Developing Academic Literacy and Voice: Challenges Faced by A Mature ESL Student and Her Instructors

Desarrollo del discurso académico y la voz: retos de una estudiante de inglés como segunda lengua y sus profesores

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Drawing on critical, socio-cultural and sociolinguistic theories of writing, text and voice, this ethnographic study examines the challenges that a mature ESL student and her instructors in a university course on Spanish Language Media face as they co-construct a common understanding of academic literacy and voice in an undergraduate General Studies Program offered by a university in Western Massachusetts. Intertextual analysis of the data suggests that traditional product-based approaches to helping students develop academic literacy might not be very effective. However, to be able to take a different approach, such as the one suggested by genre scholars, both faculty teaching content subjects and writing tutors would need appropriate training.

Key words: ESL writing, academic writing, academic voice, disciplinary writing

Con base en teorías críticas, socioculturales y sociolingüísticas sobre escritura académica, texto y voz, este estudio etnográfico explora los retos que enfrentan una estudiante hablante de inglés como segunda lengua y sus profesores de un curso de Medios de Comunicación en Lengua Española al construir conjuntamente los conceptos de literacias académicas y de voz en un curso de pregrado en estudios generales ofrecido por una universidad en Massachusetts. El análisis intertextual de los datos recogidos muestra que algunos métodos tradicionales dirigidos a la elaboración de productos pueden resultar poco efectivos para apoyar el desarrollo de la escritura académica. Sin embargo, se concluye que para usar metodologías más efectivas, como las propuestas por las teorías de género, es indispensable que tanto los profesores de las diferentes materias como los tutores reciban el entrenamiento adecuado.

Palabras clave: escritura de inglés como segunda lengua, escritura académica, voz académica, escritura disciplinaria

Introduction

I need to learn how to quote. I am tired of being told that I am not using quotes appropriately, that I need to use my own words, and of not having any idea of what I am doing wrong (Marina, Oct. 28, 2004)[1].

The above is a quote from one of the students pursuing a bachelor's degree in the General Studies Program (BGS) at a university in Western Massachusetts. The program's main objective was to help a group of mature paraprofessionals[2], Head Start teachers, and community educators from the area to develop the content knowledge and the critical academic literacies required to get their bachelor's degree, pass state mandated tests, and become licensed teachers. To achieve these goals, the program created a series of twenty-one interdisciplinary courses to be taught in the community where most of the BGS students lived, so that they would not have to commute to campus. These courses included two critical reading and writing courses and nineteen interdisciplinary courses.

The incident Marina mentions in the quote happened during the Spanish language media course. This course was the seventh one in the program. To complete it, students had to write a three- to five-page essay responding to two questions provided by the instructor: *What is the main goal of the commercial Spanish language media industry?* and *What is at stake for the Latino population if making a profit is more important than*

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1   To protect the identity of the participants in this study, pseudonyms have been provided throughout the paper for participants' names and locations.

2   An instructional paraprofessional is an individual who works alongside the teacher in a classroom and has instructional duties (DOE, No Child Left Behind, January 3, 2003).

serving the information needs of the community? In doing this, they were supposed to draw not only on the readings assigned for this course, but on the discussions they had in class about these readings and on their own knowledge and experiences. Finally, they had to follow conventions for writing five-paragraph expository essays and for attribution of voice.

After presenting the first draft of her essay, Marina, a working class mature woman from Puerto Rico who had come to the United States with only a middle school certificate, received feedback from Julia, the class teaching assistant. In it, she was prompted to include fewer quotes in her paper and, instead, use her "own words" and her "own thoughts and opinions". Marina felt terribly upset about this but did not say anything to me until one October night when she came to our writing workshop to get help on a paper she was writing for another course. On this day, she told me how traumatized she was about the feedback she had received. I remembered having talked to Julia and also to Maribel, the class instructor, about the incident. In our conversation, they talked about their struggle to both give students access to privileged genres while at the same time acknowledging the writing styles of students in their class.

The purpose of the critical ethnographic case study presented here was to explore the challenges that Marina and her Spanish Language Media university instructors faced in trying to manage the above-mentioned tension. Specific questions addressed by this study were the following: (a) What are some of the challenges that Marina and her instructors faced in trying to co-construct a common understanding of academic literacy and voice? (b) How are these difficulties addressed? and (c) What are some implications for practice and professional development?

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on critical socio-cultural theories of language according to which minority students, especially ESL/EFL students, are at a disadvantage with respect to middle class mainstream students when it comes to using the genres of the academy. First, these students have often been denied the quality education that many middle class traditional students have received, which means that they have not been accustomed to academic genres from their early years as have middle class mainstream kids. Second, they have a double barrier to overcome, the language barrier and the barrier of having to express themselves in writing in ways that are unfamiliar to them.

