**Prioritizing Intercultural Competence in Writing Programs through Linked Courses**

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***Note added April 2021:*** *This grant was funded by the CWPA in 2018. The Transculturation team is happy to share this application with the CWPA community. We welcome questions via Bradley Dilger (above). Please see our project web site for our final grant report, publications about this research, resources we’ve created to help interested writing programs implement our curriculum, and updates about our research team.*

*We thank the CWPA for their generous support of our research.*

*—The Transculturation Team  
Hadi, Parva, Rebekah, Phuong, Echo, Ryan, and Bradley*

# Prioritizing Intercultural Competence in Writing Programs through Linked Courses

Our project seeks to increase undergraduate students’ intercultural competence by designing and implementing FYW courses that focus on meaningful intercultural interaction among international and domestic students. We link mainstream and second-language-focused FYW sections to expose students to diverse texts, structured intercultural interactions, and sequenced writing assignments supported by team-taught pedagogical interventions. Using the Millville-Guzman Universality-Diversity instrument, student interviews, and analysis of writing, we measure students’ intercultural competence and the effectiveness of these curricular interventions to better develop curricula that both enhance the linked course model and offer its lessons to other FYW curricular structures. This research offers an efficient, effective method for writing programs to integrate internationalization into diverse FYW instruction, thus better preparing both international and domestic students for effective collaboration in diverse work and educational environments.

# Research questions & significance

International and diverse domestic students experience social and academic barriers in the university. While supporting adjustment to the university for these populations is deeply important, the burdens of change and adjustment should not rest on these students alone, but on the university community as a whole (Glass et al, 2013). Programs that support the development of intercultural competence among all students, not only international students, offer the most socially just effective models for creating and sustaining inclusive communities. Our linked mainstream and international/L2 writing classes leverage intercultural competence to bridge social and academic integration across student populations (Redden, 2014). Through exposure to diverse texts, structured collaborative writing, and research interactions, our curriculum promises to enhance all students’ intercultural competence as well as their writing, research, and communication skills.

Scholarship on intercultural competence in university settings often focuses on study abroad programs (e.g. Cushner & Chang, 2015) or within organizations (e.g. Dias et al, 2011), and has not yet penetrated writing programs. Our project provides much needed attention to these research questions:

1. How can FYW curricula effectively develop all students’ intercultural competence and better promote social and academic adjustment for international and diverse domestic students?
2. How can we assess the effects of the curriculum on improving students’ intercultural competence?

The outcomes of this project are relevant to many stakeholders: students, instructors, writing program administrators, and university administrators. At a university level, diversity in the student body is both highly desired and growing, yet there is very little infrastructure to support diverse students and the diversifying university. By linking mainstream and L2-focused sections of FYW, we help fill a gap between recruitment of diversity (at university level) and programmatic support for students. Writing programs are ideal for this intervention because large numbers of students take FYW courses early in their education, and small class sizes allows for careful evaluation of such interventions. Essentially, we provide inexpensive but effective infrastructure with outcomes tested by well-designed research. Our project meets students’ needs for collaborative skills in diversifying campuses and workplaces.

# Mixed-methods approach using time-tested instruments

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to assess the development of intercultural competence in FYW. Participants come from ten FYW sections—both mainstream and L2-specific sections—spanning four semesters. Data collected comes from three sources. First, we gather and analyze pre- and post-course measures of intercultural competence using the Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale tool (Miville et al, 1999; Fuertes et al., 2000) to trace development of the classes as a whole. Second, the content of major course projects, including reflective journals, are collected to analyze student writing thematically and trace individual developments in intercultural competence. Finally, semi-structured interviews with participants completed 3 to 6 months *after* the conclusion of the course present additional data about participants’ individualized experiences and their responses to the curriculum for triangulation purposes.

To analyze the student writing and trace changes in intercultural competence, our research team has developed a robust grounded theory coding scheme. While our coding scheme is primarily qualitative, we are able to trace frequencies of codes across documents, offering a quantitative view of course outcomes and cultural competencies. After this first level of coding, we map students’ documents onto the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1993) to understand larger-scales changes (or lack of changes) across the entire semester. Both the DMIS and MGUDs are scales used nationally, allowing our research team to contextualize and compare our results with other studies of intercultural competence development. The interview results offer some insight into how (or if) students carry the concepts from the class forward into other contexts.

# Project timetable

Our project began in August 2016, and we outline our plans until July 2020 below. Study years run August to July, like our academic year. Grant-funded activities will occur between August 20, 2018 and August 16, 2019.

