

ACCOMMODATING GENERATION 1.5  
IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY ACADEMY: NEW APPROACHES  
TO WRITING PEDAGOGY

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1. INTRODUCTION

In countries with large immigrant populations, growing numbers of local residents have bilingual or multilingual backgrounds. In the U.S., changes to immigration laws from the 1960s rapidly increased the volume of family immigration (Hartman & Tarone, 1999; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2009). In response to this demographic shift, as well as the demands of competitive globalized and local job markets, colleges and universities have opened their doors to a larger and more diverse slice of the population. “Generation 1.5” (Rumbaut & Irma, 1988) or “gen.1.5” refers to those “English language learners who arrive in the U.S. at an early age, obtain much or all of their education in U.S. K-12 settings, and arrive in college with various patterns of language and literacy that don’t fit the traditional “institutionally constructed” profiles of Developmental Writing, College ESL, or Freshman Composition” (Roberge, Siegal, & Harklau, 2009: vii).

Each institution that has a sizeable population of these students needs to make decisions on how best to serve their academic needs, yet in practice this is no easy matter. There are many difficulties associated merely with identifying gen.1.5 students. They then need to be placed appropriately in classes, effectively taught and fairly assessed.

To examine these issues, this paper will provide a case study based on Benedictine University, a private liberal arts university of around 10,000 students, situated in a prosperous western suburb of Chicago, where there is a very diverse multilingual, multicultural and multifaith population. In addition to its traditional population of European-background Americans, it now attracts substantial numbers of gen.1.5 students including Hispanics and Muslims of South Asian background. There are smaller numbers of African Americans as well as students from backgrounds as diverse as China, South-

East Asia, Ethiopia, and Jamaica. The university also has growing numbers of international students, mostly from Europe and China.

Like many other private universities, Benedictine does not offer preparatory English courses, except for international students; the neighboring community college offers a wide range of developmental writing and ESL classes from which local students, when further prepared, might transfer to the mandatory first year composition courses. Nevertheless, the administrators and faculty involved in the first year writing program recognized the need to provide more support to multilingual writers who had been accepted into the university on the basis of their standardized entrance test scores and high school grade point averages (GPAs), but who were still not flourishing in traditional fast-paced mainstream composition classes. In 2008 the College of Liberal Arts established two faculty positions specializing in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to assist in identifying, placing and instructing multilingual writers in first-year composition. Since then, the writing program for these students has been evolving, based on findings from our own action research, review of the literature, and dialogue with faculty across the university. The development of special programs for gen.1.5 coincides with a university-wide drive to internationalize and globalize the curriculum which is opening up spaces for inter-faculty dialogue and new approaches to pedagogy. This paper first summarizes the literature on accommodating gen.1.5 within the higher education system, and evaluates some of the pedagogical approaches and interventions that have been proposed therein. It then discusses how these approaches are being adapted at Benedictine University. The paper concludes with recommendations for a more inclusive approach that aims to improve outcomes for all students.

## 2. THE LITERATURE ON GEN.1.5

Considering the impact of gen.1.5 enrolments in higher education, until recently, the literature that focuses on them has been rather limited. There were a number of publications in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Leki & Carson, 1997; Rumbaut & Irma, 1988; Santos, 1988) that identified some characteristics of these students, and which recognized that existing modes of placement and support for their academic writing development were inadequate. However the issues were not widely addressed. One reason for the slow uptake of gen.1.5 as a topic of research could be that in the U.S. traditionally there have been sharp divisions between the theoretical bases and pedagogical foci of the field of College Composition, which has dealt with mainstream first-year composition, and the “remedial” fields of ESL and developmental writing, which have focused

on non-credit preparatory courses for those students deemed unprepared for the linguistic or academic rigors of first-year composition (Roberge, 2009).

