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## Teaching Multilingual Composition Through Literature: An Integrated Process Approach

■ Drawing on studies in first and second language composition, an argument can be made for integrating writing, reading, and critical thinking skills to promote writing competence and better ensure academic literacy for first-year multilingual student writers. This essay first presents the rationale for incorporating literature into an integrated process approach. Such an approach emphasizes the reader's response to a text combined with critical-thinking strategies and meaningful prompts for composition. Next, examples of reading and writing exercises are presented to demonstrate a possible integration of skills. Sample exercises illustrate the progression from initial exploration, through informal writing tasks, to guidelines for structured formal assignments. Encouraging students to do frequent daily writing for a variety of purposes while gaining facility with strategies for writing from texts in ways that are both personally meaningful and academically significant are important goals to help students make gains in their overall critical literacy.

The greatest challenge as well as the most important goal of the first-year college composition course for multilingual<sup>1</sup> students is to further the students' confidence in their own writing proficiency to the extent that they can critically assess any writing task that they are likely to encounter and have a reper-

toire of techniques and strategies to draw upon to make the appropriate compositional choices. Many of these students, regardless of their level of English language proficiency, may find themselves being held to native-speaker standards of academic literacy for the first time (Roberge, 2002), despite having been enrolled in mainstream English courses in high school, and are apprehensive about coping with the demands of producing an extended piece of writing in a language other than their native one in a context that rewards those who can read efficiently and accurately and write coherently and clearly. Furthermore, particularly high-stakes college writing tasks, such as the English Placement Test and Writing Proficiency Exam required for graduation, often incorporate a reading passage with a prompt requiring interpretation and critical response and assessment standards intended primarily for native English speakers. To address the perceived deficiencies of their multilingual students and to present them with a range of effective compositional strategies, through the years many L2 composition instructors have relied upon some variation of the process approach to incorporate brainstorming, prewriting, and drafting activities, macrolevel revision and editing tasks, and peer and instructor feedback in conferences and on drafts.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the gains in developing writing proficiency, however, many multilingual students remain at a disadvantage when it comes to higher-order assignments that require the assimilation of and critical response to extensive reading passages. These students often flounder in ways that their native speaking peers do not, particularly in their ability to quickly and correctly identify key points and supporting information from the text, condense it into a concise summary, and formulate their own appropriate response either in support of or in opposition to the main issue in the text as required by the specific writing prompt. To solve the problem faced by these students, many L2 writing instructors have attempted to link instruction in reading and critical-thinking

strategies with writing. While these are valuable approaches to enhance individual skills, their shortcoming is that students often fail to make explicit the link between reading, interpretation, and writing. Literature, in combination with a range of expository works, may be an effective means of exposing multilingual students to such critical demands.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this paper is to explore some of the practical and pedagogical issues that affect multilingual literature-based writing instruction and to suggest some strategies for incorporating combined reading and writing tasks into a process-oriented approach in first-year composition.

### **Why Literature?**

Although the seeds of the literature-composition debate were originally sown during the 1980s, the issue has been periodically revisited as new and veteran teachers speculate on how to best incorporate literature into their classrooms should they decide to do so (Belcher & Hirvela, 2000; Lindemann, 1993, 1995; Tate, 1993, 1995). Since then, numerous arguments have been presented defending and cautioning against the use of belletristic literature. If any consensus can be reached about the common goals of writing instruction, however, it is to provide “writing and other language experiences . . . that will enable students, both alone and collaboratively, to develop strategies for interpreting and organizing information” (Lloyd-Jones & Lunsford, as cited in Peterson, 1995, p.316). Instructors who are interested in incorporating a literary component into their writing courses but who still want to employ a primarily process approach may find that creative assignments that invite the students to respond to the texts in meaningful ways need not be at odds with their goals (Gajdusek, 1988; Gamer, 1995; Latosi-Swain, 1993; Spack, 1985). Reading and responding to literature can help multilingual students formulate their own responses and interactions to texts based on their experience and background knowledge. Instead of reading for the main idea, plot,

argument, point of view, and message—all of which foreground the dominance and efficacy of the text itself as something static and inscrutable—the students are asked to consider their personal response, critical interpretation, and a sustained dialogue with the text. Often, when students respond to literature in the classroom, the work itself is foregrounded; rather, the literary text itself can be examined effectively through the lens of composition (Rocklin, 1991). Imaginative readings are frequently used as a springboard for response; accordingly, “the theme or structure or spirit or energy of the text” may also serve as an impetus to writing without having to “get it right” (Elbow, 1993, p.21). Thus, a variety of interactions take place which, instead of marginalizing students, validate their own responses while attuning them to critical practices in their own reading and writing. This reader-response approach to literature emphasizes the author-text-reader relationship, with the reader’s own role in constructing meaning in reading and writing made prominent. Gary Tate’s counsel to revive all manner of texts, including the canonical, the expository, and the student essay, is a counter to the current trend of turning first-year composition into a service course for other disciplines (Tate, 1993).