Access to the genres of the academy would, hypothetically, not only level the playing field for these students but provide them with socioeconomic mobility and access to higher education, two possibilities which they have been denied for many years (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Delpit, 1988; Ivanič, 1998; Schleppegrell, 2004). However, socialization in powerful genres does not mean erasing the discourses students bring with them by their association with different discourse communities. On the contrary, it means getting students to appreciate the value of the discourses they already possess while simultaneously learning to both analyze and produce powerful discourses (Delpit, 1988; Lillis, 2001, Schleppegrell, 2004).

The study also draws on socio-linguistic theories of writing, texts, and voice according to which writing is a social practice that varies from one context to another, from one situation to another, and from one community to another (Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, & Yallop, 2000; Christie, 1993; Eggins, 1994; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Kress, 1993; Hyland, 2003; Martin, 1989; Martin & Rothery, 1993; Thompson, 1996). Written texts, on the other hand, are *speech genres* (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 78) which possess certain characteristics: First, they have differentiated value. Second, they are contextual and situated. Third, they are dialogical and intertextual or multivocal.

As for their *differentiated value*, scholars such as Schleppegrell (2004), Delpit (1988) and Lillis (2001) affirm that, in academic settings, analytical or *expository genres* such as the five-paragraph essay are given a higher value than *personal genres* such as narratives. Because of this, socialization in these particular genres is essential for students to succeed at school and university settings.

Contextuality refers to the fact that texts vary according to context (Butt et al., 2000; Christie, 1993; Kress, 1993; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Eggins, 1994; Martin, 1989; Martin & Rothery, 1993; Thompson, 1996). Thus, academic texts are different from non-academic texts. In the same way, texts written by a disciplined community are different from those written by another. For instance, a*cademic texts* written for a class differ significantly from *interactional texts* written for a friend (Schleppegrell, 2004, p. 50). In academic texts, the lexis tends to be less ordinary and generic (p. 52), they use fewer conjunctions to signal internal links (p. 57), and they use fewer interrogative and imperative forms (p. 59), to mention just a few differences. Similarly, expository texts in history differ significantly from the same kind of texts in science, not only in their lexical but also in their grammatical and textual features (pp. 118-128).

Situatedness has to do with the variation of texts according to the situation or immediate context in which they are produced (Butt et al., 2000, p. 3). Thus, expository texts written for a course with one instructor, although similar in purpose, organization, and structure to those written by students taking the same course with another instructor, would always look different

from expository texts written for the first instructor. Instructors may share some of the same basic values, beliefs, assumptions, and purposes, but they may also have their own values and their unique ways of producing writing in their disciplines, which students need to understand and learn to adapt to.

Dialogicality is related to that property texts have of both involving a plurality of voices through links to other texts and responding to an active audience (Hyland, 2003, p. 23). Audiences or *addressees* are active participants in the process of communication. They determine writers' choices of genre, compositional devices, language vehicles, and styles (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 96). From the moment writers start constructing their texts, they anticipate their response and modify their speech accordingly. They enter into dialogue with them.

Finally, *intertextuality* or *multivocality* relates to the fact that, in constructing texts, people draw from other texts and *voices* available to them by their affiliation with different discourse communities (Ivanič & Camps, 2001, p. 5). People appropriate these voices in their own personal ways in order to form their own personal texts. But people do more than just appropriate these voices. They "juxtapose", "transform", and sometimes "uncritically accommodate" these voices based on their intentions (Kamberelis & Scott, 1992, p. 400). They also "resist" some of these voices and their connotations (Ivanič & Camps, 2001, p. 31). As they do all of this, they engage in a process that is not only "social", and "historical", but also "political" and constrained by cultural or disciplinary conventions for attribution of voice (Scollon, 1994 & 1995; Scollon, Tsang, Li, Yung, & Jones, 2004).

Conceiving of writing, texts and voice in the ways presented above has important implications for teaching. Important teaching recommendations made by writing scholars include the following: (a) giving students the opportunity to discuss the value of both the discourses they already possess and of the discourses they are being asked to produce (Schleppegrell, 2004, p. 41); (b) explaining to students the lexical, grammatical, and textual difference between interactional and academic genres (Schleppegrell, 2004, p. 52); and (c) having students analyze disciplinary and situational distinctions among texts and decide, based on these, how they need to modify their texts (Butt et al., 2000, p. 16; Hyland, 2004, p. 4).

Suggestions regarding voice include the following: (a) helping students recognize not only the various types of voices that can be brought into a text but also the sources of those voices, the cultural or disciplinary ways in which these voices can be brought in, the ways in which the voices can be creatively recombined with other voices to achieve certain purposes (e.g. to argue or explain a point), and the ways in which writers position themselves as insiders or outsiders of the communities with which they wish to gain affiliation by the voice choices they make (Butt et al., 2000, p. 17; Ivanič & Camps, 2001, p. 31; Kamberelis & Scott, 1992, p. 399; Scollon et al., 2004, p. 175).

