Linguistic Diversity in Online Writing Classes

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Abstract

For more than 40 years, the field of rhetoric and composition has addressed the topic of linguistic diversity in a variety of ways, including the resolution on Students' Right to Their Own Language, the Statement on Teaching Second Language Writing and Writers, and "A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction." However, there continues to be a need for research-based scholarship on how to enact these position statements and best practices, particularly in online writing instruction. In this article, we describe an online writing curriculum designed specifically to promote and value linguistic diversity. Further, we share our assessment of the curriculum and the changes we have made to our program as a result of the assessment. Finally, we consider the implications of this research for other writing program administrators interested in addressing linguistic diversity in their online classes.

Introduction

Since the 1974 resolution "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (SRTOL), the field of rhetoric and composition has approached linguistic diversity from multiple avenues. The issue of how to achieve the goals set forth by SRTOL remains fraught. Leila Christenbury states "one of the most controversial—and difficult—issues for English teachers is their responsibility to students who speak what is considered 'nonstandard' English" (qtd. in Wheeler and Thomas 365). While SRTOL primarily focuses on students who speak or use multiple English languages, the CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers (revised in 2009 and reaffirmed in 2014) calls for "writing teachers and writing program admin-

istrators to . . . develop instructional and administrative practices that are sensitive to [second language writers'] linguistic and cultural needs" and to "offer teaching preparation" in this area. Similarly, in "Multilingual Writers in OWI," Susan Miller-Cochran argues that *all* college writing environments, including online classrooms, "must be designed to be inclusive and accessible to a linguistically diverse audience" (293). Indeed, the Conference on College Composition and Communication Committee for Effective Practices in Online Writing Instruction's "Position Statement" indicates that "no statement of OWI principles and practices can be appropriate if it does not fully recognize and accommodate. . . students with varying . . . linguistic" backgrounds (8).

These statements suggest that rhetoric and composition recognizes the importance of addressing linguistic diversity and multilingual writers in writing program administration and classes; however, there continues to be a need for research on enacting these position statements and best practices. This article outlines our attempt to determine best practices regarding linguistic diversity in online writing classes at a Hispanic-Serving Institution. We describe our piloted language-focused online curriculum, the assessment of the curriculum, and the subsequent changes we have made to our program. Importantly, we argue that despite the limited way in which students interacted with issues of linguistic diversity through the pilot curriculum, we have identified crucial moments of understanding and possible inroads for further progress in this area. Finally, we consider the implications of this research for other online writing program administrators seeking to implement a curriculum that addresses linguistic diversity.

Institutional Context

The University of New Mexico (UNM) is a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) in a state that, according to census data, has the second highest percentage of people who speak a language other than English in their homes, with the two most common languages being Spanish and Navajo. Because UNM does not collect data regarding students' first or home languages, we do not know how many UNM students are ESL, bilingual, bidialectal, or fluent in multiple languages and dialects. However, approximately 85% of our first-year students are in-state residents; as such, we know they are exposed to the considerable linguistic diversity present in our state—whether in their own homes or in the community. Furthermore, because both Spanish and Navajo have been stigmatized and deemed inappropriate for many school contexts, we know that many of our students are first-hand witnesses to the ideological struggle between prestige languages and

language as a cultural practice. In response to this context, the first-year writing program created two student learning outcomes (SLOs) designed to ensure linguistic diversity would be addressed in all sections of first-year writing:

1. recognize and describe the value of different languages, dialects, and registers in your own and others' texts (the linguistic diversity SLO), and

2. describe the social nature of writing, particularly the role of discourse communities at the local, national, and international level (the discourse communities SLO).

Our program's SLO Handbook (written for instructors) introduces the linguistic diversity SLO by briefly defining the terms language, dialect, and register. It then notes, "Many of our students are accustomed to seeing these non-standard fluencies as deficient, at least in regard to their schooling. But we can show them that the languages, dialects, and registers they employ are rhetorically savvy ways of communicating." Although the discourse communities SLO doesn't explicitly address linguistic diversity, it presents language as social and connected to "the communities we belong to, seek access to, and wish to communicate with" (SLO Handbook). Our handbook additionally indicates that we hope that the lens of discourse communities will help students recognize that "language is 'correct' to the extent that it achieves a speaker or writer's goals in a particular circumstance." Finally, introducing students to the concept of discourse communities allows us to position students as multilingual—a term we use to acknowledge students' facility with navigating multiple languages and dialects.