### ***Foster Critical Literacy***

Studies in second language acquisition recognize that reading and writing proficiency are implicitly connected, that gains in one area to some degree reciprocally augment the other, and that certain kinds of readings may provide engaging stimuli and models for writing. Reading and writing are linked skills in gaining overall critical literacy, which is the ability to go beyond the reception and understanding required of basic literacy to questioning and testing sources, assumptions, and intentions (Flower, et al., 1990). While the goal of a literature-based writing class is not to provide a literary interpretation of specific texts or stylistic models for composition, interpretative strategies for reading, critical

analysis, and assessment may help to balance the more information-based types of reading that the students are doing in their other courses. Furthermore, in classes where the cultural backgrounds and educational experiences of the students are mixed, it is important to expose nonnative speakers to the socially constructed conventions and assumptions that represent academic literacy (Rodby, 1992). Generation 1.5 students educated in the US may also benefit from further reinforcement of the effective critical strategies they already possess and adjust them to college expectations (Destandau & Wald, 2002). Thus, the greater the number of effective reading strategies that the students are able to negotiate and call into play, the higher their level of critical literacy, and the more their content and formal schemata are activated.

The argument to incorporate more reading into first-year writing courses is bolstered by the conventional wisdom that reading is itself a kind of composing process that has as much to do with how the reader interacts with the text as with the text itself (Comely & Scholes, 1983; Horner, 1983; Petrosky, 1982). Active reading and interpretation allow the reader to constantly build, activate, and revise existing schemata relevant to the demands of the task at hand. Particularly challenging, though, is the transaction of meaning for those students whose functional strategies for interpretation open them to misinterpretations and miscues in this dynamic exchange. To the extent that imaginative literature decontextualizes the transmission of transactional information, it invites interpretation and response; in other words, it contextualizes images and personal experience. Still, while the value of integrating reading and writing is evident, difficulties with its implementation also must be acknowledged (Reid, 1993). Some of the strongest advocates for the use of literature in composition have been those who teach basic writing, for the guided engagement with texts may be empowering (Belcher & Hirvela, 2000). Yet, for students who have come to believe that the problems they encounter with reading and writing

assignments reside with them, literature—precisely because it is open to interpretation—fosters the negotiation of meaning between writer, reader, and text.

### ***Provide Sustained Content in Meaningful Contexts***

Frequently, L2 learners' experience and maturity levels exceed their ability to articulate ideas and subtleties of opinion and perception, so the challenge for the instructor lies in finding appropriate reading materials that are sufficiently complex and challenging yet accessible. The advantage of using several longer texts, or groups of thematically or stylistically related shorter selections, to serve as a springboard for discussions and writing is that the instructor can establish a unity of common themes, genres, styles, or subject matter rather than a casual approach to a variety of loosely related short selections. Theories of formal and content schemata and second language acquisition emphasize the importance of sustained contextualized input (Carson, Carrell, Silberstein, Kroll, & Kuehn, 1990; Krashen, 1984, 1991, 1993); thus, longer selections that provide information in contexts with which the students are already somewhat familiar can provide the extended contact necessary to become familiar with the nuances of a particular style and a better sense of the text-structure knowledge required to build finer, more complex interpretations through exposure to continuous and consistent content (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). This continuity in context is essential for effective learning as it builds upon the students' previous knowledge, activates and modifies the content schemata that they bring to each task, while providing enough interest and diversity to entice at least some of the members of the class. Sustained content study also has been shown to benefit the development of students' critical-thinking abilities (Pally, 1997). For multilingual writers in particular, sustained, involved reading can aid vocabulary acquisition, contextualize grammatical and syntactical usage, and increase

sensitivity to the nuances of expression. Furthermore, sustained reading with the goal of learning new subject matter is more closely allied to the kinds of academic reading and critical-thinking skills required for most academic content classes (Shih, 1992).