Engaging students in the kind of analysis proposed above is not a task that can be easily undertaken, however, especially if the instructor does not have a background in language, which is the case of many ESL/EFL instructors. This is why scholars such as Schleppegrell (2004) and Butt et al. (2000) propose that all instructors in charge of courses offered to ESL/EFL students get the "specialized" or "metalinguistic" knowledge required to be able to provide students with the type of language support they need (Butt et al., 2000, p. 8; Schleppegrell, 2004, p. 159).

The BGS Program

The BGS program originated in 2001 as a response to the No Child Left Behind law (NCLB), according to which paraprofessionals in the schools needed to have a bachelor's degree. Aware of the fact that many paraprofessionals in the area, mostly mature Puerto Rican women, only had two years of college, the faculty at the School of Education of this university in Western Massachusetts created a plan of studies which included taking two academic writing courses, one at the beginning taught by me, and one at the end of the program. The program also included some general education courses such as sociology, geography, and math, and some concentration courses such as Spanish Language Media, and Spanish. To teach these courses, the program recruited a group of interdisciplinary staff who were deeply committed to working with the Latina/o population in the achievement of their licenses and were willing to modify their syllabi to include the content and the type of writing that were to be addressed in two mandatory teachers' tests that students had to take at the end of the program to get their licenses: the subject matter test and a literacy test. To support faculty with these efforts, the program hired me, a doctoral student with some experience in teaching academic writing, to serve as the writing tutor.

The Spanish Language Media Course

As mentioned earlier, this was the seventh of a series of twenty one courses offered as part of the program. The objective of the course as expressed in the syllabus was the following:

> [To] examine the historical development and current transformations of the Spanish-language media industry, particularly in the United States but also across the Americas and the Carib-

bean [and] how political economic and cultural constructions of "Latinidad" are implicated in the production, distribution and consumption of Spanish-language mass media.

In terms of writing, the course aimed to develop knowledge of academic genres such as the five-paragraph expository essay. To help students achieve this goal, Maribel, the course instructor, and Julia, the teaching assistant, assigned the writing of a mid-term essay paper, among other papers. For this essay assignment students were asked to respond to the following questions: *What is the main goal of commercial Spanish language media industry?* and *What is at stake for the Latino population if making a profit is more important than serving the information needs of the community?* To respond to these questions students were supposed to draw not only on the course readings but on class discussions and their own life experiences.

Research Participants

Participants in this study were Maribel, Julia, Doris and Marina. Maribel was a young Chicana who worked in the Communications Department as an assistant professor and who had never been in charge of supporting ESL students with their academic writing development as she was in this course. Julia was a young European American master's degree student with no previous experience teaching this course or with academic writing. She was hired as the course assistant based on her previous work in the program as a teaching assistant. Finally, I was the Program Assistant, Writing Tutor and Researcher and had also been in charge of teaching the first writing course. As a writing tutor, my role was to aid students in the writing of their academic papers. Being used to product-based writing approaches and totally unaware of the critical socio-cultural theories of

writing proposed in the Theoretical Framework presented above, I focused this support mainly on helping students do the following: (a) search for academic sources for their papers; (b) develop writing strategies such as drafting, proof-reading, and editing; (c) use conventional grammar, spelling, and punctuation, as well as disciplinary conventions for attribution of voice.

Marina was a prototypical BGS student. She was a Puerto Rican woman who had been born and raised on the island. She had done her primary school there and then started working to help support her family. Soon after this, she completed middle school, got married, and started a family. Her children were still in primary school when Marina decided to go to the "mainland" to be with her family, which was already established there.

Once in Massachusetts, she settled in a former factory town where most of her family lived. There, she had two more children, went to night school to prepare for the General Education Development (GED) test[3] and volunteered to work in her children's schools. Once her children were older, she went to a two-year college in the area to get her Associates Degree[4] in child education. To do this, she had to work during the day, study at night, and care for her family as well as attend church on the weekends. During our first interview when I asked Marina if she had been taught how to write essays and how to cite sources in her GED and community college courses, Marina said she did not and if she had, she had forgotten how to do it (Interview with Marina, Feb 28, 2006).