An assessment of two pilot sections of eComp, a fully online first-year writing program at UNM, revealed that out of the twelve SLOs for all first-year writing classes, students scored the lowest on the linguistic diversity and discourse communities SLOs introduced above. Given the results of this assessment, we were concerned that linguistic diversity was being overlooked. So, we adapted our existing online curriculum to include readings focused on issues of linguistic diversity, and we revised the writing assignments to reflect this additional focus. These changes, we hoped, would prompt instructors to explicitly address linguistic diversity and would give students the opportunity to make progress toward the two SLOs.

Literature for a Language-Focused Curriculum

While rhetoric and composition scholars have rightly critiqued the field's lack of progress in serving linguistically diverse students, there have been

concerted efforts toward this end. For instance, Staci M. Perryman-Clark designed a language-focused first-year course that introduces students to "Ebonics as a specific African American linguistic practice" (230) while also helping students to achieve programmatic learning goals. Specific to the online environment, Carmen Kynard introduced an online curriculum that asks what she calls "Black Long Distance Writers" to use Blackboard forums to discuss diverse readings and consider them according to students' own "histories around race and their social and political locations as black students at a black college" (335). Kynard's and Perryman-Clark's research shows the possibility to engage students in a language-focused curriculum that challenges standard language ideologies *and* meets program outcomes. These pedagogical interventions focus on Ebonics and African American students; however, several other leading scholars approach the issue of linguistic diversity more broadly, advocating for a translingual approach to writing curriculum, at least in the face-to-face (f2f) environment.

According to Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner, a translingual approach acknowledges that conventions are both tied up in power and shaped by language users and that differences are, in fact, the norm (208). Horner et al. argue that a translingual approach "sees difference in language . . . as a resource for producing meaning in writing, speaking, reading, and listening" (303). Finally, these authors assert that "standards of written English are neither uniform nor fixed . . . [and that] to survive and thrive as active writers, students must understand how such demands are contingent and negotiable" (305).

Vershawn Ashanti Young argues for a particular form of translingualism (though he might not define it as such): code-meshing or "dialects coexisting in one," which he further defines as "multidialectalism and pluralingualism in one speech act" (67). He cautions against code-switching (moving between multiple language varieties in different settings), which he says reinforces boundaries between languages that are appropriate at school and those that are appropriate at home. In contrast, code-meshing holds the potential to "promote the linguistic democracy of English" (Young et al. xx). Similarly, John Trimbur notes that everyone is multilingual, even if the multiple "dialects, registers, and genres . . . appear to be within a single language" (220).

Finally, Leah Zuidema argues that in order to develop a classroom climate that is conducive to the acceptance of linguistic diversity, we must create classroom activities to explicitly address and dispel common ideologies and myths regarding "standard" English. Without this focus on the myths, Zuidema worries that widely accepted linguistic prejudice will persist (343). In line with the literature presented above, we created a language-focused

eComp curriculum to engage students in conversations about the language diversity and discourse communities SLOs, including inviting students to examine the relationship between language, power, and social groups and to code-mesh in their own writing for the course.

Description of Language-Focused eComp Curriculum

The pilot language-focused eComp curriculum adds the course topic language and linguistic diversity to the existing eComp curriculum (a curriculum that takes a rhetorical genre approach to teaching writing in multiple modalities). The structure of the language-focused course was similar to the other traditional eComp courses: it featured three major multimodal writing assignments and an electronic portfolio, ongoing reflection, instructional assistants (embedded tutors who give feedback on students' projects), a three-stage drafting process (including peer review, instructional assistant review, and instructor review), and video and written instruction to appeal to multiple learning styles (for more information on multimodal online courses see Bourelle et al., "Assessing"; Rankins-Robertson et al.; Bourelle et al., "Sites").

Ultimately, the language-focused curriculum makes language and linguistic diversity a central focus in addition to the focus on writing, genre, and rhetorical situation present within all first-year writing classes. Specifically, in the language-focused eComp sections, we supplemented the textbook readings (which focused on the principles of genre and rhetorical situation) with texts—some of which demonstrate code-meshing—that ask students to consider issues of language and power (e.g., Rosina Lippi-Green's *English with an Accent* and Gloria Anzaldúa's "How to Tame a Wild Tongue"). The three major assignments were a rhetorical analysis where students were asked to analyze a linguistically diverse text (targeting the linguistic diversity SLO); a profile of a discourse community in which students had to draw on their own knowledge and interview another member "to provide another perspective on the language, values, and purpose of the discourse community" (targeting the discourse communities SLO); and a commentary focused on a current language-related issue that required outside research and an angle that would allow them to "add to the conversation" (targeting both SLOs).

