

as a variety of texts (their own and, frequently, others'). They must assess options and make decisions based on those assessments. For example, writers assess the situation to determine the purpose of the writing, its audience(s), and the context. They select the appropriate genre, writing technology, and publishing medium (see 2.2, "Genres Are Enacted by Writers and Readers," and 2.4, "All Writing Is Multimedial"). Writers must also evaluate their own processes. They may need to examine their approaches to a task, such as searching for information, to determine if it is effective or if a different approach would be more productive (e.g., Is this database useful for my topic? Am I using the appropriate search terms?). Writers must also assess feedback on writing, asking whether suggestions are useful and how they might respond. Once texts are drafted, a writer must assess the product, considering issues such as the appropriateness of style and content, the persuasiveness of evidence, the extent to which conventions of grammar and usage have been followed. Writers also assess texts written by others: for accuracy, legitimacy, and bias, for genre conventions, or for the audience's expectations.

To learn and improve, writers need to develop assessment abilities; therefore, students benefit when teachers integrate assessment throughout the learning process through a variety of activities. These assessment activities can be open, fluid, and tentative (Huot 2002), as in feedback on an early draft that may include a few critical questions or a conversation in which the writer explains why they made a particular choice. The assessment activities may also be more formalized, such as a structured protocol for a self-assessment of a text. By teaching students how to assess both the product and processes of their work, writing teachers are helping students prepare for future writing tasks and opportunities.

4.6

WRITING INVOLVES THE NEGOTIATION OF LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES

Paul Kei Matsuda

All writing entails language—or more specifically, the internalized knowledge of words, phrases, and sentences and how they are put together to create meaning. This statement may seem obvious to some. Yet, language is often taken for granted in the discussion of writing, especially when writers and writing teachers assume that all writers share more or less the same intuitive knowledge of language structures and functions—a condition described by Paul Kei Matsuda as the

"myth of linguistic homogeneity" (Matsuda 2006). In reality, however, the knowledge of language held by individual language users varies. No one is a perfect language user, and writers from distinct sociolinguistic contexts (i.e., regional, socioeconomic, ethnic) often come with noticeably different language features in their heads—and in their writing. Furthermore, in today's globalized world, where the audience for writing is increasingly multilingual and multinational, it is more important than ever to see the negotiation of language as an integral part of all writing activities.

As writers strive to use a shared code that allows for effective communication, it is important for all writers and readers to develop the awareness that we are all participating in the process of negotiating language differences. In any writing context, the audience will likely include translingual individuals—those who grew up using different varieties of the target language or another language altogether. For this reason, language features (e.g., vocabulary, idioms, sentence structures) as well as rhetorical features (e.g., persuasive appeals, cultural references and reader-writer positioning) that were once unmarked may need to be negotiated by writers and writing teachers. For instance, writers cannot assume that the phrase *to beat a dead horse* will be understood by all readers universally; to be effective, writers may need to consider embedding contextual clues or even building in some redundancies.

By the same token, readers and writing teachers cannot assume that what were once considered errors are indeed errors; they may reflect language practices perfectly acceptable in some parts of the world—or even in different parts of the same country. For example, including some Spanish words or phrases into sentences is perfectly acceptable for an audience of English-Spanish bilingual writers or users of English-Spanish contact varieties—as long as they do not violate the language rules shared by both users. For a mixed audience that includes non-Spanish users (which is often the case in international academic writing), writers may need to provide additional information (translation, footnote, etc.) in order to facilitate the rhetorical goal of writing (see 1.0, "Writing Is a Social and Rhetorical Activity").

This renewed realization about the changing nature of language and the presence of language differences has several implications. Teachers who use writing as part of their instruction must develop an understanding of the nature of language, principles of language development, and language features situated in various contexts of use. Such knowledge is especially important in facilitating the development of communicative competence (Bachman 1990) among writers who come from

nondominant language backgrounds. Teachers also must become more aware of the fuzzy boundary between appropriate usage and inappropriate usage (i.e., errors) to help students understand when and how language differences become negotiable. To help students negotiate language differences successfully—including making principled decisions about whether or not to adopt dominant language practices—teachers must understand various strategies for negotiating language differences. Finally, teachers must help students understand the risks involved in negotiating language differences. Beyond the classroom, all writers today need to fully understand the diversity within a language as well as how languages continue to change.

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