Soon after her graduation from the community college, Marina found a job at one of the many non-governmental organizations in town. At this organization she worked as a tutor helping Latina/o

students prepare for the GED. She also taught computer, theater, and Spanish classes to teenagers and adults in the community. Aside from this, she co-facilitated HIV, domestic violence, housing, and discrimination programs. Finally, she supervised a program aimed at involving the town's parents in the schools and school committees. It was while working at this institution that Marina heard about the BGS program.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

Data collected for this study include the following: (a) fieldnotes of all the classes taught as part of the Spanish Language Media Course; (b) copies of all the papers Marina wrote during this course; (c) videotapes of the classes in which students were given instructions on how to write their essays; (d) class documents, including readings the students were assigned for this course, syllabus, handouts, and written guidelines on how to write the essay; and (e) audio-recordings of the three interviews conducted with Marina and of the interview with Julia about her feedback. These data were collected through my attendance and participatory observation in all of the classes taught as part of this course.

To analyze the video and interview data, I first transcribed the parts of the videotapes in which students were given instructions on how to write their essay and the interviews in their entirety. Then, following Bloome, Power-Carter, Morton-Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris (2005), I organized the transcripts into clauses and the clauses into message units, numbering all the lines. Next, I coded for themes and for categories within those themes (Butt et al., 2000). Once I finished this analysis, I looked at the articles or chapters Marina had cited in her papers for this class and

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3   The GED is a test that students attending night school have to take at the end of their coursework to get a high school diploma.

4   An Associate's Degree is a degree students get at two-year colleges, often called Community Colleges.

started to read them carefully, highlighting those parts that Marina seemed to have either drawn on or copied from in her drafts. I then moved on to conducting an intertextual analysis of the drafts Marina wrote.

To analyze these drafts intertextually, I followed guidelines provided by Fairclough (2003) and by Kamberelis & Scott (1992). This analysis involved looking at which relevant 'external' texts and voices were included in a text, whether or not they were attributed, and how specifically (e.g. through direct reporting, indirect reporting, free indirect reporting, or narrative report of speech act) (Fairclough, 2003, p. 61). It also involved looking at sources of voice (e.g. teachers, parents, peer groups, minister) and the types of voice appropriation (e.g. quoted, adopted, stylized, parodistic, polemic, idealized) (Kamberelis & Scott, 1992).

Based on this analysis, I created a chart with six columns. In the first column I included the text organized by paragraphs. In the other columns, based on the analysis of the readings and the video and interview transcripts, I included the voices Marina seemed to be bringing in, the sources of these voices, the type of appropriation she was using, and the evaluation given to her by Julia. Once I finished these charts, I was able to draw some conclusions about how Marina was complying with the task assigned to her. In the following section I provide a summary of what I found.

Main Findings

Main findings from this study include a series of challenges that Marina, the course instructors and tutor had to face in trying to develop and help develop academic literacy and voice. On Marina's part, these challenges included knowing how to display knowledge in ways that were accepted by

the audience and having the vocabulary to do it. On the instructors and tutor's part, the challenges were related to knowing how to provide support with students' writing and how to provide feedback. In the following paragraphs, I discuss these challenges, provide some examples of each, and describe how the challenges were addressed.

Marina's Challenges in the Essay Assignment

As mentioned in the introduction, Marina was faced with a big challenge: She had to answer the questions provided by the Spanish Language Media instructors, but she had to do it in a language that was not her own, using not only the voices of the authors read in class but the voices of her peers and "her own voice". She had to do all this following conventions for writing expository essays and the conventions for attribution of voice.

Intertextual analysis of the essays Marina wrote for the course revealed that in spite of the great amount of knowledge that she had developed in class regarding issues concerning Hispanic language media, and in spite of all the directions and guidelines that instructors provided for the task, by the time she had to write this essay she was still uncertain about how to display knowledge in ways that were accepted by her audience (i.e. the course teaching assistant and instructor) as academic.

Marina's first draft, for example, shows that she both responded to the questions by using a string of quotes mainly from Davila (2001) and Rodriguez (1999), two of the authors read in this class, as well as selected the quotes purposefully. She chose only those which she thought would not only respond to the questions but would integrate ideas mentioned in the brainstorming sessions. For instance, to address the question, 'What is at stake for the Latina/o population if making a profit is more important than

serving the information needs of the community?', Marina first paraphrased the question, and then let Davila's (2001) voice take over.

> (1) For the Spanish-language media it is more important to make a profit than serve the information needs of the community. (2) *The stake for the Latino population* is that the antithetical processes of reinforcing and challenging stereotypes of this industry have gone hand in hand to confront, reshape or reformulate all types of Hispanic conventions in order to maintain a legitimate ethnic niche for this market. (3) *What makes stereotypes so troublesome* is not that they order and simplify information by reducing complexities to a few limited conventions but are always historically created and produced in conversation with social hierarchies of daily life (Gilman, 1996; Kanellos, 1998; Rodríguez, 1997). (4) Moreover, as an imposed category, *Hispanic/Latino* is subject to constant negotiation with regard to the multiple identifications of Hispanics as also Mexican, Colombian, or ''Niuyorican''. (5) What is unique in ethnic and Hispanic marketing is the extent to which these processes are additionally mediated by issues of race and ethnicity (Davila, 2001, p. 127). (6) The transnationalization of media products does affect the public reception and discourse of U.S. Latinas/os throughout the continent and may be relevant to how locals throughout Latin America think about race, gender, sexuality, and nationalism, not always in positive ways. (165)