Through the three assignments, we gave students multiple opportunities to engage with the material, including discussion boards and low-stakes writing assignments, and students also wrote reflections on the course SLOs for each major writing assignment. While we wouldn't call the curriculum translingual, we were attempting to help students see the value of all their

linguistic resources, and we invited students to compose texts using multiple language varieties. For example, the prompt for the profile of a discourse community states that students should try to "strategically integrate some of [their] own unique language knowledge into the text itself. In other words, if [they] are writing about a discourse community that speaks Spanish, [they should] consider using some Spanish words in order to get [their] point across." Additionally, their first assignment required them to rhetorically analyze a text that demonstrated code-meshing (our list of suggested authors included Junot Díaz, Judith Ortiz Cofer, and Alfredo Quinones-Hinojosa). Some suggested topics for the language commentary directly addressed issues related to power and language regulation, including negative characterizations of African American English, Native-American language revitalization/preservation projects and a controversy at a local Whole Foods grocery store where two employees were fired for speaking Spanish to one another.

We hoped that by asking students to analyze linguistically diverse texts and by inviting them to code-mesh, students would view the presence of multiple languages and language varieties—including their own multilingualism—as an asset to the course rather than as a deficit. We also suspected that an explicit focus on language would challenge students to confront their own biases about language (similar to Zuidema's suggestions), thus getting at some of the goals embedded in the linguistic diversity SLO. Finally, by encouraging students to consider how various communities use diverse languages and language varieties to accomplish their goals, we hoped that students would become more comfortable with the discourse communities SLO, the outcome geared toward understanding the social nature of writing and writing conventions.

Curriculum Assessment: Methods and Findings

In order to assess the new curriculum, we collected both quantitative and qualitative data in the form of portfolio assessment scores and thematic analysis of students' reflections on the three writing assignments. The portfolio assessment focused on students' understanding of the language diversity and discourse communities SLOs and the thematic analysis allowed us to interrogate that understanding as well as students' perceptions surrounding the SLOs, the course materials, and their work in the course. We used every other portfolio to create a random sample for this assessment: 30 out of 60 from the traditional eComp courses, 26 out of 52 from the language-focused eComp courses. The assessment focused only on the language diversity and discourse communities SLOs.

Portfolio Scoring

To score the portfolios, we used a rubric with scores from 0–4 (ranging from "fails to meet criteria" to "highly effective") and sought to answer whether the language-focused curriculum yielded higher scores in comparison to the traditional eComp curriculum. Prior to scoring the students' reflections, we first used five portfolios to standardize our scoring and adjust our rubric as needed. Each portfolio had two readers (drawn from the authors of this article). If the average score of the outcome differed by more than a point (which was the case for 14% of the portfolios across both curricular groups), a third reader would score the portfolio, and we replaced the outlying score with the third reader's score.

The scoring of the two SLOs revealed that students in the language-focused curriculum were better able to describe their understanding of and achievement toward the two SLOs, which is, of course, as we hoped. They scored approximately one point higher for each SLO than the portfolios from the traditional eComp curriculum (see table 1). Importantly, the language-focused group, on average, scored within the "satisfactory" category on our rubric, which indicates that while the "writer needs to further clarify their understanding of the outcome and offer more evidence of learning," they have met our expectations and would "pass" for these SLOs.

Table 1
Mean Portfolio Scores for the Language Diversity and Discourse Communities SLOs

SLO	Traditional	Language-Focused
Discourse Communities	1.65	2.66
Linguistic Diversity	1.49	2.34

As noted, we had both hoped and expected that the language-focused eComp students would score higher than the students in the traditional eComp sections. However, the scores did not, on average, exceed "satisfactory." As such, we wanted to discover both what the students understood in the SLOs and where we could continue to strengthen our curriculum and teacher preparation to ensure greater understanding.