Two key volumes published ten years apart have both raised awareness, and problematized issues related to gen.1.5. The first, "Generation 1.5 meets college composition" (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999) was a landmark publication that focused on the existence of gen.1.5 as a separate category within ESL. The work included case studies from various perspectives detailing: the characteristics of the students and their experiences in high school or college (Chiang & Schmida, 1999; Frodesen & Starna, 1999; Leki, 1999; Rodby, 1999), discussions of the different pedagogical settings in which language minority students learn academic literacies (Blanton, 1999; Ferris, 1999; Hartman & Tarone, 1999; Johns, 1999), and a critical examination of different programmatic approaches (Lay, Carro, Tien, Niemann & Leong, 1999; Muchinsky & Tangren, 1999; Wolfe-Quintero & Segade, 1999). A second volume on gen.1.5 (Roberge, Siegal, & Harklau, 2009) reviewed the progress in research and pedagogy that had been made over a decade. The later volume focused on identification of gen.1.5 (Roberge, 2009), changing demographics (Louie, 2009), educational policy (Harklau & Siegal, 2009), and identity (Benesch, 2009; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2009). A number of case studies (Allison, 2009; Crosby, 2009; Frodesen, 2009; Mott-Smith, 2009; Patthey, Thomas-Spiegel, & Dillon, 2009) also analyzed the academic pathways and literacy experiences of gen.1.5 in school, college and university settings. The major advance on the first volume was a much expanded section on curriculum and pedagogical approaches (Goen-Salter, Porter & Vandommelin, 2009; Holten, 2009; Johns, 2009; Murie & Fitzpatrick, 2009; Reynolds, Bae & Wilson, 2009; Schleppegrell, 2009). Together, these two volumes provide a solid basis for continuing research on gen.1.5. Indeed, gen.1.5 has recently become popular as a topic for masters theses and doctoral dissertations (See Ahmad, 2008 for a useful review).

In the literature on gen.1.5, a number of issues have remained central and have become more deeply problematized. These are: issues surrounding correctly identifying and appropriately placing gen.1.5 students on entry to higher education, and issues around the choice of curricula and pedagogies that will enable them to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century academy.

### *2.1. Issues in identification of gen.1.5*

The very idea of identifying students as gen.1.5 has been recognized as complex. Labeling students in this way has increased their visibility, but it has also become easier for college administrators to assume that one size fits all.

Harklau (in Matsuda, Canagarajah, Harklau, Hyland, & Warschauer, 2003) has warned of the danger of reducing such a diverse sector of the population to a single label. A number of alternatives to the term gen.1.5 have been proposed, for example, “long-term U.S. resident English learners,” “linguistically diverse students,” and “language minority students” (Harklau, Losey & Siegal, 1999), yet none of these terms adequately covers all members or does justice to their diversity of cultural backgrounds and educational experiences. Not all of these students are long-term residents; some fit the general language and literacy profile, but were U.S. born, and others, such as Hispanics, are hardly a “minority” in parts of the country. Linguistic diversity is also found in other populations, such as international students. Speakers of African American or Native American dialects may too be classed as linguistic minorities, though this terminology might be regarded as pejorative. Concerns have been raised that the use of any blanket term obscures more than enlightens, and that it may promote negative attitudes towards individuals who are already vulnerable to stereotyping and prejudice (Roberge, 2009).

In spite of the shortcomings outlined above, the term gen.1.5 is still the most widely used and understood among teachers and researchers, and it continues to be used to distinguish, however imperfectly, this population from international students or developmental writers, two groups with which gen.1.5 students are often mingled for educational purposes at college level. There are many similarities and a few important differences among the three populations: international and gen.1.5 “ESL” learners on the one hand, and the English as a mother tongue developmental writers on the other (Frodesen & Starna, 1999).

In ESL, Valdés (1992) made an important distinction between incipient and functional bilinguals; incipient bilinguals are still learning ESL and expanding their control over the grammatical and lexical systems of the language. Firstly, within, whereas functional bilinguals may be almost native speaker-like in their writing, except for occasional non-standard features. Incipient bilinguals may exhibit a wide range and relatively high frequency and consistency of well-known ESL surface errors such as limited or inappropriate lexical choices, confused syntax, errors in derivational form, weaknesses in manipulating verb forms for tense, voice or aspect, subject-verb agreement, incorrectly using or omitting definite and indefinite articles, and omitting inflectional endings on plural nouns (Frodesen & Starna, 1999). Functional bilinguals may consistently continue to use a few non-standard features, for example *-ed* endings on verbs with modal auxiliaries, or present tense verbs that lack agreement with a third person singular subject. Yet in spite of the appearance of these “fossilized” forms (Selinker, 1972) functional bilinguals tend to have a grasp on the full

range of grammatical and syntactical complexity of the second language (Valdés, 1992). Such students may not benefit from further ESL instruction, though they might learn to edit out their “errors” in written language. Gen.1.5 students could belong to either of these categories. Distinguishing between incipient and functional bilinguals is no easy matter, even for those trained in ESL. Both types of student can make some of the same errors, for example in verb endings, and these can show up in university placement essays by students of either population.