Here, Marina writes a string of quotes from different pages in Davila (2001) (clauses 2 through 6 above), each containing at least one aspect mentioned in the brainstorming sessions as answers to the question. Quote 1 mentions stereotypes, quote 3 mentions issues of race and ethnicity, and quote 4 mentions issues of race, gender, sexuality, and nationalism (Brainstorming Session 1, June 3, 2004). By inserting these quotes, Marina is bringing in not only Davila's voice but the voices of instructor, teaching assistant and peers, all of whom agreed on the following during the brainstorming sessions: (a) that commercial Spanish language media

(CSLM) reinforce stereotypes in order to maintain this market; (b) that stereotypes are problematic because they hide differences and are social and historical in nature; (c) that Hispanic/Latina/o are externally imposed labels and Latinas/os prefer to identify themselves by national origin; and (d) that ethnic marketing is intrinsically connected to issues of race (white Latinas/os being privileged over black Latinas/os, etc.). However, she is not listening to the suggestion made by instructors on her first draft to "use her own voice and her own words and opinions".

The difficulties Marina had, then, seemed to lie not in the fact that she developed an argument that was inconsistent with the ideas expressed in class, or that she did not answer the questions, or even that she did not follow guidelines for the basic organization of her paper. Neither did these difficulties lie in the ideologies these voices expressed, all of which seemed to coincide with the ones expressed in class. Rather, the difficulties seemed to lie in two factors: (a) that she was not drawing on her own experience to either make claims or support them, and (b) that she was bringing in other people's voices by stringing them one after the other, instead of indicating whose claims or opinions they were (e.g. according to…) and showing what her stance was (e.g. I completely agree with… in my opinion… CSLM should…). Furthermore, she was not following conventions for attribution of voice since she failed to cite in some places, provided incomplete or wrong citations in others, and modified quotes without signaling the modifications.

All of these facts left Julia and me uncertain as to how much Marina really understood the topic, what her opinion really was, and whether she really knew how to write academic essays and use conventions for attribution of voice. Had we not

known Marina so well, we would probably have thought that she was being lazy and had resorted to copying as a way to avoid having to think for herself. However, as revealed by the interviews I had with her later on, Marina not only knew the topic but knew how to respond to the questions and how to provide examples from her own repertoire of experiences. In fact, she had worked very hard to prove it. In her first interview with me, Marina told me how she did all of the readings, took notes, and re-read to make sure she understood. This is what she said during the second interview, when I asked her why she had used so many quotes instead of her own words and examples:

> Maybe I used a lot of quotes because I don't know how to express myself in English the way I would like to. If I had to write this same paper in Spanish, I would just have to read and that's it but I don't have the vocabulary to write that kind of paper now. (Interview with Marina, September 11, 2005)

She continues by making it clear to me that her overuse of quotes and her failure to insert her own opinions about the issue are mechanisms she uses to compensate for her lack of English vocabulary about these issues and to save face:

> I don't have any problem with responding to the questions. If they ask me questions about a book, I can go to the book, look for the answers and respond to the questions. I don't have any problem with that (...) but when it comes to giving my opinion about the topic, it is very difficult for me because I don't have the vocabulary, so I feel, how should I say? Maybe I can talk about the topic but I don't feel sophisticated enough to write about it, so writing only one page takes me a whole week because I want to sound like an intellectual (…) but at the same time I don't know how to use the words, so I get frustrated and since I don't have the vocabulary, I have to make a big effort but I try to make it so that what I say sounds intellectual and also makes sense). (Interview with Marina, September 11, 2005)

Instructors and Tutor's Challenges with the Essay Assignment

Marina was not the only one to struggle with the essay assignment. The course instructors and I also struggled. These struggles had to do mainly with two aspects: (a) how to support students in the writing of the assignment, and (b) what kind of feedback to provide and how. In terms of the first, the course instructors and I prepared two brainstorming sessions. For the first session, I brought to class handouts of how to write a paragraph, an outline in a T- form, a 5 paragraph essay and references using the APA format. I explained to students that if they were to follow US conventions for writing academic essays, they needed to write a thesis statement followed by supporting details and a conclusion. Then, I told students I brought some copies on how to reference work using the APA style, in case they lost the copies I gave them during the academic writing course. Next, Maribel explored with students some ideas on how to respond to each question. Finally, Maribel and the students moved to the actual writing of an outline and a discussion of what they could write in each section.