Analysis of Reflections

In addition to scoring portfolio reflections for progress toward the two SLOs, we also analyzed the reflections in order to identify differences in understanding across the two groups and levels of understanding within

the language-focused group. In other words, we analyzed the portfolio reflections with the following questions in mind:

1. In what ways do the language-focused eComp students seem to better understand the SLOs?

2. What are the common misunderstandings that prevented the language-focused eComp students from scoring even higher?

Of the 56 portfolios, we had permission to include quoted material from 13 students (7 from the traditional eComp sections; 6 from the language-focused eComp sections). We began by reading the student reflections from those 13 portfolios in order to identify themes, or categories, of understanding within each SLO. This reading yielded the following categories:

- Discourse Communities SLO: audience; feedback to drafts; interactions with people in their communities or through online platforms; and culture
- Linguistic Diversity SLO: formality of language; style; rhetorical choices and effective communication; language/dialect; and discourse communities

We then returned to the larger group of portfolios and read all of the reflections on the two SLOs to compare the traditional and language-focused groups quantitatively and to qualitatively examine the dimensions within each category. Following is a description of what we found for each SLO through thematic coding.

Discourse Communities SLO

Table 2 shows that students across both curricular models commonly understood the discourse communities SLO in terms of engaging with an audience, getting feedback on drafts, other kinds of social interactions, and, to a lesser extent, culture. There was very little mention of language or linguistic diversity.

Table 2:
Themes in Discourse Communities SLO Reflections

	Traditional (*n* = 28)	Language-Focused (*n* = 25)
Audience	89%	48%
Feedback	36%	44%
Social Interactions	29%	44%
Culture	7%	24%

Audience was the most common category for both groups, and students largely had similar understandings within that category. Sometimes students identified the audience for the various pieces they wrote (e.g. "my intended audience was fellow classmates"), other times they referred to audience more broadly, noting that writers need to keep their audience in mind or consider multiple perspectives when composing. However, students from the language-focused group were more likely to frame their understanding of audience within the concept of a discourse community. Students noted the discourse community profile required them to consider how to explain the language specific to their discourse community to classmates who did not belong to the same group. Additionally, a couple of students noted how difficult it can be to write for an audience when you don't share a discourse community. The discourse community profile assignment seemed to be successful in helping students consider important or relevant differences among various audiences. As one student states, "when writing, we must be mindful of our audience and what discourse community we share" as that helps your writing be more effective.

In addition to reflecting on the role of audience in shaping compositions, some students also noted that writing is social because there is always an audience. These students seemed to think of writing as interactive, and one even noted that his or her writing was joining a larger conversation. The focus on joining conversations and considering multiple perspectives was only mentioned in relation to the language-focused group's commentary assignment. One student noted this connection explicitly, stating the "commentary itself is pretty social in the sense that there is more of a conversation going on and you're adding to that conversation with your opinion and arguments." In contrast, the traditional group, who wrote a proposal about a community issue, mentioned the role of writing in getting com-

munities to take action. However, the focus was on persuasion as opposed to interaction.

Feedback and social interaction were the next two most common themes in students' reflections on the discourse communities SLO. Both groups turned to the peer review process as an example of how other people influenced their writing. Additionally, both groups noted that the interviews they completed for a course assignment (a review for the traditional group and the discourse community profile for the language-focused group) represented a kind of social interaction that influenced what they learned and how they approached their writing assignment.

Finally, 24% of the language-focused group used the discourse communities SLO as a way to consider how writing reflects culture and how culture influences writing. We are unsure where the connection between discourse communities and culture came from as *culture* is not included in the SLO or the explanation of the SLO provided in the handbook. It is possible that instructors understood the unfamiliar term *discourse community* to be somewhat of an equivalent to *culture,* or the students could have made this connection on their own as *culture* often serves as a stand in for talking about various forms of diversity in popular contexts (e.g., *multicultural* stands in for race, ethnicity, religion, etc.). Regardless of why students made the connection, culture was one lens students used to understand this SLO. Specifically, in the language-focused group, the students who wrote about culture stated that writing reflects culture. One of those students also noted that writing is an act of sharing culture.

While we are pleased that students in the language-focused group better understood the concept of discourse communities, we are disappointed that students did not reflect on the relationship between discourse communities and written standards or conventions. The lack of attention to linguistic diversity shows that we fell short of some of our goals with the revised curriculum. However, as we note in the next section, the students from the language-focused curriculum did reference discourse communities when reflecting on the linguistic diversity SLO.

