of how *Students’ Right* has been mobilized, see Michelle Cruz Gonzales (chapter 8) and Shawna Shapiro and Sarah Tinker Perrault (chapter 10).

Writing scholars began by having sustained conversations about the nuts and bolts of writing pedagogy. Yet it took years for the field to center linguistic justice in pedagogical discussions (Wible 2006), and, in many ways, feedback research perpetuate white supremacist pedagogies that *Students’ Right* sought to disrupt. As Cameron Becker (chapter 1) demonstrates, discourse around revision is tethered to characteristics of white supremacist culture, including paternalism, perfectionism, and objectivity. Richard Beach and Tom Friedrich (2006), in this vein, identify the impetus in the revision that often undergirds feedback. They trace the literature from the 1960s and 1970s, which focused on error-correcting, through the 1980s, when it moved toward social and genre-specific feedback. Across this history, they contend that the function of feedback is to “help students improve their writing” (222). The notion of “better writing” is coded language that borrows from the ideologies of whiteness and white supremacist epistemology.¹ While we agree that revision is central to the work of writing studies, we take pause in the tension between the history of linguistic justice, as a justice-centered enterprise, and historical response practice, as an often normalizing force.

Though we hold different identities—a Black queer woman and a white queer man—we both share commitments to linguistic justice, antiracism,

1. In this article, we use the term “white supremacist epistemology” to refer to ideologies that directly reproduce the power of whiteness. We draw on Patricia Hill Collins (2021) work on white epistemology and Asao Inoue’s (2015) work on white racial habitus.

and transformative justice in our teaching, service, and research (e.g., Hawks and Meadows 2023; Pouncil and Sanders 2022). In this chapter, we argue that feedback practices must directly engage the call for linguistic justice developed by *Students' Right*. As such, we foreground critical feedback orientations that specifically cultivate linguistic consciousness. We outline a critical praxis for engaging linguistic justice through writing a response that honors the Black Radical Tradition paramount to *Students' Right*. In doing so, we rehistoricize the relationship between Black protest and response literature to illustrate that canonical practices of response are imbued with a white-centered epistemology and, as such, tend to construct feedback as pseudo-objective, final, and arhetorical. To counter this approach, we offer an orientation for response feedback that unabashedly centers the Black Radical Tradition, in particular imagination, criticality, and a pro-Black ethic of care.

Tenets of the Black Radical Tradition

In Carmen Kynard's prolific history of the field, she situates the Black Radical Tradition by drawing on Cedric Robinson's (1983) *Black Marxism*. Kynard (2013) notes, "This tradition is historicized on the basis of political praxis and worldview born from the uniqueness of generations of struggle against slavery, segregation, and current-day exploitation of the black masses that would launch the seminal rebellions of slave revolts, maroonage, and today's Black Nationalisms" (78). In other words, we understand the Black Radical Tradition as a historical consciousness of Black leaders to challenge white supremacy in culture and institutions. Radicalism, after all, is a political frame that filters the work of social institutions. Unlike those defined in liberal or conservative frames, radical politics acknowledges that (1) truth is a human construction; (2) power is exercised, not possessed; and (3) praxis must be ethically engaged (Greenfield 2019). Radical politics is integral to linguistic-justice-centered feedback and response practices. Such a perspective operationalizes the Black feminist tenet that the personal is political (Cooper 2015).

In particular, our understanding of a Black Radical Tradition is guided by adrienne maree brown's (2017) work in *Emergent Strategy*, which documents "plans of action, personal practices, and collective organizing tools that account for constant change and rely on the strength of relationships for adaption" (23). We understand that large scale social change can be accomplished as intentional small scale practices and patterns. For the purpose of this chapter, we situate the histories of Black Radical Tradition through three key tenets:

- **IMAGINATION**, dreaming toward an Afrofuturist future where oppression no longer exists;
- **CRITICALITY**, making meaning of material and ideological conditions that inhibit liberation;
- **CULTIVATING A PRO-BLACK ETHIC OF CARE**, centering love, joy, and genius in Blackness.

Imagination invites practitioners to think beyond the status quo, beyond racial capitalism and white supremacy, and dream toward a world that is liberated. This idea is articulated by Robin G. Kelley in *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Kelley (2002) recovers histories of and movements for Black radicalism to showcase the collective imagination as a core commitment to the work of laboring toward liberated futures. Kelley describes his mother's dreaming of a world that has not yet arrived: "She dreamed of land, a spacious house, fresh air, organic food, and endless meadows without boundaries, free of evil and violence, free of toxins and environmental hazards, free of poverty, racism, and sexism . . . just free. She never talked about how we might create such a world, nor had she connected her vision to any political ideology. But she convinced my siblings and me that change is possible and that we didn't have to be stuck there forever" (2).

This understanding that change is possible is at the core of the Black radical imagination. It asks us to think beyond the dominance of white supremacy, asking our students and colleagues to dream toward a world that is irresistible. For example, in her book *We Want to Do More Than Survive*, Bettina Love (2019) develops a framework for abolitionist teaching that seeks to simultaneously destroy the structures that cause racial harm and violence embedded in the educational industrial complex and reimagine "new ways to establish an education system" (89). This kind of dreaming, of imagining a better future devoid of the intersections of racism, sexism, transphobia, and ableism, remains part and parcel of the Black radical imagination and the Black Radical Tradition.

If imagination is about dreaming past the status quo, criticality is about analyzing the machinations of power and privilege that serve as barriers to the imaginative spirit of the Black radical imagination. Ghodly Muhammad's (2020) *Cultivating Genius*, in a similar spirit, develops a historically responsive literacy framework that centers genius in Black students by promoting criticality. For Muhammad, criticality is "the ability to see, name, and interrogate the world not only to make sense of injustice but also to work toward social transformation" (120). In centering genius, Muhammad critically

celebrates the intellectual and social lives of students by blending criticality with skill-building.

Critical education scholars have employed the Black Radical Tradition to center a pro-Black ethic, to reimagine education in the pursuit of justice, and to redress spiritual violence enacted in literacy classrooms. In *Critical Race English Education*, for example, Lamar Johnson (2022) calls for English educators to challenge a narrow curriculum around literacy that devalues Black life and humanity. Johnson evokes the Black Radical Tradition to concretely promote pro-Black futures in the literacy classroom. He calls for English education to embrace a radical love. As he writes, “ELA classrooms must create spaces that consider Black youth’s future. We cannot envision or (re)imagine a future, without acknowledging, honoring, humanizing, and centering Blackness and Black lives” (133). Similarly, in writing studies, Natasha Jones, Laura Gonzales, and Angela Haas (2021) describe a pro-Black ethic of care as understanding that “that none of us are truly free until Black women are free—and that true liberation doesn’t come from reforming systems, institutions, programs, and organizations designed by white people for (predominantly) white people” (30). They argue that “we must work together to imagine new, justice-driven approaches to institutional leadership structures. This means necessarily challenging institutional structures as they currently exist” (Jones et al. 2021, 30). A pro-Black ethic of care is a practice that seeks to center Blackness and coalition building, and to consider how we can work together to eliminate current institutions and develop policies that promote justice. Across these spectacular examples put forward by Black educators and freedom dreamers, the Black Radical Tradition plays a pivotal role in centering a pro-Black ethic of care in our work. As we demonstrate below, the Black Radical Tradition reframes grand narratives of the field often situated through assimilationist mandates and shifts them toward a demand for a pro-Black ethic of care in our teaching practices.

Historicizing Students’ Right and Black Power Movements

Much of the discipline has conceptualized the fight for linguistic justice as a niche area of concern, one that has often “distracted” (Berthoff and Clark 1975, 217) from, or “shamed” (Zorn 2010, 325), the “moral and professional responsibility” (Berthoff and Clark 1975, 216) of rhetoric and composition. These naysayers position white mainstream English as the legitimizing force of the discipline and therefore assert the legacy of linguistic liberation as

“impractical” (Smith 1976, 159) “sham scholarship” (Berthoff and Clark 1975, 216). Opponents of *Students’ Right* have held onto mythic nostalgia of the field’s history—a history that is, to quote Kynard (2023), “never complicated by the fact that there were no Black faculty or students way back then” (319); and one that positions white mainstream English, in a white savior narrative, as a force that would “save” minoritized communities from “underachievement,” as Jeff Zorn (2010, 326) vehemently argued. In offering our argument about the power of the Black Radical Tradition to transform inequitable response practices, we want to (re)historicize the discipline, which was “conceived” (Kynard 2013, 9) out of histories of social struggle. In doing so, we underscore Black power activism as a “cornerstone” (Kynard 2013, 85) to linguistic justice and the field writ large, which fundamentally problematizes the disciplinary memory of *Students’ Right* naysayers. Simply, without histories of Black power, the field wouldn’t be worth its shit.

One of the prevailing grand narratives in the formation of the discipline is the development of college entrance exams administered at Harvard. In the late nineteenth century, Harvard applicants took a rigorous examination, initially orally and then later through writing. Crowley describes this strategy as a way to legitimize English as a field of study “as hard as Greek” (Crowley 1998, 60). New students at Harvard were required to pass a difficult entrance exam, which by 1892, 25 percent of students were failing (69). This high failure rate resulted in a required course of study in composition. The underlying story at Harvard linked the mastery of what Adams Sherman Hill, one of the founders of the English program at Harvard, called “pure English” (60) to character. This specific mythos, one defined by correctness and usage as indicators of good character, is often invoked by *Students’ Right* naysayers. Pedagogically, Harvard’s writing faculty administered daily themes, where students would write spontaneously about their experiences and surroundings and would be evaluated through judgements of their character. This narrative of the field’s departure based on the English entrance exam at Harvard demonstrates a history of hegemonic control through literacy, particularly around fixing bad character through judgements of language. Crowley (1998) notes that the broader argument for these practices laid the foundation for the idea that “[a] good deal of study in English would be necessary to rectify these character faults” (77). The grand narrative of Harvard’s entrance examples positions the origins of the field from a place of lack, control, and moral judgements delivered from a white-bourgeois gaze.

However, as Kynard (2013) has powerfully critiqued in *Vernacular Insurrections*, the origins of the discipline must be seen beyond this white cultural moment of Harvard's obsession with control and character. The history of Black protest in the 1960s and 1970s, and earlier, was a history of radically reimagining futures not only to "protest existing conditions but to compel its participants to imagine something radically different from the way things were" (98). This orientation toward imagination is one that "is a point of origins for our disciplines' ongoing ideological coordinates" (77). The ideological shift in rhetoric and composition toward linguistic justice grows out of this tradition of imagination via protest, "where Black English was mobilized to counter the white hegemony that language arts education maintains" (82). Therefore, to adequately engage the histories of response practices within composition studies beyond the assimilationism of Harvard entrance exams means we must locate the intersections—historical, political, and pedagogical—between Black liberation struggles and the ideological underpinnings of rhetoric and composition.

Students' Right only exists today, and could only have existed, because of the Black Power movement and histories of Black protest. Drawing on Sylvia Wynter (2006), Kynard (2013) establishes that the rise of Black Power organizations such as the Black Panther Party rearticulated Black Language as "a critical source of its own knowledges" (78). Complicating Stephen Parks's work (2013), for example, Kynard has shown that coalitions involving Stokely Carmichael (later known as Kwame Ture), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the Black Panther Party was critical for *Students' Right* (79). Kynard (2013) demonstrates the Black nationalisms engaged "multiple notions of race and class" (81) but generally maintained Afrocentric ideologies as critical tools and dispositions for Black people to liberate themselves from the racial capitalism of white supremacy. These ways of thinking and acting served as a kind of "revolt of culture that was powered by a reawakened racial consciousness" (86). Taken differently, then, Black English grows from protest traditions engaging a variety of social movements under the umbrella of Black Marxisms that sought to use language as a tool for political organizing and critique.

Thus, Black Power as an organic organizing strategy to critique machinations of white supremacy and racial capitalism relied on the Black Radical Tradition's emphasis on liberation through imagination, criticality, and care. For example, Kynard (2013) cites Carmichael (writing as Kwame Ture), who writes, "The reality is driven home by the fact that our ancestors were chattel slaves.

If, in a capitalist system, human beings are commodities, then everything they produce, including education, is also a commodity” (cited in Kynard 2013, 81). From this critique of education as a racial production under racial capitalism, Kynard argues for a transformation of the classroom so that it “can literally be explosive, as socially transformative and social action-based, as the insurrections on the street” (84). Indeed, Black protest, from Fisk University students in the 1920s to students at HBCUs during the 1950s onward, has always been part of reimagining racist superstructures of the modern university and has been a site of literacy engagement far beyond the dominant “autonomous missionary-model of literacy education” (66). Kynard warns, however, not to see Black Power as a set of essentialized positions as of “oppositional politics”; Black English therefore “cannot be used as the marker of a radical black polemic” (79). Since Black protest has grown from a variety of social philosophies such as socialism, communism, and Maoism, Black Marxists and Black nationalists engage and challenge these traditions and are always “quite expansive” (86). Complex histories of protest showcase that although there is not a single essentialized Black protest tradition, the expansiveness of the movement underscores the roles of critique of the world/word through intentional activist practices such as community and political organizing to shift the dominant social institutions.

And the development of *Students’ Right* indisputably grows from this tradition of Black protest literacies, which Kynard chronicles as a reading and writing out-of-school politics, community organizing, and challenging social institutions that reify inequitable architectures of white supremacy. The authoring of *Students’ Right* is no different: It represents an operationalizing of community organization literacies that leveraged a critique of institutional politics hell-bent on reproducing inequitable structures of white nationalist nostalgia. As Kynard observes, these underpinnings of Black Power can be located within the organizing work of the Black Caucus of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). Kynard and Geneva Smitherman locate the assassination of MLK as the tipping point in this discipline’s history. Ernece Kelly’s (1968) “Murder of the American Dream,” delivered at the 1968 CCCC, marked the beginning of the Black Caucus. As Kelly (1968) notes, she was “tired, very tired of being the object of studies, the ornament in professional or academic groups, the object to be changed, reshaped, made over” (108). As Smitherman (1999) observes, the Black Caucus served as an important place to operationalize CCCC’s “loss of racial innocence” (355) after the murder of King, and *Students’ Right* was an intentional policy device to address the

internal contradictions of the field alongside protesters of the Black Liberation Movement. Indeed, the Black Caucus continued to advocate for linguistic justice but also developed awareness campaigns around the topic of global corporate greed, demanding a set of boycotts and engagement with antiapartheid organizing groups. These examples demonstrate the pivotal roles that the Black Caucus had in the context of linguistic justice and, at the same time, illustrate the tenor of Black protest as always constituent to the fight for more just and equitable pedagogies, curriculum, and institutional superstructures.

Thus, the timbre of *Students' Right* fundamentally grows from a history of Black protest. Following, the death of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests, the publication of "This Ain't Another Statement" (Baker-Bell et al. 2020) engages this history of Black protest literacies. Scholars such as Baker-Bell, Johnson, and Kynard, among others, have called for actional commitments to linguistic justice and pedagogical change. Baker-Bell et al. (2020) write, "We cannot say Black Lives Matter if decades of research on Black Language has not led to widespread systemic change in curricula, pedagogical practices, disciplinary discourses, research, language politics, professional organizations, programs, and institutions within and beyond academia!" The statement's authors link the movement for Black lives with the liberatory potential of Black language in pedagogy and curriculum. In doing so, they deliberately participate in decades of social protest by Black students and Black faculty. Furthermore, they directly intertwine the practices of Black university protest through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to critique "social institutions that create barriers and oppressive relations for people of color" (Kynard 2013, 66). The analogue between Black students activists during the 1960s, who turned to "alternative discourses and altered the ways that knowledge was constructed for them and about them" (60), and the contemporary revolution for Black life to divest from police brutality reflects the truism that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Baker-Bell (2020) captures this astutely, leveraging a powerful critique of code-switching, that white supremacist epistemological concept that serves to sanitize racial consciousness in writing pedagogies: "If we honestly believe that code switching will save Black People's Lives, then we really ain't paying attention to what's happening in the world. Eric Garner was choked to death by a police officer saying 'I cannot breathe'" (5).

There live now at least two concurrent histories—one that mobilizes white nostalgia to deploy white mainstream English as a legitimizing agent, and the other that engages Black protest movements whose goals are to change cultural institutions based on elements of the Black Radical Tradition. We assert that the

latter history is often ignored and therefore challenges how the field operationalizes its commitments to pedagogy and, for our case, around feedback practice. The field of composition instruction has largely acknowledged the broader point: that composition courses don't make space for Black lives. However, even four years after the publication of "This Ain't Another Statement," administrators and instructors still rely on feedback orientations that are predicated on a lineage of deficit framing.

White Nationalist Imaginations and/as Response Literature

Given the coupling of Black Language and Black protest in *Students' Right*, we read response literature as an inheritance of tacit disciplinary traditions that invest in imaginations of white platonic ideals based in control and character. Indeed, it is an inheritance of an integrationist disciplinary narrative (Kynard 2013), one that calculates a "perceived threat to socioeconomically privileged groups in power who will secure material goods to maintain their status" (150). This is akin to Kynard's (2023) observation that much of rhetoric and composition relies on white nostalgia of "the good ole days," based in racial terror and recurrent disciplinary anxieties of shifting demographics of students, language, and knowledge. In other words, response literature can be read as an extension of composition's white nationalist imagination, wherein response practices are "organizing structure[s] that [are] twinned to the settler state" (319). It is not hyperbolic to draw connections to legacies of white nationalism embedded into response practice since we read the historical treatment of response as a calculated obsession with students as error makers, where many faculty, according to Chris Anson (1989, drawing on Mina Shaughnessy), see their roles as "guardians of the tower,' protecting the academy from the intrusion of students who don't seem to belong to the community of learners" (Anson 1989, 345). It's not a leap to suggest that this kind of authoritarian disposition enacts the same kind of white nationalist imagination, where the goal is to either push out or fully assimilate difference.

Ultimately, we offer a historical reading of response literature to show-case that it is not only the field's reproduction of deficit frames as canonical response practice (and obsession with "correction" and "character") that has become a disciplinary mandate toward the integrationist narrative Kynard reconstructs, but instead that much of the field's practices with response are arhetorical and acontextual. As we maintain, response practice reflects a race-evasive "revision for revision sake" exigence to writing classrooms that

engage response practice as politically innocent and innocuous. This cosmology for response reflects the white-centered disciplinary history that focuses on reifying the “good writing as good character” axiom from Harvard onward. For example, Nancy Sommers (1982) argues that feedback should “sabotage our students’ conviction that the drafts they have written are complete and coherent” (154) and “show our students how to seek, in the possibility of revision, the dissonances of discovery—to show them through our comments why new choices would positively change their texts, and thus to show them the potential for development implicit in their own writing” (155). We argue that positioning feedback as an impetus for creating “more effective writers” (155) without explicitly naming what makes a more effective writer is an apolitical approach that reinforces the white bourgeois consciousness that first-year writing was created to reproduce. The underlying goal of feedback of this nature is not of uplifting students and their literacies but rather reproducing the center or casting out those in the margins. In other words, we read “revision for revision sake” as an integrationist narrative where the function of response is to curate the white platonic ideal; the case we’ve made through this chapter is that it is insufficient for the field, particularly when taking its white nationalist imagination to task.

The functions and practices of feedback and response illustrate the predominant view that feedback’s function is to create better writers—a construction we contend is an output of white supremacist epistemologies. Of course, the well-worn critique of Stephen M. North’s (1984) “better writers” in writing center studies is worth mentioning here: The “better” construct is always about proximity to or performance of white discursive traits akin to Asao Inoue’s (2015) explication of white racial habitus. Sommers’s (1982) analysis of thirty-five teacher comments at New York University and the University of Oklahoma demonstrates that teachers’ feedback practices tend to be apedagogical and arhetorical performances that focus primarily on identifying errors in student writing. She calls for writing teachers to distinguish between the phases of feedback and to challenge feedback practice that is oriented to identify and eradicate errors: “We find what we look for; instead of reading and responding to the meaning of a text, we correct students’ writing” (154). Three decades later, Dylan Dryer’s (2012) study of the imagined undergraduate writers of novice graduate teaching assistants points to how novice teachers perpetuate deficit lenses when approaching the writing of undergraduates. As this research showcases, teachers’ “competing models of subjectivities” (Dryer 2012, 441) shape their “preconceptions and preoccupations” (Sommers 1982,

154), often through error-centered and deficit-framed orientations toward students and student writing.

Such a focus on teachers' varying subjectivities reflects how response practice enacts the individual worldviews of teachers, which are inseparable from their response practice. Chris Anson (1989) highlights the relationship between response and worldviews. As he demonstrates, novice teachers often focus on cosmetic rhetorical and linguistic forms over the development of complexity in mature composing. He showcases that theories of knowledge shift the goals of the teaching of writing away from static writing knowledge (e.g., right/wrong) and toward more complex writing knowledge. By studying responses to students enrolled in a summer bridge program, Anson (1989) develops three categories of raters: first, dualistic raters, who respond to an imagined ideal based on corrective feedback; second, relativistic raters, who respond with questions about experiences and ideas; and third, reflective readers, who offer different pathways for revision. For Anson (1989), the ultimate goal of feedback is not to create "better writers" but instead to act as a coach toward complexity and nuance. We read Anson as an important, and early, challenger of taken-for-granted and inherited deficit stories about students and writers and instead challenge the ideologies that produce deficit in classroom contexts. Ultimately, response practices that challenge teachers to move away from "the center" invest in stronger developmental student approaches.

Implied in Anson's (1989) study, deficit-framing in early response literature positions response less as a pedagogical practice of thoughtful support and more toward a mandate of improvement. Joseph Williams (1981) critiques the field's obsession with "correctness" through his argument that error is socially constructed and phenomenologically maintained. As Williams concludes, "If we read any text the way we read freshman essays, we will find many of the same kind of errors we routinely expect to find and therefore do find" (159). Similarly, in examining the genre and rhetoric of end comments (Smith 1997), Thomas Batt (2005) demonstrates the use of epideictic rhetoric, in particular through praise, to "persuade students to revise" (Batt 2005, 221). Thus, we notice that revision often serves to reassert white commonplaces of correctness instead of a focus on rhetorical development. Even post-*Students' Right*, the revision-for-revision sake mandate framed feedback and response as error identification and analysis. By deficit framing, we are not only referring to the errors students were asked to fix in their writing; rather, the very identities and the knowledges students brought to the classroom were also perceived as lacking. The goal of writing instruction for students, then, was not only to

fix their writing but also to fix themselves. Further, the students that needed to fix themselves were Black and Brown writers asked to assimilate to white nationalist imaginations. As such, much of the published work in this period, and even today, fits under what Baker-Bell (2020) describes as an eradicationist framework, where “Black Language is not acknowledged as a language and gets treated as linguistically, morally, and intellectually inferior” (162). We focus here on the broader legacies of deficit framing that characterize our disciplinary practice. In particular, we argue that feedback practice, as a rhetorical tradition, engages race-invasive practice to perpetuate deficit ideologies of students, particularly students of color.

Much of the white nationalist imagination develops from Mina Shaughnessy’s (1977) *Errors and Expectations*. We find it important to return to this origin point to examine how racialized logics around students, writing, and errors serve as a “white, integrationist discourse [that] simultaneously birthed and legitimized the field’s canons” (Kynard 2013, 154) which extend to response practice. While much of this response literature does not explicitly name Black Language or even identify the students they label as “inferior,” contextually, the “foreign” (39) identity of these students is implied. Shaughnessy (1977) divides students into three categories: (1) those who thrive under the constrictions of academic writing; (2) those who get by but don’t necessarily enjoy academic writing; and (3) those who are “left so far behind” that teaching them feels essentially hopeless. This third category is especially telling in that she discusses the language proficiency of these students as if it were a plague, claiming that their “difficulty with the written language seemed of a different order” (388). Shaughnessy goes so far as to vaguely mention the ethnicity of these students, claiming that their lack of proficiency made it seem as though they may have come from “a different country”—or even just an underfunded school. With no direct identification of the students that she’s referring to, the reader is left to infer where the students come from. However, given that Shaughnessy was based in New York and labels group 3 writing as “foreign,” readers can infer that she’s talking about ethnic and racial minorities, specifically those who are multilingual and those who speak Black English. As a contrast, take, for example, Nancy Sommer’s (1992) treatment of students’ perceptions of feedback in her collaborative longitudinal study at Harvard. Sommers links feedback as a critical component of students’ undergraduate experience. Importantly, Sommers’s participants at Harvard are starkly different than the students Shaughnessy takes issue with: We believe this counterexample illuminates how race-evasion reframes students of color through deficit.

Shaughnessy's decision not to name race points to a tacit tradition in writing response wherein compositionists discuss the need to address deficit in student writing but without ever describing the racial, class, and socioeconomic conditions that lead students to produce writing. The language also points to an eradicationist framework (Baker-Bell 2020); at no point does Shaughnessy acknowledge the literacies, knowledge, or strengths of students she deems inferior, but instead she chooses to discuss feedback conventions that can help these students assimilate to college writing. Particularly telling is the use of "the" when Shaughnessy writes of "the written language," implying that there is only one written language: standard academic writing. Min-zhan Lu (1991) argues that "such a view of the relationship between words and meaning overlooks the possibility that different ways of using words—different discourses—might exercise different constraints on how one 'crafts' the meaning 'one has in mind'" (29). The prescriptive approach that Shaughnessy takes ignores and devalues other discourses and knowledges.

While we recognize that Shaughnessy is not a feedback scholar, we do believe her bedrock book, *Errors and Expectations*, set a disciplinary commonplace framing students of color as lacking—and we believe this convention has been carried into contemporary response practice. In other words, this race-neutral, deficit focused disposition that Shaughnessy puts forward is one that one that compels literacy crisis narratives, thereby inventing the very deficit that the field searches for in feedback practice. More recent scholars, like John Bean (2014), may acknowledge the humanity of students but still subscribe to race-neutral feedback practices that prioritize prescriptivist ideals of what student writing should look like. Bean advocates for "establish[ing] a hierarchy of concerns, descending from higher-order issues (ideas, organization, development, and overall clarity) to lower-order issues (sentence correctness, style, mechanics, spelling, and so forth)" (322). In theory, framing feedback in terms of higher order and lower order concerns should encourage instructors to move away from the confusing and contradictory feedback that Sommers critiques, but in reality, this framing still orients writing feedback as a means to address "concerns" and prioritize an ideal paper rather than caring about student ideas. Bean suggests asking questions about thesis/main points—like, "Can you tell where the draft is headed?" (323)—and questions about an organization—like, "Could the reader easily outline the draft or write a summary of the argument?" (324). These questions still standardize an idea about what student writing should look like—that is, a good paper will have a thesis statement that's formatted in a particular way and an organization that follows

a standard structure. These “concerns” come from a white supremacist epistemology that prioritizes white-centered ways of knowing and doing as correct and are supported through a race-neutral framing.

As we’ve pointed out, much of our field’s understanding of “effective” writing feedback insists upon deficit and race-evasive ideologies that propel harmful ideas about students of color. The problems that scholars point to in the response literature are entirely manufactured by pedagogies that insist that nonhegemonic ideas about languages are substandard. By insisting on deficit narratives, we invent deficit, and as a result, feedback practice is linked to a narrative of revision and better writing/writers. Indeed, these practices are not situated in liberatory or critical pedagogical frameworks and therefore neglect what we suggest is foundational for linguistic justice-centered feedback response practices.

Toward a Critical Feedback Orientation

Given the ways the field has been constructed on metanarratives of revision through response practice, we contend that feedback must engage the three central tenets of Black radical thought: imagination, criticality, and pro-Black ethics of care. We honor the labor of Black Language scholars calling for the field to unsettle grand narratives that conflate good writing with white epistemological and discursive features. Instead, as we note here, we offer the following tenets that radically honor the Black Radical Tradition in how we conceive and conceptualize feedback practice. Below, we offer a set of questions to invite readers to reflect on translating these tenets in feedback and instructional practices, which we align to specific examples and premises for antiracist feedback practice (see table 4.1).

A critical feedback practice is not a ready-made antiracist pedagogy and must be situated within a larger ecology of curriculum, texts, assessments, and so on.

Antiracist pedagogy is, in Kynard’s (2013) words, a “political disposition that shapes what and why you do what you do in a classroom. You got to go there to teach there” (248). Because teaching writing always contains a set of political commitments, we resist the idea that our feedback practice alone can engage the commitments set forth by Black language scholars. Thoughtful, antiracist pedagogy does not exist in checklists, comment banks, or assignments. Indeed, all of these elements must be in a dynamic ecology (Inoue 2015). For

TABLE 4.1. Critical feedback orientation tenets and questions

<i>Tenet</i>	<i>Questions to consider</i>
IMAGINATION: enabling students to create and enact a future where oppressions no longer exists	- How does our feedback avoid centering an imagined norm? - How do our feedback practices move beyond traditional and historical forms of feedback? - In what ways do students write beyond systems of oppression? How do we guide them to see beyond the present?
CRITICALITY: making meaning of power and ideology that inhibit freedom	- In what ways does feedback encourage students to reorient or shift their own worldviews and consider worldviews other than our/their own? - How do we ask students to think more deeply about systems of power and how they impact their knowledge, identities, and values? - In what ways does our feedback practice identify the way that systems of power are upheld in students' writing?
PRO-BLACK ETHIC OF CARE: centering those most impacted by systems of power through joy, care, and love	- How does our feedback celebrate the cultural knowledges students bring to their writing? - How does our feedback center those most impacted by systems of power? - In what ways does our feedback challenge racist/white supremacist ideologies that students bring to writing?

example, critical feedback might be used in combination with Black feminist texts, critically interrogative assignments, and a classroom culture that instills these values.

A critical feedback practice must disrupt the false syllogism that “good writing” is consistent with white discursive practices.

Feedback practice should challenge students to name and critically interrogate how good writing has become narrativized in and beyond higher education. Feedback in a reflective response, might push on stable and inherited meanings of good writing and ask disruptive questions to practice criticality around writing. Table 4.2 provides an example of disrupting feedback on a reflective essay. This example showcases how bringing criticality and imagination to feedback can guide our feedback practice. Instead of just letting this student's reflection on baked-in language ideologies of what makes writing good stand, this comment—and others like it—invites students to challenge those prescriptive

TABLE 4.2. Disrupting feedback

<i>Student comment</i>	<i>Instructor feedback</i>
I have found that my writing is not grammatically correct or flow. I have lots of run ons and I struggle with my commas. I will work on making my writing better in the future.	What do you think about your writing having to be grammatically correct? In class, we learned about how these ideas are part of racist systems of power. How would you complicate your goals, knowing what we've learned about?

ideas, think deeper about language and identity, and imagine beyond what they have inherited as good writing.

A critical feedback practice must engage students in naming and analyzing the material, historical, and ideological conditions of language politics.

In other words, feedback can be framed as a practice of inquiry and dialogue, where students are challenged to unpack the intersections among language, power, identity, and social systems. This might involve asking challenging questions, inviting students to complicate their understandings, and shifting perspectives. For example, this end comment might be used to invite students to think about the premises they develop and where those premises come from: “I read your analysis here moving from the premise that inequity happens because of individual choice. What happens when we reframe the point of departure as a product of history and systems of power? How does that change how we think about this topic?”

A critical feedback practice must seek to develop a pro-Black ethic of care by centering those most impacted by interlocking systems of power.

We suggest that feedback must invite students to shift perspectives to consider how different identities and experiences are impacted by systems of power. We believe centering texts by Black authors and returning to their key contributions in feedback practice can help develop these orientations to justice.

Here’s an example of an end-comment on a paper that subscribed to a white-savior mentality, that positioned marginalization and race as something she was responsible for saving others from:

Let’s think about how you’re framing this story. As a Black person, I would be hurt if someone told a story about me in this way, even if you had the

best of intentions. It feels a little bit infantilizing, like you view Nancy as someone who can't stand up for themselves. For me, reading this, it feels like you may have acted on Nancy's behalf without listening to her needs first.

Did you have any reflective moments with Nancy or become her friend after this experience? To reframe, it might be good to think about what **you** learned from listening to Nancy, rather than by listing the deficits of others or by making yourself the hero in Nancy's story.

I (Amanda) was intentionally direct in this comment because it was important not to prioritize the comfort of this student while they were writing something that was directly harmful to marginalized communities. Instead, I wanted to frame this comment in a way that very directly asked this student to reconsider the impact that her writing had on people of color.

I also followed up this comment with an article about white saviorism that reflected on the impact of white savior narratives on Black and Brown bodies. The purpose of this article was to ask the student to critically reimagine her perspective and framing of race and also center the narratives and perspectives of people of color.

A critical feedback practice must offer opportunities for students to practice imagining a world beyond the status quo.

We believe that students ought to take time to imagine a world beyond the constraints of the present moment. Feedback can invite this kind of critical imagination (Kelley 2003; Johnson 2022). For example, during a second-semester composition course, students are invited to write a letter from the future about how the world has changed. This unit is framed through Black feminist Afrofuturist texts. In the end comments, I (Nick) might write, "I so appreciate you practicing imagination to think about how the world could transform toward justice. My question to you is how do we go there? How can we live our lives in ways to move toward this otherworld? I know this is a big question, but an important one to consider!"

These examples showcase a commitment to the Black Radical Tradition in our feedback practice. In particular, by focusing on *imagination*, *criticality*, and a *pro-Black ethic of care*, we demonstrate how feedback practice can encourage a deeper consideration of the material, historical, and ideological conditions that shape language politics while disrupting an inherited, imaginary standard of student writing—a standard coded in proximity to whiteness.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we've argued that contemporary feedback practices often reproduce white supremacist values embedded in language ideologies and the teaching of writing. Read within a tradition of linguistic justice, these practices reproduce what *Students' Right* sought to disrupt. We offer our response framework to disrupt commonplace feedback practices and to promote linguistic consciousness within our pedagogical toolkits. In particular, by honoring the Black Radical Tradition's emphasis on *imagination*, *criticality*, and a *pro-Black ethic of care*, we show that our response practices can transform inherited narratives of deficit and error in the writing classroom.

Ultimately, we contend that the Black Radical Tradition must guide our orientation to feedback practice that honors the legacies of classroom activism and protest over the last half-century. As we've articulated in this chapter, key tenets can lead us to reimagine the work of writing feedback in our classrooms, and in particular, challenge the inherited narratives of deficiency that have historically and contemporarily shaped our practice. Likewise, we invite teachers of writing to rethink their orientations to feedback practice to disrupt inequity and foster linguistic consciousness to build a better world.

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SECTION TWO

Looking Within

What Do Instructors Bring to Feedback?

5

An Argument for Antiracist Feedback

What Does It All M.E.M.E.?

MELVIN E. BEAVERS

What does it mean to become? As children, most of us likely experienced a parent, teacher, or relative asking us, “What do you want to be when you grow up”? Embedded in this question is the notion that in order to become something—in this case, an adult—one has to learn, mature, and grow into that thing. I have been a writing teacher for almost twenty years. I can remember the adrenaline that permeated my veins when I walked into my first freshman composition class. I still feel the rush, though it has tempered some, as experience has a way of making us feel a little more confident in our competencies and skills. Still, all these years later, I wonder if I have become a writing teacher who inspires, encourages, and ignites curiosity about what writing does, creates, and shapes, on the page and in our lives.

In my teaching philosophy, I claim to “to foster a sense of community, belonging, and ultimately trust within my classroom.” Community, belonging, and trust are worthy goals, and I would encourage writing teachers to focus on them. Ultimately, they are about becoming antiracist, which I would argue is a disposition toward equity that seeks to disrupt, confront, and unlearn our own racism and racialized ways of thinking. This means examining the role race has played in our lives and how whiteness functions as the default way of being. Thus, to grow and become requires some critical self-reflection about our own

assumptions, knowledge, and preconceptions about what students can and cannot do. Growth begins with critical reflection. Consider the often-cited phrase, “We meet students where they are.” I suspect this rings true for most educators. It is likely true in the sense that most folks have thought it, heard it, and attempted to enact it in the classroom on some level. Yet, before we can “meet students where they are,” we must know who we are, first and foremost. So, to be antiracist means we must practice critical self-reflection. Reflection as a concept in most educational settings (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 2015, 71–86) is a metacognitive practice; it’s thinking about thinking. As teachers, we should think about our thinking when it comes to giving students feedback and assessing their writing habits. We should do so through a critical lens and interrogate our thoughts about the ways we show up in our classrooms.

In *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* bell hooks asserts, “Teachers are often among the group most reluctant to acknowledge the extent to which white-supremacist thinking informs every aspect of our culture including the way we learn, the content of what we learn, and the manner in which we are taught” (hooks 2003, 25). We should practice critical self-reflection regarding our own identities and narratives, particularly when providing feedback on students’ writing. We bring bags full of crap into the classroom, and we must examine the crap. To practice critical self-reflection as an approach to antiracist pedagogy, particularly in providing antiracist feedback, I argue that my M.E.M.E. framework can help instructors become more reflective about how race, or racialized ways of thinking about language, influences the ways we assess or evaluate our students’ writing. The M.E.M.E. framework serves as a bridge to cultivating an orientation toward antiracist feedback, offering instructors a strategy to use before giving feedback to their students. Critical self-reflection is essential to the work we must do to truly “be” anti-racist educators.

As Stephen Brookfield notes,

Pedagogically, I now think of anti-racist education as being as much about teaching our own racism as it is about scrutinizing curricula, institutional policies, and organizational practices for evidence of structural disenfranchisement. If racism is understood as a learned ideology, something that pervades everyday speech, media images, peer group learning, and family dynamics, then it is surely reasonable to expect even adult educators committed to dismantling racism have internalized aspects of this ideology. (Brookfield 2018, 90)

Critical self-reflection begins with exploring questions: How have you learned how to be? How have you learned who you are based on what you were told you could or couldn't be? It takes some significant mental shifts to answer the above, and that's the point. Writing is hard; reflecting on writing is hard; and responding to the writing others compose is hard. As the countless works of great fiction and nonfiction reveal, it's possible. It's possible to say something meaningful that finds its audience and resonates. This is the work of the writing classroom and why we must attend to it.

The goal of this chapter is to describe how the M.E.M.E. framework can help instructors foster community, belonging, and trust within their classrooms. It is an antiracist framework because it requires critical self-reflection about the racialized identities we bring into the classroom. What does this actually mean in practice? For white instructors, it involves examining the implications of having a white racial identity. For BIPOC instructors, it means reflecting on the experience of living in a world that often perpetuates misconceptions and negative stereotypes about Black and Brown bodies. When do you truly "become" antiracist? To be frank, there is no finish line. Critical self-reflection is an ongoing, lifelong process of striving to become better versions of ourselves. Being antiracist means consistently building "creative alternatives" (Kynard 2021) and examining how we show up, in both physical and virtual classrooms. As we unpack our knapsacks of privilege, we must also critically interrogate and disavow curricular tools steeped in whiteness. This framework offers instructors a pathway to understanding how their perceptions of language are shaped by the normalization of what April Baker-Bell identifies as patterns of antiblack linguistic racism that continue to reverberate within writing classrooms (Baker-Bell 2020). By engaging in this work, educators can move closer to creating truly inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Linguistic racism is a system that takes purposeful acts to undo. As such, I define linguistic justice as a call to action for writing pedagogy educators to affirm the multiple and varied ways students embody their languaging habits, which are often tied to students' racialized identities. A lack of racial literacy around our own identities does have the potential to negatively impact our written responses to student writing. In this chapter, I offer the M.E.M.E. framework as a conduit for feedback that's purpose-driven, open, and informed and that pushes beyond our white supremacist conditioning. The M.E.M.E. framework is defined as the following:

MAP: Return to the course goals and objectives and map them alongside the outcomes for the “Toward Antiracist First-Year Composition Goals” (Inoue et al. 2021). To start, identify one course objective and one dimension within the “Antiracist FYW Goals.” State your purpose for giving feedback. Write it down. Attempt to do this with each course learning objective.

- Is there similarity or congruence in your intent, course objectives, and antiracist outcomes?

EXPLORE: Explore your identity and where it is rooted. Remember that the multiple intersections of your identity give you a unique perspective.

- How do you show up for your students; think about class discussions and the dialogue you have engaged in on various topics with students;
- What was the outcome? Did you leverage any parts of your identity to foster a deeper sense of understanding around your racial identity and/or literacy to build a deeper sense of community within the classroom?

MANAGE: Build awareness around the biases that show up in your feedback habits. Take inventory of comments you have made on your students’ writing and think about the kind of writing a student is doing, both the process and product. Determine if you are leaning into any unconscious biases about each individual student in your comments. Consider the racial and ethnic identities of those students that have given you warm and positive feelings as a result of reading their writing.

- How do you manage your cognitive biases?
- Ask yourself: Are those feelings creating biases that you are linking to certain student demographics (if this is something you know)?

EMBRACE: Embrace rhetorical mindfulness through a practice of critical self-reflection on your experiences with race and ethnicity in particular, but also include gender identity, socioeconomic status, and political and religious affiliations. To embrace a self-reflective mindset, document your mental state by naming what you are feeling. Your goal is to embrace a critical and self-reflective mindset about your racial identity while also leaning into feelings of discomfort you might experience as you try to anticipate where biases might originate and show up. Then reflect on the many ways you anticipate you will provide feedback to your students, given the feelings you have identified.

- Are you feeling happy, sad, angry, scared, or confused?
- How do you ensure your emotional intent matches your feedback?
- What are the emotions you want to convey as you give your students feedback?

Note the length of each section. As you progress through the framework, each step demands increasingly deeper critical self-reflection. Imagine a triangle: at the top, things are narrow, focused, and less flexible. As you move downward, the triangle broadens. This represents the growth that occurs as you gain a deeper understanding of yourself and how your experiences influence every aspect of your teaching, especially the feedback you provide to students. Your awareness of the assumptions you hold is, in part, a product of the cultural conditions in which you live and operate.

What this chapter represents is a move toward antiracism, as each point in the framework requires individuals to think and reflect on their experiences as writing teachers and the ways race and racist systems specifically have shaped those experiences; in essence, it's a theory of how instructors can push themselves to map, explore, manage, and embrace their mental frames before they offer feedback on student writing.

Consider my attempt to use the proposed framework before I offer feedback on a student's work in a persuasive writing class:

MAP: One of the course learning objectives states, "Analyze persuasive messages for effectiveness and language strategies." I can map this objective to Rhetorical Knowledges, particularly by reflecting on how "key rhetorical concepts and their racialized politics and histories" (Inoue et al. 2021) might influence my responses to students. For instance, if a student argues that repetition is a cornerstone of making a strong argument, identifying and amplifying this technique in an author's text, I need to consider the broader implications in my feedback. Why do we tend to value repetition as a rhetorical strategy, and how might this emphasis center Western traditions? By critically examining these tendencies, I can provide more thoughtful and inclusive responses.