To complicate matters further, the writing of gen.1.5 students can also display features in common with the writing of developmental native speaker writers. These include the comma splice, fragment, and run-on sentence, and have been referred to in the first-year composition literature as among “the 20 most common errors” (Connor & Lunsford, 1988). However corpus analyses show that compared with other “novice” first-year native speaker writers, L2 writers tend to draw on a more restricted range of vocabulary, favor lexical items of high generality, and use features that are more typical of conversational than written academic English (Hinkel, 2005; Matsuda, Canagarajah, Harklau, Hyland & Warschauer, 2003).

In terms of background knowledge, gen.1.5 also share some similarities with native speakers of English who have studied in today’s U.S. educational system. While international students usually have learned English as a foreign language, paying close attention to the formal rules of grammar, gen.1.5 tend to have learned English as a second (or other language) by immersion in the American community, particularly in a school context. They have been described as “ear” learners (Reid, 1998) who, like many native speakers, may have had little or no formal grammar instruction. Consequently, they tend not to have a metalanguage they can use for discussing academic writing, and for interpreting rules in grammar books. In contrast with non-native speaker international students, gen.1.5 are often fluent in conversation, with a very good grasp of idiom and vocabulary, so the emphasis on listening and speaking skills that is so important in the ESL classroom is unnecessary. The heavy focus ESL places on acclimatizing to American social and academic cultures is not needed for most gen.1.5 students. In fact, the focus on U.S. culture in ESL classes may be construed as irrelevant if not insulting to local residents who may have been in the country for several years (Holten, 2009; Roberge, Siegal & Harklau, 2009).

On the other hand, while gen.1.5 share some characteristics with mainstream native speakers of English, they may not necessarily be a good fit in a class of developmental writers. Developmental writers also come from varied backgrounds but may be native speakers of English, including minority

dialects. They may come to higher education as adults, with very different life trajectories, motivations and attitudes to learning from those of recent high school graduates. They may find themselves placed in developmental courses because gaps in their education, perhaps arising from previously diagnosed or undiagnosed learning difficulties, or life experiences that disrupted their schooling have left them underprepared for college level writing. Although some gen.1.5 may also have experienced learning difficulties, or may have had gaps in schooling as a consequence of refugee or migrant worker backgrounds they tend to enter higher education in the same age bracket as other college freshmen, While some gen.1.5 have had higher level AP (college preparation) classes, others may not have followed an academic stream in secondary school. Their opportunities to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (Cummins, 1980) may have been compromised by their lack of exposure to cognitively challenging reading and writing tasks (Harklau, 2000; Hartman & Tarone, 1999). Those who were placed in ESL classes where they were not required to read or write lengthy texts, and where there was little training in learner autonomy, or in using sources or citation may be underprepared for academic assignments (Allison, 2009).

The idea of gen.1.5 may therefore be conceived as a complex and multi-layered, positioned on a continuum between ESL, as represented by international students, on one extreme, and developmental writing with predominantly native-speaker students on the other. The table below attempts to capture the broad differences and similarities among these three populations. It should be kept in mind, however, that the boundaries are permeable; the students themselves are individuals who may or may not exhibit all these characteristics, and identities can be fluid and may even seem contradictory (Haswell, 1998).

Further complicating this picture is the issue of identity. Numerous studies have pointed to the importance of positive alignment with culture and community. Rodby (1999) notes the important role of social and material networks both inside and outside the university. Chiang and Schmida (1999) note the complexity in bilinguality, with bilinguals who identify culturally with their L1 without having competence in that language, and bilinguals who may use English as their primary language, but who “flip-flop” comfortably between linguistic identities (92). Yet identity is not always easy to establish or to maintain. Many gen.1.5 find themselves between cultures. Some find this exciting, others feel completely lost (Leki, 1999). Highly functional bilinguals may make a conscious decision to retain and express their linguistic and cultural identity through the deliberate choice of non-standard rhetorical moves in written text (See for example, Canagarajah, 2006), and even incipient bilingual gen.1.5 students may resist being labeled as speakers of ESL (Harklau,

TABLE 1. Comparison of international, gen. 1.5, and developmental writers in English