There is also the pragmatic issue of what type of literature—multicultural, world, canonical, popular, or a combination of types—is the most effective. Insofar as any thoughtfully selected work has value, instructors should determine the background, interests, and needs of their students when making a selection; nevertheless, an argument can be made for the appropriateness of multicultural selections. The main argument for using multicultural readings is their cultural interest and linguistic relevance to readers from diverse backgrounds (Kachru, 1982; Sridhar, 1982). Other arguments are more sociologically or ethically oriented and acknowledge their benefit in exposing all students to different cultures, validating and promoting tolerance through a better understanding of the similarities and differences between cultures, and, for students born outside of the US, alleviating stereotypical notions of American culture and Western values (McKay, 2001). Some approaches emphasize the importance of integrating the noncanonical literatures of minority cultures with the traditional literature of the Western canon (Vandrick, 1996). Other arguments focus on the decentering of the classroom itself where students can challenge homogeneous definitions of culture and hegemony (van Slyck, 1997). All of these arguments have validity for the multicultural and multilingual classroom as it represents a microcosm of the “contact zone” where cultures meet and interact (Pratt, 1991, p. 34). Particularly compelling for composition instruction, though, is the implication that teaching the literature of the contact zone necessitates a reexamination of the pedagogy in order to provide ways for students “to move *into and out of* rhetorics of authenticity” (emphasis in the original; Pratt, 1991, p. 40).

### ***Evoke Verbal and Written Response***

A low-risk, student-centered approach is crucial for promoting responses to readings that are authentic and meaningful as well as being consistent with the aim of process approaches to composition. To avoid the inherent risk of turning the composition classroom into a teacher-centered discussion of literary criticism, the readings should be made accessible to uninitiated readers, and discussion topics and writing assignments should provide opportunities for meaningful reflection (Morgan, 1993). While instructors may wish to assign a range of essay styles such as the personal, analytical, or mode-based, assignments should avoid becoming veiled acts of literary criticism. Although literary terms such as point of view, character, situation, and action (Gajdusek & vanDommelen, 1993) may be useful as a common language for discussing texts, foregrounding them in the writing assignment by definition turns it into an act of criticism. The major arguments against using literature in the composition classroom seem particularly relevant here as such works are unrepresentative of the types of writing that students are likely to produce in the academic discourse communities they are to enter, and the skills proffered by studying and responding to literature may be neither transferable to other fields nor adequately addressed even within the confines of the course itself. Even the instructor’s well-intentioned efforts may be undermined by an emphasis on formulas and rules in which the teacher assumes the role of expert, imparting knowledge on formal and stylistic models for writing.

A student-centered approach that allows the students to make connections, draw conclusions, agree or disagree, and enter into meaningful dialogue with their peers, the instructor, and with the texts themselves is valuable in that it validates multiple voices and perspectives as well as providing numerous opportunities for thoughtful verbal and written response. Using longer works of literature that are representative of multiple cul-

tures or perspectives is also valuable in that they can provide a range of views and topics in sufficient complexity and depth without marginalizing or tokenizing experiences (Taylor, 1997). In such a class where the students themselves may be positioned as an authority on the background to the culture, traditions, or issues represented in one or more of the texts, the lines of power are shifted away from the instructor and centered on the students. All students, even quiet ones, may be empowered as they assume authority and are able to articulate the nuances within a particular text with which they identify. However, it is important not to assume that all students even from the same cultural background are going to react in the same way or necessarily identify with the representative text from that culture. It can be an instructive point of departure, therefore, to facilitate discussion and further writing assignments that probe the reasons for their reactions and compare interpretative readings. As students explore, from a variety of perspectives, the issues and values that they may both participate in and critique, they themselves contribute to the creation of the text and convey it to their peers through comments that are the product of their own rich experiences and diverse perspectives.

### **Integrating Writing and Reading Assignments**

In a primarily student-centered process approach, techniques for facilitating meaningful discussion and assisting students in finding and writing about personally meaningful and academically significant topics is vital. Popular literature often contains various sociopolitical and cultural views and assumptions that can become a spark for critical thinking and expressive writing. Cognitively demanding assignments that evolve from previous writing tasks maximize the potential for intellectual engagement and purpose. Since many students have difficulty synthesizing their personal knowledge with that gained from the reading, such assignments

foster critical thinking and critical literacy skills (Bishop, 1995). Consistently sequenced worksheets guide students through each stage of the writing process—exploration, focus and development, drafting, revising and editing—thereby further reinforcing the reading-to-writing connection (see Appendices A, C, and D). In actual practice, these literature-based topics have proven effective as students appreciate the open-ended assignments that allow either an objective or personal response, generate more writing throughout the exploration and drafting stages, and produce more sophisticated essays than are typical of less reading-oriented prompts.