EXPLORE: As a Black, queer, forty-something, progressive, able-bodied individual, the weight of simply existing in today's highly partisan and politicized climate often feels overwhelming. This moment is heavy, shaped by the collective trauma of a global pandemic and the persistent silencing of historically marginalized voices. Yet, even amid this heaviness, I find myself wondering: what parts of my story can I share to help my students see their work in new ways? Perhaps I'll share this very reflection. It's raw, honest, and authentic, a statement that might inspire my students to approach their own stories with the same openness and courage.

MANAGE: My students typically write about current or enduring issues, and they say thoughtful things, but lots of times they don't. I love it even more

when I agree with the arguments they make; I am human, and we tend to gravitate toward our tribes. This is what I have to manage and check. I am going to do my best to keep my mind open to the various perspectives that students bring to the table. Part of what I hope to do is think like a researcher and consider the questions I have about what they are attempting to say in writing as opportunities to bring a sense of curiosity, cohesion, and clarity to their work.

EMBRACE: I am going to think more critically about the whole person that each student is attempting to reveal. Their words, their work, and their ideas reflect them. Even if they say things that are wonky, illogical, or just plain irrelevant, I need to take a moment, pause, and ask myself, “Why am I choosing to give this feedback? What am I assuming about this student’s writing, and is that assumption tied to some aspect that has nothing to do with the work in front of me?” As I continue to think about my feelings, I am feeling overwhelmed given my responsibilities as a faculty member and administrator. Still, I am eager to read what my students have to say in their persuasive arguments; I like questioning and even challenging their thinking. For me, that means conveying a sense of wonder and hope because ultimately that is what it will take for me to see and hold onto hope in my student’s abilities and the general state of academia.

This is a practice that requires getting comfortable with being uncomfortable. Reviewing my own attempt, I can see where I can go deeper and really think about whether my feedback will affirm or stifle a student’s voice. Additionally, I’ll need to think critically and ensure that sharing my own experiences is really about encouraging reflection. Furthermore, the question I’ll need to remember as I begin to offer feedback is, “What am I valuing in my students’ writing and why?” For me, this question will help me maintain focus and an orientation toward antiracism in my responses.

Moreover, one of the strategies for understanding or taking account of our own identities is to spend time reflecting on past experiences that have shaped them. Ming Fang, Xuan Jiang, and Lan Wang-Hiles reinforce my claims when they reference feedback studies in their chapter in this collection (chapter 7), noting that “teachers’ lived experiences and cultural perceptions shape their approaches to feedback.” Thus, my framework is an attempt to help build awareness around the cultivation of an antiracist mindset about feedback. It asks writing instructors to aggressively examine how a stronger sense of cultural awareness can play a part in the feedback they offer students. What does an antiracist mindset look like in action? It requires deconstructing our

racialized ways of thinking and knowing that have shaped our feedback and response habits. It requires being more present and listening rhetorically to diverse student populations who are trying to craft, create, and develop their writerly voices.

In many ways, exploring my identity and taking that moment to think about how to use it as a means to connect with my students more deeply through feedback is about finding ways to share stories of love, community, and acceptance. For example, when I was in the fifth grade, I remember reading about historical figures like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and Rosa Parks, two civil rights activists. Perhaps my teacher asked us to write a report about one of them, and I remember thinking, “Is this it; we only have two?” That assignment sparked my desire to learn more about Black History. Later that evening, I remember talking to my grandmother about feeling dissatisfied with my choices, and she told me to grab a book from the bookshelf in her living room. It was an encyclopedia she’d purchased, likely something she saw on a late-night infomercial. Well, lucky for me, it was full of the names and biographies of fifty-plus famous Black Americans, which included educators, inventors, scientists, and activists. I couldn’t wait to go home and read about them. Reading and ultimately writing about those “hidden figures” helped to form my identity. It gave me a better sense of self and, more important, pride in what people who looked like me had accomplished. It served as a counternarrative to the often-stereotypical ones about Black Americans.

Still, for writing teachers immersed in white supremacy in primary, secondary, and higher educational institutional systems (hooks 2003, 25; Yacovone 2022, 23) there is an accounting that needs to happen. To undergird this notion, Joe Feagin explains “that for a system of oppression to persist for long periods it is necessary not only to develop a strong rationalizing frame but also to build that frame’s biases, images, narratives, and emotions into the everyday operation of the important organizational structures” (Feagin 2020, 168). When the systems of oppression become so thoroughly institutionalized, it’s incumbent upon us, as folxs dedicated to the growth and development of student writers, to examine how our structures impact our attitudes, beliefs, and actions. Thus, we perhaps come to teaching with a dominant or dominator culture thoroughly ingrained in how we think about and approach our work. Yet, we seek to empower our student writers. We know the landscape; we understand the terrain; but do we often lack the racial literacy to steer the teaching ship? My Black History month example is my attempt to revisit the roots of my racial history.

In much of her scholarship, hooks examined how racial illiteracy, which is the refusal to acknowledge how racism infects, grows, and manifests itself, plays a crucial role in how we interact with others and in the work we do. In fact, in *Feminism Is for Everybody*, bell hooks (2000) offers a cogent definition of the term, which states, “Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression” (viii). Likewise, antiracism is a movement that seeks to end racism and racist systems and to dismantle white supremacy. Antiracism is for everybody. Thus, I pose the following: *What does it mean to offer feedback with an antiracist orientation?* Perhaps it is what Carmen Kynard describes as “a stance and praxis that deliberately and actively rejects a white supremacist status quo—in all its iterations—for teaching and being in schools and institutions [and] uses this rejection as energy to reach and move toward insurgent and creative alternatives” (Kynard 2021, slide 3). Being antiracist means being deliberate and acting with intention, listening with intention, or rhetorically, as Krista Ratcliffe (2005, 17) asserts. It’s being mindful of how systems work and understanding how structures and systems impact our work, our lives, and ultimately the decisions we make about feedback. More important, it’s examining how writing teachers show up in their classroom spaces. To be an antiracist means leaning into critical self-reflection and moving from a state of not knowing or being unaware to awareness and, ultimately, to action. This chapter posits that we should commit to an antiracist orientation in the feedback we offer our students.

The M.E.M.E. structure is designed to identify blind spots and assumptions instructors may carry before they respond to their students’ writing. Thus, this is a framework for engaging in antiracist feedback. When I am writing about what I should “embrace,” I am attempting to account for my assumptions before I offer my students feedback. It’s a way to call myself out before I respond to my students’ work. The goal of the framework is to foster deeper engagement with student texts by first engaging more deeply with our own racialized ways of thinking about student writing.

Therefore, I ask: What do instructors carry with them as they respond to student writing? Put another way, how can instructors account for what they carry? We should come to better understand the ways race and racism have informed the work we do inside the classroom. Perhaps this framework can reinforce a “heightening awareness of the quotidian and mundane nature of everyday racism and making it the object of analysis . . . thus it requires a number of different approaches” (Brookfield and Hess 2021, 47). This framework is one approach. Though none of us think of ourselves as being racists, we know

we move through racist systems and those systems have impacted our thinking and ways of knowing and being.

This critical self-reflection framework mitigates biases. As Pamela Fuller, Mark Murphy, and Anne Chow note, “The first step in identifying bias is to know ourselves and examine how personal identity influences and is influenced by bias” (Fuller et al. 2020, 20). Culture, education, experience, and social connections all inform the way we see the world, but more important, they inform how we treat and/or interact with others. Our experiences are rooted in a white supremacist culture, and that means we have all been conditioned to think and view the world in particular ways. In *Teaching White Supremacy*, the historian Donald Yacovone argues that “the origins and development of the idea of white supremacy have shaped our understanding of democratic society. Generation after generation of Americans have learned to incorporate that vision into their very identity” (Yacovone 2022, xiv). As instructors attempting to cultivate and foster growth and learning mindsets through writing, we must thoroughly interrogate ourselves before we attempt to offer instruction in the form of feedback to our students. Self-reflection and interrogation are tied to the *exploring* and *embracing* parts of the M.E.M.E. structure because both practices are part of what an instructor is attempting to account for or identify in their own experiences. Likewise, Kelly Bradbury and Genesee M. Carter, in chapter 6 of this collection, ask instructors to interrogate their past by “reflecting on what experiences, values, and positionalities shaped our language ideologies and approaches to teaching feedback in GTA training.” Seemingly, when we explore our identities, we are attempting to analyze that experience through a particular lens. If you want to offer antiracist feedback, then you have to understand where you’ve been rooted. As instructors, this is the preliminary/invention work we do with ourselves and with students. Part of what critical self-reflection asks us to do is to consider how we reveal or show ourselves to the world. It ultimately prompts us to question how our identities impact the writing choices we make, and thus it sits at the heart of antiracist writing pedagogy.

Furthermore, Edward Hahn notes that “antiracist teachers need to understand white habitus not as an embodied fact inherent in white individuals, but as a series of learned practices and values in ‘fields’ of situated ‘social-historical activity’ like school or home” (Hahn 2014, 22). This is important to emphasize because most, if not all, have been conditioned to think, perform, and center white language habits both inside and outside the classroom. Often the performance of white language habits shows up within the racial ideologies that

inform our thinking about race and racialized bodies within our classrooms. Thus, before we respond, we must learn to set our intentions; just as in a yoga class or practice, we might begin with an intention to move with grace, writing teachers can set an intention and attempt to offer feedback on student writing that is antiracist in its orientation.

Early in my career, I thought and performed in ways that aligned with what Asao Inoue (2021) calls Habits of White Language (HOWL) (26). Engaging in or using these habits to evaluate my students' writing performance is what I thought it was to be or become a writing instructor. Thus I did not engage my own positionality because it did not seem like the correct way to perform. Inoue reminds us that "when a teacher, writer, or authority embodies this habit, they often do not realize it, assuming that everyone has access to the same languages, concepts, practices, capacities, histories, and logics they do" (2021, 26). Inoue's ideas connect to what I thought of as my teacherly ethos.

When I first entered the writing classroom, I was not sure how to present or show up in the classroom for my students. This is nothing new. Faculty from a wide range of disciplines encounter this feeling of uncertainty. I defaulted to what Inoue describes as a "stance of neutrality, objectivity, and a politicality" (Inoue 2021, 26). I thought my teacherly ethos was best performed through commonplace ideas or notions of professionalism, taking on the objective and neutral persona that seemed like the best way to engage with my students. In retrospect, I understand that it was not. It was fake. It was a dress I donned because I thought my students needed to see me playing the part.

Understanding who we are when we enter the classroom and what ideas have formed the basis of our thinking is an antiracist act. When we offer students feedback or respond to their writing, we are asking them to listen rhetorically, and doing so requires trust between both student and instructor. The M.E.M.E. framework attempts to encourage instructors to bring their whole selves when responding to student writing. Here is a prime example. In 2014, I cotaught a Summer Bridge course. Teaching this course fostered one of the first moments in which I leaned into my identity as a means to connect with my students. The two-week summer course was designed to help students obtain higher scores on placement tests. We were encouraged to introduce students to writing instruction grounded in rhetorical theory while creating space to talk about prescriptive grammar and mechanics. The goal was to help students avoid remedial writing courses.

During class one day, we asked the students to do some free writing about various social and political topics as a way to spark class discussion. The

Supreme Court had recently ruled that bans against gay marriage were unconstitutional, and a student wrote about this topic in her free writing exercise. I am not certain how well all the students knew one another, but this student took the opportunity to “come out.” She wrote about being attracted to women and having a girlfriend. She described how the court ruling made her feel and expressed her joy about it. Once she finished reading, I immediately started clapping; I knew it took courage for her to write those words. The class followed suit and her words sparked some heated discussions. Another student proclaimed that while he did not have any problems with gay people, he just didn’t want to talk to or interact with them. I pressed him on his view. I asked why he felt so strongly about interacting with gay men specifically. He could not identify anything other than shrugging his shoulders and repeatedly stating, “I don’t know and I just don’t want to.” At that moment, I said, “We’ll you’re interacting with one now.” His reaction was quick and evident, jaw dropping in surprise. Simultaneously, other students in the room whispered and murmured about my statement as well. I smiled and said, “Yeah, I am gay and you have interacted with me for over a week now.” He nodded his head and said, “Okay, that’s cool,” or some variation. Immediately afterward, my coinstructor and I decided to dismiss the class for a short break. Several students approached me after class to offer their support. One Black female student approached me and said, “I thought so, I kinda of could tell.” She smiled and walked out of class. I was not exactly sure why she felt the need to say that; however, I think it was her way of saying “we cool.”

After teaching for many years, that was the first time I ever shared my sexual orientation with my students. Guess what? It felt great! It was one of the first moments that I felt I was showing up in the classroom space as my whole entire self. I was inspired by my student’s words and her bravery, and maybe I wanted to challenge the other student’s singular perception of gay men.

Once our students returned to class, we felt something had shifted. The students were listening to our instruction, or at least that’s what their body language suggested, as we were now surrounded by a sea of nodding heads, smiles, and attentive seated postures. That moment was an act of liberation. I yielded my identity to help a student change his perspective of a group of people. This was/is what engaged pedagogy looks like. Similarly, hooks offers:

When education is the practice of freedom, students are not the only ones who are asked to share, to confess. Engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow and are empowered by the

process. That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks (hooks 1994, 21).

Teachers have to be willing to occupy the many dimensions of their identity if we want our students to share in their languaging in what we hope are democratic classroom spaces for learning. Even though the M.E.M.E. framework is designed to help instructors give more intentional feedback, as a self-reflection tool it might also help some folks share aspects of their identity that could foster more curiosity, openness, and engagement.

Is it feasible for instructors to engage in M.E.M.E. practice every time they respond to student writing? No, it is not; however, make it part of a weekly or monthly practice. The M.E.M.E. framework is about understanding what instructors bring or carry with them in the act of giving feedback or responding. In order to find that space to respond in just and equitable ways, it is important to spend time interrogating the self.

As we inventory our own biases through the use of critical self-reflection, we should ask our students to do the same. When we ask students to reflect on their writing, we are asking them to further examine the “whys” and “hows” of those choices. This practice could represent an orientation toward anti-racist praxis. If we ask students to engage in critical self-reflection, then we can begin conversations around their racial identities, in particular asking students to probe deeper into some of the perspectives, attitudes, and values that helped to shape their understanding of how they show up in the world (Grayson 2021, 170). Why is it important for students to engage in critical self-reflection too? Understanding how their implicit and unconscious biases inform much of their thinking and actions can help them gain more insight into who and what they are. Likewise, Fuller, Murphy, and Chow state that “each of us is a whole person with complex identities, engaging with other similarly layered identities. The danger of a single story is not just the ways we limit our own possibilities, but also how we might apply that single lens to others” (Fuller et al. 2020, 25). Learning about and exploring the “whys” of how students came to be and how that influences how they react and respond to others is a fundamental part of their growth not only as writers but also, more important, as humans.

Finally, critical self-reflection involves pushing against mechanical or rote feedback to student writing. Those kneejerk responses allow instructors to easily slip into binary thinking about student writing. Binary thinking likely brings forth notions of what good writing is or what it should sound and feel

like to the reader. These ideas are dependent upon what we mean when we label writing as being “good” or “bad.” The binary does not compute. Equally, it suggests that writing, specifically what we ask first-year students to produce, is being judged and evaluated primarily against what Inoue refers to as “Habits of White Language.” Inoue writes, “Whether we are teachers of color or white teachers, white supremacy in our judgment practices of student writing influences all of us. White supremacy is structured into the ways everyone reads and judges writing. We are all implicated, no matter how we identify ourselves or our political beliefs” (Inoue 2019, 373). What does Inoue’s claim mean for the composing habits we teach our students to develop and bring into the classroom from all their past experiences? It means we talk to them openly and honestly about the racialized ways language has been used to demonize, oppress, and marginalize BIPOC individuals historically in the United States. We describe the intersections of our multiple and varied positionalities/identities to help the classroom take shape as a more welcoming environment. The M.E.M.E. framework is another way for instructors to become more aware of their biases, not only about their racialized identities but about the ways we use racialized language, too.

As I move closer to a truly realized teaching-to-transgress model, I am compelled to question how, or in what ways, it shapes the classroom. The answer to this question in turn brings me closer to what I value in teaching: love. hooks states,

To speak of love in relation to teaching is already to engage a dialogue that is taboo. When we speak of love and teaching, the connections that matter most are the relationships between teacher and subject taught, and the teacher-student relationship. When as professors we care deeply about our subject matter, when we profess to love what we teach and the process of teaching, the declaration of emotional connection tends to be viewed favorably by administrators and colleagues (hooks 2003, 127).

Equally, in the words of a famous drag queen, “If you can’t love yourself, how in the hell are you going to love somebody else?” While hooks is not referencing love of self, it undergirds her message. Love is essential; part of loving oneself means critiquing, examining, and discovering the subtle nuances of behavior and action. Still, there are no one-size-fits-all models for work that seeks to interrogate systems of power. We are all complicit in helping to maintain the status quo. Yet, as we learn and unlearn some things, as we educate ourselves, and as we evolve our ways of thinking about writing and written feedback, then

we move a little closer to making our students' classroom experiences a little more just, equitable, and transformative.

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6

Linguistic Justice and Graduate Teaching Assistant Training

Reflection, Revision, and Response

KELLY BRADBURY AND GENESEA M. CARTER

In many ways, Asao Inoue's (2015) *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future* became a watershed moment in which the field of rhetoric and composition faced head-on how to respond to calls for linguistic justice and equity in theory, in research, and in praxis. Inoue called out the myriad ways the field needed to update its approaches to writing assessment and, by extension, grading methods, curriculum design, and teacher training, among other aspects of rhetoric and composition work. The Conference on College Composition and Communication's (CCCC) position statements "This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!" (Baker-Bell et al. 2020) and "Statement on White Language Supremacy" (Richardson et al. 2021) have further propelled disciplinary conversations about the extent to which diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice (DEISJ) should shape the research, teaching, and administrative work we do. Melvin Beavers, one of the collection contributors, articulates the call to action this way: "When the systems of oppression become so thoroughly institutionalized, it's incumbent upon us, as folx dedicated to the growth and development of student writers, to examine how our structures impact our attitudes, beliefs, and behavior" (chapter 5).

As two white women in writing program administration roles (Genesea as the associate director of composition; Kelly as the director of a Writing Across the Curriculum [WAC] program) at Colorado State University (CSU), a Predominantly White, land grant, and R1 institution, we have been motivated by Inoue and the CCCC's statements to reflect upon and examine how we teach and train and how we enact linguistic justice. We are energized, as well, by CSU's commitment to DEISJ principles through its Principles of Community, a statement of university values that frames campus events and informs course and curriculum design, and through its implementation of the "dialogue across difference" communication framework (see Gurin et al. 2013).

As we lean into these calls and take action, we find ourselves continuously reflecting on whether we are adequately promoting linguistic justice in the ways we teach graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) to respond to writing. We draw from Eunjeong Lee, Jennifer Johnson, and Brooke Schreiber's definition of linguistic justice as "efforts to recognize, sustain and advocate for students' relationships, experiences and histories with different languages and literacies, away from the racializing and monolingual ideologies" (Lee et al. 2021, 5). We find ourselves enmeshed in what Shawna Shapiro describes as "the very real tension" between pragmatism and progressivism: between "what students need for today" and "what the world needs for a more just tomorrow" (2022, 4, 7). Individually and collaboratively, we have looked to the field for concrete direction on how to meet expectations for pragmatism *and* progressivism in GTA training, finding what Shapiro found—that most of the disciplinary calls offer little guidance on how to enact such pedagogy (2022, 12). (In chapter 10 of this collection, Shapiro and Sarah Tinker Perrault respond to this "tension" by offering guidelines on how to respond in ways that can be both pragmatic and progressive.)

We offer one way to begin closing this gap: In this chapter we share with readers a four-step reflection tool we developed to help us examine how we train GTAs to respond to low-stakes and high-stakes writing through a linguistic justice lens. We draw from personal and professional experiences, anonymous comments from the 2022 and 2023 GTA cohorts, and writing studies and DEISJ scholarship. Several questions formed the impetus for the tool we developed:

- Are we adequately teaching linguistic justice within GTA training?
What do we need to do more of?
- How do we meaningfully honor demands for linguistic justice while teaching GTAs how to create curriculum and respond to writing in alignment with course outcomes and writing studies best practices?

- How do we teach linguistic justice despite institutional constraints, such as limited time for GTA training, differing disciplinary practices, and little racial diversity among our faculty and students?

We share now the four-step reflective tool we developed and enacted. We hope readers will find this tool (in part or in whole) useful as they themselves tackle the same or similar driving questions.

1. The Past: reflecting on what experiences, values, and positionalities shaped our language ideologies and approaches to teaching feedback in GTA training.
2. The Paradigm Shift: what we learned about linguistic justice that has meaningfully altered our perspectives on giving and teaching feedback.
3. The Present: how we have updated our teaching of feedback based on our new awareness.
4. The Future: ideas and questions for ourselves and for disciplinary reflection.

For the first three steps in the tool, we write individually, as much of this work has been done separately. In our final section, we write collaboratively to demarcate how our reflection process has helped us grow together as collaborators and colleagues.

Before we dive into the tool, let us briefly explain our institutional contexts.

But First: A Little Context

Genesea has been the associate director of the University Composition Program since 2017. The Composition Program, housed in the English Department, offers eight lower- and upper-division composition courses. About thirty English MA/MFA GTAs teach Composition 150: College Composition (CO150), the credit-bearing first-year composition course, with a GTA-specific common curriculum. Much of Genesea's responsibilities include day-to-day administrative work, organizing GTA training (including a forty-hour orientation), and facilitating faculty professional development. Additionally, Genesea teaches English 607A: The Teaching of Writing, which is the required fall semester three credit practicum course GTAs take while teaching one section of CO150.

Since the fall of 2020, Kelly has been director of the gtPathways Writing Integration Program, a WAC program that supports writing-intensive general education courses across disciplines by training more than fifty GTAs a year

to respond to and grade writing assigned by disciplinary faculty.¹ Each fall, Kelly teaches English 608: Integrating Writing in the Academic Core (a five-week WAC practicum course for GTAs from eight departments²) and provides ongoing informal mentorship for GTAs. Because responding to and grading undergraduates' writing is such a major part of GTAs' teaching assignments, training focuses on "teaching through feedback," best practices for designing writing assignments, and the relationship between writing and learning.

For both of us, these administrative positions have challenged us to reflect on, evaluate, and revise our GTA training in light of disciplinary and institutional calls for linguistic justice and inclusive pedagogy.

The Past

The first step in the tool is looking backward and inward. Readers may already be quite familiar with reflective practice within teaching (see Brandenburg et al. 2017; Brookfield 2017) or with understanding and working to interrupt "the cycle of socialization" (Harro 2020a), and we adapt those principles to this first step. As Beavers writes in chapter 5 of this collection, "To be an antiracist means leaning into critical self-reflection and moving from a state of not knowing or being unaware to awareness and, ultimately, to action." We also take to heart the reflective question Bernice Olivas, Janelle Jennings-Alexander, Mara Lee Grayson, Tamara Issak, Lana Oweidat, Christina V. Cedillo, Ashanka Kumari, Caitlyn Rudolph-Schram, and Trent M. Kays ask in "At a Crossroads: Committee for Change and the Voices of CCCC": "What dominant narratives frame your own experiences and actions? What administrative work are you committed to doing, personally, to center the need for change?" (Olivas et al. 2023, 69). As we have both experienced in different ways, it is difficult to know where we *should go* if we're unaware of where we *have come from*. In this step, we look back at what upbringing, experiences, backgrounds, and research have shaped our approaches to feedback.

GENESEA

I am the conflicted pragmatist-progressivist WPA Shapiro writes about. My pragmatism began as an undergraduate student. You see, I was homeschooled

1. The gt in gtPathways stands for "guaranteed transfer." gtPathways courses are general education courses that are guaranteed to transfer between Colorado public colleges and universities.
2. The eight departments include Psychology, History, Anthropology, Political Science, Sociology, Journalism and Media Communication, Music, and Philosophy.

from kindergarten to twelfth grade. I always knew I wanted to go to college, and I thought my homeschooling education had prepared me for college success. But that was not the case. Once in college, I did not understand how the academic system worked: I didn't know how to take multiple-choice exams, I didn't know how to use office hours, and I didn't know how to give professors what they wanted. I was a frustrated student who knew there were "keys" of information that could unlock what I was missing. But I didn't know how to get them. Within my particular upbringing and experience with schooling (mostly self-taught and self-directed), my ways of doing school were always going to be different. Once in college, I always felt like "the cause of [my own learning] problem" (Harro 2020a, 19). Because of my experiences as an undergraduate and graduate student, I have been driven by the desire to help students understand the literacies, rhetorical situations, genre conventions, and discourse communities of academia—to provide them with the keys I didn't have when I was a student. (This is where my pragmatism comes from.)

As a master's and doctoral student GTA, I was drawn to scholarship that demystified response for both instructors and students. I remember my mind being blown when reading Richard Haswell's (2006) and Peter Elbow's (1997a, 1997b) perspectives on grading and response, particularly the clear strategies for how to respond in ways that encourage students to write and revise. When I read Lloyd Bitzer's (1968) "The Rhetorical Situation," David Bartholomae's (1986) "Inventing the University," and Amy Devitt's (2004) *Writing Genres*, new worlds of understanding opened up. These readings helped me conceptualize how I could effectively and clearly use response to help students navigate the university by learning to understand the rhetorical situation of every writing prompt. (Again, pragmatism.)

When I started training GTAs at CSU in 2018, I saw GTAs, with similar and different academic experiences to me, all wondering how to respond to student writing. Just as when I was a GTA, most of the GTAs in our program had never taught before and only a few had heard of rhetoric and composition. Additionally, our GTAs are in five different programs with different writing and response approaches. Given the GTAs' backgrounds and approaches to writing, I wanted to emphasize how the rhetorical situation could be used to prioritize and shape their experience responding to their students' texts. I assigned Richard Haswell's (2006) "The Complexities of Responding to Student Writing; or, Looking for Shortcuts via the Road of Excess," Joseph Williams's (1981) "The Phenomenology of Error," Laura Micciche's (2004) "Making a Case for Rhetorical Grammar," Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle's (2015)

Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies, and Peter Elbow's (1997b) "High Stakes and Low Stakes in Assigning and Responding to Student Writing," among others. While most of these readings were older, they were meant to introduce GTAs to foundational ideas of response, such as responding holistically and providing forward-looking feedback to help students reflect upon and revise their writing. I was focused on giving GTAs practical tools for response to help them through a challenging first semester as a graduate student and GTA. We read the texts critically, examining the authors' research methods, positionalities and teaching loads, and biases and assumptions about students' writing while also noting the missing component of students' identities in these articles.

KELLY

In contrast to Genesea's early learning experiences and schooling, I was educated in a traditional public school system and had early and continued success with academic literacies. I was the student who arrived at the university knowing how to "perform" to the expectations of Standard Academic English (SAE) and who frequently sought faculty out during their office hours. I was a driven, enthusiastic learner who recognized early on how much I learned from the process of writing, rewriting, and getting feedback from faculty.

By the time I stepped into a teaching role for the first time (as a master's student with a GTAship), I already valued the role feedback could play in teaching and learning. Feedback was also a significant part of our GTA training. We were trained to collect full drafts, provide a substantive set of marginal and end comments aimed at revision, and make extensive end comments on the final, graded draft. I spent many hours writing feedback on drafts that included thought-provoking questions to encourage development of ideas, advice on organization and "flow," notations on trends in grammatical errors, and a balance of praise and constructive criticism. Overall, I learned as a GTA that written feedback on students' writing was a central tenet of good teaching.

Given these experiences, I came into my current role as a mentor to GTAs seeing (and teaching *them* to see) feedback as an important teaching tool for fostering students' growth as writers, critical thinkers, and learners. I also admittedly came to my administrative position relatively uncritical of the field's "canonical literature" on response and assessment and uncritical of SAE as a standard of "good writing." I recognized that with SAE we were asking students to, as David Bartholomae argued, "learn to speak our language" and "appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse" (Bartholomae

1986, 4, 9), but I wasn't yet seeing this through a lens of linguistic justice, and I wasn't reading the response literature through that lens. (Not surprisingly, GTAs themselves came to the training with uncritical views of SAE as a standard of "good writing," and they came with a purely pragmatic goal: to learn how to comment and grade quickly and "accurately.") Thus, in my first semester as director in the fall of 2020, I centered canonical response scholarship by Peter Elbow (1997a, 1997b), Donald A. Daiker (1989), Anne Herrington (1997), Nancy Sommers (1982), and Ronald F. Lunsford (1997). Other readings focused on rubric design, peer review, and designing high and low stakes writing assignments across the curriculum.

These stories, while just a sliver of our experiences and perspectives, capture the first step of the tool: looking backward and inward. In large part, our reflections showed us how our home, school, and professional socializations shaped the way we saw writing instruction and feedback and how we were presenting it in our trainings (Harro 2020a, 2020b). Because of our socializations, we had been mostly uncritical of the expectations of SAE and the majority white canonical literature on response.

The Paradigm Shift

The second step in our reflective tool is to recognize what was for each of us a paradigm shift that inspired a new awareness of the ways in which racial prejudice shows up in the status quo of writing instruction and the important work of fostering linguistic justice in our teaching and our teacher training.

GENESEA

My paradigm shift is wholly affected by my evangelical Christian upbringing and wouldn't fully come until 2017. In 2013, I took an assistant professor position at the University of Wisconsin-Stout (UW-Stout). The midwestern whiteness of Wisconsin felt incredibly palpable after living in New Mexico for five years while I did my PhD. While at UW-Stout, I felt this increasing internal call to examine what it meant to be white—for me and for my students. Having no training in how to teach composition through a DEISJ lens, I developed discourse community assignments and a Facebook assignment called the Humans of UW-Stout Facebook Project, modeled on Brandon Stanton's Humans of New York (Carter 2021).

In the fall of 2017, as the new associate director of composition at CSU, I was invited by the provost to attend a two-day training conducted by facilitators

from the University of Michigan's Program on Intergroup Relations (one a scholar of color and one a white scholar, both female).³ The training included a selection of upper-level administrators, deans, and program directors, and we learned principles of intergroup dialogue, including dialogue across difference, reflection upon identity work, and teaching hot-button issues (see Gurin et al. 2013).

On day 2 of the training, the Mapping Social Identity activity dramatically shifted my perspective, helping me to recognize how my upbringing impacted my understanding of identity (the activity is reproduced in appendix 6.A). The activity asks people to identify a social identity for themselves and answer the following questions for the ages of 0–5 years old, 6–10 years old, 11–15 years old, 16–20 years, and so on:

- What messages did you hear/learn about this identity?
- Where did the messages come from?
- What behaviors were encouraged, rewarded, and supported? How?
- What behaviors were discouraged, supposed, and punished? How?

I wrote down a compilation of identities—Christian evangelical, white, and woman. My Christian evangelical identity had been my overarching identity, so everything I wrote down was connected to that in some way. I felt in my body the fears I had been raised with that prevented me from fully embracing DEISJ (to read more about these fears, see Martin 2022). And I felt in my body that those fears did not serve me anymore (a “result,” in Bobbie Harro’s words, of the “cycle of socialization” [463]). I cried. I cried for an identity that didn’t fit me anymore. And I cried about what parts of my identity were underdeveloped and underexplored.

Leaving that training, I knew I wouldn’t fully figure out how to teach linguistic justice until I got to the other side of my pain. In the following years, I spent a lot of time talking to my therapist and to colleagues like Kelly about my identity reconstruction and how research and teaching could help me heal.

KELLY

For me, the paradigm shift came during the fall of 2020 when I took over the gtPathways writing integration director position. While I was familiar with disciplinary and institutional calls for linguistic justice, antiracist pedagogy, and inclusive teaching practices, it wasn’t until I had completed the GTA training

3. For more on Michigan’s Program on Intergroup Relations, see the program website at <https://igr.umich.edu/>, accessed March 20, 2026.

for the first time that I meaningfully considered how those calls affected not only *my own* but also *others'* response and assessment practices.

It was from this new position, then, that I more fully engaged with the call I heard in Inoue's 2019 CCCC Address and in Baker-Bell et al.'s (2020) "This Ain't Another Statement!" It was then that I really took in Baker-Bell's argument that "people's language experiences are not separate from their racial experiences" and that I started to ask myself what role I was playing in perpetuating white linguistic supremacy and injustice (Baker-Bell 2020, 2). It was then that I realized that, as a white woman who grew up in a small majority white midwestern town, who attended large public Predominantly White Institutions, and who was teaching at a majority white land-grant university, I hadn't recognized, questioned, or worked to break out of my "cycle of socialization" concerning academic writing. I had not considered SAE through the lens of what Inoue has called in 2019 "white standards of writing" or what Baker-Bell and the authors of "This Ain't Another Statement!" have called "White Mainstream English." I started to recognize how, as a white person firmly situated in academic discourse, I was "able" to not question how SAE perpetuated white linguistic supremacy and reinforced white privilege. I started to ask myself how I could better foster linguistic justice, both through my teaching in general and more specifically through my feedback practices and the ways in which I prepared GTAs to respond to writing across the curriculum. In other words, this recognition shook me out of what had been a response/assessment routine I had developed over more than twenty years of teaching.

As the director of a WAC program, I turned my attention as well to the field's calls for linguistic justice across the curriculum. For example, Inoue has argued that "very little scholarship directly addresses the ways in which the discourses expected of nurses, business majors, engineers, and others across all fields and professions are quite simply white supremacist" (Inoue, quoted in Lerner 2018, 115). Key to this work, of course, is recognizing the important role that disciplinary GTAs such as those I work with play in the teaching of writing across the curriculum and, more specifically, the need for examining how GTA training can help foster equity across the curriculum (see also Rodrigue 2012 and 2013; Williams and Rodrigue 2016; Lannin and Townsend 2020; Winzenried 2016; E. Shapiro 2020; and Cripps et al. 2015).

For us, this part of the reflection process embodied what Harro refers to as the "waking up," "getting ready," and "reaching out" phases in our transition (Harro 2020b, 464)—from recognizing how the "cycle of socialization" influenced our teaching and teacher training to our participation in the "cycle of

liberation” (Harro 2020a). This work led us both—individually and collaboratively—to a commitment to reviewing and revising our GTA training to better disrupt racism and inequities in the teaching of writing.

The Present

Step 3 in this tool is application. Application is never a perfect process but an iterative one: we try something, we think about it, we tweak it, we see how it goes, we try it again or try something new. In this section we share the ways in which our respective paradigm shifts have changed the way we train GTAs to respond to students’ writing.

GENESEA

Linguistic justice wasn’t a term I was aware of until April Baker-Bell’s 2020 book, so from 2018 through 2020, I used canonical scholarship and systems theory to explain to GTAs why the field values response and feedback in the ways that it does. Questions emerged about what their roles were in teaching College Composition, such as whether it was a service course and/or had ethical obligations to teach for rhetorical situations across the disciplines. Many GTAs worried about not giving students the tools they would need to meet their other professors’ expectations. Other GTAs thought we should be teaching liberatory writing and rhetoric skills. To encourage GTAs to explore these tensions across the pragmatism and progressivism continuum, I developed a final portfolio where GTAs in small groups created one major writing assignment with rubric and lesson plans that they could pilot in subsequent semesters. GTAs were encouraged to create a curriculum that resonated with their values and beliefs. The 2022 cohort completely revised rubrics and assignments to include labor-based grading approaches, accessible and inclusive design, creative writing workshop principles, and student-centered audiences. They moved away from scholarly and professional genres and audiences, teaching citation, and analytical rubrics.

Over the years, a frequent topic of discussion in the training course I teach for GTAs has been to what extent we, as composition instructors, should burn the academic system down. In the fall 2022 semester, a few GTAs wanted to “decolonize” the academic system while other GTAs (often GTAs of color and first-generation GTAs) resisted the notion of burning academia down because they believe students need the tools to succeed academically and professionally. In a representative example, one GTA wrote in a discussion thread post

that they wanted to learn more about “decolonizing the classroom, such as community-based approaches, incorporating indigenous knowledge systems, and eliminating hierarchies where possible.” Another GTA asked to have more conversations about “how to validate student’s labor and various knowledges while also preparing them for college? How can we grade them without placing value judgments on their intellectual property?” At one point, the conversation evolved into discussing whether the GTAs who wanted to decolonize academia were speaking from a place of white privilege because they were in academia with the tools to succeed as writers. I wondered, at the time, “Can we be linguistically just by giving students the tools to break into the academic system—and let students decide if they want to tear it down?”

In reflecting upon the four years I have been teaching this pedagogy course, I see really important questions emerging from GTAs that make me rethink how GTAs (and faculty) are trained to teach writing:

- What tensions exist within the very act of response, such as expectations from students, the department, the field, other departments, etc.?
- What biases do we bring into our teaching and response around what “good writing” means?
- How do GTAs make choices around response when they are given a common curriculum to teach from?
- How do we get our institutions to value students’ nontraditional literacies and create space for them in the classroom?
- Do we have an obligation to teach students the rhetorical situation(s) of academia to help students succeed? And how do we teach it from an empowering, linguistic justice point of view?

There aren’t any easy, pat answers. But what emerged for me is the importance of asking the hard questions in class; not shying away from coalition building with GTAs; finding answers within the program, college, university, and elsewhere; radically accepting possibilities for GTA training; and taking a loving but critical look at how I teach writing and response. Over the years, I’ve gathered GTAs’ ideas and brought them back to the Composition Program team to work through them—to wrestle with what feels too radical, to talk about where we need to challenge ourselves and ideas about the teaching of writing, and to listen to students’ and GTAs’ calls for curriculum change.

Ultimately, GTAs want more freedom. They would prefer to create their own curricula, and they want to be more progressive. And I do want GTAs to challenge how and where writing fits into the academic system—for themselves

and for their students. But we cannot create change if we ignore the systems that exist—the systems that force us to write and communicate in restrictive ways. We also cannot create change if we don't give GTAs and students the tools to break into and/or tear down those systems.

It still feels unsatisfying and complex. I am still wondering what additions to make, particularly around topics of how to balance preparing students to succeed in academia while also giving them the tools to resist harmful academic structures. As I engage in reflective work to uncover and address my own unconscious biases, I am reminded of Olivas et al.'s calls for writing program administrators to “pay attention to who is speaking and who has the room. How might you shape which voices are respected and prioritized? How might you create administrative processes and practices that prioritize equity and inclusion?” (Olivas et al. 2023, 69). I carry these questions forward as self-reflective methods for my personal accountability as I plan future GTA pedagogy curriculum and professional development (and in all areas of my WPA work).

Due to program scheduling needs, I did not teach the GTA training course in the fall of 2024 or the fall of 2025. As I reflect on GTA training through the writing of this chapter, I spent 2024 and 2025 learning more about GTAs' values about and ideas for centering linguistic justice in the practicum course and College Composition curriculum. I, along with our GTA mentorship team, incorporated their feedback into our GTA training. Through this work, I have revised my approach to the practicum course to include excerpts from Shawna Shapiro's (2022) *Cultivating Critical Language Awareness in the Writing Classroom*; Alexandria L. Lockett, Iris D. Ruiz, James Chase Sanchez, and Christopher Carter's (2021) edited collection *Race, Rhetoric, and Research Methods*; and Brooke R. Schreiber, Eunjeong Lee, Jennifer T. Johnson, and Norah Fahim's (2021) edited collection *Linguistic Justice on Campus: Pedagogy and Advocacy for Multilingual Students*. Additionally, I have been exploring the intersection of linguistic justice and teaching with/to generative AI. Carly Schnitzler, Annette Vee, and Tim Laquintano's (2024) *TextGenEd: Continuing Experiments* on the WAC Clearinghouse is one resource I intend to include in my composition courses and GTA training alongside Monojit Choudhury's “Generative AI has a Language Problem.” With the rise of generative AI and its centering of Standard Edited American English and Western English, I believe another important way to move toward progressivism is to teach about linguistic justice in the age of large language models (LLMs), as LLMs are systems that define and confine language and writing much in the way that academia, as a system, defines and

confines language and writing. (See also my research with Kelly Bradbury and Sue Doe on this topic [Bradbury et al. 2026].)

KELLY

In contrast to the progressive mindset of the English Department GTAs, the GTAs I work with come to the training with a purely pragmatic mindset, as their work as “graders” is outside the focus of their graduate studies. Consequently, my primary goal in revising my curriculum was to raise GTAs’ awareness of linguistic supremacy and linguistic justice. With only six weeks of training, I decided to add to the curriculum some of the readings that raised my own awareness: Vershawn Ashanti Young’s (2010) “Should Writers Use They Own English?,” Baker-Bell et al.’s (2020) “This Ain’t Another Statement!,” excerpts from Baker-Bell’s (2020) *Linguistic Justice*, and Wayne Robertson’s (2018) video *Writing Across Borders*. Initially, I integrated the readings into week 4 of the course as part of our discussions of “grading challenges” that focused on grammar, plagiarism, and the writing of nonnative English speakers. By the fall 2023, I decided instead to *frame* the course with discussions of linguistic justice. I began the training by asking GTAs to consider their own and others’ assumptions about “good” and “poor” writing as we viewed an interview with Ibram X. Kendi about a picture book he adapted from Zora Neale Hurston’s work, written in Ebonics (CBS News 2023). In the final week of the course, we revisited assumptions about “good” and “poor” writing as we discussed “Should Writers Use They Own English?,” Inoue’s 2021 definition of “white language supremacy,” and disciplinary calls for linguistic justice. Framing the curriculum with considerations of linguistic justice helped us better see racial and linguistic injustices in the scholarship and in the status quo of response and assessment as we moved through the training.

GTAs’ responses to this scholarship reveal that most—if not all—of them agree with claims that language is embedded with power, that academic writing is problematically hierarchical and disadvantages some linguistic practices and people over others, and that we should allow for diversity in students’ linguistic and written communication. In fact, a number of them commented on the value of these specific readings. One GTA wrote, “I would argue that these readings are among the most important that we’ve read from this course.”⁴ For

4. In fact, at the end of the fall 2023 GTA training, when I asked students to note from the list of assigned texts which they valued most, Young’s “Should Writers Use They Own English?” received the highest number of votes; more specifically, half the GTAs marked it among the most valuable course texts.

several students, the readings fostered reflection on their positionalities, seen in comments like “the readings helped me uncover a bias that I did not realize I had” and “I can’t believe how ethnocentric my view of writing is, especially as a trained anthropologist where we really stress the importance of cultural relativism.” Some GTAs coming from marginalized identities recognized in the scholarship how the valuing of “White Mainstream English” had influenced their own experiences. One wrote, “I think one of the reasons that I never was a strong writer is because the rigid nature of standard American English never made sense to me.” Another wrote, “I have struggled a lot as a student of color because everything is tailored to the majority group. . . . even the way I speak is pulled apart and examined for color.”

Based on GTAs’ comments, the primary ways in which they see themselves as able to enact linguistic justice in their responses include (1) allowing for (and not penalizing) linguistic diversity, and (2) assigning (and reading themselves) texts written in nondominant dialects to normalize linguistic diversity in their discipline. What this translates to in their work as responders is likely gentler commenting styles when noting grammatical or wording errors, rubrics that don’t heavily penalize “error” (when they get to design them), and encouragement or praise for linguistically diverse writing.