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>International students</i>	<i>Gen. 1.5</i>	<i>Developmental writers</i>
Age group	Generally over 20 years of age.	Tend to be recent school graduates, 17-19 years of age.	May be recent school graduates or adults.
Educational background	Tend to have had uninterrupted and successful schooling in a foreign system of education, mainly using L1.	May have had schooling in different systems, different languages; may have had only ESL, or mainstream educational experience, or both.	May have had interrupted schooling, learning issues.
Languages spoken	Bilingual or multilingual; high proficiency in all aspects of L1.	May be functionally bilingual or multilingual. May be incipient bilingual - not yet proficient in certain aspects of either L1 or L2 (Valdés, 1992).	Assumed to be monolingual, but may be proficient in a non-standard dialect of English.
Academic literacy	Likely to have high academic literacy in L1. May be fluent readers in L1.	Academic literacy in L1 and English varies. May be reluctant or weak readers in English, but read or write for pleasure in L1 (Yi, 2005).	Academic literacy in English varies. May be reluctant or weak readers.
English proficiency	"eye learners" (Reid, 1998). Make ESL errors; Have a metalanguage to discuss grammar; better at reading and writing than conversation.	"ear learners" (Reid, 1998). Make ESL and "developmental" errors. May have little metalanguage to discuss grammar; tend to be better at conversation than reading and writing. "Write as they speak".	Make some of the 20 basic errors in college writing (Connor & Lunsford, 1988). May have little metalanguage to discuss grammar; tend to be better at conversation than reading and writing. "Write as they speak".
Cultural knowledge	Unfamiliar with many aspects of mainstream U.S. culture; highly identified with a foreign culture.	Highly familiar with mainstream U.S. culture; identification with another culture varies from high to low (Chiang & Schmida, 1999).	Highly familiar with mainstream U.S. culture; may also identify with a U.S. minority culture.



2000). Students deal with identity issues in various ways. Strategies range from uncritical acceptance or avoidance of the dominant discourses to critical yet ineffective opposition. Others may adopt more successful transposition of rhetorical resources from different languages to form a “third discourse that is different from either,” or for the rare few, a considered and critical dialogical appropriation (Canagarajah, 2006: 159-160). Typically little or no data on students’ language or cultural backgrounds is collected in the admissions processes of colleges and universities (Harklau, Siegal & Losey, 1999). Even if it is collected, students may choose not to answer these questions, or may misinterpret the questions due to the way in which they are phrased, so it is not an easy task to identify entering freshmen with linguistic or other characteristics that readily fit a description of gen.1.5.

## *2.2. Issues in the placement of gen.1.5*

Most U.S. community colleges and many four year colleges and universities offer preparatory programs to entering students who are identified as “underprepared” for mainstream degree courses. These tend to be either ESL or developmental writing courses. Both kinds of course are usually non credit-bearing, or if credit is given, the courses may not count towards the student’s degree. Credit may simply allow students to maintain health insurance, their scholarship or (for internationals) their visa status. ESL courses are generally provided by intensive language centers which were set up originally to cater to the needs of international students.

According to the characteristics summarized in Table 1, it should be clear that for gen.1.5 students needing support with writing, neither the ESL nor the developmental option might be an obvious choice. For more recent immigrants, the ESL class might be suitable, However many gen.1.5 students resent being placed in an ESL course when they may have already been accepted on the basis of standardized university entrance tests and high school grade point averages (Blanton, 1999; Leki, 1999; Rodby, 1999). For those who were born in the U.S. or came to the country at a fairly young age, the developmental writing class might seem to be a better fit. However, developmental writing courses have also suffered from the stigma of the remedial label. At Benedictine, some gen.1.5 students who have received good grades in high school English, yet according to the placement test are clearly weak in academic writing, resist being placed in any special class.

The complex issues of identity that were described earlier suggest that it may be wise to involve the students directly in the choices on offer. Luna (2003) reported on a placement process where “students were given detailed



explanations of three placement options and asked to write an essay identifying which one they should start with” (377). Involving students directly made them more self-aware of their writing strengths and weaknesses and also provided instructors with a more complete background on each student. Costino and Hyon (2007) found that students preferred to be placed with others of similar language abilities. They also argued that multilingual students should be given the opportunity to decide where they belong, in a directed way, and in consultation with advisers.

Regardless of how students of diverse linguistic backgrounds see themselves, there is pressure by institution administrators to place them appropriately for academic reasons. There continue to be complaints by some mainstream faculty, not only in composition, but across the disciplines, about students who “cannot write a sentence” (Blanton, 1999). Outside humanities and linguistics departments there are still two strongly held views that are both linguistically and pedagogically oversimplified: the view that literacy is the polar opposite of illiteracy, with no ground in between, and the view that literacy is a unitary skill that can be learned in a decontextualized way, then applied in any reading/writing context (Johns, 1997). Faculty in the other disciplines frequently assume the stance that language concerns need to be “fixed up” by ESL or writing experts before students tackle areas seen as purely content-based (Wolfe-Quintero & Segade, 1999). Yet at the same time these faculty may tolerate surface errors by writers who they perceive to be ESL, provided they are not overwhelming in variety and frequency. What professors tend to find more frustrating in student writing is a choice of vocabulary that distorts or confuses meaning, or writing that displays a lack of logic or critical thinking (Roberts & Cimasko, 2008; Santos, 1988).