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| --- | --- |
| **AY2016–17** | Developed draft curriculum and secured IRB approval. Recruited first participants from first pair of course sections. Awarded internal grant from campus intercultural research organization. Began data processing. |
| **AY2017–18** | Completed interviews with AY16–17 participants. Three groups of paired sections. Developed coding methods and began analyzing data. Awarded second internal grant. Present at ISLS and SSLW. |
| **AY2018–19** | Complete interviews with AY17–18 participants. Process 17–18 data. Submit first article to *WPA*. Fifth pair of sections. Recruit and train undergraduate student worker(s). Seek additional funding from CCCC, FIPSE, etc. Two graduate student researchers defend dissertation prospectuses. Submit preliminary report to CWPA. |
| **AY2019–20** | Complete interviews with AY18–19 participants. Complete all data processing. Submit second and third articles. At CWPA 2020, share approaches in a workshop, and findings in a panel. One graduate student researcher defends dissertation. Submit final report to CWPA. |

# Sharing our work: workshops, journal articles, and dissertations

Our work has already contributed to writing instruction at our institution, earning our writing program’s most innovative course design award in Spring 2017 and through a workshop hosted by a campus organization for intercultural learning. We have shared preliminary findings at two local conferences and will present at the International Society for Language Studies and the Symposium on Second Language Writing in Summer 2018.

In Spring 2019, we will submit the first of multiple articles to be produced from the project to *WPA: Writing Program Administration,* formalizing our findings from the pilot study and addressing feedback from ISLS and SSLW. Between now and May 2020, the project will produce at least two more articles: one for *TESOL Quarterly* documenting the pedagogical work which supports the linked courses, and one for *WPA Journal* engaging the MGUDS and DMIS tools methodologically and reporting preliminary results. At least two graduate students will address aspects of this project in their dissertations, and we will share our findings and approaches at CWPA as well. We expect the project to be an active part of the four graduate researchers’ work for years to come.

# An experienced, interdisciplinary, international team

Our team’s expertise crosses both rhetoric & composition and second language studies. Our PI is the WPA at our institution, and two professors from the ESL program provide additional support. Our PI has extensive experience administering grant-funded research programs, including a previous CWPA Targeted Research Grant which generated an article for *Writing Program Administration.* Four graduate student researchers from four countries bring ESL and FYW teaching experience from across the globe. Our research, teaching, and administrative expertise has facilitated the development and implementation of this project, and our interdisciplinary doctoral training makes us a good fit for extending this curriculum beyond the scope of the current project. Regular research meetings have built strong relationships among all co-researchers due to extensive discussions, conversations, and data analysis sessions. Moreover, the researchers’ diverse academic and cultural backgrounds create an environment of effective collaboration which facilitates the efficient and timely progress of the project.

# Budget

Funding from CWPA would help us more quickly process data, move into analysis, and realize our goal of submitting an article this academic year. We plan to hire undergraduate researchers with interest in writing research to process data and begin preliminary analysis. This experience will be structured as paid internships and may deliver course credit as well. Two graduate researchers will be paid a modest amount of supplemental pay to train and supervise these interns, in cooperation with the PI.

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| **Item** | **Description** | **Cost** |
| Undergraduate researcher wages and fringe benefits | 250 hours at $10/hr plus 8.3% fringe benefits | $2,708 |
| Graduate researcher, hourly supplemental pay, wages and fringe benefits | 80 hours at $15/hr plus 7.5% fringe benefits | $1,290 |
| **Total funding request** | | **$3,998** |

Our project has already gained local support. A campus organization supporting intercultural learning funded grants of $2,000 for both 2017–18 and 2018–19. This funding is being used to partially compensate for the cost of conference travel for all four graduate student researchers and to provide graduate student researchers supplemental pay for their work on the project ($2,000). Travel grants totaling $400 from our departmental graduate student organization are supporting our work as well.

Funding for PI’s contributions to the project (3% of annual effort, or $3,745 including salary and 28.1% benefits) is cost-shared by the home department. Graduate students involved with the project provide additional effort as part of their regular research programs. While at least two dissertations will emerge from this project, the scope of the research is greater than one single dissertation.

We are seeking other grants to fund the project, both internal (graduate student focused travel grants of $750 per eligible graduate student per year; undergraduate intern support of $500 per eligible undergraduate student per year) and external (CCCC Research Initiative, $10,000 maximum award), and will notify the CWPA if we earn these awards.Funding for travel expenses will be raised by these and other means.

# Detailed timeline

As noted in the narrative, all grant-funded activities will occur between August 20, 2018 and August 16, 2019.

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| --- | --- |
| **Aug 2018** | Recruit and train undergraduate student worker(s). |
| **Sep 2018** | Submit CCCC Research Initiative Grant (deadline 9/1/2018). |
| **Sep 2018** | First graduate student researcher defends dissertation prospectus. |
| **Oct 2018** | Complete all interviews with AY17–18 participants. |
| **Nov 2018** | Complete researching other funding opportunities and plan grant writing activities. |
| **Dec 2018** | Complete processing of 2017–18 data (transcribe interviews, preliminary coding). |
| **Jan 2019** | Fifth pair of linked section begins (to conclude May 2019). |
| **Mar 2019** | Submit first article to *Writing Program Administration.* |
| **Jul 2019** | Second graduate student researcher defends dissertation prospectus. |

# Reduced award

We will accept any amount of funding CWPA offers. If necessary, we suggest two methods for reducing our award, in this order:

1. Reduce or eliminate supplemental pay for graduate researchers;
2. Reduce amount for undergraduate researcher internships.