Linguistic Diversity SLO

By and large, the traditional group understood the linguistic diversity SLO to mean that we change our level of formality (our tone, our level of professionalism, etc.) depending on the rhetorical situation. In contrast, the language-focused group understood the SLO to mean that linguistic diversity is rhetorically important, and one way we can see that is by examining language use within various discourse communities. While many students

from both groups noted that rhetorical choices drive the use of different languages and dialect, the way they conceived of those difference was significant. The students in the traditional group were far more likely to think of this SLO as referring to an individual style of writing or a level of formality in writing compared to the language-focused group's acknowledgment of either different languages/dialects or the different use of language within discourse communities. Table 3 shows the frequency of categories within each curricular model.

Table 3
Themes in Linguistic Diversity SLO Reflections

	Traditional (*n* = 28)	Language- Focused (*n* = 25)
Formality	57%	12%
Style	57%	20%
Rhetorical Choices/ Effective Communication	75%	60%
Language/Dialect	50%	60%
Discourse Communities	0%	84%

When students referenced formality of language, they used terms like "diction," "tone," and "jargon," and they alluded to register. For example, some students claimed they tried to be professional or formal when writing their proposals. As one student says, "I am learning to write in different voices. I write in a more formal tone when doing research papers and class projects and in a much more informal tone for other communications." These reflections demonstrate that students understand the importance of considering the rhetorical situation when composing; however, they do not meet our expectations in terms of recognizing the value of linguistic diversity. In fact, nearly 60% of the traditional eComp students understood "different languages" to mean an individual's style of writing. Within the category of style, students repeatedly mentioned that not everyone writes in the same way and that everyone's unique style is valuable. In contrast, only a handful of students from the language-focused group mentioned formality (3 students) or style (5 students).

To some extent, we understand the traditional group's interpretation of the SLO as formality given the use of the term *register* in the language of the SLO itself. However, the language-focused curriculum seems to have helped students also consider the use of different languages and dialects in writing. More specifically, 60% of students in the language-focused curriculum group explicitly referenced language or dialect diversity. Additionally, the quality of the reflection in relation to language and dialect diversity differed between the traditional group and the language-focused group. While students in the traditional group mentioned other languages they came across in the course of the semester (a menu had words in Spanish, a PSA was in French with subtitles), the language-focused group talked about linguistic diversity in terms of culture, rhetorical effect, and discourse communities. The language-focused reflections noted that "languages can . . . illustrate most of a person's identity," that "writing or language evolves or changes with society," and that languages/dialects are part of people's identities and cultures. Students also reflected on the ways that including other languages in a text can influence the audience, noting that including other languages can allow an author to connect with a broad audience, with people outside of the author's own community, and with different cultures. Other students suggested that including language from your audience's communities would develop the author's credibility and might make the writing more persuasive.

Perhaps the biggest difference between the two curricular groups, though, was the way students from the language-focused sections made connections between this outcome and the outcome on discourse communities. Because the language-focused group had a writing project about discourse communities, they were able to reflect on what they learned about language in that project and how it connected with this course outcome. In other words, even though students often didn't mention linguistic difference when writing about the discourse communities SLO, they did seem to understand that language choices vary based on the expectations, affordances, and limitations of discourse community values and genres. For example, one student from the language-focused group noted the role of the audience in influencing the linguistic diversity a writer can employ, giving the example that syntactic and semantic precision is important when communicating with nuclear engineers. More importantly, some students from the language-focused curriculum group recognized that certain languages are more common within a given discourse community. Students noted African American English, Spanish, American Sign Language, "Filipino language," and more generally "different languages" when talking about linguistic diversity within various discourse communities.

Despite the apparent success of the language-focused curriculum in encouraging students to think beyond formality and style, students from both groups noted their inability to employ linguistic diversity in their writing, asking, for example, "I only speak English, how am I supposed to write in a different language?" One student from the traditional group said, "I did not have to describe or recognize the value of different languages, dialects, and registers because it was all in English." And sadly, one student explicitly stated that this SLO was not about different languages; instead he or she interpreted it to mean that we wanted students to consider the needs of their audience when composing. In short, students who did not write in other languages or dialects may not have recognized the value of linguistic diversity more broadly. Additionally, we are troubled that more students didn't acknowledge the power relations associated with using a language other than English, a dialect other than Standard Edited American English (SEAE), a register other than academic discourse, etc. Finally, despite the original intent behind the linguistic diversity SLO—to acknowledge and affirm the linguistic diversity of our student population and state—these reflections show a lack of recognition of the range of linguistic resources students already possess when starting our courses.