Interestingly, GTAs’ comments echo the tension Shapiro (2022) names and that Genesea and I are grappling with. In the words of one GTA, “I fully agree that the idea of ‘proper’ English is racist and that higher academia is a racist structure. But I fear that if I take a stand, and lead my students behind me, I would risk their future success in the academic setting. I want to allow them the freedom they deserve but do not want to do them the disservice of leaving them unprepared for the realities of how others might (wrongly) snub their thoughts based on grammar.” Added to this is the dissonance inherent in GTAs’ lack of agency as graders to enact linguistically just grading practices. As one GTA wrote, “I feel a tension between my own language use [,] style preferences that are compatible with linguistic justice as described in the articles [,] and what my professor requires I look for and grade.” Several others said they were being asked by their professors to see SAE as the standard to which they should judge students’ writing and hold them accountable—something they were now uncomfortable doing.

Combined, students’ responses make me feel that with these new readings, reflections, and discussions I have helped raise awareness and plant important seeds for enacting linguistic justice. What I still struggle with is knowing that raising awareness and planting seeds is not enough. Like Genesea, I am

left feeling unsatisfied with the work I am doing. For example, how can I better prepare GTAs for engaging in disciplinary conversations about linguistic justice when their field may not be having those conversations? What tools can and should I provide them, given that they have little agency in their current positions?

The Future: A Conclusion

As we look to future revisions and actions (for ourselves and for the field), we appreciate existing tools like Shapiro's (2022) *Cultivating Critical Language Awareness in the Writing Classroom* and her accompanying website (S. Shapiro 2023), which functions as a resource hub and collaborative space supporting the teaching of critical language awareness. We appreciate, as well, the suggestions offered by others in this collection. We see a need, though, for similar tools and resources focused specifically on linguistically just response practices. In this final step, we share a list of actions we see ourselves and the field needing to take to bolster GTA training around linguistically just response:

- Encourage personal and professional reflection strategies among GTAs and faculty about the beliefs, experiences, blind spots, and systems hindering linguistic justice in GTA training and elsewhere.
- Develop “linguistic justice in the margins” toolkits for GTAs and faculty, including curated reading lists focused on raciolinguistics, linguistic identity, and linguistically just response theories and practices.
- Create resources and tools to aid GTAs in enacting linguistically just feedback when they do not have agency over the curriculum or rubrics or when they are working with faculty or departments that value SAE as the gold standard of “good writing.”
- Support linguistic justice efforts and resources across the curriculum, especially in conversations and coalition building with tenured faculty and university stakeholders.
- Facilitate WAC conversations about linguistic justice across disciplines and across rank/roles, such as between faculty and their GTAs.
- Additionally, it is important to build in supports for graduate students and faculty who may, while doing this work, experience paradigm shifts (as we did) that can be challenging to navigate and to sustain, personally and professionally.

While the above list is brief, the work it entails is not simple. We hope that the reflective tool (and experiences) we have shared here can help us all—as

teachers, as administrators, and as a field—develop self-compassion and motivate us to dive deeply into antiracist pedagogy, as expressed through linguistic justice. We are inspired by adrienne maree brown’s exhortation in *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*: “Focus on critical connections more than critical mass—build the resilience by building the relationships. Less prep, more presence. What you pay attention to grows” (brown 2017, 42).

In many ways, this reflective work is collective and collaborative. As such, the reflective tool we share here doesn’t need to be used alone. As we experienced, there is benefit for readers in using this tool collaboratively, either in small groups of friends or as faculty learning communities. For us, grappling with our ideas and experiences (and our paradigm shifts) together enriched our reflective process and made it easier, in some ways, because we weren’t doing the work alone; we chose to walk alongside each other through this process to help each other grow. In this way, our experience demonstrates how collaborative reflective practices can thoughtfully and intentionally help academics interrogate who they are and who they want to become.

Appendix 6.A. University of Michigan Identity

Timeline: Mapping Social Identity

Directions

- Choose a social identity/(ies) that you would like to reflect on and examine.
- Map what you’ve learned about this identity in different stages of your life.
- Either use the open space below to draw your own timeline OR the more structured chart on the back of this handout.

In mapping, think about the following prompts:

- What messages did you hear/learn about being ____?
- Where did the messages come from? (Parents, other family members, religious organizations, schools, teachers, media [print, TV, music], other institutions, peers, etc.)
- What behaviors were encouraged, rewarded, and supported? How?
- What behaviors were discouraged, unsupported, and punished? How?

Your Social Identity/(ies): _____

Other Social Identity/(ies): _____

Age Group	What messages did you hear/ learn about this identity?	Where did the messages come from?	What behaviors were encouraged, rewarded, and supported? How?	What behaviors were discouraged, unsupported, and punished? How?
0–5 Years				
6–10 Years				
11–15 Years				
16–20 Years				
21–30 Years				
30–50 Years				
50 + Years				

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7

Delving into the Submerged

*A Reflexive Study of Three Nonnative English-Speaking
Writing Instructors' Feedback Practices*

MING FANG, XUAN JIANG, AND LAN WANG-HILES

Providing feedback has long been seen as critical in the teaching of writing (Ferris 2014; Hartshorn and Evans 2015). Thus, it has been a longstanding focus in both mainstream and English-as-a-second-language (L2) writing research. Seminal contributions, such as those of Nancy Sommers (1982) in mainstream writing and Vivian Zamel (1985) in L2 writing, highlight its importance in motivating students to communicate effectively, think critically, and express themselves authentically (Sommers 2013). However, feedback focusing on specific, tangible dimensions (Ferris 2018), such as organization, cohesion, coherence, grammar, and formatting, has limitations in fostering students' growth as writers. In this chapter, we caution against an exclusive focus on these tangible dimensions of writing, which we liken to the tip of an iceberg, and advocate for more scholarly attention to the submerged part of an iceberg, offering feedback on socioaffective dimensions (see figure 7.1).

We believe that the submerged portion is where we respond to students' authentic voices and empower them by advancing equity and linguistic justice. The benefit of the socioaffective dimensions of feedback has been explained in writing studies (e.g., Anson et al. 2016) and warrants more attention, and its dimensions also align with recent scholarship emphasizing feedback receptivity (Lipnevich and Panadero 2021). The authors of these studies emphasize

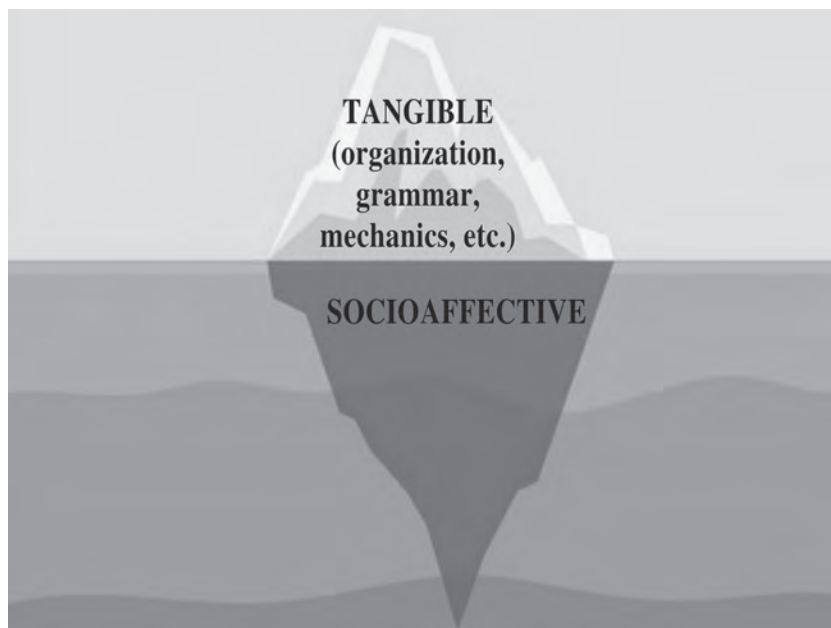


FIGURE 7.1. Multidimensional feedback iceberg.

the role of the student and the recursive nature of student-teacher interaction in feedback. Likewise, providing feedback on multiple levels fosters students' engagement with and response to feedback through a relational and recursive student-teacher dynamic. Our multidimensional feedback framework, particularly its submerged, socioaffective layers, also disrupts the ecology of white language supremacy (Inoue 2015) by prioritizing relational, culturally responsive, and student-centered feedback practices that foster linguistic justice rather than reproduce dominant norms.

Another less discussed aspect in feedback scholarship is how teachers' lived experiences and cultural perceptions shape their approaches to feedback. In particular, nonnative English-speaking writing instructors (NNESWIs) may offer unique insights by negotiating linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical authority in their roles. Through collaborative autoethnography (Chang et al. 2013), we, three NNESWIs from a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), explore how our writing feedback encompasses multiple dimensions. Our analyses reveal how our personal and professional backgrounds intersected with our status as under-represented minorities and NNESWIs within our profession and how this has

motivated us to place greater value on students' voices and rhetorical choices, viewing their writing holistically as a humanities process.

We seek to answer two research questions: (1) How do the intersections of our cultural identities, educational backgrounds, teaching and learning experiences, and institutional contexts shape our feedback practices? (2) What features of our feedback practices best support diverse, especially minoritized, students? The significance of this chapter, therefore, is two-fold: moving neglected and submerged dimensions of writing feedback from the periphery to the center of teacher feedback scholarship; and contributing to the ongoing research on NNESWIs (Tseptsura and Ruecker 2024) and their feedback practices. We argue that by offering feedback across multiple dimensions, writing instructors promote students' agency and voices and advocate for linguistic and social justice, particularly for minoritized students. These dimensions not only encompass specific aspects of writing such as sentences and paragraphs—the tip of the iceberg—but also extend to provide essential emotional support and resources for long-term growth of student writers—metaphorically, the submerged part of the iceberg.

Literature Review

We provide a brief review of the relevant literature on two issues particularly important for later discussion. The purpose is to identify gaps in current scholarship addressing the submerged dimensions of feedback and examining the positionality of nonnative English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), a category that includes NNESWIs and other English language practitioners.

NNEST AND NNEST FEEDBACK PRACTICES

NNESTs' feedback practices are central to this study. Although extensive research exists on teacher feedback, there are few studies that compare the practices of native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) with NNESTs, and they often focus on specific, tangible aspects of students' writing (Bal-Gezegin 2015; Cheng and Zhang 2021; Shi 2001). Ling Shi (2001) finds no significant differences in holistic ratings between NNESTs and NESTs but notes differences in evaluation criteria, with NNESTs prioritizing linguistic accuracy and NESTs emphasizing global issues. Similarly, Betül Bal-Gezegin (2015) highlights the role of teachers' past experiences in shaping feedback but provides limited discussion of how NNESTs' experiences influence their practices. Xiaolong Cheng and Lawrence Jun Zhang (2021) observe that NESTs focus more on

global issues while NNESTs pay closer attention to linguistic errors, yet their study minimally addresses the influence of teachers' cultural and linguistic backgrounds on feedback.

While these studies offer valuable insights, they largely neglect how NNESTs' cultural identities, professional experiences, and positionality as "strangers" in academia (Li and Beckett 2006; Lippi-Green 2012) shape their feedback. Additionally, the socioaffective dimensions of feedback remain underexplored. Addressing these gaps, this chapter examines how NNESTs' positionality and values are reflected in their multidimensional feedback practices, emphasizing their potential to foster linguistic justice and equity.

FEEDBACK FEATURE: MULTIDIMENSIONAL FEEDBACK FOR MINORITIZED STUDENTS

The ungrading movement (Blum 2020; Feldman 2019) emphasizes the importance of feedback, particularly in the absence of grades, as it mitigates hierarchical teacher-student dynamics by positioning instructors as readers and reviewers rather than evaluators (Jackson and Marks 2016). Ungrading shifts the focus from compliance with Standard English to the equitable development of skills like collaboration and critical thinking, creating a level playing field for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Anne Templeton (2020) highlights that feedback is crucial for people's understanding of their progress, especially for the minoritized. Inclusive feedback with high expectations has been shown to motivate African American students by fostering a sense of belonging (Yeager et al. 2014). Feedback that values students' lives and experiences encourages authentic writing and deeper engagement with teacher feedback, particularly for minoritized students (Coombes 2021).

Recognizing the strengths and needs of minoritized students, instructors should provide multidimensional feedback that addresses both cognitive and socioaffective dimensions. Multilingual students often renegotiate identities in academic writing, while first-generation and immigrant students may need support navigating academic rhetoric. Previous knowledge, though an asset, is not always viewed as legitimate (Simon 2022). Multidimensional feedback, characterized by a warm tone, encouragement of good effort, and high expectations, promotes equity and linguistic justice. It amplifies students' strengths by acting as a mirror that reflects their rich experiences and as a window that connects these experiences to new writing knowledge (Kurzer 2022; Simon 2022).

Methodology

For our study, we applied collaborative autoethnography (CAE). Autoethnography focuses on self (“auto”), culture (“ethno”), and narration (“graphy”) (Chang et al. 2013). Through narratives, researchers explain and reflect on how they respond to circumstances in certain ways and how their sociocultural contexts have shaped their perspectives, behaviors, and decisions. Researchers’ lived experiences are a rich data source (Chang et al. 2013). Extending autoethnography, CAE allows researchers to analyze and interpret their data to gain a meaningful understanding of sociocultural phenomena reflected in their autobiographical data. The research process of CAE is interactive, combining collaborative views with individual perspectives to engender a deeper understanding of our feedback practices. Employing CAE, we collectively explored our research subjectivity and the interplay between our professional experiences, cultural identities, and feedback practices. Through CAE, we sought to answer our research questions through personal and collective lenses and have been empowered in this reflective and dialogic process. CAE has been applied in the field of rhetoric and composition studies (see Gonzales et al. 2021; Wang-Hiles et al. 2023) to foster a supportive learning community.

We collected our data through first writing narratives on our cultural and learning backgrounds, teaching contexts, and feedback practice, respectively, followed by self-reflective and self-analytical processes to capture our present perspectives. Students’ course evaluations, reflections, and emails to us were also used as supplementary data sources to prompt in-depth reflective writing. We then shared our ethnographic accounts via Google Drive and engaged in multiple rounds of collective analysis through virtual meetings. When discussing these reflections, we commented and responded to each other to collectively refine our understanding. Through multiple verbal and written dialogues in an iterative and recursive process during a five-month time frame, we analyzed the features of our feedback practices and the reasoning for providing socioaffective feedback to students.

By integrating individual reflections with collective inquiry, our application of CAE ensured methodological rigor through iterative analysis and ongoing dialogue over an extended period of time.

Findings

To help readers contextualize our approaches to giving feedback, we start this section with a vignette of our professional trajectories. In addition to our

shared cultural and educational experiences, we all have an academic background in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), a background that emphasizes language development and that influences—but does not define—our feedback practices in that students' language use in writing is an integral focus of instructor feedback. Likewise, our knowledge of second language acquisition and writing pedagogies has directly transferred to our composition instructional practices.

Our diverse life experiences have also impacted our respective viewpoints on feedback to students. Lan was born and raised in a family of educators. Before earning her master's degree and doctorate in the US, she already had eight years of English teaching experience at a university in China with a master's certificate in English pedagogy. Her teaching philosophy is greatly influenced by Chinese culture, which places great value on caring about students. Ming's professional trajectory started in China as she took an English-as-a-second-language teaching job, and this trajectory extended as she became an English-as-a-second-language teacher in a community-based organization in Boston. Now a writing instructor in mainstream English courses, she has developed a keen understanding of the vital role of feedback in pedagogy and the importance of tailoring her feedback practices to meet students' needs in different contexts. Xuan, as a first-generation college student, came from a family of low socioeconomic status in China. As a NNESWI and Writing Center Administrator (WCA), Xuan's feedback practices encourage students, many of them as first-generation multilingual students, to build connections between their work, family, and study. Next, we turn to a juxtaposition of our condensed views on three important aspects of feedback and the motivations behind them.

FEEDBACK AS A CONTEXT-DEPENDENT PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITY

We reflect on our feedback practices as part of our CAE and agree that they extend from the tip to the submerged part of the iceberg, the socioaffective dimensions. We value the submerged part even more when thinking of our institutional contexts. Lan's institution is an HBCU with many African American and first-generation college students. She believes it is a disservice to these students if they are disadvantaged by lacking the writing skills necessary for academic success. Thus, her feedback seeks to address sentence-level issues: the tip of the iceberg. Yet the focus of her feedback is to offer comments on students' sociocultural and lived experiences. Being a NNESWI, Lan wants to learn about students' lives through their writing, which shows her attention to students' authentic voices as they convey emotions and ideas.

One example Lan shared was that of an African American student who wrote in his essay that when receiving the offers from both Lan's university and West Point Military Academy, he decided to join this HBCU because he wanted to explore the history of an HBCU and believed this university to be a better fit for him. In Lan's feedback, she wrote, "Welcome! I admire your decision and hope you have already learned and will continue exploring to learn about our school. What have you learned that impressed you or inspired you the most so far? Do you feel this school is a good fit as you expected?" Lan affirmed his decision and encouraged him to discover more about African American history at this HBCU. By asking questions, Lan opened a continued channel of communication with the student. Her reader-response comments encourage and motivate students' writing authenticity, which also reinforce her personal connection with students. This example highlights the socioaffective dimensions of the multidimensional feedback framework by valuing the student's voice, affirming his linguistic and cultural assets, and supporting his long-term development as a writer.

In contrast to Lan, Ming and Xuan teach at the same HSI, where over 60 percent of their students are Hispanic. Ming views teaching as a context-dependent activity in which pedagogical choices, including feedback, must respond to students' linguistic diversity. Recognizing that requiring standard academic English can marginalize students' language identities, Ming prioritizes validating students' linguistic resources in writing in her feedback. For instance, Ming encouraged students' use of their native languages in writing to enhance authenticity and better connect with Miami's multilingual audience: "Your writing will be richer and more authentic as you integrate Spanish words. This adds a distinctive and genuine dimension to your work and resonates with local readers." In addressing grammar, Ming's background in L2 writing enables her to prioritize clarity over correctness, focusing on how students can effectively convey meaning. Instead of labeling a pronoun error as "grammatically incorrect," she frames it as a potential source of confusion for readers, explaining the rhetorical purposes of grammar as needed, which aligns with Shawna Shapiro and Sarah Tinker Perrault's emphasis on prioritizing clarity over correctness (see chapter 10 of this volume). This example exemplifies different dimensions of the multidimensional feedback framework. The focus on grammar and clarity represents the tangible tip of the iceberg, addressing surface-level concerns in a way that enhances the reader's understanding without undermining the student's voice. Simultaneously, Ming's encouragement to incorporate native languages reflects the submerged socioaffective dimensions, validating

students' linguistic identities and fostering authenticity in their writing. The encouragement of students' use of native languages and rhetorical strategies aligns with Suresh Canagajah's (2013) call for a translingual approach to writing instruction, which resists fixed language boundaries and values the fluid, negotiated nature of meaning-making in multilingual contexts.

At the same HSI, most of Xuan's students live with their families and commute to the university. Students tend to prioritize their classes over other obligations such as working, supporting families, and taking care of family members. They also at times need to fight against sociocultural stigmas about themselves and against immigrant parents' expectations concerning more "profitable" majors. Hence, Xuan's feedback carries an understanding of such student constraints, using Shapiro's (2022) pragmatic-progressive approach. In her feedback, Xuan legitimizes those pragmatic and materialistic challenges for her students, challenges that are similar to what she has encountered through her upbringing; she also motivates students to try out some opportunities and platforms to better themselves, including publications, internships, scholarships, and awards. As such, her empathetic understanding of students' sociocultural constraints and familial obligations demonstrates the submerged portion, where feedback validates students' lived experiences and cultural realities.

CULTURAL IDENTITY FEATURES IN OUR FEEDBACK PRACTICES

Born and raised in China and having received education both in China and the US, we are greatly influenced by our cultural identities as well as our learning and professional experiences, and all of these have an impact on how we give feedback. The Chinese proverb “教书育人” (“to teach is to cultivate and educate people”) highlights Lan's mission. With over twenty years of transnational teaching experiences, Lan has also adapted to the US classroom culture. Her teaching and learning experiences in both cultures have formed her teaching philosophy of promoting students' agency and fostering their intellectual development.

Being a NNESWI, Lan also realizes that students' thoughts and perceptions may vary among themselves and differ from hers; giving a topic for students to write about, therefore, may limit students' agency. Hence, Lan encourages students to choose topics that interest them within the given parameters instead of giving students specific writing topics. Such a practice showcases her teaching philosophy, and students' reaction to this “freedom of choice” is positive. Influenced by expressivism, which focuses on developing writers' authentic

voices by means of self-discovery, and social constructionism, which focuses on understanding writers' language and knowledge in their sociocultural and historical settings (Tate et al. 2013), Lan applied these writing theories holistically in her instruction to promote students' autonomy and identity and to understand their voices, because they are influenced by and contribute to social discourses. To motivate students' perseverance in their programs of study, Lan shared with them how she had overcome similar challenges during her studies in the US. For example, one international student from Bangladesh wrote about the learning difficulties he encountered due to the language barrier and expressed his loneliness in his essay. In Lan's feedback, she expressed her understanding of his feelings and shared coping strategies as a former international student. Lan even made a public announcement in class to let everyone know that this student played soccer and that anyone who was interested in joining should contact him. "Understanding we are different and unique made for a welcome atmosphere and a great learning experience in Dr. Wang's class," read one student evaluation, indicating Lan's strengths as an NNESWI.

Ming identified two distinct features of her feedback practices: balance and personal empathy, both deeply influenced by Chinese culture. Chinese culture values balance and harmony. Balance is a means to harmony, a value that permeates social interactions. Consciously or subconsciously, she wanted to achieve harmony with students through balanced feedback. Such balance is also recognized as a best practice in the feedback scholarship (Ferris 2014). Ming's feedback is also shaped by the Chinese cultural emphasis on effective communication, which prioritizes building positive relationships as a means to achieve instrumental goals (Ting-Toomey 2018). Viewing feedback as a form of communication (Kio 2015), Ming adopts a relational approach, demonstrating empathy and care for her students' circumstances. For example, when addressing a student's rushed writing, she began by acknowledging their challenges: "I see that this work is probably rushed, but I also appreciate that despite having to work until 4 a.m. in a frozen food warehouse every day, you still managed to complete the work and meet the deadline. If you need an extension in submitting the final draft, that's fine. I believe taking time to absorb my feedback will help you craft your best work, and I'm here to support that process."

Ming believes that this relational and empathetic feedback fosters trust and encourages students to engage more fully with her feedback. This approach aligns with the Chinese saying "欲成事, 先成人" ("to get anything done, first make yourself a trustworthy person"). Building strong connections with students makes feedback more meaningful and better received. Affective feedback

that makes students feel a sense of connection affirms students' linguistic backgrounds, creates inclusive learning environments, improves communication, empowers marginalized voices, and fosters confidence and agency in language use. Such feedback highlights the submerged portion of our multidimensional feedback framework, supporting students' long-term growth as legitimate participants in the academic discourses as they bring unique linguistic perspectives to the writing process. As such, the affective feedback promotes linguistic justice and equity.

Xuan believes in the short-term and long-term impact teachers have on their students holistically across time and space. Mainly influenced by her teachers in China and her grandmother, an elementary school teacher, Xuan has inherited a caring and mentoring mindset of teaching as a package (Bal-Gezegin 2015). Seeing many of her students struggle with competing priorities in a local culture of high-context communication (Hall 1976), she deciphers meanings of words drawn from the context of the communication process beyond their literal meanings and defines professionalism in her work as consisting in part of personalized socioaffective feedback and interacting with her struggling students with care, connection, and humanity.

One recent example during the COVID-19 pandemic was to continuously encourage a female student who had a newborn. With the baby's father away serving in the military, the student struggled to attend her class. Xuan accommodated her with an incomplete grade but continued to mentor her via Zoom conferences. Her verbal feedback in these meetings drew on themes of understanding, encouragement, and empathy as well as her own vulnerability and resilient strategies as a new mom completing her PhD. Xuan's written feedback, presented briefly in bullet points, included tips for planning and managing time and provided institutional and online resources. With Xuan's guidance and assistance, the student successfully completed the course in her final semester and graduated as scheduled. Xuan's belief and empowerment changed the student's perception about herself, showing her the power of her own inner grit amid life challenges reflected in her mid-term and final-term reflections. Xuan's empathetic verbal feedback, grounded in shared experiences and encouragement, reflects the submerged socioaffective dimension, validating the student's struggles and fostering resilience.

NNESWIS' STRENGTHS IN GIVING FEEDBACK

Beyond feedback on tangible dimensions (the tip of the iceberg), Lan's feedback on students' authentic voices and socioaffective experiences is

substantial. Students see her true interest in their writing and feedback through her affirmation, acknowledgment, and encouragement. Hence, they consider Lan's feedback empowering and transforming. One example is a student who expressed in her essay that she had found her passion and wanted to become an elementary teacher but regretted already majoring in art. In Lan's feedback, she suggested a possibility for the student to think of becoming an elementary art teacher. Lan further encouraged the student to consult the education department and provided the student with a list of education professors' names. A semester later, this student wrote an email to tell Lan that she has been taking education classes and would seriously consider becoming an elementary art teacher. In the email, this student acknowledged Lan's genuine nurturing and encouraging help. Such an email rewards Lan's attempt and also indicates that Lan's written feedback provides long-term benefits for students.

Joining other first-generation immigrants in the US, Xuan connects with students who are also first-generation immigrants or children of immigrants, as a person not above them but with them. Xuan broadens normative feedback with personal trial and error and seeks help from students to showcase and leverage the value of two-way feedback and to address the pragmatic and progressive aspects of language use (Shapiro 2022). In one example, Xuan disclosed her weaknesses in using articles and prepositions. Xuan asked her students for their knowledge on those aspects of the language, thus showcasing how she uses pragmatic means to reach her goals in progressive writing (e.g., to show her perspective on writing across cultures and languages). Seeing lived examples of Xuan as a language learner and NNESWI, students know why and how to use English pragmatically to amplify their authentic voices progressively and confidently.

Seeing her students as full agents, Xuan persistently uses conferences, reforming the teacher-student power asymmetry and "decenter[ing] the writing classroom" (Huot 2002, 169). These nonhierarchical and dialogic interactions via feedback have had a synergic impact on Xuan's classroom, as commented on by a female Hispanic first-generation college student: "Her classroom environment was a safe space where all students felt at ease about sharing perspectives. This fostered positive relationships outside of the classroom as well, which prompted me to drop by her office to discuss any number of things, from personal matters to advice to reach my aspirations." Sincerely appreciating her being understanding and flexible, students tend to thoroughly revise and resubmit projects over time to improve their writing.

Ming initially grappled with her perceived weaknesses as a NNESWI, often feeling she lacked the cultural and linguistic resources to offer comprehensive feedback. She sometimes struggled to fully understand students' chosen topics or encountered unfamiliar words whose rhetorical context was unclear, leading to moments of imposter syndrome. These challenges, however, became opportunities for growth. Ming shifted her focus to what she could do—approaching students' writing as a genuine, curious reader and empathizing with their struggles navigating academic conventions and writing styles. As a NNESWI, Ming draws on her ability to relate to the challenges faced by linguistically minoritized students, particularly the anxieties surrounding nonstandard language use and genre conventions. She strives to balance two goals: helping students master academic norms for their academic success while respecting their right to express themselves authentically in their own voices. This balance, informed by critical language awareness (Shapiro 2022), is both pragmatic and progressive. It acknowledges the necessity of navigating standardized norms while encouraging students to critically examine and challenge the power structures underpinning those norms. Shapiro and Perrault (chapter 10) provide a more detailed explanation of the commitments to pragmatism, progressivism, and promoting students' rhetorical agency when giving feedback. In alignment with these commitments, Ming aims to provide feedback that supports students in mastering academic conventions while fostering a socially conscious and inclusive approach to language and writing.

Discussion

Our reflective narratives and dialogic exchanges reveal that effective feedback goes beyond written comments; rather, it helps build an ecology of linguistic justice, as Asao Inoue (chapter 15) emphasizes, by sharing a multidimensional set of feedback. Using the metaphor of an iceberg, we see the tip of the iceberg as improving specific writing pieces whereas the submerged part carries its weight in supporting student writers' long-term growth and agency in striving for linguistic justice.

The iceberg metaphor foregrounds our deep and contextualized understanding of linguistic justice. As defined by April Baker-Bell (2020), linguistic justice means supporting Black students in their navigation and negotiation of linguistic, racial, and sociopolitical identities. Supporting linguistic justice

involves the equitable treatment and recognition of diverse linguistic backgrounds. In our minority-majority institutional contexts, linguistic justice entails providing minoritized students with feedback that values and supports their unique linguistic expressions, fostering an inclusive and respectful learning environment, and establishing a trusting, caring relationship when discussing student writing. Embracing linguistic justice, we aim to enhance academic engagement by encouraging students' authentic writing voices and choices as well as to reduce disparities in academic outcomes between minoritized and privileged students within our institutions, ultimately promoting a more equitable educational experience. Hence, we argue that to advance equity and linguistic justice for minoritized students, the socioaffective dimensions of feedback are crucial.

Our first research question asks how the intersections of our cultural identities, educational backgrounds, teaching and learning experiences, and institutional contexts shape our feedback practice. The answer is that our unique identities as Western-educated scholars with Chinese cultural values certainly influence our teaching practices. Lan's resonance with the Chinese educational philosophy that teaching is to cultivate and educate people (教书育人), Xuan's adoption of the "caring and mentoring mindset of teaching as a package," and Ming's recognition of the Chinese affective communication style in her feedback all testify to such influences. These educational philosophies, pedagogical mindsets, and cultural features are powerful in shaping our responses by applying an empathetic feedback approach. As such, we showcase how cultural and language background can influence the NNESTs' written feedback practices, a focus that is largely missing in the feedback literature and thus called for (Cheng and Zhang 2021).

The strength of our empathetic feedback approach did not come to us at the onset. What is salient in the data is the acknowledgment of our self-perceived weaknesses as NNESTs—the lack of language intuition and of shared cultural resources with students and the scarcity of knowledge about students' educational experiences. These weaknesses may easily lead to self-doubt and frustration in our feedback practices. However, we have not succumbed to our vulnerabilities. Acknowledging these moments helps us see the glass as "half full." A lack of language intuition gives us the power of empathy with our students, who are also less confident and less familiar with the academic landscape and practices. A dearth of shared culture with students begets a genuine interest in student writing that taps into these cultural resources.

Absent knowledge of students' previous educational experiences strips away some questionable assumptions we may otherwise have about students. In other words, we are capable of turning our vulnerabilities into strengths when reading and responding to students' writing.

Our common espousal of a caring and compassionate approach in responding to students' writing is rooted in our cultural understanding of feedback, teaching, and education at large (Macklin 2016). Our similar postgraduate education and teaching experiences in the US also sensitized us to our role as less privileged "strangers" in academia (Li and Beckett 2006; Lippi-Green 2012) while giving us the tools to examine our vulnerabilities and change those into strengths. It is worth noting that our commonalities do not mask the individualities in our feedback. For example, coming from a family of educators, Lan empathizes with her students who struggle with maintaining a legitimate status within the institution, a struggle that she has never experienced. Thus, taking a pragmatic approach (Shapiro 2022), she helps students improve writing and encourages their academic retention. Whereas Xuan, whose earlier educational experience was roadblocked by family financial hardships and the pervasive gender bias that can be common in small-town environments, takes a more progressive approach (Shapiro 2022), explicitly setting goals to empower students for social mobility in her teaching.

To address our second research question (What features of our feedback practices best support diverse, especially minoritized, students?), we turn to the features of our feedback practices that we perceive as supportive of our diverse student populations. With attachment to and detachment from both Chinese and American cultures and values, we carry our perspectives as both insiders and outsiders in order to be eclectic and cover both the tip and the bottom of the feedback iceberg holistically, arguing for multidimensional feedback. This approach includes tangible feedback on writing conventions alongside the "submerged" socioaffective dimensions crucial for students' lasting growth as writers. We especially call attention to these socioaffective dimensions (echoing Chris Anson's study, chapter 3), which are absent in most early studies of teacher response. Emphasizing socioaffective dimensions also aligns well with ungrading principles (Blum 2020) in student writing by prioritizing holistic growth and personalized support and fostering a positive emotional climate through feedback. The three features of socioaffective feedback in the submerged part of the iceberg emerge from our collective, reflective accounts: *personally empathetic, equitable and asset-based, and long-term growth-oriented* (see figure 7.2).

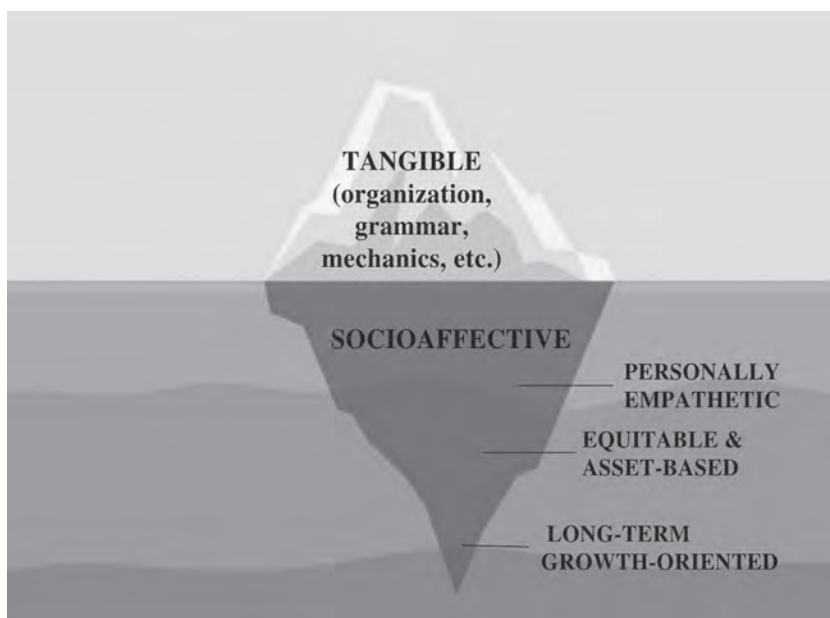


FIGURE 7.2. Features of socioaffective feedback.

PERSONALLY EMPATHETIC

This is the first salient feature we identified. We embed personal empathy in our feedback practices, largely based on our own cultural values, our prioritization of humanistic virtues, and recognition of our own underrepresented standing. We believe in the power of making feedback personal and empathic for students (especially minority students) to stay motivated and invested in writing.

EQUITABLE AND ASSET-BASED

Our feedback practices acknowledge the uneven preparation of student writers; our feedback supports all students, including underprepared students and students with limited exposure to the academic conventions of English who are usually less resilient to negative feedback. As a result, we argue for equitable and asset-based feedback as it encourages underprivileged students to turn perceived deficits into rhetorical resources. It boosts students' confidence and agency in amplifying their authentic voices. By prioritizing the socioaffective dimensions of feedback, our approach allows us, NNESWIs who are often marginalized and vulnerable, to recognize the strengths of our students and

encourage them to marshal their linguistic resources and achieve their writing purposes. This is an area that current literature comparing NESTs' and NNESTs' feedback practices does not fully address.

LONG-TERM GROWTH-ORIENTED

While helping students with the immediate writing tasks at hand, we recognize our desire to support students' long-term growth, which is heavily influenced by our shared Chinese culture valuing lifelong education. As the Chinese proverb “一日为师，终生为师” (translated as “once a teacher, always a teacher” in English) suggests, our sentence-level suggestions and comments on specific writing assignments, although helpful, can be transient, but the feedback on students' writing dispositions and habits and their writer mindset can be enduring. By aiming at students' long-term growth, we provide feedback that supports academic growth and the emotional well-being of students, acknowledging their efforts, strengths, and areas for improvement in a supportive manner. This resonates with the progressive pedagogical practices including ungrading on growth and the learning process (Blum 2020; Feldman 2019), prioritizing the learning journey rather than the final outcome and acknowledging progress and effort rather than a final grade.

Conclusion

Student writers, particularly underprivileged minoritized students, deserve consistent support and affirmation. To take a multidimensional approach to feedback and to make feedback personally empathic takes time and sometimes does not yield immediate favorable outcomes. Yet, we believe in the strength of such an approach in supporting equity- and asset-based pedagogical practices. For us, persisting in giving multidimensional feedback consistently has rewarded us with students' positive changes in writing and with the growth of their writer identity. Seeing students' positive feedback on our instruction and observing their improvement, especially that of minoritized students, in turn uplifts our morale and self-esteem, empowering us as NNESTs who sometimes are marginalized in the mainstream discourse of scholarship and composition teaching practices. Feeling empowered and uplifted positively influences our self-perception as effective teachers, enhancing our sense of value and belonging in academia. Through communicating with students via feedback, we perceive our own professional growth as proceeding in tandem with the growth of our students.

In this chapter, we have proposed a multidimensional approach to writing feedback pedagogy. Although the importance of feedback on linguistic and rhetorical features of writing is acknowledged, the socioaffective dimensions of feedback deserve more scholarly attention in terms of advancing equity and linguistic justice for minoritized students. These dimensions serve as a mirror to reflect students' experiences and a window to guide them toward growth (Kurzer 2022), fostering a learning environment that validates diverse linguistic identities and provides equitable opportunities. By empowering students to succeed academically while celebrating their linguistic diversity, we, as NNESWIs, believe our approach has strengths in improving the learning outcomes of student writers and promoting a more inclusive and equitable teaching-learning community.

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SECTION THREE

Looking Up

What Should Feedback Do for Students?

8

Not Just One White Way Down the Middle of the Road

*An Argument for Identity in Academic Writing
and Strengths-Based Assessment*

MICHELLE CRUZ GONZALES

Our students have been leading us to this place for years—this place where we can clearly see that Standard English (SE) is not inherently better, clearer, or more effective than any other English. For us to believe otherwise is to be *agringada* or wholly assimilated to white American culture or white middle-class ways and values—to be HOWLin.¹

HOWLin, or assessing with Habits of White Language in mind, as we've been trained, leads to a focus on errors, deficiencies, and standardization.² And what

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1. I have purposely chosen *not* to italicize non-English words used in this essay. The purpose of italicization is to call attention to or emphasize a word, as I have done in the previous sentence. Calling attention to a non-English word, or a Spanish word, as is the case with this essay, calls attention to the code-meshing when the goal of code-meshing is flow, style, and authenticity. Using a non-English word in an essay written mostly in English calls attention to itself, and italicizing non-English words singles them out, highlights to the reader that the non-English word is foreign, aberrant, non-conforming, when the purpose of code-meshing is the exact opposite.
 2. Habits of Language is a framework created by Asao Inoue to describe six language habits that are unspoken norms of monolingual English speakers. They are the presumed best and correct practices for speaking English, hyperrooted in whiteness and in American values and characteristics such as hyperindividualism and the perception of objectivity, universality, sameness, or consistency when applying rules—"a one-size fits all mentality" that does not consider other Englishes and/or languages, dialects, and vernaculars spoken in the US or their cultural wealth and rhetorical effectiveness.

do we see when we focus on errors and deficiencies? A truly antiracist practice would throw out the focus on prescriptive standards and usher in a focus on our students' ideas, their voices, and what they actually have to say rather than whether it conforms to SE. Sara P. Alvarez, Amy J. Wan, and Eunjong Lee make similar arguments in their essay "Workin' Languages: Who We Are in Our Writing Matters" (2022), asserting that some of the difficulties that many students experience "finding the 'right' words" is a side effect of the "monolingual identity" construct perpetuated in education. They call for "workin' language," arguing that through our individual idiolects, we all come equipped with a variety of strategies, rendering strict adherence to SE unnecessary: "Any time you are about to start a 'new' writing assignment, you are already equipped with ample ways of voicing and translating, with tools and ways of knowing" (5).

As a community college writing instructor, I have been hired to teach students with a wide variety of skills. Our open-access institutions require that we focus primarily on creating curricula and teaching, not doing research. As a result, for many years I was unable to keep up with the most recent scholarship on voice and feedback. However, even without it, the way I was trained to teach often made no sense, and I understood that through it, I risked harming many students. Perhaps it was my own experiences as a student whose "errors" were erroneously attributed to me being a nonnative English speaker as a result of my surname, or that I minored in Ethnic Studies, studied craft of fiction, and graduated with an MFA in English/Creative Writing (a discipline that is much more focused on fostering creativity in writing, and unique, authentic voices).³ It was probably a combination of factors, but it was most certainly the students who actively resisted the assimilationist pedagogies embedded in my English classroom who got me to change my ways.

"Ms. G, why you trying to make us sound white?"

A La Chingada with Being so Agringada

Beginning in about 2017, somehow unaware of "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (SRTOL) (Conference on College Composition and Communication

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3. While there is much to critique of the traditional stay-silent creative writing workshop model, such as is done in *The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop* by Felicia Rose Chavez (2021), the values of creative writing, its focus on creativity and finding one's voice for the purpose of making something fresh and new, are what I found empowering. I also couldn't help noticing the paradoxical nature of what I was learning about writing in my creative writing courses when I was in my literature courses, where we often read creative prose but were expected to respond to them in our whitest English.

1974) and Asao B. Inoue's *Anti-Racist Writing Ecologies* (2015a), I began actively teaching students about the importance of positionality in their writing as a strategy for developing their writer's voice.⁴ Let me quickly point out that my use of the term "voice" is in relation to the linguistic concept of idiolect and how we speak. The language/languages, dialects, and vernaculars that we use are intimately connected to identity, for "we not only use language to tell people things, but also to tell people who we are" (Barrett 2018, 25). Of course, who we are is layered and complex, which is why I would not talk about authentic voice in the classroom without also talking about positionality, all the ways we identify and how many of these identities come with their own vernacular. To bring attention to the multiplicity of our linguistic repertoires, Shawna Shapiro and Sarah Tinker Perrault (chapter 10) make the case for teaching choice instead of voice so as not to suggest that each student has and should develop a singular voice and thereby silence their other voices. The additional benefit to focusing on choice instead of voice is that choice engages the concept that writing from a place of identity or positionality broadens rhetorical choices, as do audience appeals that do not require a stifling or flattening of the author. Back in 2017, my goal was to spend more time on nuanced writing lessons that encouraged students to write from, or at least start from, a known place—the self—and to bring that self or different aspects of that self (including other languages and/or dialects) into their voicing choices, to find their way into an assignment and to make it their own, rather than performing their estimation of "academic" writing.⁵ As the first Latina hired in a full-time tenure track position in the department (in 2005, before our campus became an Hispanic-Serving Institution) and only the second full-time person of color, this move felt like a risk.