### ***Reading as Composing:* *Amy Tan, The Joy Luck Club***

A consistent approach that emphasizes the interrelatedness of both reading and writing processes seems to best facilitate the students' own awareness of the complex cognitive procedures and choices that they are making as they encounter various kinds of reading and writing tasks. In this way, students assume the dual perspective both of a critical reader by formulating, refining, and defending their interpretations of a text and of a fellow writer by examining such features as writing style, text structure, context, and the use of literal or metaphoric details to advance an idea. This text-oriented stance allows the reader to analyze a text with a writer's eye, and either consciously or subconsciously to convey a similar awareness of stylistic choices to his or her own writing. It may be especially constructive for the students to analyze multicultural works in which language use is implicit in and influenced by the authors' own rhetoric of social construction (Rodby, 1992; Weir, 1982). As an example, the students may examine Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) to compare the Chinese mothers' and American-born daughters' voices in the manner and interpretation of their respective stories or to interpret the introductory parables both for their thematic significance and symbolic style. Tan's essay "Mother

Tongue” (1990) makes a fine companion piece for the novel by focusing on the different Englishes in the author’s life, and it often provides insight and assurance to those students who themselves are struggling with their own language issues. Likewise, the individual readings that the students bring to the texts from the viewpoint of their own diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds contribute to the construction of rhetoric within the classroom itself. Examining language variation among various texts or identifying points of departure from nonstandard English, for example, can be effective in reflecting on the students’ own varied language use.

Since the students in mixed-level L2 classes come armed with an arsenal of assumptions, strategies, and capabilities for approaching various writing tasks, it is important to make explicit the rationale for a particular logical coherence and structural cohesion that they may ultimately apply to their own writing. Literary texts frequently lack a clearly placed thesis, topic sentences, and transitions, so the reader is required to focus more on the deep structure and implied connection between ideas. This exercise in turn encourages students to analyze how all the parts function within the whole in a way that provides an intrinsic structural framework underlying the surface coherence markers (Gajdusek & vanDommelen, 1993). For example, a writing assignment based on Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* asks the students to reflect upon the introductory parable and to work through a series of steps culminating in their own essay based on the theme and spirit of the original (see Appendix A). As a first step in their exploration of ideas, they are given a demonstration in summary and then asked to write their own. An effective exercise to highlight the reader’s contribution in interpreting a text is to ask small groups of students to compare their summaries and interpretations and to examine the differences in emphasis and interpretation. For example, students may compare summaries to discover the order, emphasis, and deletion of certain details, how their choices affect the overall

message, and their reasons for various choices. Next, in conjunction with a lesson on paraphrase, the students are asked to examine the implications of various stylistic choices by rewording a significant or ambiguous sentence in their own words and then to compare the differences in effect between the revision and the original or between each other’s versions. An important goal in composition instruction, particularly at the introductory level, is to systematically build the skills required for writing across the curriculum, such as summarizing, paraphrasing, incorporating quotation and response, working with information gained from texts and lectures, and encouraging precise understanding of the author’s meaning and purpose (Rose, 1983; Spack, 1988).

***Focus on Expression:  
Charles Ball, “Slave Ship”***

Opportunities to examine the literature from the inside and outside can provide thoughtful and varied informal and formal written assignments. Both double- and triple-entry notebooks provide the opportunity to practice various important academic skills (Zamel, 1992). For instance, summarizing a passage allows the students to check their comprehension of a passage as well as practicing how to manage large amounts of information effectively. Interpretation allows the students to consider the author’s message and provide evidence for support. And response gives them the opportunity to react as readers and incorporate their personal evaluations, agreements, or disputes. Since many academic writing assignments require the students to be proficient at each skill, combining strategies is effective for reducing the dichotomy between formal expectations for academic discourse and the personal interpretation and response that to many instructors indicate a mastery and control of the material. In addition to prompts eliciting a personal response, analytical journal entries that ask the students to focus on language and style may be a valuable strategy for providing examples of expressive

and rhetorical features. For example, the students may be asked to select an intriguing or problematic passage and analyze it for its rhetorical features, such as how clearly the author articulates the dominant or subordinate ideas, and evaluate how effectively the ideas are supported and developed through narration or description, illustrative details, and the use of direct or indirect support. Entries may also focus on expressive features such as the use of rhetoric, figurative language, and symbolism, and then ask the students to gauge how effective these qualities are in conveying the author's message. Entry prompts may also ask the students to evaluate their own responses to these features to consider if they were familiar with various uses of figurative language, to what extent such features assisted their understanding and interpretation, and how they would have expressed an idea similarly or differently. The purpose of these exercises is to raise the students' conscious awareness of language as the creation of meaning as well as to attune them to their own points of engagement or misunderstanding.