In the next section, we interpret and respond to the findings from our assessment and outline the resultant changes we have made or will make to our writing program in an effort to help all of our instructors, both f2f and online, communicate the importance of linguistic diversity as promoted by these two SLOs.

Discussion and Expected Revisions

Our assessment revealed that students aren't engaging with these SLOs in the way that we had hoped; therefore, redesigning the assignments might be necessary. As mentioned previously, the second project in the course asked students to research a discourse community and write a profile of the norms and values, including language use, within their community of choice. Because students often chose communities such as team sports, there was little room for a critical examination of language use. This specific project could be redesigned to ask students to locate their chosen discourse community within one or more speech communities and to consider issues of language and power *within* their discourse community. Or instructors could ask students to choose a discourse community whose language use might be stigmatized in particular contexts and to consider why those language practices are valuable despite the negative valuation from outsiders.

There could also be more done with discussions that occur in the course. For example, discussion board threads could ask students to consider some of the SLOs in relation to one another. Given the promising ways that students in this pilot study understood the value of linguistic diversity through the lens of discourse communities, we could ask students to reflect on these SLOs in posts throughout the semester. We could also ask them to consider our SLOs on "standard" English in relation to the SLO on linguistic diversity through a lens of power and language regulation. Finally, in the future, we would like to provide students with common misperceptions of the SLOs, as well as accurate descriptions, from former students, discussing with the online students their own perceptions and how they differ from the descriptions we've provided.

On top of asking students to engage with these topics in discussions, we could also ask them to actually put these principles into practice in the discussions. For example, Miller-Cochran notes the importance of constructing spaces in the course (i.e., discussion boards) where students can use the language with which they feel most comfortable ("Multilingual" 302), a point with which Kynard would likely agree (352). Additionally, scholars who advocate for translingualism and code-meshing also encourage instructors to allow students to compose in and across various languages for all writing occasions—including discussion boards, informal writing projects, and formal writing assignments—while cautioning that this not be a requirement. At our institution (and likely others), allowing students to write their assignments in languages other than English may make it difficult for instructors to respond to and grade those pieces. To this end, in various eComp courses, we have added an embedded tutor who can help the instructor leave feedback in Spanish (as that is the most common language other than English on campus). Even when embedding a Spanish-speaking tutor is not possible (and this may also cause more work for the instructor and tutor), instructors can respond to students who code-mesh, much like non-Spanish speakers are able to engage with Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*. Indeed, exercises that encourage code-meshing may make it easier for the instructor to evaluate or interact with the student while allowing students to understand the value of using various languages to communicate.

The results of our assessment also caused us to wonder if the patterned ways in which students fell short of our expectations could be a result of how the instructors (mis)understood the outcomes and subsequently introduced them to their students. As scholarship has acknowledged, in order to incorporate a focus on linguistic diversity in writing classrooms, there must be corresponding teacher-training programs. In fact, as Ball and Lardner note, "[I]t is not the students' language that is problematic in academic set-

tings but the teachers' attitudes towards the students' language that constitutes the problem" (473). Similarly, Elaine Richardson uses the result of a survey of nearly 1,000 CCCC and NCTE members to argue for the importance of professional development in linguistic diversity so that "our profession . . . [can] struggle against traditional concepts of literacy education" (63), particularly as it relates to linguistic diversity. Additionally, instructors may need training when developing linguistically diverse online learning environments. Fernando Sánchez argues for the consideration of second-language learners when creating departmental websites or online writing labs, suggesting instructors consider how the online space is rhetorically constructed to meet the needs of various online learners (163). This advice can be followed when creating the curriculum for an online course as well (164); however, instructors may need guidance in designing an inclusive curriculum. Miller-Cochran, in "Multilingual Writers and OWI," discusses various ways administrators can provide instructors with training for teaching students with linguistically diverse backgrounds.

As an extension of Miller-Cochran's work, in the remainder of this article, we discuss improvements to our own teacher-training practices for designing online curricula through various practicum courses. We also provide administrators with a list of professional development opportunities they can and should offer instructors when designing a linguistically diverse curriculum for the online setting.