However, teaching the concept of positionality as I assigned reader-response papers privileged student perspectives and aided in accessing schema needed for navigating complex texts and creating fresh angles for their thesis-driven writing, as I had learned to do as an English major. By 2018, through teaching in a Latinx transfer-focused learning community, I began teaching myself how to assess student writing in ways that encouraged rather than discouraged writing with an accent, authentic voice, code-meshing, and storytelling.

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4. Like Darsie Bowden, I've seen and understand how the terms style and voice have been used interchangeably, or conflated, and I agree that we should be questioning the existence of a single "authentic voice." I also agree with Bowden that the concept of style—"much like the study of voice—is complex, controversial, and political. And important" (Bowden 2011).
 5. Writing from positionality is what every published writer does, whether you can see it on the page in explicit ways or not, and based on the way I teach positionality writing, this can be done in SE or through code-meshing.

Seeing how quickly these strategies improved the clarity of student prose and engagement in the process of writing, I knew I had to share my strategies with my department, but I sensed that in order to justify my pedagogy I'd need to explore the theory written by "real" experts to back me up. It was at this point that I found "Students' Right To Their Own Language," which not only confirmed the efficacy of my revised classroom practices but also validated many of my own languaging experiences as a third-generation Chicana married to a Mexican national in the United States and, similarly, the languaging experiences of many of my students.

It's unlikely that I would have become an English professor had I not been so *agringada*, but that doesn't mean that I never saw the hypocrisies of and paradoxes of our training, that I never questioned why our own logic for insisting we all write in academic English didn't add up. Unable to ignore the logic of the recurring complaints from my students, I began to see our field in contrast to those whom we serve more clearly. I made this list of things I learned through reading, research, and experience to begin to sort it all out:

- Writing teachers are taught in college to value, prioritize, and teach Standard English.
- We are also taught to believe in its superiority.
- Standard English is a version of English that came from the London dialect of English and that became the standard as a result of the printing press (Conference on College Composition and Communication 1974).
- English professors, white, or otherwise, are themselves language anglophiles or were trained by those who were.
- Writing teachers evaluate students based on the rules and grammars of Standard English.
- Most of us are ignorant of the grammars of other English dialects such as Black English Vernacular (BEV), and we view writing in BEV as riddled with error.
- Many English professors studied some linguistics and are at least familiar with how the field of linguistics values studying, understanding, and describing how languages/dialects works without passing judgment on speakers (Rickford 1979).
- Many English professors teach literature written in dialect, different Englishes, and/or experimental forms as models for writing but never expect such "creativity" or "genius" from students and expect responses to said literature in SE.

- Most English classes serve students who speak a variety of Englishes.
- And finally, the Englishes spoken by many students, the Englishes that define their regional, cultural, or class backgrounds, are a mode for cross-cultural understanding and the key to equitable languaging practices. These practices, which encourage code-meshing, foster belonging and cultivation of a writing practice that engages all of our voices in ways that are authentic to the writer.

*Not Just One White Way Down the Middle of the Road*⁶

Buoyed by the CCCC's "Students' Right to Their Own Language," I began to interrogate and reform my own grading practices. I started by taking "no slang or informal language" (code for don't be Black or Latinx or risk looking "uneducated") off my rubrics. Students often used slang or informal language to good effect, what then? In fact, students were always making writing moves that rendered my rubric useless, like the students who wrote from their hearts and made me feel some kind of way with their fierce, tender, effective rhetorical choices. Was I still supposed to mark up the paper with notes about a few fragments or run-ons that didn't impede meaning, and take off points on the rubric? Or the students whose ideas were particularly sophisticated but whose "writing hadn't quite caught up to [their] great ideas."⁷ What I was learning from my students' positionality writing and the way that this writing humanized them further (something SE often can't do) was how the quality of my written comments was at times brusque, dismissive, or too vague to be instructive, and way too focused on error.

In the 2016 essay "Literacy Narratives in the Margins," Kara Wittman asserts that the marginal comments of teachers, particularly writing professors, say as much about what the *teacher* doesn't know as they do about the students' skills and knowledge. For me, it was a stunning teacher-decentering exploration of teacher feedback, and the kind of awareness needed in teaching for two important reasons: (1) the majority of students in American schools (elementary and higher ed) are students not of white/European heritage; and (2) while the overwhelming majority of teachers are of white/European heritage (Schaeffer 2021), Wittman's observations on the general quality of teacher feedback made clear to me the flexing we do on students, or how much time we spend showing off

6. Here I am quoting Joe Strummer, singer of the The Clash, at the US Festival in 1984.

7. This is an actual comment that I used to make on student work. In my mind then, it was better than saying "your writing is filled with sentence structure errors."

what we know as we comment on what they don't. And our marginal comments reveal something else: our own ignorance about the Englishes of students, dialects, vernaculars, regionalisms, and idiolects, and this ignorance passes as the final word or authority.

There are students who object—if not to us, to one another.

The teacher just doesn't get me.

I just don't understand what she wants.

Why do I have to follow so many rules—write to a formula?

If you recognize these reactions to our feedback, it's likely because our training prioritizes, above all else, Standard English. Even called at times “proper English,” another flex. I never used the phrase “proper English,” but I was so agringada that I used to tell students to learn the rules first in order to learn how best to break them. Now, I finally understand that the rules do not reflect the realities of languaging in a multiethnic, multilingual nation.

*Sometimes the Paper Is Doper Than the Rubric*⁸

In fall of 2020, the writing of a student named Atziri—writing that was engaging, urgent, and fresh but marked as what the academy would label generation 1.5 (bilingual, born in the US, but “still working to command aspects of writing in English, especially academic writing” [Fleischer 2017])—provided the opportunity to engage in intentional antiracist feedback practices. I met Atziri when she joined the Puente Project, a first-year learning community program in California CCs in which a cohort of students take their two required English courses with the same instructor, as well as other cohort classes. Atziri was in the program online during the pandemic in the 2020–2021 academic year, and the program offered extra online office hours and study sessions. Atziri often attended these sessions from her parents' stall at the San Jose pulga, or flea market, where she worked selling boots, hats, and belts made in Mexico. She'd often be bundled up in a heavy coat, trying to keep warm while working outside. It made me wonder, if I were her, if I'd bother with office hours at all. It seemed hard, risky, and intimate. She even apologized once for having to attend my office hours while working. Meeting with her often over the year

8. Here, I'm quoting Kisha Quesada Turner, my colleague at Las Positas College and my thought partner in this work. Many of my own ideas and reflections on the related literature have been formed through discussions about the literature and subsequent practices with her.

gave me insight into how Atziri learned and how much she already knew about the world from growing up Mexicana in a mixed-status family.

During the year that Atziri was in my Puente Project class, Atziri's writing demonstrated something I admired right away. Unlike me, Atziri was not totally agringada. While it was clear that she was working hard to attempt to write like the academy, as expected by high school standards, she wrote with an accent. It wasn't too late to encourage Atziri to develop that voice, the one that thought in Spanish, the one doing the translanguaging, and the one that demonstrated passionate and sophisticated positions on a variety of topics and keen critical thinking skills in English. When I began grading Atziri's writing I was reminded of a comment on one of my essays in graduate school: "You should know this stuff by now." Thinking about this remark, made about a pattern of comma splices in my writing, still me da mucha vergüenza. Having had the experience of being shamed by teachers in elementary school, high school, and college, I have always worked hard not to shame my students or to give students another reason to hate school, but I know that before reading SRTOL, too many of my comments were racist (no slang), potentially off-putting, or too vague to be useful. Now that I was making a concerted effort to focus on "the socioaffective dimensions of feedback" (as per Ming Fang, Xuan Jiang, and Lan Wang-Hiles, chapter 7), I was hyperaware of how the quality of my comments might affect students' receptivity to feedback. What I was learning made it more clear to me how important it was to protect Atziri, her self esteem, and her sense of belonging in my classroom and at the institution at large. I wasn't going to do that nitpicking sentence structure, grammar, or punctuation.

The first essay she wrote that really caught my attention was an in-class, reader-response style essay that asked students their views on the American dream and encouraged use of personal examples and textual references to support their ideas. The texts read in preparation for the essay were *A Dream Called Home* by Reyna Grande; James Truslow Adams's definition of the American Dream; "Letter to My Son," by Ta-Nehisi Coates; and "The American Dream is Dead, And Good Riddance," by Kelly Goff. Grande's memoir mostly affirms Adams's definition of the American dream, while Coates and Goff critique it.

The personal nature of the opening of Atziri's essay and her focus on the allure of the American Dream on immigrants grabbed my attention straight away—but so did the SE "errors." I remember leaning forward in my chair, so I could see better and read faster, a sign that I was hooked, drawn in by the interesting angle. Still, the urge I felt to make suggestions to increase clarity

for practically each line despite how engaged I was in her perspective highlighted how much my own college education—and to some extent the will of my department (i.e., the content and the kind of feedback that I received on my papers)—had trained me to focus on the mistakes, which makes it very near impossible to focus on anything else. While I had made a commitment to change, it took a concerted effort to resist commenting on the sentence structure and to listen to Atziri. I had to remember how, according to Melvin Beavers (chapter 5), “the multiple intersections of [my] identity give [me] a unique perspective.” I had to remember who I was the moment I felt the sting of the shaming feedback from my professor in graduate school.

Recalling my own traumatic experiences as a student while working with Atziri, illustrated for me how a hyperfocus on “correctness” is largely designed to teach students like her to assimilate, to wholly adopt the voice of the academy—that is, to sound white.⁹ Conversely, I remember being told in graduate school that I couldn’t get an A unless the thesis ideas were unique or fresh—**so what’s more important: grammatical correctness (and whose grammar?), demonstrable creative critical thinking, or fresh ideas?** Consider these questions as you read the opening of Atziri’s essay yourself.

As a daughter and siblings of immigrants, I know that the American Dream is like an object all immigrants hope to have in their life. They hope to reach for it and live with it as long as possible. The American Dream is set to express all the wonderful things it has to offer, but most definitely never include its worse. The American Dream has given my family and I a well and settled life. It has given my siblings a workspace and education, and has given both my parents peace. But with that, we have carried hate, discrimination, racial comments, lost opportunities, and punishments. For these reasons is why I don’t believe in the American Dream.

As I read this opening, I felt the weight of the trust that Atziri put in me to share these details about her life that brought her to this critique of the American Dream (and when most students wrote to affirm the Dream), and the knowledge that I was grading an essay written on the spot. Since linguistic justice in the classroom is *not* “allowing students to write whatever they want,” I wanted

9. I’m not suggesting that we should never make comments about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. I am urging writing teachers to quit hijacking student work with marks that only show the student how much you know compared to them about SE. Duh, you’re the teacher. I also urge instructors to have a goal in mind for grading each assignment, and to even include students in that goal. Some writing professors, like Inoue, ask students if they want feedback on grammar or not.

to coach Atziri to improve her writing, but I didn't want to hijack it.¹⁰ I wanted to acknowledge what was working, not impose a bunch of rules on it that would likely interfere with the delivery of her great ideas (i.e., say it how the academy wants you to say it even if you wouldn't quite understand it put that way). It felt terribly wrong to use my feedback to justify my grade, to rag on grammar and structure, when I should be listening to what this student had to say and encouraging her to say more. I took a deep breath and shifted my focus away from the awkward phrasing, SE clarity, SE subject/verb agreement, preposition use, and the one spelling error on an in-class essay, and I wrote this instead: "Dang, what a blistering opening, very good; I hear you, your voice, your perspective."

Putting grammar and SE clarity aside gave me space to see the critical thinking moves that Atziri was making (and the kinds of intelligences used to make them), like the paradoxes that she identifies; the ways in which her family has benefitted from leaving Mexico in pursuit of the dream but also the fallout; the effects of racial discrimination, lost opportunities, and punishments. However, had I been grading this essay with colleagues using our collaboratively created rubric, much of our discussion would likely have centered on the grammar errors and SE clarity issues. Based on this old rubric (no longer used this way), this essay would likely only get a 2.5 out of 5, not a passing score. Some might discuss the critical thinking at work, or the fact that the essay was written in class in a set amount of time, but the feedback would likely be focused on the thing that all the *teachers* have in common—a "mastery" of Standard English—and not necessarily the ability to craft a nuanced critique of the American Dream based on the immigration experiences of one family that symbolizes many others like it.¹¹

Generation What?

In the opening of Atziri's essay, I saw how her non-SE pronoun use and clarity issues, especially when paired with her last name, would have many instructors label her generation 1.5. I also recognized how one phrase in particular, "carried hate," was constructed from a Spanish translation and/or Spanish speaker

10. This ("allowing students to write whatever they want") is a comment I've gotten a lot from faculty when presenting on asset-based writing instruction.

11. I put the word "mastery" in quotes to highlight the very nature of the hierarchical language still commonly used to perpetuate the top-down authoritarian nature of education and to underscore the relationship between the pressure to "master" Standard English and the pressure to assimilate people of color, nonnative English speakers, and those who speak "nonstandard" dialects or vernaculars.

accent. I chose not to comment on these “errors” in the opening so I could focus on Atziri’s ideas. I didn’t want to open my comments with SE criticism and risk damaging her confidence, but I did make some clarity suggestions on her second paragraph:

When making the decision of crossing the border and risking one’s life for a better one, definitely doesn’t compare to anything else. These people not only escape from wars or danger happening in their own countries, they escape from past traumas. They flee to make changes into becoming a better person. When they are introduced into the American Dream, they expect to live to the fullest. They stick to their minds that they will live a rich and happy life. But it’s instead the other way around. The American Dream never includes that by being an undocumented/illegal in this country could bring the worst of all. They don’t say that one will get hated on, be left out, or even become the black sheep of the club. The American Dream does not define that one will become discriminated against, while one is trying their best to become successful in America.

My first comment was about her topic sentence: “Solid topic sentence but mixed construction—take off ‘when,’ make connection to your Am Dream clearer, and it’s fixed,” which, while an improvement on my past practices, still implies “brokenness,” an implication that I’d like to avoid altogether. While Atziri’s topic sentence could be a bit stronger, it makes a solid point that is pretty well developed through the paragraph details even if they could be organized better. And I can see now that some of my confusion about Atziri’s ideas comes from the way this paragraph is organized. Of course, I, the writing teacher, would have organized it differently, but that’s not what we should be talking about.

What we should be talking about goes back to Atziri’s ideas, the high level of critical thinking demonstrated, and what she’s teaching us about the seduction of the American Dream—how far its reach extends, how it works a bit like false advertising, how irresponsible it is to promote it to people ineligible for its purported benefits, and the ways in which it has harmed her own family. We should be talking about how to guide her to best highlight the points that are most important *to her*. We could also talk about how some of the clarity issues demonstrate that Atziri doesn’t have the SE fluency that most English professors expect or desire for writing on this topic, but she does have the experience, and she is still able to get her point across in a way that is urgent and inspired. From experience, we might also hypothesize that Atziri’s writing, like that of many other students, is awkward in places because she is too focused on an attempt at performing academic prose. Rather than focusing on

the errors made by any student, why not focus the majority of our comments on what made us lean in, what is fresh, what is working, in order to guide them toward greater clarity and greater rhetorical effectiveness that will aid in further understanding, just like we would when we revise our own writing?

Within the structure of the Puente Project, I worked with and learned from Atziri in her second-semester Puente English class (a critical thinking class taught through literature). My original hunch about Atziri was correct: She was of course invested in becoming a more confident writer, but a combination of the SE expectations she had been taught and the challenge of translating her prose from Spanish to English were competing for airtime. After the previous semester of linguistic justice (LJ) curriculum, which included readings and LJ-style encouraged responses (no recommendations or restrictions regarding grammar, encouraged code-meshing, discovery drafts where anything goes, and a classroom environment in which Spanglish was spoken by teacher and students and never discouraged), the result for Atziri was a literary-style analysis essay that demonstrates an increase in clarity of her SE prose and the inclusion of code-meshing using Spanish words and phrases.¹²

And there was an additional result: Atziri began making brazen use of her cultural wealth through her use of Spanish for the purpose of literary analysis. During the revision phase of an essay that compares female rebels in the dystopian novels *We* by Evgeny Zamyatin (1924) and 1984 by George Orwell (1950), Atziri used a few Spanish words and phrases that have specific cultural connotations. This strategy made it clear how accessing these phrases/concepts as she read the texts aided understanding of what she read, as they played a major role in her textual interpretation. During the revision phase, Atziri sought my advice on how to ensure readers would understand the phrase “plan con maña,” and she opted for using a footnote system. Plan con maña is an idiom commonly used in El Salvador and Mexico to refer to a nonnefarious ulterior motive, and Atziri’s use of the idiom illustrates how being encouraged to access her mother tongue/cultural wealth aided in her keen reading of 1984 and her take on female rebels in dystopian literature. What follows is an excerpt from the third paragraph of the essay, where she discusses the character of Julia from 1984, a character that Atziri labels a chingona:

In the real world, in charge Chingonas are females who work hard, are independent from everyone and everything, believe in themselves, and motivate

12. The linguistic justice readings included “Suite for Ebony and Phonics,” by John R. Rickford (1997), the NCTE STROL statement, “This Ain’t a Statement, It’s a Demand” (Baker et al. 2020), and Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language” (1946).

themselves and others to push to become the best person one can be. As a woman reader, it's exciting to see depictions of powerful women, chingonas, but that depiction can't be separated from what appears to be disdain or fear by the male authors and how both authors' depictions of women seem to be pointing out what they believe are acceptable ways for women to behave. The chingona in 1984, Julia, begins with a note that simply addresses the words "I love you." Winston is initially suspicious by this message but eventually is triggered to know more about her. The chingona side of Julia is exposed the minute she expects to receive attention from Winston because she comes up with this perfectly planned out plan of preparing a note that will eventually be given out to a man who she will pretend to fall down in front of and hope to receive some form of attention, I'd say this would be an examples of plan con maña. It's made clear that her chief form of rebellion is habitual, and revealed by the background history of her sexuality and how she had continuous intimate relationships with multiple men before her relationship with Winston.

This excerpt of Atziri's writing from her second semester English course demonstrates an increase in clarity and control of her ideas, and the Spanish speaker's accent is now mostly voiced through her use of a sprinkling of Spanish words whose concepts highlight the cultural perspective used to interpret the text. When I first read this paragraph, I was also impressed with her choice to use the word "triggered" in the sense that it is understood by GenZ. Its usage gave me additional insight into the way Atziri sees the world from the positionality of her generation and therefore into her reading of the text, and it helped me see Winston and Julia's intentions regarding him in a fresh way.

Perhaps Atziri's freshest usage of language, though, is her use of the phrase plan con maña. By seeing Julia as a the celebrated chingona, Atziri was able to see her not as a promiscuous, sex-obsessed girl but rather as a young woman born into a totalitarian system and still not totally brainwashed by it. In Atziri's reading of the text, Julia isn't simply reacting or acting out; she has, instead, developed a intelligently crafted PLAN to save her own ass and get some pleasure while doing it. Reading the essay the first time, I nearly fell off my chair as I pumped my fist in the air and shouted out of the sheer joy of knowing such a thinker and writer.

The Less Shitty Rubric

My experiences coaching Atziri and her writing pushed me to develop my own plan con maña, or way forward for my assessment practices. It can be hard for

teachers to change teaching practices that were learned as early as the lower grades and reinforced in graduate school by professors, the academy, and society at large, but now I was never going back. Over the year that I worked with Atziri, I was also in a phase of rejecting rubrics, even though I was teaching online during the pandemic and using Canvas, which has a built-in rubric feature that many writing instructors use. My English department does not require the use of rubrics, but holistic grading rubrics are encouraged because they help us track student learning outcomes—because, according to writing pedagogy theory, “Rubrics demystify the implicit expectations of an assignment” (Schroering 2023). However, I have always disliked rubrics because while they purport to detail expectations for writing, they are still hard to read and track. They are too loaded with information and teacher jargon, synonymous use of words like thesis, thesis statement, main idea, and position, and vague words like “prose,” or disingenuous word usage like “clarity” when what is meant is rather specific to clarity in SE. And then there’s the way the grid of a rubric works like borders or jails, keeping some language styling in and some out, the way I’d often have to fudge the rubric to not give a C or a B to a paper that made use of a “nonstandard” form but was so innovative that it actually deserved an A. There are just too many ingenious moves that students can make that we couldn’t possibly anticipate on a traditional rubric.

During the 2021–2022 school year, I combined my strengths-based assessment and grading feedback practices with additional insight from my students and created the questions that are now on what I call the LSR or the less shitty rubric. The LSR itself was originally designed for a teacher training workshop. Since we began presenting on linguistic justice practices in the fall of 2020, my colleague Kisha Quesada Turner and I had been asked numerous times how to grade code-meshed writing or writing produced in linguistic justice classrooms. I resisted the idea of creating another rubric, but decided that if we were to create one, it would embody linguistic justice values. I created the first LSR by following these guiding questions:

1. How can we show that we value risk-taking, code-meshing, etc?
2. How do we respond in a way that a student understands/doesn’t shut them down?
3. How do we account for style, originality, and multilingualism in our assessment tools?

Creating the guiding questions is the most important part of the process. With guiding questions and goals for your own assessment practices, a variety of

TABLE 8.1. Sample less shitty rubric (LSR)

<i>Feedback and questions for the writer</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Encouragement/praise</i>
	Does the writing make you want to lean in or engage?	
	Does the tone or style make the writing unique?	
	Does the writing have purpose, focus, a unique idea, or perspective?	
	Does the essay meet the goals of the assignment?	

different rubrics for different types of writing assignment can be created, hopefully with input from the students in the very class you are about to assess.

To create the actual LSR (see table 8.1), I started with the concept of a single point rubric adapted by Asao B. Inoue from Jennifer Gonzalez because it's a cleaner, pared down rubric. Gonzalez's rubric focuses on standards and uses language such as "areas that need work" and "evidence of exceeding standards;" whereas Inoue's rubric focuses on what he calls dimensions, areas of writing that he and his students decide collectively to work on and improve (Inoue 2015b). To meet my own linguistic justice goals, I wanted the rubric to foster collaborative learning between teacher and student, hence the column for feedback and questions.

The questions on the rubric are interconnected and designed to encourage descriptive rather than prescriptive feedback. Additionally, when the teacher asks honest questions about student ideas, words, and phrasing rather than assuming anything nonstandard or unfamiliar is an error, the teacher can learn from the student, and the student is more willing to **take writing risks such as engaging authentic voice/code-meshing**. Asking questions and focusing on what makes us lean in and engage—on what's unique—is my way of **keeping the student engaged in the feedback process without shutting down** or getting overwhelmed by comments focused on "errors" rather than the ideas the teacher purported to care about when posing the essay question. And not focusing on so-called errors and demonstrating on our rubrics a desire for **style, originality, and multilingualism** encourages students to write in "they own English" (Young 2010) and to *not* sacrifice their own identities in order to "learn how to write." As I learned from my student Atziri, this is an especially important goal, given that our adult students are people "already equipped

with ample ways of voicing and translating, with tools and ways of knowing” (Alvarez et al. 2022).

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9

Listening to Student Writers' Questions

Linguistic Justice in Student-Led Feedback

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Traditional feedback, where instructors and peers provide unsolicited commentary on student writing, places respondents in a hierarchical position over student writers. This type of feedback, no matter how well-intentioned, positions givers of feedback as the central authority; the writers are passive receivers, reading someone else's thoughts about their work. Feedback given this way upholds what reams of research and pedagogical practices regarding how to *give* writers feedback highlight (Formo and Stallings 2014a; Stallings and Formo 2014). Research tells respondents how to give feedback in a myriad of contexts—for example, as instructors, as peers, and as writing center tutors (Formo and Stallings 2014a). If feedback's goal is to “move students forward as writers” (Sommers 2006, 250), then traditional feedback frequently fails the writers in our classrooms, since it is often the feedback-giver's agenda moving forward, not the writer's agenda. However, some scholars challenge traditional feedback; for example, Robert A. Nash and Naomi E. Winstone (2017) say feedback should be a shared responsibility, while others, like Dawn M. Formo and Lynne M. Stallings (2014a) and Rachel Ruegg (2020), encourage student writers to solicit the feedback they seek to increase writerly agency. Importantly, both Cameron Becker (chapter 1) and Analouise Keating (2007)

call on teachers to develop “new teaching tactics” (Keating 2007, 10). Still, top-down feedback from instructors and peers remains the central practice in many composition classrooms.

In 2014, the four of us, teaching various types of writing-intensive courses at our Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) in Southern California, developed a question-based pedagogy (QBP), explained below, to disrupt traditional feedback practices and place students intentionally at the center of the feedback process. Collectively, we teach at one regional state university and two community colleges, with our courses including predominantly first-year writing-intensive courses with some upper-division writing courses for the Literature and Writing major. Traditionally, student writers are often told to get feedback, but they are rarely taught *how* (Formo and Stallings 2014a). In our question-based classrooms, we create a question-asking culture, one where students lead the feedback process and we as respondents listen to their questions, providing only the feedback students request (Baker et al. 2021). We developed our QBP over several years. Despite our differences as instructors as well as the differences in our institutions and courses, we found commonalities among our students’ perceptions of QBP. These commonalities prompted us to delve deeper and listen to what they said about the process.

In 2020, during the pandemic, the context in which QBP existed in our classrooms changed. We had recently completed our first QBP research study, which examined over four hundred student perceptions of QBP, and engaged in countless workshop and conference presentations. Due to the pandemic, we were forced to move to online-only instruction. Then, George Floyd was murdered by the police. The pandemic and George Floyd’s murder collided in ways that exposed systemic inequities in education and society at large, making many people, including educators like us, reexamine practices that contribute to systemic racism.

In response, we researched antiracist pedagogies (Baker-Bell 2020) as well as both Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings 1995) and Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay 2018; Hammond 2015). The racial reckoning prompted our institutions to offer much-needed training focused on equity. Drawing on our institutional training and insights from equity-focused research, we recognized intersections with our students’ perspectives on QBP. These intersections called for a second study that included 472 student logs collected in classes offered from fall 2020 to fall 2021. We, along with fifteen undergraduate research interns, analyzed the logs to further understand how

students experienced QBP during this tumultuous moment.¹ Our students taught us that QBP promotes listening, student-to-student engagement and community building, and writerly agency. We contend that (1) listening must be at the center of any classroom ecology that prioritizes linguistic justice, and (2) QBP creates conditions for linguistically just feedback.

What Is a Question-Based Pedagogy? Question Asking, Reflection, and Revision

A question-based pedagogy redefines the instructor's role in the feedback process from central authority to active listener, fostering a feedback ecology that values both instructor and peer feedback, placing writers at the center. To ensure the writer is at the center, the instructor must infuse three familiar pedagogical constants from day 1 of the semester: question asking, revision, and reflection. While question asking, revision, and reflection are established pedagogical practices, in a QBP classroom, these familiar elements prioritize student-led inquiry. Simply stated, the degree to which question asking is taught and practiced as a way to center student writers in the feedback process is QBP's innovation.

In the traditional feedback model, students submit their writing to peers and their instructor and wait for unsolicited feedback. In contrast, writers in a question-based class include three questions with their rough and final drafts, and peer and instructor respondents answer the writers' questions and *only* their questions. The feedback instructors and peers might be inclined to provide is not privileged in the QBP classroom, but the writers' questions are. If a student forgets to ask questions, which rarely happens intentionally, they do not receive feedback. Simply stated, no questions from the writer=no feedback from a peer or teacher respondent.

It is not unusual for instructors using a traditional feedback model to ask students to jot down questions about their writing at the top of their papers before turning them in. However, in a QBP class, questions are not a quick add-on as a paper is being submitted. Students' questions about their writing are at the center of the feedback pedagogy. Students have near daily low-stakes opportunities to practice asking, responding to, reflecting on, and

1. We thank our research interns for their thoughtful engagement and partnership in this research: Jacob Atencio, Gracie Azua, Morgan Bartholomew, Emilee Beck, Kaila Cain, Maria Jungers, Lily Leos, Maddie Lopez, Stephanie Martinez, Esmeralda Quijada, Brittney Scardina, Katherine Sinclair, Esmeralda Quijada, Destinee Taylor, Mariah Wade, and Rachel Woodward.

revising questions about their writing.² As QBP instructors, we don't expect students to know how to ask questions, so we start teaching students how to ask questions on day 1. The pedagogy of question asking begins with our syllabi where we outline the many ways in which students will ask questions over the course of the semester. Nearly every classroom activity focuses on ways to help students learn how to ask questions and think critically. We, as teachers, promote discussions of the questions themselves, creating opportunities for students to revise their questions to promote critical thinking and question revision. In other words, the acts of asking questions, reflecting on the effectiveness of the questions, and revising questions so students can receive answers that match their needs happen in nearly every class session (Baker et al. 2021). As we teach students how to ask questions, we teach ourselves and peer respondents how to listen to student writers, privileging the writer's agenda. These exchanges create a dialogue among student writers that fosters community while also allowing them to take charge of the feedback process and their writing.

As part of the QBP course design, student writers complete metacognitive question logs and reflections after each draft and peer review asking them to list their questions, reflect on the responses, and, if needed, draft new questions. At the end of the semester, students write a Final Question Log and Reflection Essay (appendix 9.A).³ These question logs and reflections are graded credit/no credit, meaning students receive full credit if they complete the assignment, and they are not graded on other factors such as our impressions of their reflections, our evaluations of their questions, or any other criteria. The question-asking process intentionally creates space for students to explore their position in the feedback process and for respondents to listen without imposing their own agendas.

QBP inherently demands that instructor and peer respondents listen to student writers' questions in order to answer them. This process directly contrasts with traditional feedback, where instructors direct the feedback to their values and concerns. Yes, students could potentially tailor their questions to what they

2. For more on how the QBP practice is innovative, see our *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* article (Baker et al. 2021), where we establish the lineage of pedagogies that make QBP new. Included in this lineage is the corpus of research focused on guiding teachers, tutors, and peer respondents on how to give feedback; research that notes students' frustration with the feedback process; and pedagogical work outside of composition studies that employ inquiry-based learning (IBL) or inquiry-guided learning (IGL) to promote question asking.
3. This Final Question Log and Reflection Essay is the data source for our current research as students' words provide crucial insights into the value of QBP.

believe are the instructor's values and concerns, but they also have the freedom to figure out their own values and concerns. Writers do not need to navigate through unsolicited feedback, but instead they learn to request feedback they believe they need, and simultaneously, instructors and peer respondents learn to listen to writers.

With our initial foray into redesigning our classrooms using QBP, we made large-scale modifications to our courses, namely our philosophical commitment to placing students at the center of the feedback process as solicitors of feedback and our concomitant deep revisions to our syllabi. Like those of Joanne Baird Giordano and Erin Lehman in chapter 13 of this collection, our syllabi emphasize student autonomy. While their syllabus statements may focus on students' rights to their own languages, our statements highlight students' central, active role in leading the feedback process. We also revised individual in- and out-of-class activities to infuse question asking, revision, and reflection. Below are examples of question-asking classroom activities we developed and incorporated into writing-intensive courses.

SAMPLE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES⁴

1. **PARAGRAPH WORKSHOP:** Prior to QBP, our students would post an essay paragraph to an online forum, and the class would provide feedback. In our question-based class, students post an essay paragraph with questions for feedback, and the class provides feedback by answering their questions. The whole class discusses questions and revises them to make them more pertinent to what the student writer wants to know.
2. **PEER REVIEW WORKSHOP:** Prior to QBP, our students would offer feedback to their peers, noting what they felt their peers should revise. In our QBP class, writers bring their questions, and peers respond only to those questions. After the workshop, the writer completes a reflection.
3. **QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TEXT WORKSHOP:** Prior to QBP, our students would complete a reading for homework and come to class to answer and discuss instructor-developed questions. In our QBP class, students develop and answer critical questions about the reading. As a whole, the class discusses effective question revision and practices the act of revising their questions. While this activity isn't directly about response or feedback, it contributes to the classroom ecology, one where learning to ask questions is ubiquitous and vital.

4. Informed by Michael Pemberton et al. (2019), we have "recycled," with slight revisions, the pedagogy portion of this article from an earlier publication.

4. **REFLECTIONS:** Prior to QBP, our students would reflect on writing and reading. In our QBP classes, students reflect on question effectiveness both throughout the process and near the close of the semester. The Final Question Log and Reflection Essay (appendix 9.A) is central in all our classes.

These activities represent a sampling of what happens in our classrooms. We infuse five-minute question-asking activities one day and full-class activities another, consistently contributing to our feedback ecology, one where students initiate the feedback process. Importantly, Asao Inoue (chapter 15) notes how writing ecologies struggle to promote linguistic justice if students are obligated to “translate the teacher’s feedback into directives.” A classroom ecology that includes an infusion of question asking, reflection, and revision makes clear to students that what they want to know or understand is important, not our directives. While the components of QBP are not new (e.g., question asking), their level of influence in the feedback ecology we have created is. As such, our feedback ecology does two important things: it values all respondents and it centers student writers as solicitors rather than mere receivers of feedback, thereby shifting linguistic power dynamics in our classrooms. This notable shift in linguistic power dynamics responds to calls for culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies and new teaching tactics that promote students’ agency.

Literature Review: Listening as Linguistic Justice

In 1995, Gloria Ladson-Billings introduced Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), shifting the way many instructors, both in K–12 and higher education, thought about their pedagogical practices. For Ladson-Billings (1995), CRP “helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity” (469). Twenty years later, April Baker-Bell (2020), in *Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy*, breaks down how classrooms still privilege “White Mainstream English,” which is antithetical to Ladson-Billings’s idea about supporting students’ cultural identities. Baker-Bell explains why “telling children that White Mainstream English is needed for survival can no longer be the answer” (6), and how “when Black students’ language practices are suppressed or they begin to absorb anti-Black messages that imply that their language is deficient, wrong, or unintelligent, this can cause them to develop a linguistic double consciousness or negative attitudes about themselves and their linguistic, racial, cultural, and intellectual identities” (27). She calls upon writing instructors to resist

privileging White Mainstream English (WME).⁵ To move toward linguistic justice, then, teachers need to validate students' language practices, affirming students' cultural identities and building community in our classrooms.

As writing instructors, we specifically look at the ways in which feedback practices can support or deny students' cultural identities. Traditional feedback generally comes in the form of directives, where instructors and peers tell students what to do to improve the paper; those directives, Inoue notes, teach students to be "submissive" (chapter 15). Formo and Stallings (2014b), in "Where's the Writer in Response Research? Examining the Role of the Writer as Solicitor of Feedback in (Peer) Response," note students' frustrations with traditional feedback. In fact, Richard Higgins, Peter Harley, and Alan Skelton (2002) explain that students often find feedback too complex, and Elizaveta Sopina and Rob McNeill (2015) comment that teachers often value feedback more than students value feedback (667). Despite these concerns, traditional response practices persist. Shane Wood (2020) contributes to arguments about the significant shortcomings of traditional feedback: "Teacher response to student writing can perpetuate inequalities and inequities just as much as assigning letter-grades on language practices reinforce power and control" (1). Wood (2020) calls upon teachers and students together to "analyze genres of response for the purpose of resisting habits of White language" (9). As writing instructors, we can ask this question: What feedback practices validate cultural identities and resist privileging WME? Replying to student questions requires respondents to listen actively, privileging student writers' voices. In QBP, students ask questions about their writing, and both instructor and peer respondents answer only those questions (Baker et al. 2021). Writers dictate the complexity of their thinking via their questions and are more inherently invested in the feedback since it's what they want to know. In this way, respondents must listen to student writers' questions and concerns.

Many scholars have addressed the ways that listening to students helps affirm their identities. Krista Ratcliffe (2005) developed "rhetorical listening," explaining that as students begin to understand their writerly needs, teachers learn to listen rhetorically to those needs. Then, instructors can craft feedback responses that address those needs. Similarly, Inoue (2019) discusses "deep attending" or deep listening (363). He explains how "deep attending" helps instructors build patience with students, which is particularly important when

5. We use Baker-Bell's term, "White Mainstream English" (WME), for the same reason she does: "To foreground the relationship between language, race, anti-Black racism, and white linguistic supremacy" (Baker-Bell 2020, 2).

we work with students who do not act or sound like us. In chapter 15 of this volume, Inoue explains that a key aspect of linguistically just ecologies includes learning how to “listen to language more slowly, and hear it differently.” Listening to students, then, helps instructors illustrate to students their voices are valued and important. For Felicia Rose Chavez (2021), listening must happen for any change to occur: She exhorts teachers to “sustain discomfort, listen deeply, and reflect on the unsettling truth that white racism is inevitable. Only then can we endeavor change” (44). If listening engenders change, then listening is required in order to change the ecology of a writing classroom, one where linguistic justice is a priority. As Zaretta Hammond (2015) explains, Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) “feedback can communicate to [students] we have heard them” (104). Therefore, listening to our students to understand, and not just listening in an effort to challenge, as Ratcliffe (2005) says most academic reading demands, helps affirm their ideas, words, and language. Ratcliffe purports that true listening may help instructors “judge differently in that perhaps we can hear things we cannot see” (203). These scholars note that it’s important for instructors to listen to students. We add that it is equally important, as research by Muriel Harris (2014) and others have demonstrated, for students to develop feedback practices that require students to listen peer-to-peer. Harris (2014) advocates for centering student writers’ voices, in part by investing time in training peer tutors to support writers in “deciding what will happen in the time spent working on the paper” (283). That kind of peer-to-peer work requires enhanced collaboration skills, including careful listening. As our students continue to teach us, QBP creates the conditions for that deep listening, and linguistic justice cannot occur without deep listening.

Lessons Learned from Our Students: QBP Promotes “Rhetorical Listening” and “Deep Attending” by Instructor and Peer Respondents

In this qualitative study, we thematically (Braun et al. 2019) analyzed 472 Question Log and Reflection Essays, a component of QBP as noted above, exploring students’ perceptions of QBP during the fall 2020, spring 2021, and fall 2021 semesters. Through listening to students’ words, we learned invaluable lessons: listening to understand their writerly needs is at the heart of cultural validation, and listening must come from both instructors and peers.

Our positionality as researchers engaged in culturally responsive, anti-racist training created an equity lens through which we viewed our data. We recognized significant intersections between what students articulated as being

most valuable about QBP and what scholars argue that linguistically just, equity minded, culturally responsive classrooms look like. Listening to students, as noted earlier, is one major intersection between students' perceptions of QBP and equity-focused scholars. When student writers pose questions to both their instructors and peers, responses to those questions create a dialogue. QBP calls us, as teachers, to listen to our students' writing needs; it also elevates peers' voices as they listen to each other. QBP, then, is a feedback practice that relies on listening to students. Below, we detail the ways in which QBP engenders linguistic justice for students, both from their writing instructors and from their peers.

We describe three lessons learned from our students, all of which start with writers and respondents listening to one another. We use representative quotations from our students to demonstrate the lessons. In other words, the quotations used highlight common ideas and sentiments from our students that we identified during the analytical coding process. The percentage next to each lesson demonstrates the frequency with which it showed up in student reflections. Our students taught us three lessons about QBP:

- Lesson #1: Instructors and respondents must listen to student writers' needs—91%
- Lesson #2: Peers listen to writers' needs thereby creating empathetic communities—37%
- Lesson #3: Students develop writerly agency as respondents listen to their wants and needs—94%

LESSON #1: INSTRUCTORS AND RESPONDENTS MUST LISTEN TO STUDENT WRITERS' NEEDS.

When we began using this pedagogy almost ten years ago, we quickly realized we had to unlearn traditional feedback practices; in essence we had to sit on our red pen-wielding hands and refrain from adding any critique that did not directly respond to our students' questions. At times this was difficult because many students did not ask the "right" question, the one we deemed important. We so wanted to tell them, for instance, that their thesis statement needed work, but they did not ask about their thesis statement, so we, the respondents, had to "be quiet and listen," flipping Peter Elbow's (1998) roles where the writer is supposed to be quiet and listen to respondents (101–5). As instructors we had to fight against our inclination to tell students what we thought would make their essay better and only listen to what they wanted to know. This unlearning

took time and eventually paid off: Our listening helped foster trust with our students. Lynette, a first-year composition (FYC) student from what we are calling community college 1 (CC 1), stated, “It [feedback from question asking] helps you feel like they [instructors] care what you actually wrote and the time that you put in.” Christina (FYC from community college 2 [CC 2]) commented, “I loved how we had to ask questions after every essay because I would have never asked questions to the teacher in person. I would not have got the help I needed on my writing skills. It gave me a lot of confidence.” Lynette feels like the instructor cares about her writing, and Christina notes how QBP allowed her to feel comfortable to keep asking questions knowing the instructor is attending to her specific needs.

Student reflections suggest that question asking contributes to an ethos of “deep attending” (Inoue 2019, 363), allowing us to *hear* things we cannot *see* (Ratcliffe 2005, 203). Instructors are called to listen closely, to work to understand the writers’ questions—not to revise, polish, and correct the writers’ questions. Feedback stemming from student writers’ questions communicates to students that reviewers “have heard them” (Hammond 2015, 104). This feeling of being listened to creates a space for student writers to write what they deem important rather than write what they think the instructor deems important. As evidenced in our analysis of student Final Questions Logs and Reflection Essays, 91 percent of students make clear that QBP demands that instructors and peer respondents must listen to the writers’ needs.

Students also implied they felt listened to, and this implication showed up in several ways: students changed their questions based on feedback from others, and students acknowledged the audience and readers. For example, Andrea (CC 2, FYC) wrote, “Then as I started to receive some feedback I knew I had to ask more thorough questions to get better feedback. When I did that I started to see the difference in the feedback I was getting and it was just helping me a lot more with my essay.” Here, Andrea knows that someone is carefully reading—in a sense, listening to—her questions and responding. Knowing someone is listening prompts Andrea to revise her questions in ways that generated a response that she deemed more helpful because she got better feedback. Jessica (CC 1, FYC) advised future students to “develop a relationship with the reader [by asking questions].” Jessica’s insights not only demonstrate audience awareness but also her understanding that readers are part of her writing process and that writing is social. Andrea’s comments suggest that question asking can create partnerships with readers and writers. Her words, a representative example, make clear: Students want feedback from others. Our

students teach us that question asking creates both a desire for feedback and an awareness of the relationship between readers and writers.

**LESSON #2: PEERS LISTEN TO WRITERS' NEEDS
THEREBY CREATING EMPATHETIC COMMUNITIES.**

Community-building in a writing class is not typically an institutionally required learning outcome in our courses, but it is often an instructor's wish if not intention. We know writing is a social act, and community-building is foundational. During the height of COVID, when we were forced to teach online, we were struck by students' comments about QBP and community-building during this lived, locked-down reality. Many (37%) indicated they felt a sense of community through the act of question asking. The dialogue created by questions made students feel like they were part of a larger community. Megan (a state university student in a 300-level, major-based writing course) wrote, "We started a group chat and have kept communication open the entire time. We have all been understanding of the struggles we're all going through right now, and because of that, we have been more open to putting in extra time so that we all succeed. We have spent so much time reviewing each other's papers that we feel invested in everyone's success." Megan shows how the dialogue created through questions created a community, a community "invested in everyone's success." The connection between community and learning is notable. In fact, in Geneva Gay's (2018) description of Culturally Responsive Teaching, a key element is community: "Students are expected to work together and are held accountable for one another's success" (44). While we do not and cannot require students to be accountable for peers' success, Megan articulates how she felt everyone was "more open" to everyone's success, something traditional feedback may not produce since it's often a directive from the respondent (peer or instructor).