An approach that integrates instruction and practice in both style and form helps the students to develop individual expression as well as address the grammatical and syntactical errors that often mark second language writing. Although it is now axiomatic that grammar instruction alone is seldom useful, an approach that combines relevant modeling and practice encourages students to focus on the causes of certain errors in their writing as well as the reasons for making various rhetorical decisions. Likewise, close scrutiny of the syntax and form of select passages in a literary text that seem of particular interest or pose a special difficulty to the students may also be instructive in emphasizing the importance of rhetorical choices to convey nuances of literal and implied meaning. For example, in conjunction with a brief explanation of the form, use, and meaning of the active and passive voice, the students may be asked to read a selection from Charles Ball's oral narrative about his passage on a slave ship (Lester, 1968; see Appendix B). First, the students are

invited to discuss their reactions to the narrative and articulate their interpretation of the slaves' and slave traders' actions during the passage. Next, the students are asked to compare the original version, written primarily in the passive voice from a slave's point of view, with an alternative version of the narrative rewritten in the active voice and to consider the different effects of the shift in point of view and to discuss which version they prefer and why. The benefit of this exercise not only gives relevant practice in the grammatical form, but it also focuses attention on the rhetorical choices that one makes as a writer. Perhaps most important, the students often seem pleased as the exercise validates their own ability to master the nuances of language. Style and content, critical literacy, and composing skills coalesce as the students assume responsibility for their own writing and develop a sense of critical self-evaluation.

***Heuristics for Composition:***  
***Rodolfo Anaya, Bless Me, Ultima***

Frequent informal writing assignments help students to probe the complexities and rhetorical difficulties that they encounter in reading and to work on effective solutions. Nevertheless, many multilingual writers still experience difficulty with managing longer reading selections and manipulating writing tasks from reading-based prompts. While students are interacting with and responding to texts in ways that are salient to them through informal writing assignments, formal assignments require the transaction of meaning between writer and reader. The difficulty many multilingual writers often encounter in formulating a critical response to a reading-based prompt lies in clearly defining the parameters of the task, accurately selecting, summarizing, and ranking the relevant information from the source, and developing a focused response that is consistent with the external expectations for the assignment. Common reasons for this lapse may be a lack of familiarity with such assignments (Johns, 1993), insufficient context for



the readings and information (Leki, 1993), and the inappropriate transfer of information from the readings to their own writing purposes (Carson, 1993). To avoid these pitfalls, effective assignments should have clear formal expectations, be cognitively demanding yet open enough to allow students to formulate a response that evolves from previous journal and informal writings, and neither intentionally nor unintentionally require explicit literary criticism. Clearly defined formal requirements are a necessity as they typically form the basis for evaluation, yet they are frequently the source of a mismatch between the student's representation of the task and the instructor's expectations.

Heuristics used for composing are a useful technique for incorporating effective analytical strategies for reading and discovery strategies for writing. Young's (1982) tagmemic heuristic of particle, wave, and field provides a structure by which the students can analyze the various components of a unit or topic by its contrastive features, variations, and distributions. According to this principle, a particular unit of experience may be examined according to three modes of perception: as a discrete, static particle that distinguishes its identity, as a wave of activity that can vary or change through time, or as a field of relationships that locate it within a particular context. Aligned with each mode of perception are the universal principles that allow one to identify each unit of experience: the contrastive features that distinguish the subject from other units, the variations that allow it to retain its identity despite individual differences, and the distributions that reveal the context for this and related units. Taken together, each of these nine approaches provides a complementary line of inquiry that can yield new information, offer fresh modes of perception, and serve as a useful brainstorming technique as well as be applied to the examination of a text. For example, if the students were to apply this approach to an examination of Rodolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), they might be asked to identify an important point in Antonio's life or

select an interesting scene and rewrite it from each point of view (see Appendix C). As an in-class exercise, groups of students could be assigned a different scene or one of the three modes to analyze and then compare results. Alternatively, in preparation for an essay assignment examining a particular event in Antonio's life, such as the scene describing his first day at school, the students are asked to work through a series of exploratory questions based on the nine permutations in the modes of perception. From this initial exploration, they then select a single perspective to develop at greater length into an essay. Since the value of this procedure is to direct inquiry in ways that might not otherwise be considered, the students are prompted to make judgments about the relationship between main points and supporting details and to discover the most appropriate organizational strategy, such as description or cause and effect, that grows organically from their material and purpose.