Before our instructors teach in the eComp program, they first complete two practicum courses—one traditional pedagogy course that prepares them to teach f2f composition courses and includes instruction on the SLOs; the other that prepares them specifically to teach online. Like Miller-Cochran suggests, we believe that "all writing teachers should be prepared to address issues of linguistic diversity in writing classes" ("Language Diversity" 216); therefore, within the practicum in which they are prepared to teach f2f courses, instructors learn the importance of linguistic diversity, in part through the introduction of the two SLOs we have focused on in this article. We find that in the traditional pedagogy course, instructors agree in principle with the value of different languages and the linguistic diversity SLO. However, instructors find it difficult to put these principles into practice and often end up noting that students need to learn and use SEAE in formal, academic, and professional contexts. As Kim Brian Lovejoy argues, this is a problematic place for our instructors to land as "a cognitive understanding and appreciation of language difference is not sufficient . . . we must translat[e] that knowledge into meaningful classroom practices that can shape our students' view of language and their experience as writers" (96).

Additionally, surveys and focus groups on our SLOs indicate that instructors commonly struggle with the two SLOs highlighted in this article. Specifically, fifty percent of instructors or fewer (as low as 43%) noted that these two SLOs were important or very important to student success (in and out of the class) and good writing compared to 80–85% of instructors indicating that our SLO on "standard" English was important or very important to student success and 90% of instructors rating our SLO on being able to compose in multiple genres as important or very important to student success. According to the surveys, instructors were also the least comfortable teaching these two SLOs. Only 57% of our instructors said they were comfortable or very comfortable leading class activities on discourse communities, and 72% said they were comfortable or very comfortable teaching students to recognize the value of linguistic diversity. In comparison, 91% said they were comfortable or very comfortable teaching their students "standard" English.

In response to this research, the practicum for all new instructors now asks instructors to create a profile of one of their discourse communities as a way to become more familiar with the concept. As part of this assignment, we introduce them to John Swales's "The Concept of Discourse Community" and have them identify the languages, genres, and cultural values/practices common to their own discourse communities. This assignment prepares them for the now-required assignment for all first-year composition courses: a profile of one of the student's discourse communities, which must include language use unique to the discourse community as a focus. Additionally, the low-stakes assignments that lead up to the profile prompt graduate students to consider both the language and the values of the discourse community and the relationship between the two (i.e., how the values influence language use and how language use reflects values). We have also worked to incorporate more practical advice and resources for addressing linguistic diversity with our students and dedicate significant classroom discussion time in the practicum to responding to and grading linguistic differences in student writing. While we are hopeful that these changes will help with instructor and student understanding of the SLOs, the results from our assessment of the language-focused curriculum reveal additional changes we can make.

For example, we have made changes to the subsequent pedagogy course instructors must take if they wish to teach online. Before the pilot of the language-focused eComp class, there was little discussion of the SLOs and how to approach them specific to the online environment. Graduate instructors are now prompted to discuss how to approach these two SLOs through various small writing assignments, discussion boards, reading

responses, and other peer-to-peer interactions. To provide a framework for this discussion, students read Miller-Cochran's "Multilingual Writers and OWI," which offers ideas for developing an online curriculum for multilingual students, and the graduate instructors discuss those suggestions and incorporate many of them into their lower-stakes assignments implemented throughout their courses.

In addition to discussing the SLOs in the context of curriculum development, the graduate instructors within our online pedagogies course were prompted to design assignments based on the language diversity and discourse communities outcomes. The graduate instructors were also required to interact with one another and give each other feedback on these projects within a Blackboard online discussion board instead of a f2f forum; in this sense, the graduate instructors learned how others understand the SLOs, as well as the challenges that come with adding a diversity element in the online classroom. This task is in line with Beth Hewett's suggestion that online teachers experience "the OWI course from the student seat in order to learn the LMS, how long an assignment takes to complete, and the temptations of multitasking from the student view" (68).

As we mentioned, the graduate instructors sometimes don't seem to recognize the importance of encouraging diversity in the online classroom. To further encourage this recognition, the graduate students participated in a more active discussion of the CCCC Committee's *Position Statement* to help them understand the full context of the principles, which were, in fact, written with a diverse set of students in mind. The *Position Statement* specifically acknowledges multilingual learners who may have a different working knowledge of academic English or different cultural backgrounds. Such discussions regarding the OWI principles and how they work in conjunction with the Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers to focus on and approach linguistic diversity in the online classroom hopefully aid the instructors in understanding the OWI principles more effectively and ultimately help them build a better class that promotes success for *all* students.