### *2.3. From placement to pedagogies for gen.1.5*

A more nuanced viewpoint of literacy is that it is situated and contextually bound (Gee, 1990; Street, 1995). Learning academic literacy is not the outcome of mastering a skill set that can be universally applied, but comes about through situated and meaningful social interaction (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Street, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). Traditional preparatory programs, either in ESL or developmental writing, have been criticized for perpetuating a unitary decontextualized skills approach that ignores this complexity. Leki and Carson (1997) warn against courses that rely on students’ general knowledge, or use reading texts as mere springboards for self expression, as they do not involve students in taking responsibility for engaging meaningfully with the content of source texts.

### 3. EVOLUTION OF A COURSE FOR GEN.1.5 STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

The literature on gen.1.5 that was summarized above paints a complicated picture. At Benedictine University the goal has been to develop a program that is based on sound linguistic theory, and best pedagogic practice. An action research process is being followed, consisting of iterative cycles of examination of current practice, planning for change, implementation of action, careful observation and data collection, and evaluation and modification of action, all the while critically reflecting on processes, problems, and issues (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1986). The EAP faculty currently work within certain constraints. The university has no plans to establish preparatory programs in composition. Incoming freshmen write a timed response online to a writing prompt designed to establish whether they are accepted into mainstream first-year composition or whether they should be directed into one of three special sections of first-year composition that provide additional support for writing. All the placement essays are currently reviewed by EAP faculty before a final decision is made. Because the special classes earn credit towards the students' GPA, instructors are required to adhere to the same academic standards as the mainstream composition sections; they are also required to follow the same written assignment requirements, and a commonly agreed upon book of core readings.

#### 3.1. *Results of action research*

Driven by the findings of our action research, the program has been evolving. When the program was set up, placement was carried out by composition faculty, not ESL or developmental writing specialists. gen.1.5 and developmental students were randomly assigned to the three sections. Students followed the regular composition syllabus in their class with the addition of a weekly one hour workshop supposed to target grammar. At the end of the first year's trial, students' greatest source of dissatisfaction was the extra time spent on the workshop. Most claimed to find the attention on grammar of limited use. Neither a focus on the 20 most common errors, nor attempts to have students work independently using online exercises based on their own grammar problems had been met with enthusiasm. In the second year, the same model of class plus workshop was tried, but more attention was placed on group discussion of issues arising from the students' own drafts. Even so, most students were still negative about the workshop. Students were particularly dissatisfied where scheduling difficulties had meant that their workshop teacher was not the regular class teacher. In the third year, both class

and workshop were scheduled with the same instructors. In the workshops, instead of focusing so intensively on grammar, the teachers directed students' attention more specifically to issues related to assignments they were writing in their composition class, so that the extra hour became a seamless extension of the course.

In regular class time they followed the general composition syllabus. The assigned readings included extracts from writers such as Paolo Freire, bell hooks and Martin Luther King. These were particularly challenging, as they were lengthy arguments, replete with abstract vocabulary and ideas that were for many, culturally foreign. Therefore, the instructor devoted time to contextualizing and scaffolding reading and writing tasks. Drawing on the idea of the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), students were set to work in groups on different portions of a difficult reading, and jointly constructed a summary of the section that had been assigned to them, and which one of them then wrote on the whiteboard. The rest of the class would review the summary, ask questions on content and make suggestions to improve grammar, spelling and syntax. For homework, students blogged about the readings and the summaries, and in the next class they would discuss the reading as a class. In this way they rehearsed much of the language they would need for their spoken and written assignments, and also learned vocabulary and different modes of expression from one another. Over the semester the length and sophistication of student blogs increased. Students reported benefiting not only from the extra time for critically thinking and writing about the readings, but also from reading and critiquing the attempts of their peers.

In the extra workshop time, instead of having a fixed agenda, the instructor devoted the extra hour to developing strategies for critical reading of course texts, analyzing essay prompts, developing thesis statements, embedding and citing source material, organizing arguments, or editing for common errors. In a break from the traditional practice in freshman composition classes, students engaged in only limited peer editing; they reported that it was more productive for them to work in pairs or small groups on editing an anonymized paragraph of a particular student's work, focusing on a particular aspect such as choices in tense, or the use of cohesive devices, or the embedding of quotations or summaries using correct citation. After these changes were made, student evaluations of class and workshop were almost all positive, and most students made clear improvements in both organizational and mechanical aspects of writing. These results also support findings that gen.1.5 students react more favorably towards an approach that addresses their individual needs, than to the type of direct instruction in grammar used in ESL (e.g. Holten, 2009).