***Instruction in Form:  
Langston Hughes, "Theme for English B"***

At issue is the proper sequence of assignments and instruction. While some advocate moving from personal response to a more critical approach (Rose, 1983; Spack, 1993), others recommend that most writing be based on texts, that it is sufficiently challenging to be engaging, and that it models the types of academic writing tasks that the students are likely to encounter in other classes (Maimon, 1983). Since most critical reading and composing strategies take place on a continuum, a system that builds in numerous occasions for different types of formal and informal writing, and that accommodates instruction and practice in discrete skills, seems to best accommodate the critical-literacy skills that can benefit all students. The interrelatedness of reading and writing provides a means for students to explore, articulate, and build upon their ideas about a subject as they move from more personal to more analytical responses. Cognitive theories of writing emphasize the

interconnectedness of reading, writing, and thinking (Flower & Hayes, 1980, 1981) as well as the reciprocity of various types of writing that contribute to the final product. Likewise, students should also be encouraged to view most writing as a work in progress and to identify appropriate and effective procedures. Encouraging students to do frequent daily writing for a variety of purposes such as note-taking, summarizing, and personal response can easily be built into the preparation and composing stages of writing rough and finished drafts. Assigning weekly essays that receive a written response from either the instructor or their peers is another way of assuring that the students think that the writing they do is relevant and worthy of a reader's critical response. Particularly effective are writing assignments that evolve from informal writing tasks and reflect the student's own points of engagement with the reading.

Although formal instruction in organizational patterns is at odds with most process approaches, comparing alternative structures drawn from literary texts can provide relevant examples while eliminating the temptation for imitation. Narrative, expository, causative, or argumentative patterns, for example, can be introduced in such a way as to discuss their structure, effect, and use without resorting to explicit models. For example, in presenting a comparison-and-contrast model, it might be instructive to analyze Langston Hughes's poem, "Theme for English B" (1951; see Appendix D). Since the poet is contemplating his own ability to respond adequately to an instructor's writing assignment—a situation that the students themselves should find apropos to their own experience—as well as presenting cultural and racial differences, the students may be guided in their interpretation of the poem by a consideration of the contrasts between their own student-teacher expectations and sense of cultural difference. Students are next directed to identify specific devices in the poem that support their interpretation and conclusions and then to analyze the effectiveness of these textual cues in contributing to the reader's knowledge. For a

writing assignment, the students are asked to analyze and compare a specific cultural contrast that they have experienced or observed, identify points of personal connection, and convey their conclusions to the reader. While teaching organizational structures, it is possible to avoid the tacit imitation of models but instead to use the texts to garner ideas, techniques, and inspiration from examining how another writer handles the material.

### **Conclusion**

The strategies and goals that make a successful writing-reading class for multilingual students feature many of the same techniques that can benefit all students. An integrative process approach that validates and builds on the knowledge and strategies that the students already possess, combined with relevant instruction in techniques to produce an effective completed reader-based product, seems to offer the skills they need to approach various academic writing situations. Since many of the writing assignments the students are likely to encounter require writing from texts, they may further benefit from a strategy that integrates effective reading and composing strategies through relevant and meaningful topics with which they can become engaged. Critical literacy is determined by the intersection of the students' fluency and knowledge of academic conventions and the socially constructed expectations and assumptions held by their instructors and peers, which in turn influences how they are evaluated and graded. Consequently, an educational strategy that goes beyond reception and imitation to incorporate tools for assessment and critical response both orally and in writing augments the complex cognitive procedures and choices required as they encounter various reading and writing tasks. To help first-year multilingual students make the link between the composition process and critical response, they need a sufficient repertoire of strategies and approaches to be able to confidently assess and respond to those tasks to the extent that the writing itself

is no longer the main challenge to fulfilling the assignment.

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I am using the term multilingual to refer to all groups of students, including those who are traditionally designated as ESL, Generation 1.5, bilingual, or trilingual speakers, and international students for whom English is a foreign language. Recent studies have determined that the traditional institutional tracks and labels are insufficient for accurately assessing the “in-between” status of Generation 1.5 language learners (Goen, Porter, Swanson, & VanDommelen, 2002). Nevertheless, while it would be optimal to designate separate classes addressing the distinct needs of the diverse students often enrolled in traditional ESL composition courses, it is not always practical or feasible to do so. Therefore, this approach assumes that the target population of students will have demonstrated a similar level of written English proficiency based on their entrance test scores although not necessarily the same level of familiarity with American academic conventions.

<sup>2</sup> Postprocess theorists have raised some valid concerns regarding the validity and application of process-oriented approaches in L2 composition, noting the inherent inconsistencies for use with an audience for whom it was not originally intended (see Atkinson, 2003; Matsuda, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> The literature/nonliterature distinction has blurred in recent years as the boundaries

between belletristic literature and expository nonfiction have become increasingly ambiguous because of the influence of rhetorical and reader-response theory, and even the texts themselves have evolved to encompass diverse features of space and hyperspace. Nevertheless, literature is loosely defined here as any imaginative print text including all forms of fiction, poetry, drama, prose nonfiction, autobiography, myth, or stories set down from oral traditions.