Implications for Writing Program Administrators

Many of these changes and curricular revisions that we have discussed are relevant for the local context of our university; however, our curriculum, assessment, and lessons learned can easily be applied by writing program administrators at various institutions. In this section, we outline the implications of this study for WPAs:

1. **Approach existing SLOs with an eye toward linguistic diversity.**
    As Matsuda suggests, diversity has the potential to become erased in
    the composition classroom (638). As such, WPAs need to review and
    revise their outcomes to include a focus on linguistic diversity, and we
    hope that WPAs can use our SLOs as a guide. While the two SLOs
    we discuss are important to our Hispanic-Serving Institution, they can
    be implemented to encourage an exploration of the linguistic diversity
    present within various local communities.

2. **WPAs must also ensure that the first-year curriculum supports
    student learning of such SLOs.** As we mentioned above, adjusting
    the curriculum to include texts that introduce students to linguistic
    diversity in practice and conceptually ensures that students will grapple
    with the role and value of multilingualism. Additionally, several of the
    assignments—particularly the discourse community profile and the
    commentary on a language-related issue—show promise for helping
    students to understand the ways that language norms are socially cre-
    ated and enforced and how writing can be a means to engage in ongo-
    ing conversations about language equality and discrimination. Despite
    the promise of these curricular changes, WPAs must be prepared for
    resistance to the linguistic diversity SLO given the prevalence of stan-
    dard language ideologies. While this isn't an easy problem to address,
    our assessment and experiences identify discourse communities as a
    point of entry for exploring and valuing linguistic diversity.

3. **Teachers must have adequate training when teaching these SLOs
    for both face-to-face and online environments.** As our assessment
    revealed, instructors who teach f2f courses struggled with understand-
    ing the importance of the two SLOs that attend to diversity. WPAs
    need to address new diversity SLOs within teaching practicums, ori-
    entations, and workshops that help instructors add a diversity element
    to their assignments. Additionally, we recommend that WPAs engage
    instructors in an exploration of linguistic diversity through their own
    discourse communities as way to address the likely resistance instruc-
    tors will have regarding the importance of nonstandard languages and
    language varieties in online writing classes.

    At UNM, we strongly believe in training all of our teachers to be
    prepared for the complexities of online instruction. Instructors receive
    training within the environment in which they will be teaching,
    meaning that the online teacher must be immersed in an online train-
    ing course. Participating in training that occurs online can help the

instructor see what their own students might struggle with and make changes to their pedagogy accordingly. WPAs must design a model curriculum, similar to the eComp model we have described, and ask their graduate instructors to read various readings and participate in discussion boards as if they were first-year students. The purpose of this training is twofold: (1) it will allow instructors to first see a model of how to incorporate diversity, enabling them to design similar courses, and (2) the online training course will be an eye-opening experience for instructors when learning what their own students may struggle with, and they can create extra resources and tools to help assist students in learning difficult material.

4. **Assessment is critical, as are ongoing conversations about improving student learning.** WPAs must conduct an assessment by first implementing new SLOs, then collecting and scoring eportfolios, similar to the assessment cycle we offer in this article. This needs to be done at both the classroom and departmental level, allowing instructors opportunities to make changes to their curricula while simultaneously offering administrators empirical evidence that can guide them in making changes to future training methods and curricula. In addition to evaluating eportfolios, WPAs must examine instructors' and students' language attitudes following the course or the teacher training.

Conclusion

Our experience has taught us that addressing linguistic diversity in online classes can be challenging. Even when designing classes specifically focused on addressing our two language-based SLOs, the students struggled to achieve a critical, robust understanding of the outcomes. We were certainly heartened that students in the language-focused classes performed better on the SLOs than in the traditional online course, but we still observed ways in which we could improve our curriculum, especially regarding training practices for instructors. We hope our project, assessment, and analysis can be of use to other administrators considering ways to incorporate linguistic diversity into online classes at their institutions. Each university, of course, has its own institutional goals, context, and needs that must be considered; there is no cookie-cutter approach for tackling such a complex task. However, we believe administrators can use our approach as a starting point that could be adjusted, revised, and improved. Moreover, we hope that more teacher-scholars and program administrators will join the conversation about addressing and valuing linguistic diversity in online composition classes. As more and more classes are offered online, and as universities

become increasingly diverse, it is important for writing program administrators to consider and discuss these issues at a curricular level.

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