Nevertheless, in spite of some successes with this approach, it became clear that one semester in a special class would not prepare a struggling non-native speaker student for all the writing challenges he/she would face in the disciplines, even if the writing teacher could accurately predict what all these challenges would be. Even more importantly, after only one semester of scaffolded instruction it was evident that many still generally lacked both abstract vocabulary and a way to decode syntactical forms common to academic discourse, for example, noun phrases with lengthy pre- and post-modifiers that contain multiple embeddings (Biber, 2006). Without these skills, close reading of texts becomes all but impossible, as it becomes difficult to engage with the complex ideas in a text. The majority of the students themselves realized they would need more time to develop the skills they needed and some of them asked for a continuation of this approach in their second semester writing course.

In the second semester of freshman year, U.S. students are typically expected to take a second writing course. At Benedictine, students can take one of four options in research-based writing, where the focus is on writing across the curriculum. This is a major step up in difficulty for all students, but particularly for gen.1.5 and developmental writers. Faculty who teach these courses, and those who subsequently see the same students in other discipline-based writing intensive courses report that some of the students who have achieved high scores in their first semester course perform dismally in later courses. One might assume either that these students were wrongly placed, or that standards in the special sections of composition were too low. It is easy to jump to these conclusions, but the factors involved may have nothing to do with the quality of either placement process or instruction. Private life issues or non-academic factors such as too many hours in outside employment can play a larger role, and are outside of faculty control (Sullivan & Nielsen, 2009). However EAP faculty believed that the sharp increase in cognitive challenge posed by unfamiliar subject matter, more intense reading load in unfamiliar genres, and the requirement for longer written assignments could be managed if further scaffolding was provided after the first semester.

#### 4. EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVE CURRICULUM DESIGNS

It was clear that further changes in curriculum and pedagogy were needed. Therefore three innovative curriculum models for gen.1.5 outlined in Roberge, Siegal, and Harklau (2009) were evaluated. Criteria used for comparison were identification and placement methods, course duration and follow-through, design of curriculum and pedagogy, and resources required.

*4.1. University of California, Los Angeles. English Comp 2i (Holten, 2009)*

For this preparatory course, students take a university entrance writing exam. Scripts showing typical ESL errors are assessed by both composition faculty and ESL faculty. The placement decision is based on an interview with the student, though writing faculty make the final decision. A student can be placed in one of three preparatory courses according to need: ESL, developmental writing or the gen.1.5 course, which is restricted to students with more than 8 years' residence in the U.S., who speak another language at home, and who made ESL and "native speaker basic writing errors" in language and academic vocabulary in the placement test. The gen.1.5 strand is a pre-first year composition course of 60 hours of instruction over one quarter. The contact time of 6 hours a week is 2 hours more than the other two preparatory courses that are offered. The pedagogical focus is described as non-remedial. Assignments parallel the developmental writing course but include more scaffolding and 7-8 mandatory individual conferences. Course readings are shorter, but at a university level of difficulty, and with more teacher direction. Considerable time is spent on questions of grammar, vocabulary, and editing. No additional resources are required beyond provision of instructors.

Although this is a preparatory course, the student placement process, duration, and approach to syllabus and pedagogy are similar to the composition course we had developed. The course avoids the stigma of the remedial or gen.1.5 label by being offered through the English department's composition series. The workload acknowledges students' academic motivation. It builds on oral skills of "ear learners," with more time devoted to talking about topics, and developing academic vocabulary. Disadvantages are that the course runs over only one quarter, and is not explicitly linked to the content of any other courses. Students who pass this course still have to complete the regular composition sequence, so this preparatory course seems like a rehearsal for the "real" composition class. This enforced delay may be demotivating to students who may not have been singled out for special treatment during their high school years.

*4.2. University of Houston (Reynolds, Bae & Wilson, 2009)*

This two semester core composition sequence is offered as an alternative to the regular composition sequence. The identification or placement processes are not described. There are only 6 whole class meetings, each of 50 minutes, during the semester, but weekly 50 minute small group meetings, plus weekly individual meetings of 30-60 minutes. Four writing assignments are developed

with support from a consultant from the writing center. In the second semester, there is less scaffolding from the instructor, and more peer-based work. Teacher-scaffolded academic literacy is gradually replaced by peer-tutoring. Students have clear outlines of academic expectations via rubrics and feedback, both formative and summative. The class covers a wider range of genres than a normal composition class. Emphasis is on developing technological competence using the course management system, and using internet-based resources for reference.