For the next class students were supposed to have a session in which they brought to class their outlines, with citations already incorporated, to share with the rest of the class. However, when the moment came for the students to show what they had brought, they all said they needed more time. Hence, instructors started a second brainstorming session in which students were, once more, asked to brainstorm ideas for the paper. They were also reminded that they could back their ideas up not just from the articles and books, but also from class discussions and the movies they had watched in class.

In regard to the second struggle, what kind of feedback to provide and how, after receiving students' first drafts and discovering that they were not displaying knowledge in the ways that they were expected, Julia turned to me, as the writing tutor, for help. She wanted to know if it was possible for me to provide students with feedback on form while she provided feedback on content. She argued that providing feedback on form was very difficult for her since she had never worked with ESL students and, therefore, did not know what kind of feedback to give or how to provide this feedback. After explaining to her that it was impossible for me to provide feedback on form without being clear about the purpose of the task or its audience, Julia said she would talk to Maribel about it and get back to me.

Julia never got back to me on this. However, during our interview, I learned that Julia and Maribel had met after this to discuss what to do with Marina and other students who were not citing properly, and decided that, given the time constraints, they would just let the citing go. According to Julia, they were "just happy that she was doing some of her own analysis but if I had had more time to work with her, I would have done a third draft that would have integrated these two [content and citing]" (Interview with Julia, March 21, 2005).

Based on this decision, Julia focused her written feedback on making suggestions in the form of marginal comments on students' papers. She also organized conferences with students in which she went over the ideas that they could include in their drafts in order to improve them. She then produced the following feedback for Marina on her first draft: "Marina, you use too many quotes from the article and book. We want to hear your own words, your own thoughts and opinions".

Outcome of Efforts

Although Julia was quite polite and respectful not only in her written comments but also in the oral feedback she gave Marina afterwards, trying to encourage her to make corrections and focusing on how she could improve her paper instead of what she had done wrong, Marina felt uncomfortable with the feedback. In her second interview with me, she said that she felt "frustrated, upset, confused, ashamed, and guilty" all at the same time (Interview with Marina, February 28, 2006). Overwhelmed by these feelings, but aware that the instructors were more interested in her perspective than in the perspective of the authors read in class, Marina went home and tried to keep the voices of those authors out of her second draft.

For this draft, Marina not only used fewer quotes but also included more personal experiences, which made her voice resonate more clearly, and incorporated feedback from the instructors. In paragraph 5, for example, Marina tried once more to incorporate the ideas she read or heard in the brainstorm sessions as she responded to the question: What is at stake for the Latina/o population if making a profit is more important than meeting the information needs of the community? This time, instead of using quotes, she used a patchwork of words and ideas whose source was more difficult to identify than in the first draft, and she incorporated feedback in the form of marginal comments and examples from her own life.

(1) *The stake* is that this multibillion dollar industry is responsible for the perpetuation of stereotypes, racism, sexism, prejudice, and exploitation of Latino communities in this country. (2) *The commercial Spanish-language media industry* creates stereotypes because of the way they represent the Latinos in all the advertisements. (3) *They* present good looking Latinos mostly

from the upper class in the ad. (4) Most of the time, *they* look a lot like the Anglo advertisements. (5) *This* can be a problem because the marketers are not presenting realistic representations of the Latino community. (6) Like *my grandmother* would say, "people are like a garden of flowers, all of them are different but all of them are beautiful and unique". (7) If *advertisers* do not represent people and differences in their ads then *the Anglo culture* would think that any Latino who doesn't look like people in the ad is different or weird. (8) *Many people* are afraid of others that don't look like them. (9) Consequently, *prejudice* would arouse against another culture, racism would follow and make people act with violence and hatred against others.

In this paragraph, expressions such as *this multimillion dollar industry* and *realistic representations of the Latino community* all seem to come from the readings assigned to her in class, especially Davila (2001). Ideas such as those expressed in clause 1 seem to come directly from Julia's written feedback, since, in the margins of the first draft Julia wrote: "Result: stereotypes, racism, sexism, prejudice, exploitation". Similarly, the ideas expressed in clauses 3 to 5 that CSLM create stereotypes and use mostly Anglo- looking Latinas/os in their ads and news programs, all seem to be taken directly from both Davila (2001) and the brainstorming sessions. Finally, ideas such as those expressed in clauses 6 to 8 seem to all come from Marina's own repertoire of words and experiences.