As the students' examples make clear, this community extends well beyond the instructor, and it provides many things the instructor alone cannot provide. As instructors, we are not students' friends because we are not their peers; rather, when students are in our classes, we are their allies. But students need friends to feel part of a greater community. Mark (State U, FYC 2) wrote, "I can recall many times I've asked and concurred with my fellow classmates because I was confused on a certain topic, and it was resolved every time. Making connections in the classroom can not only help students with their academics, but also help them get out of their comfort zone and even make friends." Mark speaks to the value of building relationships among his peers and sees how

that community can support its members in “their academics.” One way peers support one another is to allow a safe space for taking risks, for getting out of “their comfort zone.” Students learn to trust one another and become friends. Ana (State U, FYC 2) echoes this, “Lastly, making friends in the class will go a long way. You will have someone you can rely on for help as well or just as a study buddy. It’ll help not [*sic*] feel alone or struggle alone.” Student responses to QBP suggest that trusting others lays the foundation for community building, which ultimately creates “collective, not merely individual, empowerment” (Ladson-Billings 1995, 160).

Students build each other up as writers, as thinkers, as language users. Although students do not comment on translanguaging or what Vershawn Ashanti Young describes as code-meshing, through their reflective descriptions of their experiences employing QBP they show us language and culture mesh in ways that create community for them. Jasmine (State U, FYC 2) explained, “It was helpful receiving feedback from students who have gone through somewhat of the same racial experiences as myself.” What stands out about Jasmine’s comment is that it is unprompted; nowhere in the Final Question Log and Reflection do we ask about race. More important, while Jasmine’s comment is unique, her experience is not. Many students make clear that they experience this when they share their writing and have conversations about their questions and feedback. As white, cisgender female instructors, we cannot offer what other students can, especially given the cultural diversity and therefore richness evident on our campuses. Jasmine’s words capture what Baker-Bell (2020) claims at the outset of *Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy*: “People’s language experiences are not separate from their racial experiences” (2). They come together; they mesh. Thus, they remind us of students’ inherent power in using the questions, words, phrases, and languages that work best for them. When students listen attentively to understand *before* responding to other students rather than listening to challenge, they validate one another’s linguistic experiences by acknowledging their humanity.

Working in a writing community provides scenarios for students to work with others, thinking about how they can respond to one another’s writing—their perspectives—something directive feedback, again, may not provide space for. Robert (CC 1, FYC) states, “One of the things that I didn’t expect was how much the process of answering other people’s questions could benefit your own writing. I found myself going back and making changes to my own work based on feedback I had given other people. Sometimes you don’t

noticed [*sic*] things you do until you see someone else do them. I think the important part is being self-aware enough to realize it.” Here we see that the process of responding to others’ questions helped Robert see the value of peer review—of community; also, perhaps more important, Robert developed his agency in the classroom as a writer because of his experiences using QBP in the classroom community.

LESSON #3: STUDENTS DEVELOP WRITERLY AGENCY AS RESPONDENTS LISTEN TO THEIR WANTS AND NEEDS.

When instructors and peers listen to student’s needs and wants during the feedback process, they develop writerly agency. In fact, as we learned from our students’ Final Question Log and Reflection Essays, an overwhelming majority of students (94%) commented on the ways in which question asking developed what we define as writerly agency. Students noted higher levels of confidence as writers and explained how their ability to identify their own writing weaknesses improved. They also self-reported their writing as better, stronger, or having improved. For example, Noah (State U, FYC 1) explains, “As the semester progressed, and more information about my writing style was fed back to me, I felt more confident in my own abilities, as well as my weaknesses, and knew more or less about the areas that need attention, and where an outside look at my writing would go a long way.” As Noah was learning through the responses to his questions, it made him feel more confident as a writer and thinker moving forward. His questions were soliciting feedback he believed was helping him learn about himself as a writer.

Another student, Emily (CC2, FYC), writes, “Asking questions helped me to come up with more original questions. It has improved my process of self evaluation. I don’t just ask myself the same set of questions, but I challenge what new things I can uncover about my writing.” Asking questions helped Emily critique her own writing, showing a desire to learn and grow. Importantly, we also see a desire to receive feedback and improve, showcasing how with QBP, feedback can be “actionable” (Hammond 2015, 104). Additionally, this desire suggests a trust writers have in their reviewers, which we assume is because they maintain control of their writing with question-based feedback.

Moreover, with QBP, students’ voices are validated, namely because they ask questions in their own languages about their own writerly needs and wants. Student writers maintain control of their writing in this way, which builds writerly agency. When we, as responders, listen to our students by responding only to those needs and wants rather than assume we know what

those needs and wants are, they develop confidence. Some students ask about furthering their content and ideas using their language choices, while some ask about WME grammar and other dominant language practices. QBP cannot dismantle years of systemic problematic and often racist language practices in a single semester. By answering their questions, however, including their grammar or sentence-level questions, we are helping them see there is not one perfect way of writing. In chapter 1 of this volume, Becker discusses how perfectionism reinforces Standard Edited American English (SEAE), and that this kind of teaching has strong roots in US schools. Many of our students come from this kind of teaching, so they ask questions about SEAE, often thinking that it is the correct thing to do. However, once their question is answered, students appear to deprioritize WME grammar and move forward as writers by asking different questions. QBP challenges practices that contribute to “a linguistic double consciousness” (Baker-Bell 2020, 27) by deemphasizing instructor feedback directives and prioritizing students’ feedback preferences, using their language of choice. When we respond only to a student’s questions, we avoid taking control over student writing and asserting our own agendas. Alternatively, when feedback takes control of student writing, it can communicate to students that their language is inferior. Moreover, as noted by Michelle Cruz Gonzales in chapter 8 of this volume, “The general quality of teacher feedback made clear to me the flexing we do on students, or how much time we spend showing off what we know as we comment on what they don’t.” This kind of feedback can impact student confidence, making them feel inferior and, and Baker-Bell (2020) asserts, leads to “negative attitudes about themselves and their linguistic, racial, cultural, and intellectual identities” (27). With question-based feedback, however, students have a positive response and frequently tell us they are more confident as writers, they feel more capable of identifying their own strengths and weaknesses, and their writing skills improve.

As instructors we are doing our part, too, by teaching students how to ask questions and putting them in situations where they must ask one another questions and provide feedback to those questions. Students’ responses to QBP suggest that this pedagogical practice and process opens space for empathetic dialogue grounded in what writers self-identify as their writerly questions and needs. In doing so, QBP appears to create communities that not only members write better but, perhaps more important, help them create “collective [. . . linguistic] empowerment” (Ladson-Billings 1995, 160). They experience the power of their questions and the linguistic learning that follows.

At the core of QBP is question asking. Responding to writer-generated questions with genuine curiosity demands careful listening. The lessons our students continue to teach us through their reflections about QBP suggest that the careful listening *before* responding engendered by this pedagogy is about acknowledging and hearing the question-asker as a person and a writer rather than as a student whose thinking and language need to be fixed. QBP then creates the pedagogical conditions for linguistic justice.

Limitations and Future Directions

We did not design this study to explore question-based pedagogy vis-à-vis linguistic justice, and this highlights our first limitation. Instead, we designed a study with the goal of listening to our students. We wanted to understand what students said about the process of asking questions for feedback in courses that were almost all fully online during the COVID-19 pandemic. George Floyd's murder, the racial reckoning that followed, and our students' reflections about QBP, especially those comments connected to community-building, called us to continue researching linguistic justice, culturally relevant pedagogies, and antiracist teaching practices. In doing so, we recognized overlap among what students said about QBP, our themes generated from student reflections, and what teacher-scholars say in areas of research noted above. In other words, the study was not designed through the lens of listening as a critical step toward linguistic justice, yet we generated themes illustrating how a question-based pedagogy demands "rhetorical listening" and "deep attending," both of which, our students taught us, are central to antiracist teaching, CRT, and CRP. Therefore, we hope future research, from us and others, explicitly explores students' desires vis-a-vis feeling heard, potentially finding other ways response can help us listen to students.

Secondly, and more important, another limitation resides in our classrooms. QBP needs additional translingual practices, because as long as we as instructors are teaching a traditional academic essay, student questions will echo the language of the traditional WME academic essay. Instructors can augment QBP by teaching alternative essay formats such as counterstory (Martinez 2020) and code-meshing (Young 2013), and we can answer Qian-quian Zhang-Wu's (2021) call to teach that all speakers are translingual. This understanding may motivate students "who are already socially, linguistically, culturally, and racially minoritized" to create "translingual text[s]" (125). The combination of QBP with other translingual pedagogies such as Zhang-Wu's

can potentially empower students to write with their own voices. When that happens in our classrooms, our field will be upholding CCCC's (1974) "Students' Right to Their Own Language" position statement. However, until our classrooms move away from traditional assignments and notions of "correct" writing, shifting the whole classroom ecology, our results will always be held within some dominant frameworks.

Our students' reflections highlight ways in which QBP supports culturally responsive feedback practices: specifically, listening to our students. They illustrate how WME often controls how we teach academic writing. Importantly, our students are showing us how QBP contributes to feedback practices that promote students' linguistic agency and how it may help to demote, if not dismantle, WME feedback practices once the "submission" that Inoue notes is removed. Their words call us to continue this research so that we can understand more fully both the theory and practices of antiracist feedback. Ultimately, we aim to create classrooms that welcome and honor our students' full linguistic agency and fluency. We are sure to learn much from our students about linguistic justice as we continue to engage in "deep listening," when our classrooms are abuzz with translanguaging and code-meshing during the feedback process and more. In the end, our students show how QBP calls us to listen deeply to them, which engenders linguistic justice in our classrooms.

Appendix 9.A. Final Question Log and Reflection Essay

DIRECTIONS: Use all of your Question Feedback Logs and Reflection assignments for reference as you write the Final Reflection.

List the questions you asked for each essay. Then, write a long reflection about the process of asking questions and receiving feedback. I will provide more details about this reflection below.

OVERALL REFLECTION: Please provide a thoughtful and detailed response that includes answers to all the following questions. Your response should be one single piece of writing. Remember, you already have support for your reflection: your questions! In other words, use your questions and the feedback you received as evidence for your response—both from peers and your instructor. Please do not simply list answers to the below questions. Instead, write a cohesive, organic reflection. Your response should be around 300 words long.

1. As the semester progressed, what changed about the questions you asked?

2. What were the benefits of you asking questions in order to receive feedback?
3. What were your challenges in asking questions in order for you to receive feedback?
4. Imagine you've been invited to meet the students in my next question-based class. What advice would you give to future question-based classes? Please say more than "ask questions." 😊

Note: We included the following question during Fall 2020, Spring 2021, and Fall 2021.

COVID-19 Update: During the pandemic, we have amended this prompt to include the following:

Part 1:

1. In a non-COVID semester, would you have taken this class online? **Yes or No**
2. Rank your satisfaction with the question-based feedback process used in this course by choosing a response to the following statement that best aligns with your experience: **question-based feedback is effective.**
 1. Strongly Agree
 2. Agree
 3. Neutral
 4. Disagree
 5. Strongly disagree

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10

A Critical Language Awareness Approach to Feedback and Response

Critical Pragmatism in Action

SHAWNA SHAPIRO AND SARAH TINKER PERRAULT

A growing number of writing studies scholars are calling for pedagogical approaches oriented toward Critical Language Awareness (CLA), particularly for multilingual and multidialectal writers (e.g., Baker-Bell 2020; Gere et al. 2021; Shapiro 2022; Weaver, chapter 11). The heart of CLA is an ideological commitment to what Alistair Pennycook (1997) calls **critical pragmatism** (see also Ruecker and Shapiro 2020). We must critique and change institutional cultures and structures that disadvantage students from linguistically diverse backgrounds (Charity Hudley et al. 2022; Clements and Petray 2021; Schreiber et al. 2021). At the same time, we must make sure students have access to learning about effective communication within institutions as they are today. Balancing these goals is, in our view, central to achieving linguistic justice for students from marginalized linguistic backgrounds, so that those students feel seen, supported, and empowered to achieve their goals in the academy and beyond. Maintaining this balance, however, can be particularly challenging—especially when it comes to responding to student writing.

This chapter asks: How can we respond to writing in ways that both affirm language difference as an asset and empower students to make informed choices as writers? We explain how CLA helps answer this question, then provide some CLA-based guidelines for response to writing.

Our Backgrounds and Positionality

Shawna's main expertise is in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) and applied linguistics, while Sarah's is in rhetoric and composition. We both teach writing to students from a variety of language backgrounds, including multilingual and multidialectal writers. We are white women who were raised speaking a fairly standardized/mainstream variety of English, although Shawna spoke with a Southern US accent as a younger child and was aware that this accent is stigmatized in many parts of the US. We also have studied languages other than English (Shawna studies and uses Spanish and French; Sarah studies and uses Spanish and Turkish), and there are other languages that are important in our lives for cultural purposes (e.g., Hebrew prayers for Shawna). We also work with faculty teaching writing in a range of disciplines, and Sarah directs the Writing Intensive Curriculum (WIC) program at her institution.

Despite our different disciplinary orientations and different institutional contexts—one a small, private liberal arts context and the other at a large research-intensive land grant university—we both see CLA as a means of ensuring that our curricula are linguistically inclusive and rhetorically empowering. We are committed to linguistic justice, which, following Eunjeoung Lee, Jennifer Johnson, and Brooke Schreiber (2021), we see happening through “efforts to recognize, sustain and advocate for students’ relationships, experiences and histories with different languages and literacies, away from the racializing and monolingual ideologies” (5), as well as class-based, gender-based, and other harmful ideologies.

Critical Language Awareness: Committing to Rhetorical Agency

The CLA framework focuses on intersections among language, identity, power, and privilege (Alim 2005; Janks 2010; Shapiro 2022) and recognizes that *every writer*, no matter their language background, has a complex linguistic repertoire that includes a variety of styles, codes, and/or languages. Our aim as writing teachers is to help them expand and draw on that repertoire in a variety of rhetorical situations. Although we know that all language varieties are equal in terms of their expressive capability and their value in people's lives, we also must keep in mind that not all language varieties are *treated* equally. Our writing curricula and instruction can and should work to resist the harm that comes from linguistic discrimination, particularly when it comes to users of marginalized language varieties.

A CLA perspective invites us to be both progressive and pragmatic in how we approach linguistic norms and standards. We recognize that the privileging of standardized English at US educational institutions causes harm to users of other languages (e.g., Clements and Petray 2021)—particularly for users of Black/African American English, who are frequently linguistically profiled in academic and professional settings (e.g., Baker-Bell 2020; Charity Hudley et al. 2022; Smitherman 2021). We must take seriously the calls for equitable treatment of Black Language speakers (e.g., Baker-Bell et al. 2020). At the same time, we must also recognize that many students—particularly those from less privileged backgrounds—want instruction in standardized English and academic discourse as part of their rhetorical education. Of course, this desire is reinforced by problematic ideologies that tell students that other language varieties are inappropriate or inferior (e.g., Baker-Bell 2020; Flores and Rosa 2015). This is why we use a “both/and” approach that promotes linguistic justice while also asking the question: *How are we helping students meet their own short-term and long-term goals as writers?* As white scholars who had access to privileged varieties of English at home and in school, we do not see it as our place to decide for students whether or not they should have access to that variety. Instead, we teach critical literacies in all of our classes, which includes explaining the ideologies and strategies of code switching, code-meshing, and translanguaging, and we work with students to help them develop the language resources they determine are best for them.

A CLA approach helps us through its explicit commitment to increasing students’ **rhetorical agency**—that is, their ability to make informed choices as language users—no matter what code/variety they are using (Gere et al. 2021; Shapiro 2022; see also Baker-Bell 2020 on Black Language specifically). For some assignments or situations, a student might be eager to resist or play with typical conventions for a particular genre, audience, style, etc. But for other situations—particularly those that are high-stakes—they might choose to conform quite closely with those conventions. This decision to conform is not a capitulation: It is often a calculated choice. Yet for students to be prepared to make these decisions about conventions and conformity, they need opportunities to engage both with standardized English and with other language varieties. Although some scholars have criticized this “both/and” approach (e.g., Canagarajah 2013; Flores and Rosa 2015; Young 2014), others have argued that such an approach is a means of ensuring that students are fully prepared to exercise their writerly agency (e.g., Delpit 1992; Hankerson 2022). Geneva Smitherman, who has been adamant in her advocacy for Students’ Right to

Their Own Language (SRTOL—see, e.g., Smitherman 1995) has argued that there is a still place for standardized English (which she refers to as the “Language of Wider Communication”—e.g., 1987; 2017) within literacy curricula. However, she specifies that this emphasis must be “promoted as an integral part of a policy which includes recognition, use, and acceptance of the native tongue” (Smitherman-Donaldson 1987, 31). More recently, Smitherman (2017) has herself drawn attention to the value of a CLA approach as a means of “teaching students to understand and master the power of language” so that they may “deploy it to empower themselves” (6).

One CLA concept that helps us understand this process of writerly empowerment is **indexicality**—that is, the way that language (like one’s index finger) “points to” different social identities and group memberships (for more about positionality and idiolect, see Gonzales, chapter 8). Conforming with a rhetorical norm or convention is one way to signal belonging to a particular discourse community. Choosing to violate that norm or convention, conversely, might be read as an attempt to distance oneself from that community. For example, using passive voice in an article’s Methods section (e.g., “The data were collected . . .”) is thought to reflect the commitment to objectivity and/or neutrality. Deciding to use active voice (e.g., “We collected the data” or “The research assistants collected the data”) might cause some readers, including reviewers, to question the researcher’s trustworthiness and might increase the likelihood that the article will be misinterpreted or rejected. Some writers may decide this risk is warranted—for example, to increase transparency or to recognize the labor of nonauthors in a study. Writers may also see the passive voice as reinforcing a notion of objectivity that antiracism experts have rightly criticized as part of a white supremacist culture in the academy (Harding 1993; Okun 2023; Smith 2012). But most still feel pressure to continue using the conventional passive voice, especially if it is what journal editors request. (See Inzunza 2020 for more on the debate around active and passive voice among scientists.) These are the sorts of nuances we share with students writing about methods.

Indexicality also affects how we respond to student writing. (For a useful approach to developing more self-awareness as faculty, see Weaver, chapter 11 in this volume.) What relationships do we want to build with and among students, and how might our feedback strategies signal or (in some cases) hinder that relationship? Put another way, how might we treat our feedback practices as relational—not just transactional? By thinking carefully about the *why*, *when*, *how*, and *what* of our feedback, we can build students’ rhetorical agency and affirm their developing identities as writers in the academy and beyond.

This agency and affirmation is at the heart of a linguistically just rhetorical education (Baker-Bell 2020; Mecucci Springer et al., chapter 9 in this volume; Schreiber et al. 2021; Shapiro 2022). The four guidelines discussed below help us respond to student writing in ways that align with these intentions:

1. Use feedback as part of a sustained dialogue with students about their goals and choices.
2. Sequence and tailor feedback to fit the student, the stage in the writing process, and the nature of the writing task.
3. Prioritize choice over voice and clarity over correctness.
4. Comment pragmatically and grade progressively, taking labor, growth, and reflection into account.

Feedback as Sustained Dialogue

As discussed in this volume's chapters by Lauren M. Mecucci Springer et al. (chapter 9) and Megan M. Weaver (chapter 11), we can increase students' linguistic agency and engagement by approaching the feedback process as a sustained dialogue. Given our central goal of increasing students' rhetorical agency, we try to begin the feedback process early in the term by **gathering information from students** about their experiences, needs, and goals as writers. This can happen via short meetings, reflective writing assignments, or data collection tools, such as Directed Self-Placement surveys. Sarah has adapted a tool called the **Writer's Personal Profile (WPP)**, developed by Robinson and Burton (2009) for use by faculty teaching writing-intensive courses in all majors.¹ In this document, students reflect on their understanding of "good writing," their history as writers, the genres they are most/least comfortable with, and their goals for the term.

Sarah uses this tool as a starting point for individualizing her curriculum, including her feedback. She has found that students' existing strengths (what Juan C. Guerra [2008] calls "learning incomes"), needs, and goals vary widely. In one class, they ranged from international students majoring in business, who were looking to build their editing skills, to students in other programs wanting to mix languages and dialects in their academic work. Sarah tailored her feedback to those goals: She guided the business students' use of grammar logs to work on increasing their grammar awareness, while students

1. Robinson and Burton's WPP tool can be found online at <https://wic.oregonstate.edu/writers-personal-profile>.

in the latter group got feedback from members of their target audience and explained their rhetorical and linguistic choices in a process log that Sarah responded to.

We can sustain this dialogue as we **scaffold student writing**. Shawna does this by requiring short proposals or meetings to confirm that students understand the assignment and have a plan of action. Her students also provide updates in a **Writer's Memo**—a short reflection that accompanies the assignment submission—answering questions such as:

- Where are you at this point in the process? Do you feel on track to complete the final draft on time? If not, what supports do you need?
- What have you learned thus far about yourself as a writer/researcher? What are you most proud of?

Shawna then follows up on areas of concern by offering times to meet and targeted workshops or other instructional resources. (See Shapiro 2022 for more.)

Sarah sustains the conversation using **process logs (or research journals)** throughout the term. Based on the “process books” used in design classes (Bruner 2009), each log is an online document in which students reflect on their writing choices and share questions and concerns as their work progresses. Sarah provides prompts to scaffold reflection. At the start of a recent blogging project, she asked students: *What do you want your online persona to be? What is one of your model blogs, and what do you like about it?* This gave her a starting point for understanding her students’ goals and choices as bloggers.

Sarah also uses marginal comments on process logs to sustain dialogue and deepen student learning. When one student wrote that her model blog was “skillful” and “professional,” Sarah urged her to say more about what these words meant for blogging. She tied this inquiry to a course learning goal, “Be more specific when using abstract concepts.” Notably, Sarah did not define what “skillful” and “professional” meant for that student; instead, she helped the student articulate her own understanding, thereby reinforcing the student’s agency.

In addition to sustaining our relationship with students, our Writer’s Memos or process logs can promote uptake of classroom instruction and feedback. Below are lightly edited versions of prompts we have used for these purposes:

- Write at least 200–250 words about what strategies from the class readings and lessons you used for finding, reading, and using scholarly sources for your paper. What did you try? What worked or didn’t work?

- Describe 3–5 major changes you made (edits, deletions, additions) from the previous draft, and why you decided to make those changes (e.g., based on feedback from whom?). Also note one or two suggestions you chose not to follow and explain why.

These kinds of prompts **scaffold students' reflection process**, helping them go beyond simply describing what they are doing—a common problem in student reflective writing (e.g., Dymont and O'Connell 2010)—toward thinking more deeply about what they are doing and why. Students can also look back and observe growth in their process and confidence over time, which helps when they write end-of-term reflections on their learning. We as faculty also benefit from seeing what students are taking from our instruction and past feedback, which can inform our future pedagogical decision-making.

Sequencing and Tailoring Feedback

In addition to sustaining dialogue with students, we can tailor feedback to what we know about writing processes. Early in the writing process, when students are working toward understanding genre conventions, developing ideas, crafting arguments, and finding supporting details or evidence, they need feedback on these macrolevel concerns. At this stage, sentence-level feedback on stylistic or grammatical issues is not usually very helpful, because those aspects of the writing will likely change as students continue writing. Later, when students are improving register (e.g., tone, word choice, etc.) or proofreading/polishing their work, microlevel feedback will be more helpful. Figure 10.1 shows how stages of the writing process map onto the hierarchy of rhetorical concerns, and suggests what kinds of feedback students usually need at each stage. Note that in the recursive, “messy middle” phases, students may return to a macrolevel aspect of writing (e.g., Organization) after they have started attending to microlevel aspects (Register, Polish).

Figure 10.1 represents a general approach to sequencing feedback, with the understanding that we may need to vary this approach depending on students' goals and needs. For example, some writers struggle to develop a new section of a paper before they do some editing on the previous section. We would give those students some stylistic/grammatical feedback earlier in the process, but also remind them that those sections may change again as they continue developing the paper. This negotiation with students about what kinds of feedback they need and want illustrates again how we foreground student agency, in keeping with the aim of promoting linguistic justice (see

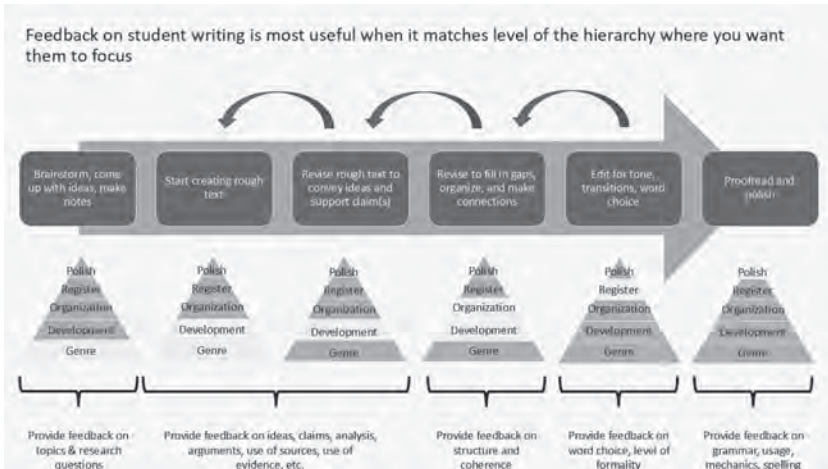


FIGURE 10.1. Aligning writing process, rhetorical concerns, and feedback foci. Used under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial license.

Mecucci Springer et al., chapter 9 in this volume, for more on fostering student agency).

Delaying the focus on sentence-level issues (word choice, tone, grammar, usage, etc.)—no matter which language variety students are choosing to use—also helps promote rhetorical agency by inviting writers to experiment early in the process, rather than confining themselves to a narrow view of “good writing” that includes only standardized language conventions.

Prioritizing Choice over Voice

Another helpful CLA guideline for responding to student writing is to discard—or at least be skeptical of—the notion of writerly “voice.” Many writing teachers, particularly in the US, believe that each writer has a unique voice and that it is their job to help students find and cultivate that voice (Elbow 2007). Moreover, teachers may express concern if a student’s voice seems “inauthentic” or “unnatural.” Although such comments are intended to empower students, they can have the opposite effect, particularly with multilingual and multidialectal writers (Ramanathan and Atkinson 1999). After all, writing in a language or variety (i.e., dialect) that is less familiar will always feel awkward or artificial, at least to some extent. How is a student supposed to find or settle into a voice that will be read as “authentic”? Moreover, given that many students use multiple languages or varieties for school, home, community, etc.,

TABLE 10.1. Contrasting examples of “voice” vs. “choice” comments

	<i>Voice</i>	<i>Choice</i>
1	“This sounds generic. I want you to bring more of yourself to this piece of writing.”	“I think readers would appreciate more specific connections to your identities and lived experiences. Let’s talk about where you could build that in.”
2	“I can really hear your authenticity coming through in this passage!”	“I love how you’re using such vivid and passionate language in this passage—it really works well with your goal of motivating the reader to action.”
3	“This section doesn’t sound like you. It feels like you’re copying someone else’s words or style.”	“I notice a shift in/structure/style/tone here. Was that intentional? If so, what is your goal in shifting?”

which of these voices is the “real” one? In reality, we all have many voices in our linguistic repertoires. By shifting from “voice” to “choice,” we can help students recognize their existing voices and cultivate new ones as well!

Focusing on choice is also well aligned with a rhetorical view of writing in which students must consider factors such as genre, purpose, audience, etc. throughout the writing process. For a student who wants to use scholarly conventions, for example, we might offer alternatives to more colloquial language. Conversely, with a student wanting to engage in public or professional writing outside academia, we encourage deep investigation into the language choices and other rhetorical conventions that are typical of that genre and context. In other words, our ongoing conversations with students focus on recognizing their choices and providing feedback on how those choices might be perceived by readers (see table 10.1).

Of course, the ability to make informed choices in writing has to be developed. This is another example of how feedback and instruction are interconnected. In the reflective writing assignments discussed above (e.g., Writer’s Memo, process log), we sometimes ask students to note some rhetorical choices they have made in their work and the reasons for those choices. Assignments that can set up these conversations and build students’ choice-making (and choice-evaluating) capacities may include **language/genre play**, such as a “translation” assignment in which students work to convey key information in a new language/variety or using a different genre (Gegg-Harrison 2021; Shapiro 2022; Tardy 2021). We can also promote **rhetorical reading**, evaluating the rhetorical effect of the choices an author/creator has made (e.g., Sweeney

2018). These sorts of activities invite critical conversations about how our own identities, histories, and biases shape how we read and evaluate the rhetorical choices of others (e.g., Inoue 2019).

It is important to note, before moving on, that student choice-making does not happen on a “level playing field.” Students from marginalized backgrounds (linguistic, racial, socioeconomic, etc.) may not have or *feel that they have* choices that will be read as “appropriate” within the academy (Alim 2005; Flores and Rosa 2015). A CLA approach encourages us to address these issues not just in our response practices but also within the curriculum itself, which should include opportunities to explore how language, identity, power, and privilege intersect (Baker-Bell 2020; Shapiro 2022; see Inoue, chapter 15 in this volume, for more on how feedback fits into larger instructional ecologies).

Clarity over Correctness

A related CLA guideline is to make **clarity** the goal, rather than on **correctness**. In other words, we want our students to ask (of us, and of their peers) not “Is this choice ‘correct?’” but rather “Is this clear? Are you able to understand what I am saying?” Problems with clarity can connect to many aspects of writing—including the categories listed in figure 10.1 (Genre, Development, etc.). When considering whether a piece is organized effectively, for example, the question “Is this the right structure?” implies that there is only one structure that will achieve the writer’s goals, which is usually not the case. An alternative question such as “Are readers able to follow the progression of the narrative/argument?” opens up a much broader conversation about writerly choices and their rhetorical impact.

A focus on clarity over correctness can be particularly helpful with stylistic and/or grammatical concerns. When it comes to language use in writing, especially among multilingual and multidialectal students, faculty often fall into a binary. Some attempt to avoid any discussion of linguistic aspects of writing lest they marginalize or alienate students. Although perhaps well-intentioned, this avoidance can hinder students’ rhetorical agency as it overlooks their real-world rhetorical needs and goals, which may include a desire to fit within particular linguistic norms and conventions (Delpit 1992; Shapiro 2022). On the other side of the spectrum are instructors who place too much emphasis on grammar, style, and mechanics, ignoring other aspects of writing that are equally important. These instructors also may propagate “universal” grammar rules (e.g., “Never split an infinitive”) that are often outdated and/

or decontextualized. This approach is equally detrimental to rhetorical agency because it treats language prescriptively rather than rhetorically, resulting in an overly narrow conception of “good writing” (see Kolln and Gray 2017 and Micciche 2004 for more on rhetorical approaches to grammar).

By making clarity the goal, we can help student writers to make informed choices regarding all aspects of their writing, and to evaluate the effectiveness of those choices. At the macro/discourse level, clarity is most impacted by organization and genre features. At the sentence level, clarity is much more affected by grammatical consistency (e.g., with verb tenses and subject/verb agreement) and syntactic complexity (e.g., number and placement of clauses) than, for example, use of articles (a, an, the) or prepositions.

It is important to note, however, that clarity issues are not always a “problem” that needs an immediate “solution.” Research shows that when writers work with complex tasks and topics, the writing often starts off less clear because the writer is still figuring out what they want to say and how to say it (e.g., Condon and Kelly-Riley 2004; Perrault 2011). Thus, lack of clarity can signal that the writer is tackling new rhetorical challenges such as incorporating additional points or evidence, identifying caveats or counterarguments, or offering context or implications for their argument. Early in the process, therefore, we should focus on helping students become clear *with themselves* about what they are trying to say, with the understanding that they can refine the prose at later stages.

Commenting Pragmatically, Grading Progressively

Although our focus thus far has been on *response* to writing rather than on *evaluation*, we would be remiss not to touch on what a CLA approach suggests about grading. There has been much discussion in recent years about alternative approaches to assessment, with emphasis on labor-based grading (e.g., Cowan 2020; Inoue 2019). One question about these more process-oriented approaches, however, is whether they change the nature of feedback we give to students (e.g., O’Meara 2022). If our aim is to help students make informed choices, what happens when we grade for labor rather than evaluating the final product? What is the “end goal” toward which students are laboring?

In answering this question, we return to our commitments to pragmatism, progressivism, and promoting students’ rhetorical agency. With **pragmatic** feedback, we offer clear, actionable comments and suggestions focused on rhetorical effectiveness. When grading, we aim for **progressive** policies

and practices that are equitable and inclusive. Shawna does not grade early drafts (although she may provide a “proxy grade” indicating what the grade would be if this were a final draft). Sarah bases grades on students’ engagement with learning activities and emphasizes their reflections and development of rhetorical metacognition. Thus, both of us assess student growth and self-reflection in order to recognize and reward their labor and learning. Moreover, we **scaffold these processes** so students develop their metacognitive skill sets. The process logs discussed earlier, for example, allow Sarah to give extensive feedback on student reflections, resulting in stronger formal reflections at the end of the term. When grading or assigning credit, we also consider how extensively students have revised their work. In addition, if students resist making revisions, we can couch our feedback in terms of their own goals. For example, the WPP version that Sarah adapted for an honors class asks students, “Think about any gaps that exist between your current repertoire of writing skills and those needed for writing a thesis. To close these gaps, what needs to change about your writing?” When suggesting major structural revisions to one student who was initially resistant, Sarah connected those suggestions to the student’s stated goal of getting better at organizing texts.

Other ways we can support students’ growth and reflection include:

- offering direct instruction in self-assessment through modeling, workshops, and low-stakes practice;
- sequencing reflection assignments to build on one another;
- providing opportunities for students to revise their reflective writing, and to continue revising other work until it meets a threshold that is satisfactory to both the instructor and the student.

Conclusion

We hope these CLA-informed guidelines empower instructors to scaffold and respond to writing in ways that increase students’ rhetorical agency, both in classrooms and beyond. Research in the area of “teaching for transfer” suggests that engaging a process of rhetorical problem-solving, feedback, and reflection helps to build the metacognitive and metalinguistic skills students need to approach a variety of rhetorical situations with confidence (e.g., Yancey et al. 2019). By putting students’ rhetorical agency at the center of our curriculum, including our feedback practices, we cocreate a space where all students’

linguistic repertoires are valued and expanded—an excellent manifestation of critical pragmatism, in keeping with our commitment to linguistic justice.

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11

Teaching Toward Equity and Linguistic Justice

Possibilities and Challenges of a CLA-Informed Dialogic Response Practice

MEGAN M. WEAVER

Over four decades ago, Cy Knoblauch and Lil Brannon (1981) argued that “nothing we do as writing teachers is more valuable than our commenting on individual student texts in order to facilitate improvement” (1). On the surface, I agree; responding to student writing is where I do most of my teaching. However, I resist the notion that our commenting practices are intended to “facilitate improvement” solely in regard to students’ “control” over their “communicative purposes” (1). Much of this resistance stems from my own experiences as a white Southern middle-class language user of both White Mainstream English (Baker-Bell 2020) and Appalachian English(es). Throughout adolescence, I often negotiated the negative perceptions of and commentary on my speech by fully embracing Standard Edited American English in my writing. It wasn’t until I was an undergraduate English Education major, when I was introduced to the scholarship surrounding language (dialect) awareness, that I began to question much of the earlier feedback I had received on my own writing and that I was now being trained to give to my future students. After several years of teaching, though, I became critical of language (dialect) awareness approaches to teaching because they continued to uphold the power of a single, standardized language variety. I began questioning and examining how my teaching practices could do more than just raise awareness of linguistic diversity and

also contribute to challenging discriminatory language ideologies and disrupting feedback practices that critique students for not employing rhetorical and linguistic qualities of a white, privileged way of communicating. As such, I maintain that responding to student writing has a much greater potential—and a much greater responsibility—to enact the tenets of “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” (CCCC 1974) and the demand for Black linguistic justice (Baker-Bellet et al. 2020). In this chapter, I suggest that writing teachers can teach toward equity and linguistic justice by embodying *critical language awareness* (Alim 2005; Fairclough 1992a) in their response practices.¹ More specifically, I argue for writing teachers to enact a dialogic response practice informed by critical language awareness (CLA) and aimed at promoting students’ linguistic consciousness of the relationships between language, power, and identity.

The CLA-informed dialogic response practice that I discuss melds CLA theory with Louise Phelps’s (2000) and Brian Huot’s (2002) work on reflective practice and dialogic response as well as Asao B. Inoue’s (2020) work on anti-racist reading strategies. To bring the theoretical into the practical, I describe what the response practice looks like in my pedagogy, and I discuss a teaching moment that highlights the need for as well as the challenges of embodying a CLA-informed dialogic response to student writing. Finally, I explore the transformative possibilities of a CLA-informed dialogic response practice.

Working Toward Dialogic Response

Across much of the previous scholarship, scholars have argued that response should work toward being a dialogic act of communication between teachers and students. Teachers engage in an internal dialogue with both themselves (Phelps 2000) and the “larger socially structured world” (Inoue 2020, 21) as they engage in meaning-making from student writing, and students become “active participants in a ‘conversation’ of response” (Huot 2002, 135), returning to their work as part of a cyclical writing process rather than being passive recipients of teacher feedback. Therefore, dialogic response constitutes various forms of revision, rewriting, and/or rereading. Depending upon the teacher’s response as well as how revision is built into the design of the course, however, revision can undermine the dialogic element of response by becoming a practice of only addressing the teacher’s preferences for an ideal text or only making revisions

1. In using the term “linguistic justice” throughout this chapter, I invoke the long histories of language rights in education and the many varied and overlapping approaches to literacy education that seek to dismantle discriminatory, racist, and oppressive ideologies and teaching practices.

necessary for the student to achieve a certain grade. To counteract this practice, Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) suggested that a response and revision cycle centered on negotiation might support teachers and students in a process that encourages students to work toward an ideal text while staying true to students' purposes and goals with their writing. In a subsequent publication, Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) amended their "negotiation" model and clarified that teachers should serve as "sounding-boards" for students, ultimately "leaving decisions about alternative choices to the writer, not the teacher" (162).

Decades later, Inoue (2020) also pushed against the idea of negotiation, either as a goal or as a reality, between readers and writers, explaining that negotiation implies compromise. And while compromise is beneficial in certain contexts, when working within and against systems in which racism and white supremacy are embedded, "there can be no compromise if one really wishes to be antiracist" (4). Inoue then drew upon Huot (2002) to uphold the importance of dialogue between readers and writers, explaining that dialogue "can imply a more open-ended outcome and allows for all parties to sit with and inquire about their differences and discomfort" (4). What, then, might dialogic response between teachers and students look like in our classrooms? No matter what writing instructors say or do, they are almost always reading student writing in an educational context embedded with various power structures and ideological values. As such, we are teacher-readers reading with the purpose of teaching student-writers (Huot 2002). How, then, might teacher-readers revise their response practices to teach toward and promote equity and linguistic justice?

(Re)Defining Reading Like a Teacher

First, we must rethink how we read student writing to revise how we respond to students' writing. Reading is "a dynamic, meaning-making activity" (Huot 2002, 114); however, readers, especially teacher-readers, are not blank canvases reading a text. Rather, teachers bring a diversity of prior experiences to their ability to make meaning from texts. These experiences include prior interactions with the student-writers and their prior texts; institutional and sociocultural language ideologies for writing and communication; and diverse pedagogical training and teaching philosophies (Anson 1989; Huot 2002; Smith 1982; Straub 2002). All these experiences and values influence how teacher-readers make meaning of students' writing as well as how they might engage in dialogic response with student-writers. We cannot set aside our experiences

and values when we read; however, we can and must recognize and account for our experiences and values as part of our response practice.²

Similarly, Inoue (2020) advocates for teaching students to identify and question the judgments they make when reading texts as part of a larger antiracist reading practice. Such a practice, Inoue argues, supports students in recognizing “their own habits of language” (1) to understand “how those habits participate in racism and White language supremacy” (2). Prior to or while teaching students to engage in this practice, though, teachers must learn to account for their own experiences, values, and habits of language when reading or using language. Teachers must further develop their critical language awareness to support them in recognizing and accounting for how their experiences and values influence how they read, and ultimately respond to, student writing.

Critical Language Awareness and Response

CLA is more than knowledge about language; it is knowledge about how language is interconnected with sociopolitical ideologies (Alim 2005) as well as with issues of power and privilege (Shapiro 2022), and it supports language users in making informed choices when using language (Alim and Smitherman 2012). With CLA, language users develop an awareness that all language varieties are linguistically equal but that beliefs about language (i.e., language ideologies) are socially constructed and perpetuated by sociopolitical agendas (Rosa and Burdick 2017). Language users develop greater awareness of the ways in which language ideologies inform how they approach, make meaning from, and ultimately respond to both language (e.g., a student’s piece of writing) and language users (e.g., the student). Moreover, I align with scholars (e.g., Alim 2005; Fairclough 1992b) who contend that CLA calls for language users to engage in action that seeks to transform sociolinguistic interactions. In other words, I firmly believe that CLA implores language users, especially privileged language users such as speakers of White Mainstream English (Baker-Bell 2020), to subvert and resist discriminatory language ideologies through their actions and responses to language and language users around them. Teacher-readers often hold privileged social identities and/or are often in a privileged position to draw upon their developing CLA as they read and respond to student writing.

2. For a framework to support the development of teacher awareness and accountability, see Beavers, chapter 5 in this volume.

I contend that a CLA-informed dialogic response practice is one in which teacher-readers actively subvert and resist the perpetuation of racist and discriminatory language practices for a more equitable teaching and learning environment. Teacher-readers can do this by: (1) questioning and challenging their own understanding of good or rhetorically effective writing; (2) supporting students in questioning and challenging their understanding of good or rhetorically effective writing; and (3) inviting students to draw upon multiple language varieties and rhetorics in their writing.³

CLA PEDAGOGY AS RESPONSE

Response is more than commenting on student projects; it is also what we do in our pedagogy and through our interactions with students (Knoblauch and Brannon 1981; Phelps 2000). Given that response is both our pedagogical actions *and* our commentary on students' writing, writing teachers must work to ensure that our interactions with students complement our responses to written work and vice versa (Straub 2002). This is especially important when seeking to promote equity and linguistic justice given that writing instructors' embodied beliefs about language, which are often conveyed through grading practices, can eclipse any articulated beliefs about language in classroom conversations or in written responses to student writing (Weaver 2020). Therefore, a CLA-informed dialogic response practice begins with enacting CLA pedagogy. Geneva Smitherman (2017) defines CLA pedagogy as "seek[ing] to develop in students a critical consciousness about language, power, and society . . . to heighten their awareness of the stakes involved in language attitude and policies of correctness and striv[ing] to impart knowledge about their own language, its social and linguistic rules, its history and cultural connection" (10). Shawna Shapiro (2022) extends the definition, suggesting that CLA pedagogy "aims to promote a more just future, while also preparing students for the (often unjust) present" (13–14).