This course is appealing because it manages diversity and individual language issues through individualization. The individualized format also addresses the student complaint that whole-class grammar activities are not relevant. Gradual transfer to peer-based work should foster self-confidence and independence. A disadvantage is that many tutors are needed for the small group work and individual consultations. Presumably the cost of this is defrayed by having larger classes (35) for all-group sessions. The mix of large and small group teaching would also appeal to different student learning styles. However tutor training might be an issue, and class scheduling could also be difficult in a small school. Although the class runs over two semesters, there is no linkage with other content courses.

#### 4.3. *University of Minnesota (Murie & Fitzpatrick, 2009) learning communities approach*

The program runs over two semesters, with several linked courses. No mention is made of the identification or placement process. The curriculum sequence is outlined in table 2 below.

TABLE 2. Curriculum sequence for gen.1.5 at University of Minnesota.

<i>Fall</i>	<i>Spring</i>
1. Developing college reading (2 credit)	1. Reading in content areas (2 credit)
2. Content course in sociology, art or biology (3-4 credit)	2. Content course in anthropology, biology or art (3-4 credit)
3. Writing I (3 credit)	3. Writing II (3 credit)
4. Introduction to college writing workshop (2 credit)	4. Literature of America's immigrant experience (3 credit)
5. Oral communication (3 credit)	

This is a very comprehensive program whose pedagogical focus is on “embedded content-based language support.” following a learning communities model. Learning communities provide for “curricular structures that link together several existing courses – or actually restructure the material entirely – so that students have opportunities for deeper understanding and integration of the material they are learning, and more interaction with one another and their teachers as fellow participants in the learning enterprise” (Gabelnick, Macgregor, Matthews & Smith, 1990: 19).

Students follow a sequence of first year composition and oral communication courses and introductory disciplinary content courses, all of which attract credits towards GPA. The writing course follows a process-based approach. Fluency is addressed first, with editing for grammar and syntax only in the final stages. Courses are supported by linked workshops on reading and writing taught by adjunct faculty. A multicultural literature course that any student, including native speakers of English, can take for credit caps the sequence. Peer support is provided through “supplemental instruction” (Martin & Arendale, 1993).

The program has many advantages. It focuses on academic literacy across disciplines in a sustained way over several courses and two semesters. It recognizes the central role of reading in academic literacy (Allison, 2009), and has a rigorous intellectual focus that requires critical thinking. It also globalizes the curriculum by drawing on gen.1.5 students’ own cultural capital in the international literature course, which mainstream students can also take. The involvement of peer tutors in the reading course addresses learning in the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), and also helps students’ social adjustment to college. A potential barrier is that faculty in the disciplines need to be willing to collaborate with ESL and writing faculty across the program. Peer tutors also need to be trained in the specific methods of supplemental instruction.

#### *4.4. Comparative strengths and weaknesses of the three programs, and other innovations*

All three programs are creative in making additional time for gen.1.5 students to develop academic literacies, and all three use a scaffolded approach, and give individualized attention to student writing. Both the second and third run over two semesters, but only the third program makes explicit links to other content areas of the first-year curriculum. This would provide continuity, and avoid the sudden jump in cognitive challenges mentioned earlier. None of the programs evaluated reported on the academic progress of students over the long-term. Clearly more longitudinal studies on gen.1.5 cohorts are needed.



All three programs are also process-writing based. In U.S. first-year composition courses, as well as in the high schools, a process model of writing is almost universally applied. This pedagogy strongly emphasizes processes of invention such as brainstorming, multiple drafts, and extensive peer and teacher feedback, with attention to grammar and syntax delayed until the final editing stage (Reid, 1993). While this approach has many strengths, it may not be suited to students whose prior literacy experiences do not give them an instinct for the norms of formal academic writing. Critics of the process approach have suggested that students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can benefit from clearer explanations of what teachers and other audiences expect. For example, systemic functional linguists have developed more explicit pedagogies that demystify academic genres, and introduce a metalanguage with which to talk about writing (Christie, 1999; Feez, 2002).