By constructing this patchwork of words and ideas, Marina represented herself, at least in both Julia's and my eyes, as someone who knew the topic well enough not to have to lean on other people's words for every claim and for examples to support them. However, by going to the other extreme and almost completely omitting quotes from her draft, Marina made us wonder about her ability to incorporate or acknowledge the writing of others, as is common in expository essays (Gadda, 1991,

cited in Schleppegrell, 2004, p. 88). Finally, by drawing so closely on the feedback she received, on the examples provided by the book, and on the ideas presented in class, she left us wondering to what extent she really agreed with what she was saying and to what extent she was just parroting words and ideas which she knew her audience would welcome. In spite of all this, and contrary to what happened in the first draft, Marina received a very positive evaluation which focused on her understanding of the issues and suggested that she provide more examples of what was at stake for the Latina/o population:

> Marina: This second paper is much better than the first draft. You use your own words, thoughts and analysis. Excellent.
>
> You could expand this essay further to talk about what is at stake for the Latino population, with examples.
>
> - If North American (white) media owners control the SL media what will provide educational information, news and entertainment to the Latino community?
>
> - More specifically, what is at stake? (Look at yellow sheet we brainstormed together on 1st draft).

When I asked Julia in my interview why she did not call Marina's attention to form or any of the above issues, Julia explained that to the other instructor, Maribel, and her it was more important to have students understand the content of the course and be able to "articulate it in their own words" than to have them use quotes, and Marina did a good job at this. Julia added,

> I actually think that she did a really good job at pulling in the papers to answer the question of what is at stake. I mean, she followed the guidelines that we had talked about in terms of racism, sexism, exploitation, you can see that she is working from my notes here, when she says "this multibillion dollar industry is responsible...of the Latinos community", and then she has a paragraph there about racism, and she talks about sexism here. So this is all addressing what is at stake for the Latinos community, so it is a big improvement from the first

paper, and then she does the conclusion, "mass media… consumer". She is understanding, which is a big leap from the first paper, she is really understanding the ways specifically in which commercial Spanish language media exploits the Latino consumer. (Interview with Julia, March 21, 2005)

In spite of the positive feedback received, Marina seemed to still be confused about what voices she was allowed to bring in, how to purposefully incorporate those voices in her texts, and how to use disciplinary conventions for attribution of voice. During her second interview with me, Marina confessed that she still did not know exactly how to go about incorporating the writing of others in her text and that was partly the reason she had decided to include only two quotes. This was confirmed a year later when the instructor of the human geography course complained, just like Julia had, that Marina was plagiarizing in an essay. Marina felt so bad and ashamed that she thought of quitting the program. I conferred with her and promised to work with her until she finally had a good grasp of how to integrate other people's voices in her paper. However, she never came to sessions with me and dropped two of the classes offered that year. Fortunately, after one semester out, Marina came back and graduated from the program in the fall of 2006.

Discussion

The difficulties that Marina had with the incorporation of academic voices in her text seemed to be related mostly to the nature of the support received. On the other hand, the challenges faced by the course instructors and me seemed to be related to the lack of a solid preparation on both of our parts on how to support ESL/EFL students with academic writing.

In terms of the nature of the support received, as we saw in the explanation of the task, even though instructors held two brainstorming sessions in which ideas on what to put in each section of their argumentative essay were discussed and handouts were given, in none of these sessions was there a discussion of the difference between interactional and academic genres. Neither was there a conversation about why it was important for them, as students and future teachers, to learn to produce academic genres such as the one proposed for this course, in which they would need to rely not solely on their views and opinion but on the opinions of others. Moreover, there was no mention of why a text such as this was assigned a higher value than a narrative, for example, which only contained their experiences.

Furthermore, there was no talk about the lexical, grammatical and textual features associated with the type of academic text the students needed to write or about how these were different from the lexical, grammatical and textual features of the interactional genres they were used to producing. On no occasion during the text preparation were students reminded that, for example, academic texts needed to rely less on the use of conjunctions or contain shorter statements than interactional texts. Neither were students made aware that the argumentative essays they were expected to write might be organized differently from the argumentative essays they may have written for previous courses, since in every discipline there is a unique way of structuring texts.

Important voice-related issues were also left out. Such issues included which voices, apart from those of the authors read in class, the students were expected to bring in and leave out, and exactly how they were expected to do this (e.g. by making the

voices precede or follow theirs or by interweaving them with their own). Not once during this course were there discussions about the purposes of citing other authors, the power those citations had of positioning them as insiders or outsiders in the discourse community, and the different ways they would represent themselves by, for example, using primary as opposed to secondary sources, updated as opposed to outdated sources, and reliable as opposed to non-reliable sources.

By limiting our support with citations to the presentation of some handouts with rules about how to cite following the APA style, we presented the incorporation of voices as a simple task implying the memorization and application of a fixed set of rules on how to cite, instead of presenting it as a personal, social, and political process, which writers use to purposefully position themselves in various ways for their audience. Also, we treated conventions for attribution of voice as rules that need to be followed the same way across all genres and all disciplines, not as meaningful, agreed-upon ways used by members of a disciplinary community to engage with the ideas of other members, and to further develop, support or challenge these ideas.