In my own first-year writing classes, I implement CLA pedagogy through assignments that ask students to reflect on their language backgrounds, examining and complicating what it means to be literate and articulate; to examine discriminatory racial and sociopolitical ideologies surrounding language use; and to not only identify rhetorical qualities in composing situations but also question and challenge dominant (i.e., white, upper-middle-class) perceptions

3. For discussion on CLA response practices that promote a stronger "both/and" approach (instruction in dominant language varieties/conventions alongside code-meshing and translanguaging), see Shapiro and Perrault, chapter 10.

of rhetorical effectiveness. Additionally, I implement grading contracts in first-year writing courses to detach students' course grades from their language use and language backgrounds.

DIALOGIC RESPONSE WITHIN CLA PEDAGOGY

For each major project in my first-year writing classes, students participate in a dialogic response process aimed to scaffold my embodiment of CLA as well as students' development of CLA, as illustrated in figure 11.1. Central to this process is the act of revision, which students are made aware of early in the course and are reminded of with each new assignment. Prior to a major project, students complete multiple low-stakes writing and conference activities to which I provide formative feedback, such as appreciative comments, questions to help students think through project development, and recommendations to review mentor texts or concepts from class. Once students have completed a full draft, they participate in peer review sessions during which they are instructed to respond with their readerly experience of their classmate's text using both appreciative and constructive feedback. After having time to take up and implement any feedback which they received from their peers, students submit a draft of their project to me to read and respond to.

A CLA-informed dialogic response practice is not a checklist or step-by-step sequence; rather, it is a *mindset* informed by CLA theory. This mindset includes

- reading with appreciation and respect for diverse language experiences and identities;
- reading as both a learner and as a co-constructor of knowledge to make meaning of the text and to engage in dialogue with the student-writer;
- pausing and reflecting on what is informing my internal dialogue and external responses, including prior interactions with the student, colleagues, and language ideologies as well as rhetorical conventions, genre conventions, and assignment directions;
- providing appreciative and constructive feedback through marginal and end commentary aimed to encourage student-writers to reflect on their writing choices and to consider the readerly experience of a reader attempting to co-construct knowledge with them.

In later sections of this chapter, I discuss some challenges and transformative possibilities of reading and responding to student writing from these criteria. But first, in table 11.1, I offer a few examples of how I have engaged with these criteria in my comments to student writing. It is important to recognize that

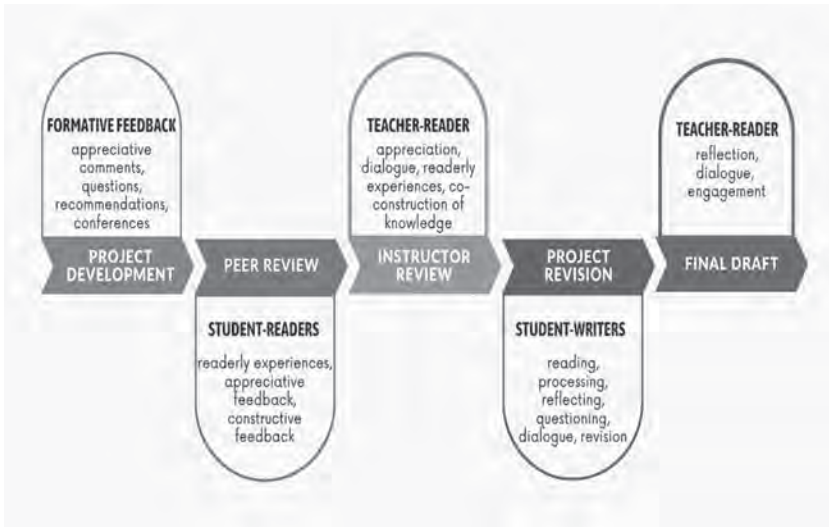


FIGURE 11.1. Dialogic response process in my first-year writing classes.

a CLA-informed dialogic response practice does not solely occur in teacher comments; however, I offer them as examples in which I am actively seeking to engage the response practice in my teaching.

After returning my written responses to student projects, I provide time in class for students to review the feedback, to ask questions or respond to questions I asked of them in the margins of their work, and to make revision plans for their projects. Revised projects include both the revision of the original work and a revision letter similar to the “writer’s memo” that some scholars have promoted to further the dialogic nature of response (e.g., Brannon and Knoblauch 1982; Shapiro 2022). As part of the letter, I ask students to explain their revision process, including how they took up the feedback and/or any rationale they would like to offer for retaining their original writerly choices. Depending on the class design, revision of major projects might be a required assignment or an optional assignment included in the grading contract. Either way, I grade students’ revisions as complete or incomplete based on whether they meet predetermined factors (e.g., word count, formatting, timeliness). After students submit their revised projects, I engage in another round of reading and responding, focusing much of my response on the revision letter. In doing so, I aim to convey to students that I am more interested in how they are engaging with their feedback and how they articulate their writerly choices based on their developing CLA than I am in the final product.

TABLE 11.1. Example instructor comments for a CLA-informed dialogic response practice

<i>Student text and/or context for comment*</i>	<i>Instructor comment</i>
... However, most users found this to be too little and in 2017 Twitter upped the character count to 280. While this number seems high, this is still not a lot of characters. These new words are becoming so popular that they are even being added into the dictionary.	When I read this line, I paused, scrolled back up, and wondered if something got cut accidentally. You've just been talking about characters and then you shift to "these new words." I wondered, which words in particular is she referring to? Now I'm thinking that perhaps you are using "these" for a more generic reference to social media's influence on words?
<i>Responding to a student's literature review in an IMRaD-style research paper.</i>	You have done a really good job of synthesizing your secondary sources to create an introduction/literature review that sets the reader up for how your study fits into the larger conversation. Some writers silo their secondary sources into separate paragraphs, but you've done great to guide the reader through both a chronological and cause/effect discussion of the change of language through social media.
... I have found that these shortened words are becoming more and more common in my daily vocabulary and see the generational difference when I am using them with an adult. I have gotten to the point that in my writing I use these shortcuts in professional papers which is not something that is good, and made me wonder if I was the only one being impacted by this.	I paused on this sentence then asked, how come it isn't good? The argument so far seems to be that language change and even shorthand for efficiency's sake seems to be a natural evolution in language. Can "professional papers" evolve to this as well?
... Perhaps at first, "racially neutral" language should be used, but as we discussed previously, microaggressions and harmful stereotypes can be perpetuated by such language.	I appreciate how you continue to point out, "well, here's a way to move forward, but know that this also has problems with it!" There's so much to meeting people "where they are." At the same time, it often takes so much effort to do so; effort that isn't expended by the individual in a more privileged position or frame of mind.

* All student text is shared with their permission.

**THE NEED FOR CLA-INFORMED RESPONSE TO ADVANCE
EQUITY FOR MARGINALIZED STUDENT POPULATIONS:
A REFLECTION ON WHAT WENT WRONG**

During the spring 2021 semester, I taught a research-based first-year writing (FYW) course while also mentoring three graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) who were observing and teaching individual lessons in my class for their practicum. I was also teaching online due to COVID-19. I met the FYW class once a week synchronously, and I developed an asynchronous course plan for the other days of the week. The GTAs attended the synchronous weekly meeting and attended a separate teaching debrief that I led the day following the FYW class. Throughout the semester, the GTAs gained experience developing and leading class sessions, creating low-stakes writing assignments, and reading and responding to student writing. The culmination of the FYW students' coursework was a research paper on which students received feedback from either me or one of the GTAs. As the course was designed around a sustained, inquiry-driven research project within a course theme on Advocacy in Higher Education, I directed FYW students to draw from their scaffolding assignments (an annotated bibliography and a fieldwork brief) to answer their initial research questions in their research papers. I also directed FYW students to advocate in favor of an action, group, event, stance, change, or process for their campus community, or for higher education more broadly, based on their findings.

A few days after I divided the FYW students' research papers between myself and the GTAs, Emma, a white international female GTA, emailed me asking to meet and to discuss the draft of one of her assigned students (Kendra), noting that she was unsure of how to provide feedback.⁴ In advance of my meeting with Emma, I reread Kendra's paper, having already skimmed it before assigning it to Emma. I wondered what questions or concerns Emma might want to discuss, as I found Kendra's draft to be quite effective. In the assignment directions, I encouraged students to use the first person "I" and to include personal anecdotes as appropriate, and Kendra had clearly taken up that encouragement. In answering her research question, she incorporated a narrative style, creatively used images, and met the grading contract criteria for a complete draft (e.g., word count, citation style, formatting, timeliness). Beyond my reading of the draft, I also knew that Kendra, an international student of color, spoke multiple languages, English being an additional language for her, and had received her primary and secondary education outside of the US.

4. All names are pseudonyms.

During my meeting with Emma, I learned that she did not find the paper effective and was confused on how she should give feedback when the draft did not appear to be, in Emma's words, an "objective," argumentative research paper for an "American audience." Despite the assignment directions being more descriptive (i.e., detailing the goals of the paper) rather than prescriptive (i.e., telling students *exactly* how to meet the goals of the project), Kendra's paper did not follow the genre conventions that fit Emma's image of an ideal text, an image that she had acquired through her own education as an international, multilingual student. Although I had modeled (or at least I thought I had modeled) CLA-informed dialogic response in my feedback to student writing throughout the semester and I had provided written guidance to the GTAs to read and respond to each student project as a reader dialoguing with the writer, explaining their experience with the text and providing appreciative as well as clear, specific feedback similar to the comments in table 11.1, Emma was focused on what she thought Kendra *should* be doing rather than what Kendra was *actually* communicating. For multiple reasons, including my philosophy that mentoring isn't a didactic but rather a dialectic endeavor and the fact that Emma and I were close to the same age, I struggled to communicate to Emma the potential harm of not providing CLA-informed dialogic response to Kendra's project. Therefore, by the end of our meeting, we agreed that Emma would give feedback that showed appreciation for Kendra's approach to and personal connections within the writing as well as feedback that directed revision toward implementing academic genre conventions from a Western rhetorical tradition. Emma believed that Kendra would need to know how to employ these conventions in future writing situations and wanted to help her develop those skills for her current writing task. In that moment, I believed my conversation with Emma supported Kendra's development as a writer as well as Emma's development as a writing teacher.

After the meeting, though, I felt unsettled by the conversation. In listening to Emma share her experience reading Kendra's paper, I was reminded that the ways instructors respond to student writing are deeply informed by their years of schooling and experience with socially constructed language ideologies. For the next GTA debrief meeting, I asked all the GTAs to read Kendra's paper as well as Stephanie Boone Mosher's (2020) article describing her teacherly and scholarly ideological becoming. In the article, Boone Mosher examined her positive response to a piece of student writing with dominant African American English lexical and rhetorical features, compared to the reactions of some of her colleagues who responded that the piece was less successful than student

papers that followed the style and norms of standardized English and Western rhetorical traditions. Through her analysis, Boone Mosher argued that teachers can learn *from* students' discursive and rhetorical strategies, and that "when a student does something unexpected, and it works, that should give us pause" (448–49).

Although I had hoped to lead a robust conversation with GTAs about the article and their experience with Kendra's text, it was a shortened conversation due to other practicum requirements. Notably, Emma did not contribute much to the conversation with her peers, instead listening as they remarked about the similarities between the student project described in Boone Mosher's piece and Kendra's paper. In meeting with Emma and discussing Boone Mosher's article with the peer group, I had hoped to support Emma in responding from a more action-oriented CLA-informed dialogic perspective that would invite Kendra to return to her project and engage in purposeful, negotiated revision. Instead, my earlier conversation with Emma led her to provide Kendra with more traditional academic feedback. In hindsight, I recognize that this dual approach did not confront discriminatory language ideologies. This can be seen in Kendra's final portfolio reflection, in which she explains how she approached writing the research paper and why she ultimately chose not to complete a revision of the project (a grading contract option):

For my research paper I directly started with a personal story and then went on and gave the story of how I did the research throughout the semester. This was an unusual way to write a research paper and was told that it was even perhaps too personal, but this was to me the most effective way to bring together all the components of the paper. . . . I received that feedback for my research paper and was told to try and make it a little bit more academic, but because I did not want to change my style of writing, I sort of ran away from it and ended up not doing a revised academic research paper. This is probably something that is somehow challenging for me: being able to take feedback from other people especially when it comes to my writing style.

In this teaching moment between Emma, Kendra, and me, the CLA-informed dialogic response process broke down in several places. Emma did not fully embrace the mindset for a CLA-informed dialogic response to Kendra's project, and I did not require Kendra's teacher-reader (Emma) to respond with a stronger CLA-informed dialogic perspective—a perspective that may have encouraged Emma to reflect on her own assumptions about writing instead of pushing Kendra to uphold genre conventions without inquiring into why she subverted those expectations. Kendra, of her own admission, "ran away

from” the feedback and the opportunity to return to the writing, even to continue a dialogue about her writerly choices. In her final portfolio reflection, Kendra shared that one of her goals moving forward was to be more receptive to feedback, noting that she “need[s] to understand that receiving and incorporating feedback does not change who [she is], but it rather improves it.” Kendra may have interpreted Emma’s feedback as a critique of herself rather than viewing the feedback as an opportunity to continue developing her writing skills and engaging in a teacher-reader/student-writer dialogue—and, in hindsight, I’m not sure that the feedback *did* invite these opportunities.⁵ As such, the CLA-informed dialogic response cycle fell short in this teaching and learning scenario.

Challenges of a CLA-Informed Dialogic Response Practice

Just like Emma, I have also felt the same unsureness, even paralysis, of how to respond to student writing. It is challenging to approach each student and each student’s projects with the level of appreciation, respect, understanding, reflection, and questioning that a CLA-informed dialogic response practice requires of teacher-readers. Many factors often cloud my mindset, including frustrations with individual students or individual writing, time constraints, and issues at work or home that I inevitably bring to my reading of student writing. When this happens, I wish I could say that I pause and take a step back from my response practice. Sometimes I do, when I have the time and space. Other times, I plow through the piles of student projects because a timely response is also important for students to participate in the dialogic response process that is embedded in my course designs. In these instances, I strive for quality over quantity, keeping in mind that my comments “have real social and emotional power” for my students (Shapiro 2022, 301), just as Emma’s response did with Kendra. Whereas many teacher-readers might opt to focus solely on constructive or critical comments when they are short on time or energy, I consciously try to do the opposite, focusing more on appreciative comments and my readerly experience of the text. In this choice, I foreground the first two criteria of the mindset I described previously: *reading with appreciation and respect for diverse language experiences and identities*, and *reading as both a learner and as a co-constructor of knowledge to make meaning of the text and to engage in dialogue with the student-writer*. In doing so, my intent is to engage in response

5. For more on the socioaffective dimension of feedback and the face threat that students can experience from instructor feedback, see Anson, chapter 3 in this volume.

TABLE 11.2. Example instructor comments, pressed for time, in a CLA-informed dialogic response practice

<i>Student text</i>	<i>Instructor comment</i>	<i>Mindset reflection</i>
... [restaurant] is a grab-n-go style venue fit with burgers, fries, and chicken tender wraps—a far cry from the nutritious options one might expect a student to eat at the #2 ranked dining program in the country. This sentiment was echoed by Kevin, a junior at [university].	Clarify what you are referring to here. Currently, it seems like Kevin is echoing your opinion that [restaurant] is “a far cry from the nutritious options . . .” Is Kevin echoing a sentiment of [different participant] instead?	Rather than serving as a learner and co-constructor of knowledge, I am much more directive in my comment here. With more time, I would couch my understanding of the student text in a more dialogic approach, asking the student-writer to consider how to make connections across paragraphs in order to guide the reader into understanding the interview data.
... The last thing a university should do is insert measures that inadvertently prevent students from making these responsible decisions.	Effective statement; I’m following your train of thought.	I attempt to provide appreciative feedback on what I find the student-writer doing well in this work. With more time, I would aim to provide a more detailed appreciative response, specifically noting why I found the writing to be effective so that the student might compose similarly in future writing contexts.

that resists the perpetuation of racist and discriminatory practices for a more equitable teaching and learning environment. Though, to be transparent, this, too, is hard, and sometimes I find myself employing a more directive and less dialogic response practice. In table 11.2, I provide example comments made on student writing when I was under a time constraint. In the final column, I offer a brief reflection on how I would ideally employ the CLA-informed dialogic response criteria differently.

In addition to the day-to-day teaching and life-related factors, accounting for my own complicity in and perpetuation of racist and discriminatory language practices through the third mindset criterion is perhaps the hardest yet most important aspect of a CLA-informed dialogic response practice. In continuously reflecting upon and questioning my responses to student writing, though, I become conscious of how I, as a white cisgender female and user of White Mainstream English and Appalachian English, am affected by

the dominant White discourses pervading education and sociolinguistic interactions. Much like an antiracist reading practice “gives reader opportunities to find ways forward and out, to change, to be anti-” (Inoue 2020, 2), a CLA-informed dialogic response practice provides me with opportunities to continue my learning, to transform my pedagogy, to do better for and with my students.

Transformative Possibilities of a CLA-Informed Dialogic Response Practice

In articulating a theory of response, Huot (2002) noted that by changing the ways we think about and engage in response, we can transform the work we do as writing teachers. For example, students’ response practices in peer review activities often reflect past learning experiences from teachers’ responses (Edgington 2020). In engaging a CLA-informed dialogic response practice, we can add to—and ideally transform—students’ experiences with response so that they change the way they read and respond to their peers’ writing. This can happen implicitly through modeling CLA-informed dialogic response; however, explicit instruction in reading and responding with a CLA-informed dialogic mindset is necessary to provide students with practice in reading and responding in ways that resist and subvert deeply embedded language ideologies and prior experiences with language. Arguably, a CLA-informed dialogic response practice aims to transform not only how we teach students in their development as writers but also how students will go on to interact with language and other language users throughout their lives.

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SECTION FOUR

Looking Around

What Else Needs to Change for Feedback to Promote Linguistic Justice?

12

Linguistic Justice in the Multilingual Two-Year College Composition Classroom

*Challenges and Opportunities for Reenvisioning
Instructor Feedback on Student Writing*

JENNIFER KILLAM

Writing studies has long recognized that response to student writing is a critical component of writing pedagogy (Anson 1989; di Gennaro and Ekiert 2020; Ferris 2014; Sommers 2006; Straub 1997). However, despite recent calls for antiracist approaches to writing instruction and assessment (Baker-Bell 2020; Inoue 2019a) and the promotion of code-meshing (Young et al. 2014) and translingual pedagogies (Canagarajah 2014; Horner et al. 2011), it is not yet clear that instructor feedback practices have evolved to reflect social justice orientations toward language and literacy. Though as a field we have understood the importance of “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” (Conference on College Composition and Communication 1974), our judgments on student writing remain situated in a White linguistic *habitus*, which determines our expectations for writing and our reception of and reactions to any variations from that norm.

Asao B. Inoue (2019a, 2019b) suggests we are more likely to give reign to implicit biases that favor White language and literacy practices when we are under pressure to think and respond quickly. Yet this is the very condition under which many writing instructors provide feedback. Most instructors find themselves predictably busy at certain points in the semester when they are required to respond to high volumes of student work in a relatively short time frame.

If the average postsecondary composition instructor is sometimes overwhelmed by the task of providing feedback on writing, consider the community college instructor. At the typical two-year institution, instructors carry heavy course loads and teach large classes, requiring fast, repeated judgments of language and writing to be made on triple-digit numbers of student essays. Instructors may therefore rely more heavily on the kinds of quick judgments that prioritize implicit biases toward White language practices over careful, individualized feedback. Moreover, the high rates of diverse, nontraditional, and multilingual student populations enrolled in community college composition courses can make providing effective and efficient feedback a challenge as students often have widely varying needs in terms of writing development and language support.

This chapter is motivated by my own experiences as a White, cisgender female who is also a native-English-speaking, multilingual community college instructor of Composition and English for Academic Purposes at a Hispanic-serving institution. Based on these experiences, I extend the definition of linguistic justice provided by April Baker-Bell (2020) to promote equality of all languages and language varieties in support of linguistic human rights in education (Baugh 2018). This chapter seeks to reenvision feedback practices by exploring the challenges of and opportunities for promoting linguistic justice for racialized and multilingual students through instructor feedback in community college contexts. The chapter begins with a review of the White linguistic *habitus* and its influences on feedback practices and on the construction of racialized and multilingual students as novice writers and nonexpert users of English. It then explores the key role of instructor feedback and language judgments in various liberatory pedagogies of composition before reviewing the features of community college contexts that mediate instructor feedback practices. Finally, I share my experiences incorporating antiracist feedback practices as a two-year college instructor along with possible directions for future research.

The White Linguistic Habitus, Judgments of Writing, and Instructors' Readings of Student Identities

The term *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977) refers to a set of durable dispositions derived from cultural values that predispose individuals to specific behaviors. These dispositions are unconscious but generate actions and thoughts that tend to be reliably consistent over time. Because a *habitus* is shaped by social structures, it reflects any systemic injustices embedded within those structures. Thus, when

social hierarchies or systems are maintained along racial lines, the racist nature of these systems becomes part of the *habitus*.

Pierre Bourdieu (1991) notes that efforts to standardize language serve to normalize the products of our linguistic *habitus*, which represents our perceptions of language and is embodied in our language practices. Inoue (2015) elaborates on the racialized nature of the linguistic *habitus* in the United States, which places the highest legitimizing value on White dominant discourses and standardized varieties of English and delegitimizes variations from these norms. This White linguistic *habitus* permeates education, where it is reflected in standard language ideologies and prescriptivist stances along with a clear preference for monolingualism (Lippi-Green 2012).

In the composition classroom, the White linguistic *habitus* creates dispositions that influence how instructors read and judge writing (Inoue 2015, 2019a, 2019b). That is, even if we accept that a monoglossic standard English is a myth (Lippi-Green 2012), our White linguistic *habitus* can predispose us toward judgments of language as though the mythologized standard were an objective reality. Curt Porter and Gloria Park (2018) refer to this tension, with Porter noting that “one can argue for the legitimacy of ‘different’ ways of using language, but this is a far cry from becoming attuned to the sometimes-novel rhythms and sensations that accompany the negotiation of unfamiliar language practices” (186). Though we might hold an ideal of accepting language difference, doing so in practice requires deep introspection and an interrogation of the unconscious reactions and biases of the White linguistic *habitus*.

Linguists have studied two areas of language bias that relate to the White linguistic *habitus*: linguistic stereotyping, in which individuals are judged on the perceived value of the language produced (Lippi-Green 2012); and reversed linguistic stereotyping, in which “attributions of a speaker’s group membership cue distorted perceptions of that speaker’s language style or proficiency” (Kang and Rubin 2009, 442). In the first form of stereotyping, language is used as a basis to construct the identity of the speaker. In the second, the speaker’s perceived identity affects what is heard by the listener such that even the perception of accented speech can negatively impact comprehension (Rubin 2002). Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa (2015) capture this form of bias in their conception of the *white listening subject*, who “often continues to hear linguistic markedness and deviancy regardless of how well language-minoritized students model themselves after the white speaking subject” (152).

Bethany Davila (2012, 2017) illustrates how linguistic stereotyping and reversed linguistic stereotyping impact instructor feedback on student writing.

Though Davila uses neither term, her research on indexicality (“the ideological process that links language and identity” [Davila 2012, 180]) and reverse indexicality explores essentially the same set of phenomena. In Davila’s study, twelve White writing instructors construct the identities of student writers through their use of language in anonymized essays. Davila (2012) reports that instructors relied on textual indicators of standardness, including grammar, usage, style, and academic conventions, to make determinations about the student writers’ identities along dimensions of race, socioeconomic class, and gender. Instructors also showed a tendency to relate linguistic markers of educational preparedness to both class and race in ways that reflect persistent educational inequities in the United States. Consequently, students were frequently racially constructed by instructors when their texts contained deviations from standard English,¹ such as variations in grammar, diction, and dialect. The textual variations associated with race by the instructors in Davila’s study were also construed as negative features of the student writers’ texts.

Instructors in Davila’s (2012) study also engaged in reversed linguistic stereotyping. The textual features they associated with low socioeconomic status and/or a racialized, nonwhite identity influenced their perceptions of the overall quality of students’ writing. The instructors then used these features to construct student identities that helped them to estimate whether instances of language difference were errors in need of correction or simply mistakes. Though the study required instructors to draw on their own experiences in the classroom in ways that highlighted existing social stereotypes, the influence of instructors’ personal experiences also served to “reinforce and perpetuate standard language ideology and Whiteness” (Davila 2012, 191). As a result, one type of linguistic stereotyping reinforced the other, mediated by instructors’ Whiteness, standard language ideologies, and perceptions of standardness.

Though previous studies have examined how instructors read their students in their writing (Bazerman 1990; Tobin 2004), understanding the influence of the White linguistic *habitus* on those readings is essential to promoting linguistic justice in the composition classroom. As Davila’s (2012, 2017) research indicates, well-meaning instructors can be blind to the ways a preference for standard English can affect their reception of student writing. These

1. I use the term “standard English” with reluctance to refer to the variety of White English in the United States most often associated with academic writing contexts and the edited English of mainstream publishing. Baker-Bell (2020) offers what is perhaps a better term: White Mainstream English (WME). However, since WME could potentially be interpreted as referring to a less formal style as opposed to an academic style, I use “standard English” here for the sake of clarity.

raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores and Rosa 2015) reinforce a negative view of nonstandard varieties of English and see legitimate language variations as errors, positioning multilingual students and speakers of minoritized varieties of English as nonexpert users of standard English. The impacts of raciolinguistic ideologies are further compounded by classroom power dynamics, which already construct students as novice college-level writers. At two-year colleges, where classes are comprised of diverse groups of students with varied levels of preparation for postsecondary education, raciolinguistic ideologies may be even more prevalent and damaging to students' writerly self-concepts. Moreover, when instructors react to students' work and read errors into their writing in ways that delegitimize nonstandard language practices, students are afforded little license to flout academic conventions, engage in creativity, and experiment with language (Lu 1994; Tardy 2016) in ways that expert writers often do.

The Critical Role of Feedback in Liberatory Writing Pedagogies

Because providing feedback and assessing writing involves making language judgments steeped in a White linguistic *habitus*, Inoue (2019b) argues that traditional grade-based assessments of "good" writing are harmful to multilingual students and speakers of marginalized varieties of English because they privilege White language and literacy practices. To mitigate these biases, Inoue (2015, 2019a) proposes labor-based grading as an antiracist alternative. Labor, according to Inoue, is a more neutral measure than grades of quality, which reflect instructors' judgments of student writers' proximity to dominant academic discourses. Although Ellen Carillo (2021) advises that other inequities can arise from centering labor, in labor-based grading, feedback on student work from instructors and peers and the judgments conveyed through that feedback play a central role.

In some ways, labor-based grading removes one type of judgment—the provision of a grade—to center another, namely feedback. The importance of feedback in Inoue's assessment ecology bears some similarities to traditional writing pedagogies. Composition scholars have long agreed that both instructor and peer feedback on student writing is valuable to the student writer, even if their effectiveness has yet to be proved conclusively (Belcher 2000; Ferris 2010; Hartshorn and Evans 2015; Melzer 2020). However, what sets antiracist writing pedagogy apart from more traditional approaches is how feedback operates. Because linguistic justice for diverse and multilingual students

cannot be achieved through unexamined feedback practices grounded in a White linguistic *habitus*, antiracist feedback problematizes judgments on writing through a process of questioning the writer's textual choices and the judgments expressed through feedback (Inoue 2015, 2019a, 2019b).

The importance of questioning among feedback participants appears in other liberatory pedagogies of composition as well. Regarding code-meshing, Vershawn Ashanti Young et al. (2014) suggest that “in assessing intelligibility, the writer will need to learn how to query peer readers about his textualization strategies, and teachers too need to query about the writer's choices” (150–51). Similarly, Suresh Canagarajah (2013) notes that in translingual pedagogy, feedback is ideally structured around dialogic interaction, with student writers reflecting on and questioning the feedback they receive from instructors and peers. Dialogic feedback practices have an elevated importance in liberatory pedagogies, which require minoritized students to be vulnerable around their language and identity in a school setting—a context in which both are likely to have been previously marginalized. Young et al. (2014) underscore this point, noting that for linguistically marginalized students, writing and even code-meshing require a great deal of trust that their language practices will be valued.

One challenge for liberatory pedagogies is defining expectations for student writing and feedback. Theresa Malphrus Welford (2011) notes, “When I say I welcome slang and everyday language, some students get carried away, forgetting that they must mesh these things with more formal language” (28). This implies that students must achieve the right balance of blending their language with dominant academic discourse for code-meshing to be effective. Gerald Graff (2011) acknowledges that it is not entirely clear what “*competent* code-meshing” (16) looks like. Canagarajah (2013) simply underscores the contingent and negotiated nature of instructor feedback and assessment, which requires instructors to continually assess their language judgments. Despite the significant contributions of code-meshing and translingual approaches, as of yet no coherent assessment protocols are associated with either pedagogy (Inoue 2015). Consequently, instructors wishing to engage in these pedagogies need the time and space to be flexible, negotiate, and change course.

Besides time, perhaps the biggest challenge for instructors in promoting linguistic justice is confronting the White linguistic *habitus*. To take an antiracist and linguistic justice orientation in providing feedback, instructors must simultaneously negotiate their own White linguistic *habitus* while still teaching, writing, or otherwise participating in systems in which a White linguistic

habitus is a significant asset. Thus, the process of problematizing language judgments is a very personal one requiring deep introspection (Inoue 2019b), with limited guidelines to help instructors understand the source of their language judgments. Given that few community college writing instructors have had the benefit of sociolinguistics training, the current interest in labor-based grading sometimes appears to concentrate on the mechanics of implementation, which is arguably easier to grapple with than instructor's language judgments. This focus obscures a crucial point: Instructor judgments of student writing grounded in a White linguistic *habitus* can deny students the right to their own languages and dialects in any pedagogy, whether a grade is assigned or not.

Liberatory pedagogies seek to affirm the identities of minoritized students, legitimize their language and literacy practices, and shift the balance of power in the writing classroom. However, instructor feedback remains one area in which it is difficult to flatten educational hierarchies. The academy, instructors' professional experience, and the classroom space all work together to construct the instructor as expert and the student as nonexpert. Though Inoue (2019b) suggests that labor-based grading makes classroom power dynamics and the White linguistic *habitus* more visible, instructors still occupy a position of relative power, particularly in evaluating students' labor and writing. Due to the institutional positioning of instructors, "students often feel that teacher feedback is not to be questioned" (Ticke 2003, 32). Because students' beliefs in their own competency may mediate how they engage with feedback (Pearson 2022), antiracist instructors need to understand how previous schooling experiences that delegitimized students' language and literacy practices affect engagement with feedback and how feedback in turn influences students' writing and self-efficacy. Instructors then need to train students to interact with feedback in ways that empower them to make their own determinations about the value of their language use and rhetorical choices.

The Community College Context and Implications for Antiracist Feedback

Community colleges enroll higher proportions of racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students than their four-year public postsecondary counterparts (National Center for Educational Statistics 2023). Moreover, due to open-access admission policies, "two-year college faculty teach the broadest range of students in higher education, including students who would not be admitted to other institutions" (Giordano et al. 2021, 3). As a result, two-year

colleges are sites with great potential for creating social change, and community college composition instructors are uniquely positioned to affirm marginalized students' varied language and literacy practices. Given the importance of feedback in liberatory pedagogies of composition, approaches to antiracist feedback offer community college instructors an opportunity to promote linguistic justice as they navigate some of the structural challenges associated with working at two-year institutions.

According to a report by the Two-Year College English Association's (TYCA) Workload Issues Committee (Giordano et al. 2021), discussed further by Joanne Baird Giordano and Erin Lehman in chapter 13 of this volume, workplace conditions for full-time faculty at community colleges are characterized by heavy course loads, high course caps, and requirements for service and professional development on top of teaching commitments. In a typical semester, a full-time community college composition instructor can expect to teach 125 students or more. Additionally, due to financial need, many instructors teach extra courses each semester and over the summer while others regularly take on work as contingent faculty at neighboring institutions. This situation complicates our sense of tenure-line two-year college instructors' true workloads, which may be spread across multiple institutions.

In order to manage heavy workloads, two-year college instructors employ a range of strategies, including "*reducing course preparation time, modifying assessment practices, [and] using technology to manage workload*" (Giordano, Wegner, et al. 2020, 4). Given the time-consuming nature of providing feedback on student writing, some instructors also report that they have modified their feedback practices. For instance, the TYCA survey results revealed that some instructors only comment on final drafts, make fewer comments overall, or comment only on sentence-level features (Giordano, Hassel, et al. 2020). Though some instructors increased the number of smaller process-orientated tasks to scaffold larger assignments, others greatly decreased low-stakes assignments and formative feedback as a workload management strategy. Giordano, Holly Hassel, McKenna Wegner, and Patrick Sullivan (2020) note that the conflicting approaches "illustrate the complexities of implementing national standards for frequent and timely feedback at a teaching intensive two-year college" (n.p.).

Though the conditions of composition instruction at two-year colleges are unlikely to change soon, implementing antiracist feedback practices can benefit students and faculty alike without necessarily requiring course design overhauls, for which many instructors lack the authority (Giordano et al. 2021). Given the dialogic and negotiated nature of antiracist feedback, approaches

that center students' agency, such as those recommended by Jacob Babb and Courtney Adams Wooten in chapter 14 of this volume, could assist instructors in streamlining the feedback they provide.

In my own courses, I have used revision letters for this purpose, as I outline below. While they benefit students in eliciting feedback that responds directly to the global issues or specific language features students are most concerned about, revision letters also help me navigate the tensions around imposing my own voice on student writing (Canagarajah 2013). Asking students to make their writing intentions or goals clear in their revision letters could also shift assessment and grading practices since the letters present possibilities for assessing how well students met their own writing goals rather than holding students' writing to an external standard (Inoue 2019b). Additionally, centering the experience of adult students and their motivations and goals for learning are among the key facets of andragogy (Chan 2010), which is often promoted in community college contexts.

Using Revision Letters to Center Students' Agency and Negotiate Instructor Feedback

In my multilingual and first-year composition courses, which typically enroll twenty-five or more students, I have found revision letters incredibly helpful as I negotiate the language judgments generated by my own linguistic *habitus* and, simultaneously, work to manage my feedback load. I require all final drafts to be accompanied by a revision letter, worth 20 percent of the essay grade, in which students need to discuss:

1. the writing process (e.g., What were the challenges of writing this essay type? Were there any parts of writing this essay that you found easier than others? What do you want the reader to better understand as a result of reading this essay?)
2. voice (e.g., How would you characterize your voice as a writer in this essay? What did you try to achieve in making your choices around style and language use? In what ways do the language and style choices you made help you connect to the audience you envision for this essay?)
3. peer/tutor feedback and revisions (e.g., What kinds of feedback from your peers/tutors did you incorporate into your revisions? Why did you incorporate this feedback? How do you feel it improved your essay?)
4. the feedback you would like from your professor (e.g., What are you still unsure about? What areas do you think could benefit from more

attention? What do you need to learn that will help you write future essays?)

The revision letter is informal, and I invite students to write to me in the way they feel most comfortable. Most students take the letter seriously and use it to convey their feelings about their self-efficacy as writers, writing challenges, and global issues as well as concerns about language and sentence-level features. For students who choose to code-mesh, translanguaging, or otherwise break with convention in academic writing, this is also a place for them to share their thoughts about these practices and ask for mine. In the spirit of the liberatory pedagogies discussed above, I respond to students in letter format to further the asynchronous dialogue. I have found that writing a letter takes no more time than writing my feedback, though a template could certainly be used for this purpose. In addition to sharing my responses to their queries, I engage in question-posing, encouraging an ongoing conversation about their writing across future essays, drafts, and revision letters. While I do sometimes address features not mentioned by my students in their letters, the topics I discuss tend to reappear in the revision letter for the next essay as our epistolary conversations unfold.

Revision letters have served as a tool for promoting linguistic justice in my feedback practices. Because I read the revision letters before reading my students' essays, I get a small but crucial insight into who they are before engaging with their work. This prevents me from creating my own construction of students' identities based on the textual features their essays alone (Davila 2012, 2017). It humanizes the process of providing feedback and forces me to focus on students' concerns rather than those generated by my linguistic *habitus*. As a result, I find that I am much less reactive in my judgments. I am better able to question my response to difference and whether the source of my response is the White linguistic *habitus* or some other mismatch between the student's writing goals and their text. While I would prefer to hold one-on-one student conferences with all of my students, I have found these difficult to manage given my workload and my students' struggles with transportation, childcare, technology, and other responsibilities that can sometimes keep them from class or from a scheduled meeting. In the interim, revision letters are a method for generating asynchronous dialogue around feedback that works to center student agency and mitigate the role of my White linguistic *habitus*.

Though this process could undoubtedly be improved upon, revision letters have helped me to streamline the feedback I provide since my purpose in

reading is guided by what the student has communicated in their letter. Moreover, when students guide feedback, instructors will often develop a greater sense of trust in students' insightfulness when it comes to their writing and languaging practices. This open orientation is key since instructors are often learning as much about translanguaging practice and code-meshing from their students as their students learn from them (Canagarajah 2013). When instructors are open to the possibility that students may already have rhetorical expertise for reaching specific audiences, it further legitimizes students' existing language and literacy practices.

There are some practical considerations to keep in mind for implementing revision letters. Some two-year college students may need to be trained to write letters that meet classroom goals, as this is likely to be an unfamiliar genre. Clear instructions and model letters can assist students in developing revision letters that can effectively guide instructor feedback. Many students enter community college classrooms with insecurities about their writing that they can easily discuss, and with some preparation, they can reflect equally well on their writing goals in terms of audience, ideas, organization, and voice as they learn about the features of texts. Instructors can also determine at which stages in the writing process revision letters may be most helpful. In my own case, letters that accompany final drafts have aided me not only in reenvisioning my feedback practices but also in reenvisioning assessment to center students' goals for writing.

Additional Opportunities for Promoting Linguistic Justice in the Two-Year College Context

Though revisions letters are a helpful pedagogical tool for instructors seeking to promote linguistic justice within their feedback practices, disciplinary support for incorporating liberatory pedagogies into the broader institutional landscape of two-year college English programs is urgently needed. Doing so would not only reach more of the "teaching majority" (Hassel and Giordano 2013); it would also mean that the diverse populations of students enrolled in community colleges across the US would be served by an education that affirms their identities and legitimizes their language and literacy practices.

While many community college instructors participate in professional development activities, much of that professional development appears to be offered at the institutional level and is missing a disciplinary focus (Suh et al. 2020). As called for in "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (Conference on College

Composition and Communication 1974), additional training and professional development in sociolinguistics and language variation is crucial to promoting antiracist stances in writing feedback. For instructors who have had little scholarly interaction with how language difference operates from a sociolinguistic perspective, it can be difficult to recognize and respond to legitimate variation simply as difference. Awareness of community languaging practices permits instructors to engage in a feedback dialogue that encourages students to reflect on their language choices. Instructors without this knowledge will often be left to resort to student identity construction informed by a White *habitus*. Graduate-level courses for future instructors, professional development offered through organizations such as TYCA, and even mentoring programs at the institutional or organizational level could assist in meeting this need.

Given the critical role of dialogic feedback in antiracist pedagogies, a better sense of what problem-posing around language difference looks like could also be helpful to two-year college instructors. Much of the literature in critical pedagogy involves problem-posing in the classroom (Freire 1970, 1973), and Inoue (2015, 2019b) provides a good model of what problem-posing with students around language and the White linguistic *habitus* can look like. However, if we are to promote a version of linguistic justice that sees all languages and varieties as equal in support of language human rights in education, we need more structured opportunities to help instructors engage in their own personal problem-posing around language. Again, sociolinguistics training would be of use here. Additionally, in Howell et al. (2020), Missy Watson provides a model for reflecting on the White linguistic *habitus* and the pressures that time, exhaustion, and even students' own academic aims can have on the way feedback negotiations can proceed from a translingual stance. Furthering these conversations within our professional circles, home departments, institutions, and professional conferences is essential.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the role of a White linguistic *habitus* and its impact on instructor feedback practices, particularly within the community college context, and has explored the use of revision letters as one method for promoting linguistic justice and for incorporating more dialogic feedback practices that can benefit instructors and students. Future research could investigate the ways in which antiracist feedback practices can serve students and faculty alike given the confines of community college composition instruction. Inoue's (2015,

2019b) scholarship and pedagogy grew out of his experiences in community colleges and similar contexts, which shows the importance that such institutions have as sites for developing critical pedagogies. Additional efforts that offer a variety of entry points into antiracist stances in composition instruction and feedback are needed. Research into the nature of language judgment and instructor feedback at two-year colleges offers a real opportunity in this direction since providing feedback on student work is a nearly universal best practice in writing pedagogy and a feature of instruction in all course modalities.

We also need studies that expand the work of Davila (2012, 2017) to reveal how community-college instructors construct their students' identities. Given that readers generally rely on textual features to build identities on behalf of writers (Matsuda and Tardy 2007), it is essential for us to have a sense of how these constructions can work to privilege or marginalize students based on the different identities that two-year college instructors read into students' texts. Since these identity readings of texts relate to judgments of textual features, this may be a particularly fruitful area for investigation. Future research might also explore the processes through which antiracist instructors interrogate their own language judgments and feedback practices, developing the work of Nicole Gonzales Howell et al. (2020). Studies that examine the ways that racialized and multilingual students engage with feedback that aligns with and diverges from antiracist approaches in two-year college contexts would also help us to understand how differing approaches affect developing writers' self-concepts.

Finally, since language judgments arise in encounters with language difference, we also need a clearer understanding of how much language difference exists on local two-year college campuses so that community language use can be highlighted in the classroom. Research in critical applied linguistics has shown that translingualism is not simply a theoretical position but rather part and parcel of everyday life, remarkable only for its pure ordinariness (Dovchin and Lee 2019; Tankosić et al. 2022). We need to focus on leveraging these ordinary language practices to facilitate success in postsecondary two-year college composition courses if we really wish to promote linguistic justice.

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13

Designing Open-Access Online Writing Courses Around Responsive Feedback

JOANNE BAIRD GIORDANO AND ERIN LEHMAN

How can one writing instructor with little formal training in literacy education and online teaching provide thoughtful and helpful feedback for a diverse online classroom population that includes first-generation, refugee, dual enrollment, international, transfer, returning adult, and GED students? Two-year college faculty and other open-access writing instructors can meet this challenge by structuring their courses around responsive, inclusive, and varied opportunities for feedback that supports individualized learning and literacy development. However, students in online courses typically have fewer opportunities for in-the-moment feedback since online students' classrooms are course sites within a learning management system (LMS).