A pedagogy that draws on diverse research into academic genres and addresses many of the concerns about process writing is Ann Johns' ethnographic approach (2009). In common with process writing, this approach is not concerned with early remediation of surface errors, but it is more concerned than process writing with the development of an understanding of disciplinary conventions and strategies. Johns recognizes that different disciplines have their preferred modes of rhetorical organization to which learners generally need to acculturate to be considered successful. In her approach, students become ethnographers of their own disciplines, learning to ask the right questions to establish the preferred modes of discourse in specific contexts (Johns, 1995). Emphasis is placed on the analysis of a variety of texts and modes of argumentation in different genres. Students analyze assignment prompts and successful student papers in specific disciplines as well as published academic texts. In this way, students begin to bridge the gap between their knowledge of familiar everyday genres and genres of the academy. Johns also recommends the writing of responses under time pressure to build fluency and the use of portfolio assessment to give students time to develop their ideas, to strengthen their facility with the language through drafting and redrafting texts, and to reflect on their progress in academic literacy.

These ideas could be taken even further. Frodesen (2009: 102) argues that all curricula need to be more inclusive to "encourage meaningful, negotiated oral interaction in the classroom for all students, L2 and native English-speaking learners alike." The concept of multiliteracies (Cazden *et alii*, 1996) reflects a complex globalized world where people increasingly use a mixture of modalities, sign systems and even code-switch between languages within a single text. In a globalized society, communication and competitiveness are based on the ability to cross boundaries and be flexible. In this regard bilinguals

and multilinguals have unique strengths, as well as cultural capital that is worth building upon and they should not be seen as deficient because they may never “pass” as native-like speakers of what may be their third or fourth language. Technologically savvy gen.1.5 students may benefit from interactive technologies such as blogging, or developing websites that make use of visual as well as written text.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Given the immense diversity in gen.1.5 and the difficulties inherent in correctly identifying and placing them in appropriate writing programs, and given that placement alone is no guarantor of success in first year composition, it would seem that focusing on innovative pedagogies would be the most constructive way to achieve positive outcomes. This research suggests that appropriate identification, placement, and ongoing programmatic support for gen.1.5 students who are considered to be underprepared for the demands of academic writing needs to take into account a great deal more than the linguistic “deficits” evident in surface errors; instead, it should take into account students’ multilingual and multicultural strengths as well as their unique identities. Students are far from homogeneous in their needs, literacy experiences, and motivations. Although preparatory courses have their place, directly entering first year composition may be a more palatable option for the majority of gen.1.5 students who have already been accepted on the basis of standardized university entrance tests and their high school results. However direct entry has more likelihood of success if students receive specially targeted instruction and appropriate scaffolding over more than a single semester.

If diversity in the student population is accepted, and unnecessary barriers to student achievement are not erected, there are innovative ways in which this can be accomplished without sacrificing academic rigor, and without students having to assimilate into a monocultural, monolingual academic world. Until recently, it has tended to be the gen.1.5 students who have been expected to do the “accommodating,” that is, to downplay their “otherness” in order to fit institutional norms. Although some individuals may choose to accommodate to achieve their own ends, I suggest that the institution itself should be more accommodating of these students. The identification and placement processes, and subsequent interventions or pedagogies need to be more congruent with their needs and strengths; the programs in which they are placed should be reconcilable with, and as rigorous in their own way as any comparable courses offered by the institution; the students themselves need to be involved in the process of placement so that they feel their goals and needs are being addressed;

the programs in which they find themselves should not hold the students back from achieving their academic goals within a reasonable period of time; and most importantly, the special strengths and abilities of these students should be recognized and utilized for the benefit of the institution as a whole.

The most promising way forward for a small school like Benedictine would seem to be some combination of features identified in the courses and approaches outlined above. Benedictine university is supportive of the learning communities model, so a comprehensive program of linked courses would seem to be particularly suitable, particularly if the pedagogies included more explicit attention to the range of genres and discourse features as outlined in the ethnographic approach by Ann Johns. One of the greatest challenges would be persuading faculty from other disciplines and mainstream writing instructors to become involved and committed to in-depth collaboration with EAP faculty, instead of leaving what they see as literacy problems to the “experts.” A more inclusive approach in mainstream classes that drew constructively on the multilingual and multicultural resources of gen. 1.5 students would be positive for all students, however monolingual English speaking students would need to buy into such a program to achieve the desired globalization of curriculum. This is not as simple as it may seem. The idea that they could benefit from multicultural exchange is not easy to sell to mainstream students in America’s Midwest, even though their own campuses may be very diverse.

In addition, given that many gen. 1.5 students in high school lack opportunities to rehearse college level academic literacies, more information needs to be shared with local schools so that the transition from high school to university is not so abrupt for these students. Finally, in the university, more empirically-based dialogue about academic literacies between writing instructors and faculty across the disciplines would be a useful learning experience for all.

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