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## Appendix A *The Joy Luck Club*

### **Reading Assignment:**

Read the passage that opens the novel *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan. This parable introduces several chapters describing the lives and stories of four women and their lives in China before they immigrated to America, and the hopes that they have for their daughters.

### **Writing Assignment:**

The passage from Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* captures many of the hopes for and differences between immigrant parents and their children. In your essay, make an argument for what you believe is the most important lesson or trait that a parent can convey to his or her child. You may write the essay reflecting upon your parents and the lessons that they have passed down to you or from

your own viewpoint as a parent conveying a lesson to your current or future children. The essay should be approximately two to three pages in length.

### **Exploration:**

1. Write a summary of the passage.
  - a. Summarize the passage, making your summary approximately one-third the length of the original. See the examples on how to summarize effectively in order to guide you.
  - b. Compare your summary with a partner, and write your answers to the following questions.
    - What is the main point that you tried to convey in your summary?
    - What seems to be the main point that your partner's summary conveys?
    - What are the main differences between your and your partner's summaries? Consider the order the information is presented, which details are included, and which details are omitted.
    - Briefly explain the reasons for your choices in ordering and presenting the information and details, and how these choices affect the overall message conveyed in the summary.
2. Paraphrase a sentence.
  - a. Select one sentence that you feel is especially important, ambiguous, or confusing. Rewrite the sentence in your own words. See the examples on how to write an acceptable paraphrase in order to guide you.

Original sentence:  
Your paraphrase:
  - b. Compare your paraphrase with a partner, and write your answers to the following questions.
    - In what ways did you change the language in your paraphrase to make the meaning clear?
    - In what ways does rewording the paraphrase change its meaning from the original?
3. Write your own parable inspired by the

original passage. You may write it from the perspective of your parents' advice to you or from your own perspective about what you would like to pass on to your current or future children.

### **Focus and Develop:**

1. Use your own parable as a starting point to begin drafting your essay. Ask yourself the following questions.
  - a. What is the most important message that your parable is trying to convey?
  - b. How can you summarize the main idea of your parable?
  - c. How can you restate the main idea of your summary in a different way?

### **Draft:**

- An argumentative essay is one that tries to persuade the reader that the writer's point of view is correct. In your essay, try to persuade your imaginary audience to accept the advice being given.
- a. Write the main piece of advice as a thesis statement. Try to keep this message as your focus.
  - b. Provide the context or background to understand why this lesson is important.
  - c. Provide several reasons to support your advice and convince your imaginary audience.

### **Revise and Edit:**

- Revise your essay to make any changes to the content, organization, and development.
- Then, edit your essay to correct sentence structure, grammar, word choice, spelling, and punctuation.

## **Appendix B** **Charles Ball, "Slave Ship"**

### **Exercise:**

- Examine the use of passive voice in the passage. Compare the following passage written in the active voice with the original narrative.
- What are the differences?
  - How do the changes affect the tone?

- What is the difference in effect?

**Original Passage:**

At the time we came into this ship, she was full of black people, who were all confined in a dark and low place, in irons. The women were in irons as well as the men.

About twenty persons were seized in our village at the time I was; and amongst these were three children so young that they were not able to walk or to eat any hard substance. The mothers of these children had brought them all the way with them and had them in their arms when we were taken on board this ship.

When they put us in irons to be sent to our place of confinement in the ship the men who fastened the irons on these mothers took the children out of their hands and threw them over the side of the ship into the water. When this was done, two of the women leaped overboard after the children—the third was already confined by a chain to another woman and could not get into the water, but in struggling to disengage herself, she broke her arm and died a few days after of a fever. One of the two women who were in the river was carried down by the weight of her irons before she could be rescued; but the other was taken up by some men into a boat and brought on board. This woman threw herself overboard one night when we were at sea.

**Active Voice:**

We entered a ship full of black people whom the slave traders had confined in a dark and low place, in irons. They locked the women as well as the men in irons.

The slave traders seized about twenty persons from our village at the time that they took me. They also captured three children so young that they were not able to walk or to eat any hard substance. The men loaded onto the ship these mothers with their children still in their arms.

When they put us in irons and sent us to our place of confinement in the ship, the men who fastened the irons on these mothers took

the children out of their hands and threw them over the side of the ship into the water. When the men had done this, two of the women leaped overboard after the children, but the third woman could only struggle against her chains linked to another woman. She struggled to disengage herself, but broke her arm and died a few days after of a fever. One of the two women in the river drowned by the weight of her chains before the men could rescue her; but the men dragged the other woman on board ship. This woman threw herself overboard one night when we were at sea.