We are both two-year college instructors who primarily teach online and virtual literacy courses while balancing student needs, administrative duties (required for most full-time faculty at community colleges), and academic writing. We have a passion for exploring online learning at the two-year college as we observe this is an underexplored topic in published scholarship, likely due to the high teaching loads for two-year faculty. At our institutions, we have chosen to teach online because we see its benefits—including accessibility, support, and effectiveness—for student learning. This student learning begins with instructors and course designers embedding multiple activities that support

inclusive and responsive feedback into the structure of a course site. Effective online writing course design creates a foundation for responsive feedback to happen within a virtual learning space.

Given the growing interest and enrollment in online literacy courses, open-access institutions will likely continue to use predesigned model online courses to support effective teaching and inclusive learning. This is why it's important for teacher educators, chairs or WPAs, and course designers to consider the way course design paves the way for equitable and linguistically just feedback. In this chapter, we explore equitable practices for designing online writing courses around responsive feedback at open-access institutions. We connect professional statements about literacy and language to open-access teaching. We discuss why embedding moments for inclusive and linguistically sustaining instructor feedback in online course design is necessary. Then we provide practical guidance—including sample syllabus statements, orientation practices, feedback policies, and feedback templates—for online course design practices that give students autonomy over their own language choices and create a foundation for responsive feedback that supports literacy development for students who would otherwise be excluded from higher education.

Literacy, Response, and Open-Access Online Teaching

Equitable, compassionate, and informed instructor response is essential to the online classrooms of two-year colleges given their broad reach. One-third of students in higher education attend a community college, and almost half take a community college course at some point. Because of their open-access missions, two-year colleges educate the most diverse range of students in higher education based on their linguistic, educational, cultural, and social backgrounds. This is especially true of online writing programs because they serve both students who are inadmissible at other institutions and students from selective universities who seek lower cost general education courses that they can transfer to their home institutions. In fall 2019 (before the pandemic), 37 percent of community college students (about 2 million) took distance education courses, with 15 percent enrolled only in distance education courses. Online community college students are less likely to complete courses compared to students taking in-person courses.¹ And yet there's little published

1. Data in this paragraph is drawn from the "Community College FAQs" page of Columbia University's Community College Research Center website, <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Community-College-FAQs.html>, accessed March 31, 2026.

scholarship on how two-year writing faculty can support students' learning and success in online writing courses.

Scholarship about social justice and writing often focuses on students from nonwhite backgrounds (Baker-Bell 2020; Inoue 2015). However, two-year colleges regularly serve learners with disabilities, rural white students, and low-income returning adults—groups whose writing and use of language can often vary from the conventions that college instructors expect students to develop before entering college (Olivas 2023; Suh 2023; Hassel and Phillips 2022). Further, although two-year colleges enroll international students, their second-language writers are more likely to be US residents with varying levels of experience with English ranging from no formal education to extensive time in US public schools. The literacy needs of immigrant and US-born second language writers are distinctly different from those of international students (de Kleine and Lawton 2015). Responding to writing and language needs for widely diverse student communities is a routine part of online writing instruction at community colleges, as Jennifer Killam also outlines in chapter 12 of this volume, but it's a less frequent teaching experience at traditional four-year universities with admissions standards that exclude students based on academic performance, educational experiences, and performance on standardized English tests.

REIMAGINING SRTOL FOR THE OPEN-ACCESS, ONLINE CLASSROOM

"Students' Right to Their Own Language" (CCCC 1974) is a foundational document that voices students' right to have and practice language variety with the understanding that choosing one standard or method of doing language is equivalent to choosing one culture for all students. Since its publication nearly fifty years ago, composition research has continued to expand upon and respond to SRTOL (Perryman-Clark et al. 2014; Lippi-Green 2012). For example, instructors have shared SRTOL with students to allow them to negotiate and interpret the way they bring their own language into the classroom and their academic careers (Kinloch 2005). However, as Jamilla M. Kareem (2023) has noted, "SRTOL achieves a lot of cultural-inclusion objectives, but it has never been implemented in ways that the creators likely intended" (Kareem 2023, 86). Implementing linguistically, racially, and socially just practices in writing programs requires attention to the ways in which unjust practices are built into the design of courses at the level of an individual program. Open-admissions online courses provide access to literacy learning and development for students

who are excluded from other higher education spaces. In this teaching context, linguistic justice means not only respecting students' language rights but also providing them with experiences to support their transition into the learning spaces that have excluded them.

In moving from primarily face-to-face delivery of writing courses to hybrid and online versions, instructors need to keep SRTOL and related scholarship in mind—especially at institutions that enroll students from widely diverse educational and linguistic backgrounds whose language choices often differ from students at selective institutions. At the same time, instructors may need to expand their thinking about what responsive feedback means in virtual learning environments. In hybrid and online courses, inclusive feedback needs to happen everywhere across the course, not just in responses to student drafts or formal assignment submissions. Beth Hewett's *The Online Writing Conference* points out the varied ways in which online students receive feedback, noting that virtual chats, journal interactions, online tutorials, draft comments, email communications with students, quick comments on student posts on the fly, and asynchronous exchanges with students “may not always be recognized as the online conferences that they are” (Hewett 2015, 3). Such “online conferences” are a foundational pedagogical and feedback approach used specifically in online course environments. Hewett points out that this ongoing “text-based instructional commentary” woven throughout the online course is critical to student growth and learning (3).

The National Council of Teachers of English's (NCTE) 2019 “Definition of Literacy in a Digital Age” complicates the teaching principles established in SRTOL. This professional statement argues that “as society and technology change, so does literacy” (NCTE 2019). The teaching practices that accompany literacy instruction need to support students in developing new forms of literacy that help them “participate effectively and critically in a networked world” and “explore and engage critically, thoughtfully, and across a wide variety of inclusive texts and tools/modalities” (NCTE 2019). The statement also explains that digital literacy requires “participants in a global society” to “recognize and honor the multilingual literacy identities and cultural experiences individuals bring to learning environments” (NCTE 2019). In a digital age, instructors' approaches to feedback need to model both critical engagement with tools for communicating in a digital world and—as SRTOL asserts—culturally responsive feedback that respects students' linguistic and cultural identities. Fostering the types of literacy skills outlined in the NCTE statement requires open-access instructors to develop learning activities that create opportunities

for students to recognize and respect each other's multiliteracies as they respond to the work of other writers.

MANAGING FEEDBACK LABOR IN THE OPEN-ACCESS CONTEXT

Providing culturally and linguistically responsive feedback can be especially challenging for open-access literacy educators in online environments. Online courses are part of teaching workloads for most community college English instructors. A majority (59%) of respondents in a 2021 Two-Year College English Association (TYCA) survey indicated that they taught asynchronous online courses even before the COVID-19 pandemic, and 45 percent taught online courses with scheduled class meeting times (Tinoco et al. 2022). The teaching workload at community colleges is typically five courses a semester or thirty credits in an academic year (Suh et al. 2021), which creates workload challenges for online literacy educators. An earlier 2019 TYCA survey suggests that community college English instructors manage their workloads for feedback by reducing the number of writing courses they teach, making adjustments to the types of graded assignments that students complete, assigning fewer short activities, and strategically timing when students receive feedback (Giordano and Wegner 2020). Respondents also reported reducing time spent on feedback through the following practices: "Writing fewer comments on a draft, responding to fewer drafts, eliminating narrative feedback on drafts, or providing detailed feedback on fewer writing assignments" (Giordano et al. 2020). Some instructors managed their teaching-intensive workloads by focusing primarily on formative feedback in process work while others focused on summative assessment for finished drafts (Giordano et al. 2020). Achieving an equitable balance between meeting students' diverse literacy needs and a manageable workload is one of the most challenging parts of online literacy instruction at two-year colleges. Designing writing and literacy programs at community colleges can both reduce instructors' workloads and create pathways for instructors to provide students with responsive feedback by developing model courses that instructors can draw from for their own teaching.

Designing Open-Access Courses Around Feedback

Creating varied opportunities for individualized feedback is one of the most essential components of designing an online literacy course for students from diverse linguistic and educational backgrounds. Carefully designed online literacy course shells (either for an individual instructor or for an entire

program) can create moments and space for inclusive and linguistically sustaining instructor feedback. For courses taught in an asynchronous format without scheduled online class meeting times, online teaching requires writing studies experts and other literacy educators to reconceptualize what it means to provide students with feedback. Hewett points out that “to teach through text—which includes but goes beyond holding online discussions, lecturing by means of digital handouts, or providing summative evaluation of writing—is a challenging task” (Hewett 2015, 4). Students who are new to online learning, unfamiliar with conventions for writing in the US, and/or who have limited experience with academic reading and writing need multiple types of feedback at varied stages to help them successfully transition to an online college writing, reading, or English language course. Additionally, students enrolled in an asynchronous online course don’t have access to formative in-class feedback or the same opportunities for in-the-moment conversations about their writing compared to students taking an in-person or hybrid course. For these reasons, literacy educators who are involved in online course design and instruction need to plan strategically for equitable, inclusive, and individualized feedback as they design and instruct each part of a course.

RECONCEPTUALIZING FEEDBACK ALONGSIDE FACULTY AND STAFF DESIGN EXPERTS

When literacy educators transition to online teaching at open-admissions institutions, they may need to rethink their perspectives on feedback and move away from the idea that an individual instructor determines how and when students receive feedback. At community colleges and other institutions that employ a disproportionate number of adjunct instructors to teach online developmental English and general education writing courses, choices about feedback processes are often collaborative. Design and development processes often involve a team of disciplinary and instructional design experts who create a standardized course (or development shell) in an LMS. In addition to individual faculty members working on their own courses, online course design participants might include a writing program administrator or online coordinator, a designated departmental course lead, course developers (i.e., disciplinary experts who create the course structure and content for other instructors), one or more instructional designers, and course or curriculum reviewers. Decisions about how to embed opportunities for feedback into an online writing course thus depend heavily on course developers and other team members.

When designed intentionally and thoughtfully, online literacy shells can promote equitable workloads for adjunct faculty and model culturally responsive and effective feedback. A well-designed course creates a structure for linguistically just feedback to occur. Much of the available professional resources for online teaching connects inclusive teaching to student support without explaining the role of feedback in students' literacy development. For example, the "CCCC and CWPA Joint Statement in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic" has a section on supporting students and argues that instructors should "provide regular feedback on student work in a timely manner," but the statement doesn't explain how to plan for online feedback that actually supports students (CCCC 2020). We believe that inclusive and linguistically just feedback practices in online courses should reinforce students' literacy development in varied ways across a course while also supporting their language choices and encouraging them to reflect on their own work as writers.

Incorporating Linguistically Sustaining Response into Online Course Design

Culturally and linguistically sustaining teaching and assessment strategies (Alim and Paris 2017) encourage students to draw from their language backgrounds and affirm their rights to make choices about how they use writing and other forms of literacy. In chapter 10 of this volume, Shawna Shapiro and Sarah Tinker Perrault emphasize the importance of student choice and how feedback should recognize the strategic choices students might make in different writing contexts. When responses to student writing are linguistically sustaining, they create learning conditions that teach students to value and trust their own choices as writers, including giving them autonomy over when, how, and whether they will change their work based on feedback. Nancy Sommers describes the issues that arise as follows: "When the teacher appropriates the text for the student . . . students are encouraged to see their writing as a series of parts—words, sentences, paragraphs—and not as a whole discourse" (Sommers 1982, 151). When instructor feedback is conflicting and inconsistent, students view their own writing as pieces that need to be fixed to suit someone else's purpose. Similarly, in online courses, instructor feedback must be woven into the design of the course for consistent, linguistically sustaining responses; otherwise the result will be a literacy course experience that is chopped up rather than "a whole discourse" (Sommers 1982, 151). This work is more comprehensive than responding to student papers, and this is why online course design is centered in this chapter. The following design strategies for online

courses help developers of model courses and instructors create opportunities for equitable, individualized, and linguistically just feedback through practices that help students identify and draw from their linguistic strengths.

COMMUNICATE INCLUSIVE RESPECT FOR STUDENTS' LANGUAGE CHOICES

Online course materials at open-access institutions need to explicitly explain that instructors will respond to student writing in a way that respects their linguistic identities and supports their choices as writers. Two-year college students who wouldn't meet admissions standards at other institutions often have educational experiences that teach them to believe that they aren't capable of growth in writing (Kareem 2023; Hassel and Phillips 2022; Phillips and Gior-dano 2020). They often have yet to learn that setbacks and "mistakes" are part of writing development (Brooke and Carr 2015). Kareem notes that "students' racialized writerly self-images often reflect the narratives and images about race, language diversity, and writing we have imposed through our own pedagogies and college prep advice extending all the way from secondary education to early elementary education" (Kareem 2023, 86). Examples of common negative experiences with responses to writing include low grades with minimal feedback, grading that focuses on sentence-level issues rather than linguistic strengths and literacy development, and disrespectful comments from instructors that the student had trusted. In "Beyond the Red Ink," a short video where community college students discuss their reactions to instructor feedback, one student recounts, "A teacher wrote bad on top of one of my sentences, and I didn't know what that meant" (Sommers 2020).

It's critical that open-access online literacy courses incorporate repeated messages that create conditions for learning, reduce students' anxiety about their language choices, and provide a foundation for undoing student misconceptions about feedback and writing assessment as critical or punitive. A syllabus statement can introduce students to the idea that an instructor's assessment of their work will support students' literacy development and goals for writing. For example, it might include this information: "Ideas about language correctness are closely linked to cultural and social values. Guidelines for using language vary for different cultural, social, and educational situations. Therefore, your work will not be graded based on strict rules for language correctness or writing strategies that you haven't learned in this course. You will, however, receive individual help from the instructor with any features of your own writing (including grammars and punctuation) that you decide to work

on for this course. If your writing is unclear to readers, your instructor will provide you with feedback to help you revise it.” This kind of overview can also be communicated through a course orientation module; an example is given in the next section.

After an initial introduction to the idea that students’ language choices should and will be respected, instructions for assignments, reading assignments about language choices, online discussions and workshops, and comments from instructors can all reinforce that concept throughout the course. Megan Weaver’s chapter in this volume (chapter 11) describes how she grounds feedback in appreciative comments to build a supportive learning environment for students. Additionally, syllabus statements for an online course need to have accompanying instructional practices built in. For example, individualized support from instructors can come through scheduled virtual conferences or small group meetings that replace other online activities. Instructions for assignments can prompt students to make requests for feedback that help instructors in both meeting students’ individual needs and understanding their choices as writers.

ORIENT STUDENTS TO ONLINE FEEDBACK PRACTICES

An effective orientation to an online course teaches inexperienced online learners about the role of feedback in their college literacy development, along with helping them know when and how they will receive responses to their writing from the instructor and peers. The CCCC Online Writing Instruction (OWI) position statement guides instructors to focus on writing instruction and “not on technology orientation or teaching students how to use learning and other technologies” (CCCC 2013). But this guideline assumes that all students enter the online writing course with the same working skill level with technology. For many open-access students, an online writing course is their first college or online course—or both. Many institutions lack online orientation activities or guidance for students. In order for instruction and feedback to be linguistically just, they must first be accessible to all students. Writing instructors at open-access institutions need to orient students to the activities and practices that will take place in an online writing class, including how to find and use feedback. Instructors might provide a welcome message or video and written materials that explain how to navigate the course, how often the instructor will access the course, how and when the instructor will respond to students, and how to use technology required for accessing feedback and giving feedback to other writers. Incorporating an introduction to feedback into a course

orientation also models effective and equitable feedback practices for less experienced instructors.

Instructors can also orient students to the value and purpose of feedback in an online writing course. For example, an orientation module or early course activities can make feedback more accessible while also introducing students to concepts for understanding their right to make language choices. For example, orientations can begin to address the following issues: Where and how will students locate instructor feedback? What types of instructor feedback will be provided and how does this vary from assignment to assignment? How do students request feedback in a way that supports their own choices as writers? How do opportunities for feedback support their development as writers and help them achieve their goals? Orientation modules or early instructions for course activities can also help students understand the varied types of feedback provided across an online course. For example, instructor feedback on discussion boards differs from the feedback instructors provide on drafts of major papers. How might students interact with that feedback? What kind of engagement is expected from the student? How do students request feedback in a way that makes their language choices clear to other students in peer review workshops? How might peers respond to the work of other writers in a way that acknowledges and respects their varied educational and linguistic experiences? What agency do students have to emphasize their own interests and questions as well as their own unique goals for writing?

Feedback policies and guidelines in a model online literacy course can provide a template that helps instructors navigate the challenges of providing individualized feedback in a virtual learning space as well as communicate expectations for students so that they will know how feedback works in the course. First, returning adults and students with limited experience in online learning often struggle with finding feedback. They need direct information about how to access feedback using different online tools (for example, through providing links to sections of student user guides that explain how to view comments in a discussion board or in an assignment drop box). Second, students also need to know when they will and won't receive feedback for different kinds of learning activities. The following example of a feedback policy explains how feedback works for discussion activities and low-stakes process work when instructors need to balance the demands of a teaching-intensive workload with a class of students who need widely diverse levels of individualized learning support: "You can expect to receive individualized feedback early in the course to help you learn how to complete reading discussions and writing workshops

successfully in an online course. As the course progresses, students who receive full credit for short discussion activities will receive feedback on some assignments but not for all of them. This gives the instructor time to provide students with support for working on writing projects, catching up on late work, and successfully completing course requirements. You will receive feedback whenever you do not receive full credit for an activity to help you with future assignments.”

Statements in an orientation module or syllabus can also provide a foundation for helping students value and respect the language choices of other writers. This statement from an orientation module prepares students for future peer review activities and course conversations about language choices: “Students’ different languages, varieties of English, and individual approaches to writing are welcome and respected in this class. There are many ways to write and speak in English. The choices that writers make depend on cultural background, social situations, audiences, and purposes for writing. In this course, you will learn about how to adapt your writing to different situations based on your own needs as a writer. As a class, we will actively work on respecting each student’s ideas as writers and valuing the rich and diverse language backgrounds of class members.”

The course can then include follow-up learning activities that reinforce a commitment to students’ language choices, including reading “Students Rights to Their Own Language” or other texts, reflecting on and writing about experiences with linguistic diversity and language choices, and participating in related online discussions. Peer review activities can draw from this learning to help students provide inclusive and respectful feedback to other writers.

SEQUENCE ACTIVITIES AROUND STRATEGIC RESPONSE TO WRITING

Online writing courses require planned opportunities for feedback embedded strategically in every module of a course. One benefit of an online writing course is the accessible nature of asynchronous feedback. Hewett points out that asynchronous writing conferences “give the appearance of being somewhat one-sided, hardly a conference at all,” but this is a misconception (Hewett 2015, 21). Online writing conferences offer the student writer the opportunity to pause, reflect, and respond to the conversation when they’re ready. Asynchronous responses to writing, including instructor feedback, can be effective and socially just when feedback practices respond appropriately to where individual writers are in a project, in their literacy development, and in their lives.

Incremental asynchronous feedback promotes access by allowing students to pursue self-paced work when working full time, managing caregiver responsibilities, or simply needing more time to work on a project. Offering feedback to students at strategic moments in a writing project allows students to better plan and prepare to receive feedback and process it on their terms. However, in online courses, almost everything students do is available for feedback. It is unmanageable for instructors to respond in depth to every move a student makes, especially in a text-dense online environment that supports students from diverse educational and linguistic backgrounds. An expectation for timely and detailed response to all writing can create an unmanageable and inequitable workload for instructors as well as students. Instead, course developers and instructors can sequence opportunities for intentional, inclusive responses to writing by strategically planning for when and how feedback will happen in the design of a course.

PROVIDE INSTRUCTORS WITH MODELS FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

Planning for equitable feedback can include creating feedback templates that instructors write and develop from class to class and that course developers provide to instructors. Feedback templates promote equity through consistency; all students receive similar guidance and attention through carefully planned comments that can directly validate students' language choices. Feedback templates for programs can also model strategies for providing culturally and linguistically responsive feedback, and they can help instructors manage their workload and provide space for individualization for each student. A model feedback template in a course development shell reduces the initial workload for adjunct faculty and gives them a starting point for developing their own templates over time.

Table 13.1 provided examples of our actual comments from feedback templates, focusing on students' choices as writers. For us, feedback templates not only create more consistency in feedback but also provide a way to help students develop autonomy in making choices about writing, especially for community college students who believe that they can't become successful writers.

Planned and sequenced opportunities for feedback in course design (adapted to the level of a course and the needs of students) provide a structure for supportive feedback across multiple points of a course, allowing instructors to give quick, low-workload responses to process work while students are still developing their ideas and learning from a project. Instructors can build on students' own requests for feedback and their reflective work to respond to

TABLE 13.1. Examples of comments from feedback templates

<i>Teaching situation</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Comment example</i>
Informal topic feedback	Recognize students' choices about selecting and narrowing a topic	"Narrowing your topic demonstrates that you are making clear choices as a writer." "You might consider narrowing your general topic to a more manageable issue. What ideas and information related to your topic would be most interesting for you to explore?"
Instructor feedback in a discussion about the research and writing processes for the current project	To help focus research on student's choices and lines of inquiry	"Through your research, you seem to be asking [current topic]. Asking your own questions and exploring ideas through research is an important part of making choices as a writer and developing projects around your own interests."
Feedback on reading for research activities	To support linguistically sustaining experiences with reading	"Please remember that you can do research in any of the languages that you use for reading. For information about how to change the language for reading sources from the library databases, read [insert link to page in the LMS or library resource]."
Instructor feedback on peer response	To guide linguistically just responses to writing	"You had good detail in your feedback for your classmates. More importantly, you treated your classmate's writing with respect and kindness, and honored their ideas and writing voice." "In some places your comments focused on sentence-level errors. Think about how you might respond to other students' ideas as writers. Work on responding directly to the questions and issues that other students ask for in their requests for feedback."

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TABLE 13.1—continued

<i>Teaching situation</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Comment example</i>
Response to student requests for feedback on grammars for process work	To focus students' attention away from sentence-level correction during the drafting phase of a project	"Your request for feedback focuses on grammars and punctuation. However, the purpose of this assignment is to help you explore and develop your ideas as a writer. If your own goals for the project include working on grammars, you might contact me for a conference after you finish developing your draft and working through your ideas."
Feedback directed at noninclusive language in a draft	To help students identify and revise their writing when their language choices reinforce bias	"Think about ways to revise this section to make your wording [or example] more inclusive. Readers might process your message as [sexist, racist, ableist, heterosexist, ethnocentric]. Refer to our class guidelines on inclusive language [insert link to page in the LMS]."
Feedback on a writer's purpose/focus in a draft	To help students adapt their language choices based on audience and purpose	"What do you think is your purpose? Your argument about [topic] is the most compelling point as you work toward the final draft. But as the writer, you may choose how you develop your point to your readers."

their writing in a way that helps them move a project forward to completion while spending more time supporting students who need extra guidance and less time responding to more experienced writers. Instructors can also create a structure for inclusive support by simply planning for the messiness that will inevitably happen in an open-access online writing course. Embracing the disorganized and uncertain nature of writing and responding to writing helps decenter the perfectionism of white culture. Planning for imperfect responses when working with individual and developing writers helps to personalize an online environment for students and teach them about the messy processes that all writers use to work through challenging literacy tasks.

Conclusion and Gaps for Future Research

The labor-intensive nature of the work involved in supporting students' literacy development across multiple courses for full-time faculty, combined with the precarious employment status for adjunct instructors, means that community colleges will continue to use predesigned model online courses to support effective teaching and inclusive learning. Creating equitable online teaching and learning environments requires two-year college English departments and writing programs to maintain a balance between instructor workload and autonomy on one hand and the need for students to receive equitable learning opportunities and inclusive feedback on the other. The workload, student needs, and strategies for providing equitable responses to student writing can be fundamentally different for community college faculty teaching thirty or more credits a year in an open-access program compared to instructors who work at institutions that exclude students from higher education based on admissions standards. Community college literacy educators make daily challenging decisions about how and when to respond to student writing. Writing studies as a profession needs more scholarship and professional resources to support equitable and inclusive course design and feedback practices.

In conclusion, we share questions for further study that can help writing studies and English studies more broadly work to close equity gaps for instructors and students in online courses.

- How might open-access institutions better expand and translate SRTOL principles into the design of their online writing course shells?
- How can writing instructors who lack equitably designed online course shells adapt principles for socially just course design to their individual courses while also managing a teaching-intensive workload?
- What course design strategies for structuring and sequencing feedback are most effective in supporting literacy development for students in open-access online writing programs, especially those from linguistically and culturally underresourced communities?
- What online feedback practices do current community college students find most effective, supportive, and inclusive?
- What feedback practices do online students think reduce their autonomy over their own language choices?
- How might inclusive and effective feedback practices help students develop over a series of online courses as they work toward completing

writing requirements for a degree? How do feedback practices need to change for different levels of learning in an online program?

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14

Recalibrating Agency, Expertise, and Collaboration in Response Practices to Graduate Student Writers

JACOB BABB AND COURTNEY ADAMS WOOTEN

In graduate school, students invest a significant amount of time researching and writing to produce seminar papers and thesis and dissertation chapters, typical genres that enculturate graduate writers into disciplinary writing practices. The range of faculty responses to such writing, however, can vary widely, from a quickly scrawled phrase and a letter grade on the last page to a densely and thoughtfully marked copy providing feedback on content and language. Graduate writers may also consult with graduate faculty throughout the writing process, from idea development through final revisions, building mentoring relationships with those faculty members that ideally support their individual and unique professional identities.

As writing studies graduate programs continue to recruit, teach, and support graduate writers, the field should devote more attention to specific practices of faculty response to graduate student writing. In recent years, there has been increased attention to graduate writing (see Prior and Min 2008; Simpson et al. 2016; Ballenger and Myers 2019; Powell and Driscoll 2020; Madden et al. 2020; Badenhorst et al. 2021; Brooks-Gillies et al. 2020), much of which focuses on disciplinary enculturation and mentoring in addition to responding to graduate student writing. Graduate programs have an important role in fostering diversity in our field, and graduate faculty need to be particularly

attuned to the ways that their responses to graduate student writing interact with and affect the personal and professional identities of their students. Jasmine Kar Tang and Noro Andriamanalina argue that “a lack of support for Indigenous doctoral writers and doctoral writers of color at PWIs [predominantly white institutions] in the U.S. nation-state is a systemic problem that cannot be resolved by individual [graduate student] acts of resilience” (Tang and Andriamanalina 2020, 140). Their study of thirty doctoral writers from Indigenous communities and communities of color across various disciplines demonstrates that faculty “feedback maintains a form of disciplinary gatekeeping and disembodiment that are connected to US racial formation” (140), particularly through feedback offered either as a shaming of writers’ personal and community ties to their work or as a praising of writers whose work directly takes up or connects with their identities as Indigenous people or people of color. As white faculty members in different types of graduate programs—one in a master’s-level English program and the other in a PhD-level Writing and Rhetoric program—we recognize the need to offer what Tang and Andriamanalina (2020) frame as critiques for identifying “existing models of what works and what is sustainable” and what “new models” are needed (151).

Drawing on work in the field that centers on social justice, and particularly linguistic justice (Conference on College Composition and Communication 1974; Young 2010; Poe et al. 2018; Baker-Bell 2020; Baker-Bell et al. 2020; Wolfe 2024), as well as recent work that centers the experiences of graduate writers from underrepresented groups (Green 2016; Cuellar 2020; Godbee 2020; Jackson et al. 2020; Cox et al. 2021; Fa’avae 2021), we can productively extend these conversations to consider how writing faculty teaching graduate students can account for the diverse identities of their students in the responses they provide, not only in how they approach aspects of language but also, more broadly, in how they respect graduate writers’ personal identities and support graduate writers’ formation of their own unique professional identities. In this chapter, we see linguistic justice as valuing and respecting the language and literacy practices of our graduate students during the complexities of disciplinary interpellation that occurs in student writing and faculty feedback practices. The scholarly voices that emerge from linguistic justice-oriented graduate education will be stronger and more diverse as a result.

An important aspect of this work is making response a collaborative and discursive practice between teacher and graduate student that allows for more tailored responses to individual students’ values, goals, and linguistic identities. As Asao B. Inoue writes in chapter 15 of this collection, “What our words

mean and how they function have a lot to do with the conditions in which our feedback circulates.” This echoes Tang and Andriamanalina’s claim that changes to feedback and response require reflection and revision of existing models or creation of new models of response.

In response to Tang and Andriamanalina’s call, this chapter suggests an equity-minded approach to response that integrates the agency of graduate writers and the expertise of faculty members, making writing and response a collaborative, interactive process in which graduate writers’ agency over their writing, including their linguistic choices, is honored and faculty members have avenues through which to share their expertise. These both build on existing models of faculty response to graduate writing and work toward new ones that emphasize linguistic justice and build student agency. We propose pedagogical practices for peer and instructor responses to graduate student writers that we have both built into our courses that make intentional space for addressing linguistic and social justice in graduate writing, and we call for further scholarship about such practices.

Integrating Equity and Social Justice into Graduate Course Feedback Practices

Constructing and implementing a social justice approach to graduate students’ writing—whether in a class or in the various stages of exams and thesis or dissertation projects—presents faculty with opportunities to take work from our field that often revolves around undergraduate students and to apply it forward to graduate courses, centering the diverse needs of graduate writers. In our own teaching, this surfaced when Courtney taught a graduate-level composition theories and pedagogies course for the first time at her institution and when Jacob designed a capstone course for a new MA in English program at his previous institution. As discussed above, there are some additional factors to consider in such courses since graduate programs are often where faculty expertise and student learning become more vexed: Graduate writers can become more expert in areas than their faculty mentors, even as faculty mentors are often more experienced with how to frame ideas in academic genres in the field, strategies that may or may not work with graduate writers’ own values and goals.

Both Courtney and Jacob sought to deconstruct some of these ideas through course design to support their intentional changes to feedback practices in the class. Our courses were designed around graduate writers’ own goals:

Courtney's course asked students to practice two common academic genres (research proposals and literature reviews) before designing their own final project genres (teaching units, administrative proposals, research proposals for grants, teaching guides, etc.), while Jacob's course was built around students choosing a previous project to revise and a genre they would use for this revised text. Drawing from Tracie Marcella Addy et al.'s (2021) *What Inclusive Instructors Do*, Courtney also sought information about students' backgrounds, expectations for the course, and individual learning goals for the course before it began and asked students to complete a midterm reflection, both of which affected the course design and approach. These elements of course design set up a learning environment in which graduate writers are seen as agents in their education, which relates directly to the feedback strategy practices we discuss below. We outline these peer and instructor feedback examples so that other faculty teaching graduate students can reconsider the feedback practices used in their classes and how these can support graduate writers' agency in their own educational experiences.

PEER FEEDBACK PRACTICES

As a long-standing practice in writing studies, peer feedback is an important part of the response ecology in a course, offering students the opportunity to receive feedback from others who are grappling with similar questions at a similar point in their professional lives and to use that feedback to further revise their projects. We intentionally designed our courses to generate a negotiation between the teacher, the graduate writers, and their peers, providing an environment in which writers would be involved in determining the kinds of feedback they wanted to receive on their work from others (both peers and instructors). (Shawna Shapiro and Sarah Tinker Perrault, in chapter 10, and Megan M. Weaver, in chapter 11, write about integrating critical language awareness into their response strategies at the undergraduate level that are pertinent to our chapter as well.) Similar to the question-based pedagogy discussed in Lauren M. Mecucci Springer et al.'s chapter in this collection (chapter 9), our approach was to create opportunities for students to direct their peers' attention to the issues they were most concerned about, rather than relying upon instructor-determined areas or readers' own ideas in reading each other's drafts.

In Courtney's course, she built her model for peer review in part on the antiracist creative writing workshop approach that Felicia Rose Chavez (2021) advocates for. Chavez's book engages with the legacy of white supremacy

embedded in creative writing workshop practices and proposes an antiracist model for changing such workshops so that they privilege the writer's voice and move away from "tear it down" models of feedback that center primarily white workshop leader voices, solicit feedback from majority-white workshop participants, and define "good" creative writing in terms of what is seen in the writing of canonical white authors. As a white teacher-scholar, Courtney designed the class to engage with a range of scholarship from diverse scholars that also modeled different ways scholars write for the field. Part of the feedback praxis centered on Chavez's guidance that "the anti-racist model empowers the author to moderate their own workshop while participants rally in service of the author's vision," seeing instructors as allies who conference with students individually and dialogue "about how to best achieve the author's vision" (10; more on this latter point below). For the first two stages of the semester-long project, Courtney chose common academic genres (the research proposal and literature review) that would allow students to practice writing skills they would need throughout the rest of their graduate study, and students peer reviewed drafts of these projects.¹ For these peer reviews, she asked writers to lead conversations about their writing instead of providing her own questions for peer reviewers to follow or letting the peer reviewers decide what to focus on. This meant that writers could maintain ownership over their own texts while receiving feedback on areas they self-identified as needing help.

When posting their drafts, students also posted questions they wanted their peers to focus on, informed by the diverse perspectives that class readings and discussions had engaged with. Rather than preparing her own written feedback, Courtney asked students to read their peers' drafts and be prepared to discuss these in class. Then, in class, Courtney formed peer review groups and asked them to provide time to discuss each draft, telling students that "the writer should start with their questions for others to offer feedback about" and, "IF time left and the writer wants additional comments," they could provide additional feedback to them. This meant that writers were able to direct the conversation toward the areas they wanted feedback about and decide whether they wanted other feedback or not. Unlike traditional creative writing workshops (such as those criticized by Chavez [2021]) or peer review sessions, this format encourages students to see each other as resources to support each

1. Although a peer review had also been built in for the final stage, students collectively decided that they needed more individual time to focus on these projects at the end of the semester, and so Courtney dropped the final peer review requirement.

other's visions and work rather than as competitors. This is particularly important for students from historically marginalized groups, whose voices may otherwise become drowned out during writing workshops or peer review sessions.

Jacob's example shifts our discussion in a programmatic direction because he was constructing a master's program that built on these principles throughout the curriculum, particularly in the two courses that framed the degree, Introduction to English Studies and Capstone in English Studies. This section focuses specifically on the capstone course. Because of the population the degree was intended to serve, particularly high school teachers seeking coursework to qualify them to teach dual-enrollment composition courses, the program culminated in a capstone paper rather than a thesis option, although students who wanted to complete a thesis could do so in negotiation with a faculty mentor.

The capstone course was designed to rotate between small peer group meetings in which writers shared their work with one another at different stages and one-on-one meetings with the teacher, who would also share feedback at different stages of revision. Early class meetings would focus on providing writers with guidance on how to respond to other writers' work, including an emphasis on linguistic difference. Jacob modeled the peer review on "Anti-Racist Scholarly Reviewing Practices: A Heuristic for Editors, Reviewers, and Authors" (2021), composed by a group of technical communication scholars. This document aims to "navigate the extant oppressive and exclusionary practices" and "offer a heuristic for active application of inclusive practices" for peer review practices. While this heuristic is designed for scholarly publishing, Jacob adapted the heuristic for the course to make explicit the need to operate from an antiracist and inclusive default position. Adapting the heuristic for peer review and instructor response purposes requires dialogue with students about how to apply the document, which provides opportunities to explicitly address how readers may bring racist biases to their reading and response practices. Jacob finds such discussions particularly helpful since one of the defining principles of that document is maintaining transparency during the review process. In their study of peer reviews among linguistically diverse graduate writers, Kate Mangelsdorf and Todd Ruecker point out the need for teachers to emphasize "the importance of being open to language difference and seeing difference as a resource that can benefit all learners" (Mangelsdorf and Ruecker 2018, 26–27). Peers in the small response groups would learn how to respond to language difference in ways that did not negatively impact other writers through application of the antiracist heuristic. Likewise, by providing

a framework for peer response, Jacob was preparing graduate writers for how he intended to respond to their work as well.

INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK PRACTICES

Alongside setting up peer review practices that encourage graduate students to guide the feedback that they want, we both also considered how we could carry this over into the instructor feedback we provided, particularly in considering our own positionalities as white faculty teaching diverse graduate students with different goals. As Melvin Beavers's chapter in this collection points out (chapter 5), when instructors reflect on their mental states, identities, biases, and rhetorical mindfulness "to create space for a more purpose-driven, open, and informed feedback model," it helps them better understand themselves, particularly "racialized ways of thinking and behaving," before offering feedback to students. Since instructor feedback is often seen as the ultimate judgment of a text, something we had tried in part to minimize through the alternative assessment ecologies and peer review sessions we set up, it is important to consider how graduate students can guide this feedback as well, even as there is a delicate balance between student agency in guiding feedback and instructor responsibility to support students as they are professionalized into the field.

One practice we both felt was important and that we know many other faculty build into their courses—whether with undergraduate students or with graduate students—is individual conferencing with students. This starts a conversation between faculty and graduate students about graduate students' individual values and goals while also setting up the types of feedback graduate students can receive from faculty that will guide their development of their projects. This feedback is ideally specific to their projects, guided by graduate writers' goals, and informed by the instructor's knowledge of the field. Generating a balance between graduate student agency and instructor expertise can thus occur at a more individual level through conferencing.

Beyond conferencing (which is a critical form of feedback) is the written feedback that students receive on their projects. This is often where continuing negotiation of faculty and student roles manifests, and it can be an area where faculty tend to take over student texts and impose their own goals onto what the student is writing. We draw on alternative assessment ecologies to emphasize student agency by providing more space for graduate writers to determine how they approach assignments. This also serves to minimize judgments of graduate student work based on our own preconceptions, particularly concerning students' use of their own languages. In Courtney's class, she implemented

a grading system based in part on contract grading (Danielewicz and Elbow 2009; Inoue 2019; Carillo 2021) and specifications grading (Nilson 2014). Like Courtney, Jacob built a contract grading framework for the course with the explicit intention of creating an environment in which students from diverse sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds could find space to revise their graduate writing with minimal concern about the negative impact of teacher response. We want our courses to be spaces where graduate writers can engage in that difficult work with the support of faculty who understand the many choices they are making and honor those choices, even as they provide feedback about how readers in the field might respond to them so that graduate writers can make informed choices.

In Courtney's course, for each stage of the major project, students filled out a Google form survey asking them to reflect on what they learned so far from doing the project, what feedback they wanted from her, what questions they had at that point especially in thinking ahead to the next stage of the project, and, for that particular stage of the assignment, what they would do with the project if they had a little more time to work on it. Her use of the surveys echo Chavez's (2021) recommendations that workshop leaders provide feedback "framed within the context of the student's guiding questions, condensing critique into focused, manageable doses. The critical choices, moving forward, belong to the writer alone" (159). Navigating her role as a white scholar-teacher, Courtney saw this as one way to understand and center students' goals rather than her own. As Courtney gave feedback on students' projects, she first read students' reflections to gain an understanding of what kinds of feedback they wanted and how she could help their projects develop through feedback. Typically, the types of feedback students asked for revolved around whether their research was appropriately narrow or broad, how to connect together the research they were finding with their own ideas, how to move from one stage of the project to the next, how the project could extend from the class into future work, etc. Notably, students did not generally ask for sentence-level feedback and, as a result, the attention she paid to language was typically around the precision of terms students were using and definitions of those terms as deployed in their projects—a more conceptual attention to language—rather than whether they aligned with any standardized language practices.

After learning what feedback students wanted, Courtney then read students' work and provided in-line comments in the text as well as a couple of paragraphs of overall comments. These were mostly focused on addressing students' own stated feedback needs; however, given that part of her role in the

class, as she viewed it, was helping graduate students professionalize into the field, she did sometimes offer additional feedback centered on explaining academic genres to students and pointing to additional areas of scholarship they might explore. This kind of feedback included noting when better transitions or connections could be made between ideas, strengthening project frameworks, pointing to additional areas of scholarship students might explore to strengthen their ideas, discussing how ideas related to the field, and so on. This feedback in particular she tried to frame carefully as helping students learn more about the field and academic genres rather than forcing them to write or represent the field in particular ways.

For one student who focused on how the concepts of “instruction” and “support” are positioned in writing centers, Courtney provided this initial feedback on a literature review draft: “I’ve pointed out places in the literature review where the tension between ‘instruction’ and ‘support’ could be further developed; these correspond in part to some of the areas you mentioned knowing likely need to be developed. Building these ideas out would help show how you are taking up the scholarship to think through even further what this difference means and how it can be potentially reconsidered.” Here, she built from the student’s own reflection to show, from her vantage point, what could be more fully developed so that the student’s own ideas could be strengthened. When providing feedback on the final draft of the literature review, she commented, “One of the things that came more clearly out of this draft that I hadn’t fully grasped before was a pushing against the ways writing center can be politically fit into higher education. I think using the language of ‘support’ can operationalize a view of writing centers that higher education administrators like to advertise as a way they are supporting students. The questions about expertise and disciplinarity linked to this are really useful—what does it mean if writing centers aren’t necessarily connected with disciplinary writing? What happens to ideas of instruction or support at that point?” In this follow-up feedback, Courtney aimed to build from the student’s work on these ideas and previous feedback to explain how she saw those ideas developing and the kinds of questions those could lead to. This was her way of following the student’s lead while offering disciplinary expertise through these feedback opportunities to dialogue the student’s ideas.

Because the genre of the final stage of Courtney’s multipart project was one that students could at least partially define (they were provided options or could work with her to define another), there was space for them to generate knowledge in different genres. This left open students’ choices about

what they produced at this final stage, which would be grounded both in their sense of norms in the field and in their personal and professional investment in their work. One student chose a final project that focused on integrating reading into a college-level composition course. In response, Courtney provided feedback about several areas that worked well, and then suggested, “There has been some scholarship about literacy narratives and literacy autobiographies, including a critique of the way that students often take up the genre by crafting a kind of growth model (in which they are always overcoming something negative about their previous literacy knowledge). If you’re interested in this type of assignment, you may want to look at some of that scholarship to see how others in the field have tried to think through the assignment framing to help students get beyond a growth model to think more complexly about their literacies.” She tried to strike a balance in this feedback between recognizing the excellent work the student has already done and offering further avenues for development if the student chooses to pursue them (rather than assuming that this aligns with the student’s goals and must be pursued further).

Understanding that graduate students are themselves navigating norms in the field with their own epistemological commitments, Courtney views feedback practices as critical to supporting graduate students’ own goals while helping them identify the many ways they can engage with the field, in part by reading scholarship from diverse scholars in the field and in part through their own writing practices. Due to the assessment ecology the grading contract set up, she was able to focus her energies on providing responsive feedback and productively supporting students’ writing goals, including when students needed more time to develop their ideas or to juggle personal and professional responsibilities.