Even though instructors (by dropping the requirement to use the readings assigned for class to support their ideas and by asking students to let their "own voices" be heard) were showing respect for the discourses students brought with them to the academy, they were also doing a disservice to students: These not only did not get the type of experimentation with voices that Kamberelis & Scott (1992) propose, but they did not get socialized in ways of citing in this discipline either. Also, they were deprived of the opportunity to acquire strategies that would help them cite for other disciplinary communities in future courses. Such strategies included identifying how the voices

of others were being incorporated in similar texts and for what purposes as well as noticing how conventions for attribution of voice were being used in sample texts before launching themselves into the writing of their own texts.

Had Marina been involved in discussions and analysis of form-related and not form related issues of the kind described above, she would have been in a better position to realize that a string of quotes extracted from the different texts they had read in class, regardless of how relevant, was going to be judged by her instructors as inappropriate and so would be her absolute refusal to include her personal opinion and non-disciplinary ways of citing. However, neither I nor the course instructors seemed to be prepared to involve students in these types of conversations.

As for me, even though I had taught writing courses before, at the time this course was taught I was not familiar with either the genre or the voice theories presented in the Theoretical Framework section. Therefore, as many other writing instructors, I thought of both academic writing and conventions for attribution of voice as fixed sets of rules that needed to be mastered and that once mastered, one could apply to every piece of academic writing one produced. This was reflected in the fact that, as mentioned in the description of the essay assignment, all I could think of to help students with the writing of their essays was to provide them with the rules in the form of handouts on how to write a five paragraph essay and how to follow APA guidelines for citing.

As for course instructors, even though they had a great amount of knowledge of their discipline, they were at a loss when it came to guiding students in the ways of writing and citing inside that discipline. This could be seen not only in their conversations with me about the assignment but in the preparation for the essay assignment where,

instead of discussing with students important form-related and unrelated issues such as the ones mentioned above, they focused on discussing ideas for the text. It could also be seen in the feedback Julia provided to Marina, in which to help Marina see the non-disciplinary ways in which she was citing and using the voices of others in her text, she only wrote the word "quoting?" all over the text and then prompted her to use her "own voice" and her "own words and opinions".

For mature students striving to become licensed teachers like Marina, this lack of preparation both on my part and the part of the instructors was very unfortunate for several reasons: First, without knowledge of how to write for a specific audience in a specific context and situation, with specific ways to cite and interweave her voice with the voices of others, she was unable to meet the expectations of other instructors and was likely to end up being accused of plagiarizing, as was the case with her human geography instructor. Second, without this same knowledge, it was unlikely for her to pass mandatory teachers' literacy tests, such as the one all aspiring teachers have to take in Massachusetts, since these tests usually include the writing of an argumentative essay very much like the one they had to write for this class. Third, as a schoolteacher, she needed to have this knowledge to be able to guide her students in the development of disciplinary ways of writing.

Conclusions and Implications

Results from this study suggest that students such as Marina, who have had an academic path filled with bumps and holes, experience a series of difficulties in the development of academic literacies and voice. These difficulties have to do with at least two aspects: (a) a lack of the language needed to express themselves, and (b) a lack of

familiarity with the ways in which members of the discourse community for which they are writing combine their voices with the voices of others to argue a point.

The study also suggests that to effectively help these students overcome the abovementioned difficulties and develop a "critical academic voice" that they can use to present their knowledge in academic settings, traditional product-based approaches, such as the ones employed to support students in the BGS program, are not enough. These students need additional support. If we were to follow the genre theories presented in the Theoretical Framework, this support could start with discussions about, for example, the differences between interactional and academic genres and the different value these genres are assigned, depending on the context. The support could also take the form of conversations about the contextual, situated, dialogic and intertextual nature of texts.

However, in order to hold these conversations, ESL/EFL faculty would need, first, to stop considering writing as a process in which anyone can successfully engage, given a basic structure and some ideas to include in each section. Similarly, they would need to stop considering texts as fixed sets of structures that can be copied from a handout and that are applicable across context, situation, purpose and audience. Additionally, they would need to stop considering voice as unique and personal. Finally, they would need to develop metalinguistic knowledge of the genres most frequently used by members of their discourse communities and of how these differ in text organization and language demands from those used in other disciplines the students are studying.

Though difficult to accomplish, taking these actions is of paramount importance for ESL/EFL students, especially for those preparing to be teachers. They not only need to pass their program

courses and licensure tests but also need to be able to project themselves to the community through their writing. What is more, they need to be able to help their future students see writing as a situated, disciplinary, contextualized, multi-purpose, inter-textual, and dialogical social practice.

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