**Appendix C**  
**Bless Me, Ultima**

**Reading Assignment:**

Read the passage on pages 57 through 59 of Rodolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*, narrated by a young boy, Antonio Márez, who speaks only Spanish but is about to enter a school that is conducted only in English.

**Writing Assignment:**

Write a two to three page narrative essay based either on your interpretation of Antonio's experience of starting school in a different language or on your own experience of starting a new school. If you choose to write about your experience, you may want to consider such issues as language or cultural differences. As you focus your essay, make your thesis statement address the main question posed by one of the three perspectives either from Antonio's or your own point of view.

**Exploration:**

Examine the episode from each of the following perspectives.

1. What makes this experience an important moment in Antonio's life?
  - a. In what ways does starting school contrast with Antonio's earlier childhood experience at home?
  - b. How does this experience represent a

- turning point in Antonio's life?
- c. How might other children feel about starting a new school in another language?
2. In what ways is Antonio starting to grow up and change?
    - a. How does starting school in another language help Antonio to mature?
    - b. How does Antonio see himself as being different from the other children?
    - c. In what ways is starting school a time of maturation for many children?
  3. In what ways would starting school serve as an initiation into the world outside of his immediate family?
    - a. How does the experience of starting school cause Antonio to start to break away from his mother and family?
    - b. How does Antonio begin to view people and life differently after starting school?
    - c. How is this time in Antonio's life similar or different to other children's experience with starting school?

***Focus and Develop:***

1. Select one of the three perspectives to develop in greater detail.
2. Try to write a tentative thesis statement about one of the main questions.
3. Then use your answers to the following questions to write three or more sentences as subpoints that support your thesis statement.
4. Try to add several supporting details for each subpoint. Use concrete details from the story or from your own experience or observation.

***Draft:***

Write a first draft of your essay, paying attention to creating a focused main idea. Make sure you develop your main idea sufficiently and add plenty of specific details. Make each paragraph support and develop the main idea stated in your thesis.

***Revise and Edit:***

1. Revise your essay to make any changes to

the content, organization, and development.

2. Then, edit your essay to correct sentence structure, grammar, word choice, spelling, and punctuation.

**Appendix D**  
**“Theme for English B”**

***Reading Assignment:***

In the poem, “Theme for English B,” Langston Hughes responds to his English instructor’s assignment to write about himself. He observes that he is both similar and different from his instructor since he is black and his instructor is white.

***Writing Assignment:***

The purpose of the assignment is to analyze and compare perceptions of cultural difference. Compare some aspect of your native culture with a similar aspect of American culture. If you have not lived in two cultures, then write about a cultural difference that you have experienced in dealing with your parents, grandparents, relatives, or another friend. Try to focus on only one main aspect of cultural difference (such as hospitality, rules for politeness, behavior in public places, dating, etc.) and identify several examples that support your observations and conclusions. The essay should be approximately two to three pages in length.

***Exploration:***

**Analysis:**

1. The poem contains four stanzas with two main parts. Summarize the meaning of the two main parts of the poem. See the examples of effective summary to guide you.
  - a. Write a summary expressing the main idea of the first part.
  - b. Write a summary expressing the main idea of the second part.
2. Interpret the meaning of the two main parts.
  - a. What is the thesis or main idea of the first main part? Write the main idea in one or



two complete sentences.

- b. What is the thesis or main idea of the second main part? Write the main idea in one or two complete sentences.
3. Interpret the main theme in the poem. What is the message that Hughes wants to tell his instructor? Write the main idea in one or two complete sentences.

### **Comparison and Contrast:**

1. Make a list of some of the ways that Hughes says his experience is different from his instructor's.
2. Make a list of some of the ways that Hughes says his experience is similar to his instructor's.

### **Personal Connection:**

1. Identify a situation in which you felt different from the majority. Describe it briefly.
2. What was the main cause of this difference?
3. Did you find that you were more similar or different from one another?
4. What factors, if any, contributed to helping both parties understand one another better?

### **Focus and Develop:**

1. Identify the main aspect of cultural difference that you want to focus on in your essay. Write it as a tentative thesis statement for your essay.

2. Make a list of three or more examples showing the differences between the two cultures.

**Culture A:**

**Culture B:**

3. Use your list of comparative examples to write several topic sentences for each body paragraph.
4. Next, add several supporting details explaining the examples in each paragraph.
5. Try to draw a general conclusion about the aspect of cultural difference that you have identified.

### **Draft:**

Write a first draft of your essay, paying attention to creating a focused main idea. Make sure each paragraph identifies an example of cultural difference that relates to your thesis and conclusion.

### **Revise and Edit:**

1. Revise your essay to make any changes to the content, organization, and development.
2. Then, edit your essay to correct sentence structure, grammar, word choice, spelling, and punctuation.