Jacob’s programmatic perspective on instructor feedback closely follows the logic of response that Courtney describes above. The purpose of the curricular design for the program is to build in opportunities for students to assume collaborative agency in the response process, to negotiate with their peers and their instructors to determine the kinds of feedback responses that they need for their work. Additionally, Jacob models his instructor response on the “Anti-Racist Scholarly Reviewing Practices” (2021) just as he urges graduate writers to base their peer responses on those practices, aiming to make his own response practices transparent and inclusive. The document provides a heuristic to inform response strategies, and Jacob draws particular attention to the first two principles of that heuristic: “(A) Recognize a range of expertise and encourage citation practices that represent diverse canons, epistemological

foundations, and ways of knowing”; and “(B) Recognize, intervene in and/or prevent harmful scholarly work—both in publication processes and in published scholarship.” For feedback purposes, these particular principles call on reviewers to acknowledge diverse ways in which authors generate knowledge and to maintain an active role in calling out harmful scholarly work. Given that graduate students are still learning how to navigate academic norms and conventions, Jacob’s response practices aim to encourage different approaches to scholarship while also identifying potentially problematic approaches in ways that help students feel like they can shift directions productively.

The design of the capstone course aimed to balance student agency with instructor expertise through the shifting interaction of small peer groups and individual conferences with the instructor. Recognizing that students want feedback from the instructor because of their expertise, Jacob’s design provides spaces for that instructor feedback while also establishing a response ecology that emphasizes the collaborative nature of feedback, forming a recursive response relationship between student, peers, and instructor. The aim of this course design was to instill in students a confidence in their understanding of what kinds of feedback they need from readers and in their burgeoning expertise in their own research.

The practices above illustrate how to intentionally build in forms of response that provide the potential to consciously address language differences from the start. Ultimately, we argue that graduate teachers and program directors should make intentional choices that not only make space for language difference and social justice but also integrate them into courses. By making these kinds of response strategies part of courses from the very beginning, we ensure that graduate writers are able to produce texts in a supportive environment in which they feel empowered to make choices about their writing and can more successfully learn disciplinary forms of discourse while also carving out spaces for their own scholarly identities.

Future Directions for Theories and Practices in Graduate Student Feedback

Responding to graduate writers is more complex than writing comments on seminar papers and thesis or dissertation chapters. Graduate education aims to professionalize students by introducing them to disciplinary conventions and discursive practices while also giving graduate scholars the chance to carve out their own areas of expertise in research and teaching and to develop their own voices. We hope our chapter sparks ways that others in our field can take

up Tang and Andriamanalina's (2020) call to systemically and programmatically change the ways graduate writers are enculturated into our field, particularly "acknowledging that faculty of color are often the ones responsabilized to take up this work" (151). However, as Kelly Bradbury and Genesea Carter note in their chapter in this collection on linguistic justice and graduate teaching assistant training (chapter 6), "we cannot create change if we ignore the systems that exist." As white faculty, we recognize we have a responsibility to do this work even as we understand the limits of the embodied perspectives we can offer to graduate writers in our programs. The bodies that we and our graduate writers inhabit participate in power dynamics in particular and often troubling ways that we must both be aware of and respond to, and these must be acknowledged as always affecting the work faculty do, regardless of the practices we implement to try to make our classrooms more inclusive and collectively created spaces.

We also view graduate writers as people who are aware of the power dynamics at work in graduate courses and our field as a whole. As such, we see our role as one in which we should make space for explorations of those dynamics in readings and discussions, support graduate writers' own goals as they develop their scholarly voices and visions, and critically engage with graduate students should their writing embody racist norms. We assert that we need to implement pedagogical practices that allow graduate writers to take agency over their own writing practices, including writing practices that push against the (racist) epistemological norms embedded in our field, and to give input on the kinds of responses they need and want from their faculty mentors. Faculty members, as established disciplinary experts, can thus continue to mentor graduate students in finding how their work fits within the field and contributes to scholarly inquiry, facilitating graduate students' pursuit and construction of knowledge without engaging in linguistic gatekeeping practices in their feedback. Such an approach, when implemented at course and programmatic levels, can help to push graduate education toward more equitable and just pedagogical practices that can support different epistemological orientations in the field that decenter whiteness.

We must also bear in mind this caution from Joanna Wolfe (2024): "Racism is an insidious virus, and attempts to eradicate it in one context cause it to mutate into new and surprising forms" (760). Here, Wolfe is raising concerns that Asao B. Inoue's labor-based grading contract approach to response could unintentionally create "covert forms of racism" in response practices, echoing concerns raised by Sherri Craig (2021) and Ellen C. Carillo (2021). However,

Wolfe's words also serve as a broader reminder that in developing theories and practices designed to promote social justice our approaches must remain dynamic, evolving to meet new iterations of racist practices.

Further scholarship is needed in order to adequately theorize and propose dynamic practices that can support the ways faculty respond to graduate student writing—responses that influence the professional identities of graduate writers who are future colleagues in and out of our field and, as a result, the voices and language practices represented in our field. A few potential avenues for further research include:

- When providing feedback, how might faculty further adapt antiracist approaches so that graduate writers have agency over their own professional voices and identities, including the languages they choose to use in their writing, while guiding writers to acknowledge diverse perspectives and approaches to building knowledge in scholarship?
- How can specific feedback strategies support graduate writers' development of their own voices rather than making them feel forced to replicate faculty members' voices (or voices of others in the field)?
- How can we create spaces for graduate writers to provide feedback about their experiences receiving faculty responses without them feeling that providing this feedback is professionally risky (whether at the individual class, specific program, or national levels)? How can we involve them in this research?

There are, of course, many ways in which such research might be conducted and offered to the field. One goal of such research, though, might be for graduate students across the field to see a diverse, inclusive range of personal and professional values, goals, and voices centered in faculty responses to their work.

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What Does Antiracist or Linguistically Just Feedback Look Like?

ASAO B. INOUE

Over the last ten years, I've been asked many times a version of this question by writing teachers in colleges and high schools. *How can a teacher engage in antiracist feedback to student writing? What key features might be included in teachers' feedback that promotes social justice or linguistic justice?* My quick answer to such questions is that there are no essential features in the words a teacher might offer as feedback to a student that directly leads to linguistic justice. While most teachers do not believe that antiracist feedback is just about changing our words to students, it is important to make clear: Antiracist feedback is not simply about changing our words. Linguistic justice does not hinge on a teacher's words alone.

What our words mean and how they function have a lot to do with the conditions in which our feedback circulates. In Jennifer Killam's chapter in this volume (chapter 12), she identifies the various complex problems that make antiracist writing assessment ecologies very difficult, perhaps impossible, to fully implement in community college classrooms. Such complexities can make all feedback circulate in familiar and oppressive ways. What I hear her describing is something I argue in a different way here: It is important to understand and theorize our educational conditions, our ecologies, if we are trying to effect socially just outcomes through feedback. And I'm not just

talking about teachers. Our students can and should theorize or explain their own understandings of their conditions and of who they are when giving or reading feedback. This is where I start, both here and in my classrooms.

Michelle Cruz Gonzales, in her chapter in this volume (chapter 8), also illustrates just how central students' subjectivities, their positionings, are to their languaging and success in writing courses. And of course, one central place in a course is the ecology in which feedback circulates. In fact, Gonzales's "less shitty rubric" (LSR) tends to focus on the reader's (rather than the writer's) experience of the draft, although she discusses the rubric's collaborative nature as well as its ability to recognize the different subjects reading the draft and their different ways of understanding that draft. Still, her LSR is similar to the kind of rubric I offer in this chapter, which Gonzales discusses as well. Thus, one important and perhaps obvious element of antiracist conditions for feedback is the people in the classroom: teachers and students. I've found that explicitly offering our positionings to each other can aid in facilitating linguistically just feedback.

To my students, my own positioning is clear because I give it to them explicitly in our opening introductory activities where we all introduce ourselves. These introductions create a part of our conditions in classrooms that aim at the linguistically just feedback we eventually will attempt. That is, it matters that my students know that I am a BIPOC teacher with a particular languaging history who gives them feedback. And each student has their own languaging histories that need some explaining if their feedback is to circulate in meaningful and socially just ways. Once we acknowledge our positioning, we can work to make sure our differences do not mean unfairness (more on this below). Here's how I offer my own positioning, which serves as their example: "Hello, my name is Asao B. Inoue. I am a cisgender Asian male, who prefers the pronouns 'he/him/his.' I identify as a person of color, an Asian American. My father was Japanese from Hawai'i and my mom is a combination of Greek, Italian, Scottish, and English, as best our family can say."

After this, we each offer a short vignette or story about ourselves as a languageling, one that we feel we can share and that exemplifies who we are or how we enter the course. I do this too. Mine typically explains my working poor upbringing in the 1970s and 1980s in a predominantly Black city, North Las Vegas, and my own remedial English status up to high school. I talk about the racism I experienced, and how I responded. I often tell about my lifelong love of languaging, playing language games with my twin brother at home, writing stories to each other at ten and eleven years old, and playing Dungeons and Dragons, a word game of collaborative storytelling.

My point here is that when I give feedback, my words necessarily come from this history, one with Black English and White Standardized English in it, one that was filled with educational unfairness and racism as well as language games and joy. While the point of my course's introductions isn't about how we (the people in the room) make the conditions of our feedback, it is my point here. Who we are, where our words come from, and who others understand us to be matter to the conditions that make for linguistically just feedback in classrooms. To help with this, I ask each student to write their introduction down, record a video of them reading it, and post both the text and video to our course website. Later on, before we read and respond to each others' work, we review the videos and their written scripts. These practices establish important conditions that can be molded toward the kind of linguistically just goals I hear in those questions from teachers.

As Gonzales's LSR suggests, there are other elements to the conditions that make our feedback what it is. Consider the language we use around writing assignments. It is not a coincidence that students "submit" their drafts to teachers. Think about what's implied in an act of *submission*, in being the one who is submissive. Think about the habits or dispositions one must take on in order to submit to someone else. Most students must translate the teacher's feedback into directives. That's being submissive. In such conditions, feedback has a very hard time promoting linguistic justice if one measure of linguistic justice is the amount of coercion exercised in the ecology. It is difficult for such conditions of submission to afford our feedback antiracist or socially just outcomes.

The scholarship on feedback in our field also works against us in these endeavors. While the field has yet to focus on antiracist feedback practices directly, scholarship has considered what good feedback is. And it's mostly been about what to say or do. In Rhetoric and Composition, we have a history of thinking mostly about how to give good feedback to students on their writing. An early attempt of this is chapter 13, "Evaluation," of William F. Irsmscher's (1979) *Teaching Expository Writing*. It's in the section of the book entitled "The Practice." In the chapter, he offers examples of his own comments and a rubric. There's also Richard Straub and Ronald F. Lunsford's (1995) *Twelve Readers Reading*, which focuses on the different methods of responding that leading teacher-scholars in the field use on the same student texts. There's Straub's (2006) *Key Works on Teacher Response*, which is divided into two main sections of chapters, "practice" and "theory," but the theory is mostly theory about the practices of responding. There's Edward M. White and Cassie A. Wright's (2016) *Assigning, Responding, Evaluating*, which also focuses on how to respond to writing as well

as the purposes of those responses. Even in second language literature, there is a focus on how to respond to students' writing. I'm thinking of Dana R. Ferris's (2003) comprehensive *Response to Student Writing*, where she shows a difference in what students want from feedback (corrections) and what teachers want to talk about (ideas or "higher order" elements). The point is, Ferris's good book still focuses our attention on what words should be given to students, and what words they want.

In 2002, Brian Huot made the claim that the field "lacked a sufficient theory for responding to student writing" (Huot 2002, 109). His solution was a dialectic that centered on theories of reading that worked with response practices (112). But focusing on how to give feedback, even feedback that is fundamentally a reading practice informed by reading theory, is still a practice focused on what kinds of comments to offer. Now, Huot's suggestion is more robust than this. He folds into the process of feedback ideas about reading as a practice and dialogue with students as a necessary part of feedback. What I hear him emphasizing is that to give feedback, first, we have to read something, then we have to exchange ideas together. We also have to have a theory of reading. Mostly, Huot understood that feedback as the words we give to students is only one "part" of the larger ecology that needs to be understood and designed explicitly if linguistic justice is our goal.

While linguistic justice is not Huot's goal for feedback, he does argue for a careful consideration of context when theorizing and giving feedback (Huot 2002, 124). In his five-part theory of response, "context" is literally central (135). He describes context as a "particular writer, particular moment of a particular work in a particular curriculum, particular institution, particular issues, and particular audiences" (132). This is a step in the right direction, I think. However, Huot still focuses his chapter's conclusions on how we, as teachers, can "change the ways in which we respond to our students in our classrooms" (136). A decade later, in 2012, Chris Anson summed up the trends in the field around response, saying that "assumptions about students' learning—about what works best to promote writing development—constantly stand in for actual inquiry on the specific effects of teachers' commentary" (Anson 2012, 189). I agree, and the effects we're thinking of presently are linguistic justice.

The bottom line is: There is no "how to" guide for linguistically just feedback, no rubric for antiracist commenting on drafts. This can be inferred from Huot's "rearticulation" of writing assessment and his theory of response. To read and provide feedback to students on their languaging in antiracist or linguistically just ways does not amount to simply asking more questions or qualifying your

comments with “as a reader who is . . .” or “from my experience . . .” It is also not enough to make your feedback just about *your* response to the writing, as when we say, “I am confused as a reader because I expected . . .” or “readers like me want . . .” While these practices are not bad ones, and they can be a part of linguistically just feedback, they can also circulate in other ways. Linguistically just feedback is not only about “particular” writers and particular readers, individuals who are assumed to be unique or apart from the larger racial, gendered, and other social groups in which they circulate. That impulse centers the individual as primary, a habit of hyperindividualism that’s a part of habits of White language (HOWL) that I discuss elsewhere (2022, 25–28), and that Marci Prescott-Brown’s chapter in this volume also focuses on (chapter 2). She illustrates, through various methods for creating and sustaining feedback cycles, ways to express our antiracist goals in our feedback and address the ever-present pressures to adhere to or enforce HOWL.

Responses that promote linguistic justice are not, however, about avoiding HOWL or a standardized English. They aren’t even about learning Black English or the multilingual Englishes a teacher may encounter in their classrooms. These are good ideas, but not because they lead to more linguistically just feedback. These practices lead to more informed feedback, more compassionate feedback, perhaps even more critical feedback. It is also not enough to allow students to make rubrics that a teacher will use to grade or respond to their work, or build processes that include students in assessing their own writing, as I hear Huot calling for (2002, 69), and which I’ve also called for in the past (Inoue 2004). Again, these are not bad ideas, but not inherently processes that lead to linguistic justice. Student-made rubrics and assessment practices that invite students to articulate their own evaluations can, and often do, promote White language supremacy by inviting students to be the agents of their own linguistic oppression or colonization. Too often such rubrics and processes still expect a White standardized English and habits of White languaging. It often can feel better to a teacher to ask students to do this kind of “collaborative” evaluation, but I wonder how much coercion there is in that collaboration and what students are led to value in those activities?

Thus, linguistic justice ain’t really about how we give feedback. It is much more about the conditions in which that feedback circulates. It is about what the assessment ecology affords students, and how the ecological conditions present a range of available responses to a teacher’s feedback. What I assume is that all feedback that circulates in a course’s assessment ecology must first be oriented toward socially just ends. That is a design feature, not simply a perspective by the teacher. Keep in mind that I’m not saying that in linguistically

just classrooms, at least the kind I can envision, students won't learn, or learn about, White standardized English. Most will. What I am saying is that students' progress will not hinge on needing to reproduce that standardized English in some way approved by the teacher.

Socially Just Assessment Ecologies, Not Feedback

This approach to feedback is more holistic because linguistic justice is understood to be generated through the entire assessment ecology—the material, linguistic, and social conditions in which any feedback circulates and accumulates meaning. I explain such ecologies in *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies* as having at least seven elements that can be examined and explicitly designed. They are our assessment *purposes*; the *parts* that make up the codes of our feedback and assignments; assessment *processes* that create judgements; *power* relations generated through roles and activities that are active; the learning *products* or organic outcomes students produce; the *places* created, which are figurative and material; and the various locally diverse *people* in the ecology, which includes their habits of languaging and histories (Inoue 2015, 176; Inoue and Poe 2020). Our assessment ecologies are what make or unmake our responses and feedback to students, no matter how we have crafted that feedback. And a vital part of the ecology is the teacher (one of the ecological people) who may have beliefs about feedback that contradict their practices, or vice versa, as some research has shown (Lee 2009; Kennedy and Kennedy 1996; Karavas-Doukas 1996; Richards 1996). If our assessment ecologies are designed to produce linguistic justice through feedback, then all the elements of those ecologies must bend toward such outcomes.

So I think the real question we might ask ourselves is: *How do we cultivate linguistically just assessment ecologies that will be the conditions in which our feedback circulates?* Another way to ask this is: How do we encourage our assessment ecologies to transform our feedback so that linguistic justice happens?

To answer this question, we may need a clearer definition for linguistic justice. It is not simply antiracist in purpose, but it could be. April Baker-Bell offers a definition of linguistic justice that centers on Black linguistic justice—that is, justice that “is about Black Language and Black Liberation.” She explains it is an approach that attempts to “dismantl[e] Anti-Black Linguistic Racism and White linguistic hegemony and supremacy in classrooms and in the world.” Black linguistic justice, she says, centers Black languaging, Black English, and doesn't place “White Mainstream English” as the singular standard for expression or communication (Baker-Bell 2020, 7). I've called similar classroom

assessment ecologies antiracist ones, but Baker-Bell highlights a more pointed purpose for such ecologies. And this begs each teacher to be very intentional about the expressed purposes for their assessment ecologies and the learning products they want their feedback to encourage. For some teachers, though, trying to be more intentional about their feedback does pose a contradiction when they don't always control their teaching conditions. They may have scripted curricula, mandated rubrics, or outcomes they must use. But there may still be ways to negotiate their feedback's purposes.

What precise antiracist outcome do you want to produce through your assessment ecology? What social justice outcome do you think your feedback will encourage, exactly? Is it Black linguistic justice? Is it Latinx linguistic justice? Are your purposes ones that work to dismantle White language supremacy, or maybe to dismantle antiblack languaging? What do these kinds of outcomes look like to you in your course, in students' writing, in your feedback? These are all different purposes for our assessment ecologies, different goals for and outcomes of feedback, although they may share some methods and practices. But if articulated carefully and explicitly, these purposes and products can push an ecology toward particular kinds of feedback practices—that is, languaging that is itself contextually bound to the people and politics there. We may not always have the most ideal antiracist purposes for our assessment ecologies, given our particular constraints, but if we imagine that our ecologies are always under negotiation, then perhaps over time our feedback practices can become change agents for our department or program.

Now, if you want an example of feedback that promotes linguistic justice for your classroom or department, you still are not thinking in terms of an assessment ecology, at least not as I understand things. It's the wrong question. For one thing, *you*, whoever you are in time and space, cannot do *my* antiracist feedback. We are different people, from different languaging histories, embodied in the world in different ways, and our students are equally different, but we are also connected to and circulate within larger sociolinguistic communities that inform our politics and biases. Instead, reorient yourself, take a hard look at your own feedback, and ask yourself two questions. Better yet, give your feedback to a trusted friend and ask them to answer the questions: *How does this feedback promote linguistic justice in your classroom or the world? And: How does it NOT promote linguistic justice?* Both questions need answering.

What you may find is that your colleague, if they are going to really answer both questions, will have other questions about the prompt—for instance, who the student is, where the student comes from, what the student knows about

you, what lessons or activities led to the draft, and, of course, what happens after the draft? What does the student do with this feedback? Is the student supposed to follow your orders? Is this the final draft? All these kinds of questions point back to the seven elements of the assessment ecology. Those elements are the conditions that make your response to that student writing what it is: good, bad, unfair, linguistically just, White language supremacist, or anti-Black linguistic justice.

It may sound like I'm saying that you can have almost any kind of feedback as long as you have an antiracist ecology. Do that and your feedback will be cool. All is good. Say what you like. No. Of course not. Antiracist and linguistically just assessment ecologies—ones designed for such outcomes—determine and frame (or push people and create boundaries) through their ecological elements—which, in turn, determine and frame how feedback is produced, who produces it, how it is read and used, and what lessons or products are able to come out of any feedback process. So, if you and the ecology are oriented toward antiracism, then your feedback will likely be oriented that way too.

For instance, if we take Baker-Bell's definition of Black linguistic justice as our assessment ecology's main purpose, then I don't see how we can have a rubric or standard articulated for or even by students that enforces what she calls a "white mainstream English," and what I call "habits of White language" or HOWL (see Inoue 2021, 24–28; 2022, 25–28), or what some call White standardized English. Such habits and language practices will be present in the ecology, but for the classroom to bend toward linguistic justice, how do such languaging habits and practices circulate? What power does such feedback exert on students? That is, when I HOWL at a student in feedback, commenting on ways to cite a source so that I and other Whitely readers can understand better where the writer's ideas are coming from specifically, is that ecology pressuring the student to do something or just learn about this habit of White language? That's not a rhetorical question. Is the implication that the student must mimic that habit I'm embodying, or is it to notice it, or code-mesh it, or do something else with it?

Let's be clear. You cannot expect or enforce a White standardized English and at the same time honor or value Black languaging, or any multilingual Englishes, through your responses, no matter what those responses say. Why? Because in such classrooms, you grade that student's writing on that White standardized English—this is a big part of what makes the ecology and influences what students take from your feedback. In order for Black languaging to be valued, it has to be legitimate in feedback, in drafts, in rubrics, in activities,

and in grading practices. If your ecological purpose is to promote Black English, then Black English cannot just be in the ecology. It must *matter* to the ecology and to what that ecology produces. To have these kinds of conditions, it is not simply a matter of our words of feedback to students. Our feedback must circulate in a problack assessment ecology.

Some may wonder how such a problack assessment ecology can prepare students, Black or otherwise, for future assessment ecologies, future courses and professional settings that will not be oriented toward such social justice. Those settings will mostly expect and reward a White standard of languaging, which these students allegedly are less prepared for. The short answer is that this kind of antiracist ecology prepares students by creating assessment and language conditions that afford a hyperawareness of those other assessment ecologies and their Whiteness standards, in part by being a self-consciously different ecology. The conditions I'm calling for pull the curtain back from all assessment ecologies, revealing the racial and other politics of languaging and its judgement always at play. This condition affords students language to critique, showing them that it ain't just them that makes their failures alone. It's also the White hegemonic system and the unnamed Whiteness standards it puts forth as "appropriate" or "correct" writing. If we really think that students need to feel confident in their writing in order to be successful communicators, then we have to provide ecologies that afford every student confidence in themselves as languagelings now, in this moment. That's what such an ecology does—and in the process, everyone still learns *about* those dominant Whiteness standards, only they are placed at arm's distance first before anyone decides whether they wish to take them on or not.

Feedback from Dimension-Based Rubrics

In my courses, I like using what I call "dimension-based rubrics," which help my students and me create more equitable and democratic feedback processes that we all use. These kinds of rubrics do not identify what a draft is supposed to do—that is, they do not present a single standard; instead, they prompt readers to focus feedback on particular dimensions of the draft that we all want to talk about and understand better from various readers' perspectives. That is, dimension-based rubrics produce feedback that is mostly about readers' responses, their values, their habits of language, and where all these things come from in their lives. This is counter to most standards-based rubrics, which focus on the draft or writer and ignore the ways meaning in a text is

made just as much by the readers based on who they are and what contexts and conditions they're in. Appendix 15.A outlines the differences between dimension-based and standards-based rubrics in order to illustrate what the former offers students.

In linguistically just ecologies that really honor the languaging embodied by each student, all writers must be able to make their own discernments and decisions on their writing from feedback without the risk of punishment or negative consequences, not because we're trying to be nice to everyone, or because there's no rigor anymore, but because that's how we—readers and writers—learn the deep, meaningful, and critical natures of all languaging. We learn where we got our words from. We cultivate an open-mindedness, an uncomfortable willingness to sit with ambiguity and paradox, with the organic and locally diverse languaging present. We learn how to listen to language more slowly, and hear it differently.

This slowing down is how we embody compassion, and it can aid in cultivating antiracist assessment ecologies with meaningful feedback present. If you're looking for some kind of principle for feedback that promotes linguist justice, then, beyond a description of a teacher's linguistically just purposes and their assessment ecology's conditions, the closest I can come is this: *Linguistically just feedback is primarily a process of slow, mindful, and compassionate reading, a deep attending to the reader's own languaging, the reader's habits of language that make judgements and meaning out of others' words.* Notice where the attention is.

In order to make conditions that allow for this kind of deep attending, dimension-based rubrics and their attendant reading processes never devalue any languaging, even if readers question that languaging in drafts, or make judgements about drafts, which they do. Notice the difference between a standards-based rubric's standard (or criterion) and a dimension-based rubric's dimension:

STANDARDS-BASED RUBRIC: Does this draft provide a clear thesis early on and center the discussion on that thesis?

DIMENSION-BASED RUBRIC: What thesis do you discern and how does the writer engage with that thesis?

In the second rubric, notice the change in the subject under investigation, which also changes a number of assumptions that ground the question in such rubrics. The focus of everyone's reading and their feedback is not on the writer or the draft. That's the writer's job. There is no assumed single standard for "clear theses" or what the "center" of discussions are in the second rubric's

question. Dimension-based rubrics push the readers' attention in feedback processes—which are, as Huot tells us, centrally reading processes—back toward themselves and their habits of language. The readers in this rubric are trying to understand themselves, their own responses to languaging, and where those habits and biases come from, with an interlocutor: the writer of the draft being responded to. The draft, then, is merely the occasion for readers to explain their own languaging habits and expectations so that they can have a dialogue with the writer about the languaging they are exchanging.

This isn't an approach to feedback that asks students or teachers to simply be selfish and solipsistic when giving feedback. It also doesn't ask students to submit to feedback. It's meant to be a process that aids readers in paying attention to their own habits of language, their own history with language, and the models in their head in order to provide a thick description of their reading experience to the writer. This benefits both writer and reader. It also acknowledges both parties languaging in the processes of meaning making.

Furthermore, when placed in a gradeless ecology, one where students are not pressured to simply obey the teacher or other readers and where reading feedback isn't about hunting for revision ideas, all responses to such rubrics can be heard more easily as legitimate responses, ones that open up conversations about a range of things: various language habits and the politics of language that happen to also make judgements on language and people. These conditions, which hinge mostly on a gradeless ecology that uses a dimension-based rubric to produce feedback, centers on the languaging present and doesn't try to push any given language habits onto anyone. These conditions are ones that can afford Black linguistic justice, as well as other kinds of linguistic justice, because Black English, like all other versions of English, matters in this ecology.

Everyone still must work on their feedback, craft it compassionately and carefully, consider how to articulate their judgements on the texts they read, and figure out where they got those ideas about words, but all this work is situated in an environment where there is no single standard for writing held above others, even if some writers may be trying to mimic a standardized English. This pushes and frames all feedback in more socially just ways. We try to understand our own language expectations next to others' expectations around us, while also situating those expectations in our histories with words and the larger racialized structures of power that we all work in, such as expectations to HOWL. This condition makes the "whys" and "wheres" critical to all feedback, critical to understanding the "whos" doing the reading and writing in the ecology. To do all this, we need multiple ways of judging and multiple habits of languaging embodied in the locally diverse people of the course.

As an illustration, below is a version of a past dimension-based rubric for a research project draft in a first-year writing course of mine. The language comes from my students, who collaboratively created this rubric from sample texts they found, reflected upon, and discussed together. We then created the five rank-one bullet items, which are the dimensions of our rubric. The rank-two bulleted items are individual and group responses to each dimension, meant to show how various readers in the classroom might translate that dimension in our projects. One thing to notice about this rubric is that its purpose is to enable readers the ability to provide their own rich experiences of their colleagues' texts along the dimensions we collectively chose. That feedback is in the form of a letter to the writer. Usually, writers choose two rubric dimensions they want feedback on from readers, and readers choose one other to discuss in their letters.

- What makes the **central question** of the project compelling and interesting?
 - The writer clearly states the question in the beginning of the draft.
 - The question should be clear to identify and comprehend, as well as open-ended (not a yes-no question).
 - The question is interesting or unique to the writer.
 - The central question explores the course' topics.
- How does the writer or draft **engage the reader** with evidence, imagery, different languages, diction, or something else?
 - The main concepts or ideals should capture readers' attention.
 - Evidence and rhetorical devices should be relatable to the intended audience.
 - The writer offers their own ideas on the topic.
 - The writer uses relevant evidence, tools, and familiar imagery to build a connection with the reader.
 - The writer evokes an emotion in the reader.
- How does the project **use evidence effectively** to back up or explore claims/arguments?
 - The writer addresses the credibility of any evidence used.
 - The writer uses visual aids or images to help enhance the experience and understanding of the readers.
 - The writer uses direct quotes to allow the reader to understand the point that's being made as well as to support evidence given.
 - Personal experience and anecdotes are used to help complicate, nuance, or illustrate ideas or questions.
- How is the project **structured** in some conscious or meaningful way?
 - Ideas flow seamlessly together.

- The order of ideas makes sense.
- Have a clear thesis in the beginning.
- The writer forms each idea through critical analysis in organized content.
- The writer uses rhetorical devices in proper places.
- How does the project **frame key concepts and ideas** for readers' understanding?
 - The writer shows how politics and historical events influence language and language identity, or how languages evolve in communities.
 - The writer illustrates how community influences or impacts language (or visa versa), or how the size of a community impacts a language, or how different regions and their languages compare to others.
 - The writer discusses how an individual's definition of language affects how they communicate with others

Socially Just Feedback Must Be Read As Socially Just

My last point may be obvious. For any feedback to encourage linguistic justice to be a part of the possible outcomes, the ecology has to push students to engage with feedback in particular ways and create boundaries around those practices. Imagine feedback that you've given to a student in a course where there were no grades on anything. There wasn't a standards-based rubric or scoring guide. Instead, there were just activities that helped each reader articulate their own habits of language before they engaged in reading their colleagues' drafts, such as my introductory activities, and a dimension-based rubric.

This kind of ecology helps students pay attention to who they are as languagelings, how they make judgements in and through language, and where they got those words and ideas. Such an ecology helps them better understand that any feedback on someone's languaging is mostly about understanding and expressing one's own habits of language and judgement, one's own politics of language, one's own languaging history and conditions. In such an ecology, feedback is not primarily about understanding what makes a "good essay" or a "strong" one, or whether the one in front of the reader is good or strong. This kind of ecology also helps feedback resist participating in HOWL as a single standard or assuming the teacher's languaging habits as the standard, while leaving room for such languaging to circulate.

The kinds of framing activities with dimension-based rubrics that I'm suggesting can help students explain better not just why they have the judgements they have and what markers in the draft they are responding to but also where

in their lives and training they got such values and languaging habits. What conditions in their lives afford them their own languaging habits, and how are those habits connected to larger racial, gender, economic, and other social patterns of inequality, oppression, or privilege? What are each student's languaging politics? This kind of ecology does not ask anyone to give up their languaging habits, but it does ask them to investigate them compassionately and thoughtfully before they go using them on others. And this includes the teacher.

There might also be activities that help writers think carefully about what they really wanted to know about readers' experiences of their drafts. These activities would resist, but call attention to, the pressures in conventional assessment ecologies that orient students to ask questions of readers that are mostly about how to change things: "What do I change?"; "How well does it flow?"; "Did I make a compelling argument?" "What weaknesses do I have?" All these questions lead to the same kind of submissive goals: How do I follow orders and change my draft for you?

Instead, writers could be relieved of the pressure to change drafts, even as their own habits of language are in question and developing through noncoercive dialogues on the feedback they receive. Let me emphasize the important part: dialogues on the feedback, not the drafts. Drafts may change, writers may change, but these changes happen because writers make decisions to do so, not because they are following orders. It's an assessment ecology based on *students in control of their languaging*, not *students being controlled by the languaging of others*.

All of this may come off as a bit idealistic to some. Fair enough. But this will be the case for any alternative that pushes against conventional ways of understanding and situating feedback in writing assessment ecologies. Aren't we looking for the ideal? Shouldn't we shoot high? Being idealistic is not a good reason to ignore a practice or approach. I see such limiting thinking as the kind that puts artificial boundaries up before any innovation or revolutionary acts can be entertained seriously. And I understand "seriously entertaining" something as a joyful action, not simply ruminating over possibilities. To really entertain antiracist feedback, you gotta do it, try it, give it a shot.

Ultimately, I don't believe that we teachers determine the grounds by which students become free languagelings or engage in linguistic justice. Words are powerful, but they aren't essentially so. Our words in feedback are only as powerful as the conditions in which they circulate afford them power. They are only as linguistically just as the assessment ecology conditions them to be. We cannot place antiracist or linguistic justice purposes, motives, and agencies onto students either. Students must circulate in assessment ecologies that provide

linguistically just conditions, conditions that afforded them their rights to their own languages, and even their rights to try other habits of language, including the dominant ones. But such linguistic justice cannot be achieved through coercion, not by a teacher’s carefully crafted words of compassion; it is only possible by students circulating in assessment ecologies that have expressed and explicit purposes and goals for linguistic justice. Our students must come to their own decisions about their engagements with linguistic justice, but our assessment ecologies can determine and frame feedback that affords such engagements and outcomes more readily.

Appendix 15.A. Standards-Based vs. Dimension-Based Rubrics

<i>Standards-based rubrics</i>	<i>Dimension-based rubrics</i>
• Use a standard that automatically privileges particular ways of using language • Determine success and failure in one direction (from one set of language practices/dispositions). • Use hierarchies to value language practices and discourses • Informed by habits of White language (HOWL) • COIK (Clear Only If Known) • Used to evaluate level of performance, grade, or determine proficiency • Construct the object of assessment as the writer (the other) • Frame judgements are prescriptive	• Use multiple standards that cannot privilege any one way of using language • Lead to comparisons of language practices and dispositions, or paradoxes in judgement • Avoid hierarchies in valuing language practices and discourses • Ask readers to explain their own habits of language along discursive dimensions • COWE (Clear Only When Explained) • Used to rhetorically listen, and understand a variety of paradoxical language performances • Construct the object of assessment as the reader (the self) • Frame judgements are descriptive
Asks: • How well did this student do in this literacy task? • What did the student do well (or poorly) in this paper? • How effective is this student’s writing?	Asks: • What do I see and hear this student doing? • What do I think this paper is doing? • How effective do I think this student’s writing is? • Where did I get these expectations? • Who are my models and where do they come from? Full Example Rubric: https://tinyurl.com/ybxel7gu

Example: “uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work” (Association of American Colleges and Universities 2009)	Example: “How did the writer use sources and data in ways that explored ideas for you as a reader?”
Standards-Based Rubric Example	Dimension-Based Rubric Example
An example from an old rubric of mine (taken from William Irmscher’s [1979] <i>Teaching Expository Writing</i>).	Each draft is read to understand the ways readers see/hear the following dimensions:
B- ESSAY · Absorbs and interprets ideas and texts meaningfully. · Has a clear sense of order. · Uses adequate words that express thoughts (diction). · Uses mechanics as an integral part of meaning and effect in prose. · Shows the capacity to consider alternative ways of expression.	· How do I hear/see the draft/writer interpreting the central texts and ideas discussed? · What kind of order or development do I discern from the draft? · How do I experience the draft’s ideas? · How do I experience the sentences of the draft and ways of expressing ideas?

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Afterword

MYA POE AND HAIVAN HOANG

Since 2020, we have witnessed a surge among US writing teachers eager to contribute to linguistic justice in their curricula and pedagogies. As this volume notes, the surge has been catalyzed by George Floyd's murder and patterns of police violence against Black and Brown people, inhumane treatment of undocumented immigrants, and anti-Asian hate. In this landscape, many writing teachers are taking a hard look at how our teaching, especially response to and grading of student writing, might play a role in promoting linguistic justice and racial equity today.

It's important to note that the contemporary push for linguistic justice and antiracist writing education is part of a much longer struggle. The languages, practices, theories, and cultural rhetorics that we see today—whether dominant or marginalized—have been shaped by histories of colonization, enslavement, de jure and de facto segregation, class stratification, and gender normativity. In our societies, those histories shape how languages and cultural rhetorics develop separately in their own spaces or come into contact and evolve together. In writing classrooms, those histories shape what languages are valued, the ways in which dominant cultural norms tell us how to use language, and the social identities that teachers and students are supposed to adopt in classroom spaces. It's within this wider ecology that we are

all habituated into harmful ideologies about language and writing, ideologies that shape how we respond to student writing and writers.

For the field of writing studies, the fight for linguistic and racial justice in the 1960s and '70s was particularly momentous. Black scholars in the Conference on College Composition and Communication called for more race consciousness and equity in 1968 after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination (Smitherman 1999). Geneva Smitherman (1999), Keith Gilyard (1991), and Staci Perryman-Clark and colleagues (Perryman-Clark et al. 2014) reminded us that the field's position statement "Students' Right to Their Own Language," published in 1974, was not only a statement about linguistic justice but also tied to racial justice struggles. In this same historical moment, Chinese- and Spanish-speaking and other minoritized children in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) were in a legal battle for an equitable education that honored their cultural traditions (Hoang 2015, 27–55). In 1974, *Lau v. Nichols* was heard by the Supreme Court. Whereas the SFUSD argued that the children were getting the same education as others (in the English language medium), Justice Douglas explained, "Under these state-imposed standards, there is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education" (quoted in Hoang 2015, 43). Community activists struggled not only for English language support but also for a fully bilingual and bicultural education.

And the fight against linguistic denigration and for linguistic justice has persisted: in the 1979 Ann Arbor court decision that resulted in teacher professional development to learn about the African American language practices that their students brought to school (Ball and Lardner 2005), in the conflicts over the English-only movement of the 1980s, and in the Ebonics controversy in Oakland in the 1990s (Baugh 2000; Rickford 1999). Today, beyond contending with linguistic misinformation and injustice, writing studies scholars also propose a more affirmative approach to linguistic justice in the teaching and assessment of writing (Baker-Bell 2020; Inoue and Poe 2012; Perryman-Clark et al. 2014; Young 2007).

Still, as the contributors to this collection argue in unison, the commonly cited works on response to writing have largely ignored linguistic and cultural variation as well as the racialized landscape that shapes which language, rhetorical practices, and practitioners are differentially valued. We concur. While one outcome of the body of research on written response was to legitimize student writing as something worthy of academic study, another outcome was

that it left a notable disconnect from other research in the field that was deeply contextualized in communities and attentive to students' cultural and linguistic identities (Cushman 2011; Gilyard 1991; Lu 1987; Mao 2006; Mao and Young 2008; Richardson 2003; Royster 1996). It also left teachers without explicitly culturally sustaining response practices.

If the field is to more fully situate student perspectives in response research and the sociocultural ecologies of response, then collections such as this begin to point us in the right direction. With this collection, the editors place two scholarly threads in conversation: responding to student writing and linguistic justice. This connection foregrounds the ways in which writing teachers may foster more teacher-student dialogue and student agency. The chapters in this collection show how cultural context is central to the practice of responding to writing, how a more expansive theoretical framing of that work can illuminate new insights, why teacher self-reflection needs to be part of the work of response, and how the realities of labor conditions shape what is possible in day-to-day practice. We are heartened to see contributors attending to the ways local institutional contexts (e.g., community colleges, HBCUs, HSIs), impact what linguistic justice work might look like. Such situated work is critical if we are to make response practices serve the education of all students.

Looking forward, we believe that there is promise in drawing more extensively from longstanding sociolinguistic and sociocultural research because doing so sheds light on how teachers and students are actors within wider histories, evolving sociolinguistic systems, and cultural rhetorical heritages. When sociolinguistics first emerged as a field, ethnographers and discourse analysts endeavored to learn about language practices in action, within communities on their own terms (Gumperz and Hymes 1972; Labov 1972; Smitherman 1977, 2006). Likewise, when sociocultural theory emerged as the path-not-taken by the cognitive tradition in the early twentieth-century, it made social interaction central to its theory of human development (Nasir and Hand 2006; Piaget 1959; Vygotsky 1986). Social interaction is not only about interpersonal exchanges; it also includes the broader historical and cultural influences that shape how and what children learn as well as with whom they learn. Writing researchers have long used sociocultural research to understand the literate worlds of children (e.g., Taylor 1988; Purcell-Gates 1997), teens (e.g., Lewis Ellison et al. 2019; Muhammad and Hadix 2016), and college-age students (e.g., Kinloch et al. 2017; LeCourt 2004; Leki 2017; Roozen 2009). Such work shows that the "culture" part of culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining teaching does not rely solely on individual students. Writing

teachers can develop culturally sustaining pedagogy not only by learning from the students in our classrooms but also through ongoing engagement with scholarship on plural rhetorical and linguistic communities. Moreover, beyond reflecting on *others'* cultural rhetorics in relationship to our own positionality as teachers, we believe that it's important for writing teachers to reflect on our own cultural literacies, languages, and identities in relation to our students' positionalities. What are the practices, beliefs, memories, and ghosts of language that shape how we walk in the world? That work may illuminate what language means to teachers and students alike, which then allows us, as Asao B. Inoue points out in this collection, to create the conditions for reconceptualizing response. The spaces where response happens are impacted by our institutional contexts as well as our respective regions' sociolinguistic and racial make-up.

Furthermore, movements for justice always point to structural inequities and future action. We would be remiss if we did not consider artificial intelligence and the challenges to how we talk about antiracism and justice work in higher education. First, while computer-generated response to writing has been around for several decades, recent advancements in artificial intelligence are dramatically changing how teachers are responding to writing as well as how students receive feedback on their writing outside of class. Like many scholars, we are frustrated by the limits of AI, such as made-up citations, the lingering specter of essayistic literacy, and hyperlimited linguistic models based on the myth of a Standard Dominant English variety. As teachers of writing, how might we have conversations with our students about what happens when we turn the shaping of language over to algorithms that flatten the richness of our ways of speaking and, ultimately, our ways of knowing? How might we teach students to use AI with attention to the histories of colonization, enslavement, de jure and de facto segregation, class stratification, and gender normativity?

A second pressing challenge that we face in our struggles for linguistic justice and racial equity in the US is the wave of anti-DEI legislation that has passed and that is being pushed forward in many states. For many of us, much of our attention has been focused on how to talk with students and colleagues about linguistic justice. These days, we must also contend with another layer of rhetorical constraint and exigence: How does legal compliance in states with anti-DEI legislation restrict struggles for linguistic justice and racial equity? How might teachers and students contend with surveillance required by reporting of curricular and pedagogical activity? How do teachers create

conditions of excellence in the teaching of writing to all students while living under everyday surveillance?

Reconceptualizing Response: Using Instructor Feedback to Promote Linguistic Justice is a hopeful collection in that it points the field toward sustainable response practices that are embedded in our field's practices and in our university work. We look forward to participating in and learning from others who extend this work and seek to fulfill the promise of education for all.

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