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The Myth of Linguistic Homogeneity in U.S. College Composition

Paul Kei Matsuda

In “English Only and U.S. College Composition,” Bruce Horner and John Trimbur identify the tacit policy of unidirectional English monolingualism, which makes moving students toward the dominant variety of English the only conceivable way of dealing with language issues in composition instruction. This policy of unidirectional monolingualism is an important concept to critique because it accounts for the relative lack of attention to multilingualism in composition scholarship. Yet it does not seem to explain why second-language issues have not become a central concern in composition studies. After all, if U.S. composition had accepted the policy of unidirectional monolingualism, *all* composition teachers would have been expected to learn how to teach the dominant variety of English to students who come from different language backgrounds. This has not been the case. While Geneva Smitherman and Victor Villanueva argue that coursework on language issues (though certainly not a monolingualist approach) should be part of every English teacher’s professional preparation (4), relatively few graduate programs in composition studies offer courses on those issues, and even fewer require such courses. As a result, the vast majority of U.S. college composition programs remain unprepared for second-language writers who enroll in the mainstream composition courses. To account for this situation, I want to take Horner and Trimbur’s argument a step further and suggest that the dominant discourse of U.S. college composition not only has accepted English Only as an ideal but it already assumes the state of English-only, in which students are native English speakers by default.

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That second-language writing has not yet become a central concern in composition studies seems paradoxical given the historical origin of U.S. college composition as a way of “containing” language differences and sealing them off from the rest of U.S. higher education. Robert J. Connors has suggested that U.S. composition arose in response to perceived language differences—texts written by ostensibly some of the brightest native English speakers that included numerous errors in “[p]unctuation, capitalization, spelling, [and] syntax” (*Composition* 128). Susan Miller also points out that college composition “has provided a continuing way to separate the unpredestined from those who belong [. . .] by encouraging them to leave school, or more vaguely, by convincing large numbers of *native speakers* and otherwise accomplished *citizens* that they are ‘not good at English’” (74; emphasis added). To a large extent, however, issues that prompted the rise of the composition requirement are weak forms of language differences that affect native speakers of English—matters of convention and style as well as performance errors that arise from factors such as unfamiliar tasks, topics, audiences, or genres. While U.S. composition has maintained its ambivalent relationship with those weak forms of language differences, it has been responding to the presence of stronger forms of language differences—differences that affect students who did not grow up speaking privileged varieties of English—not by adjusting its pedagogical practices systematically at the level of the entire field but by relegating the responsibility of working with those differences to second-language specialists (Matsuda, “Composition”; Shuck).

I am not trying to imply that there has not been *any* effort to address second-language issues in composition studies. I recognize that a growing number of writing teachers who face those issues in their classes on a daily basis have developed, often on their own initiative, additional expertise in issues related to language differences. What I want to call into question is why the issue of language difference has not become a central concern for *everyone* who is involved in composition instruction, research, assessment, and administration. I argue that the lack of “a profession-wide response” (Valdés 128) to the presence of strong forms of language differences in U.S. composition stems from what I call the myth of linguistic homogeneity—the tacit and widespread acceptance of the dominant image of composition students as native speakers of a privileged variety of English. To show how the myth of linguistic homogeneity came into being, I examine the early history of various attempts at linguistic containment, which created a condition that makes it seem acceptable to dismiss language differences. My intention is not to argue against all forms of linguistic containment. Rather, I want to problematize its long-term implication—the perpetuation of the myth of linguistic homogeneity—which has in turn kept U.S. composition from fully recognizing the presence of second-language writers who do not fit the dominant image of college students.

THE IMAGE OF COLLEGE STUDENTS AND THE
MYTH OF LINGUISTIC HOMOGENEITY

Behind any pedagogy is an image of prototypical students—the teacher’s imagined audience. This image embodies a set of assumptions about who the students are, where they come from, where they are going, what they already know, what they need to know, and how best to teach them. It is not necessarily the concrete image of any individual student but an abstraction that comes from continual encounters with the dominant student population in local institutional settings as well as the dominant disciplinary discourses. Images of students are not monolithic; just as teachers incorporate pedagogical practices from various and even conflicting perspectives, their images of students are multiple and complex, reflecting local institutional arrangements as well as the teaching philosophies and worldviews of individual teachers. Although there is no such thing as a generalized college composition student, overlaps in various teachers’ images of students constitute a dominant image—a set of socially shared generalizations. Those generalizations in turn warrant the link between abstract disciplinary practices and concrete classroom practices.

Having a certain image of students is not problematic in itself; images of students are inevitable and even necessary. Without those images, discussing pedagogical issues across institutions would be impossible. An image of students becomes problematic when it inaccurately represents the actual student population in the classroom to the extent that it inhibits the teacher’s ability to recognize and address the presence of differences. Just as the assumption of whiteness as the colorless norm has rendered some students of color invisible in the discourse of composition studies (Prendergast 51), theoretical practices that do not recognize and challenge other inaccurate images reinforce the marginal status of those students by rendering them invisible in the professional discourse. At the same time, pedagogical practices based on an inaccurate image of students continue to alienate students who do not fit the image.

One of the persisting elements of the dominant image of students in English studies is the assumption that students are by default native speakers of a privileged variety of English from the United States. Although the image of students as native speakers of privileged varieties of English is seldom articulated or defended—an indication that English-only is already taken for granted—it does surface from time to time in the work of those who are otherwise knowledgeable about issues of language and difference. A prime example is Patrick Hartwell’s “Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar,” a widely known critique of grammar instruction in the composition classroom. In his analysis of a grammar exercise, he writes that “[t]he rule, however valuable it may be for non-native speakers, is, for the most part,

simply unusable for native speakers of the language” (116). While this is a reasonable claim, to argue against certain pedagogical strategies based on their relevance to native speakers seems to imply the assumption of the native-English-speaker norm. Hartwell also claims that “[n]ative speakers of English, regardless of dialect, show tacit mastery of the conventions of Standard English” (123), which seems to trivialize important structural differences between privileged varieties of U.S. English and many other domestic and international varieties of English.

Language issues are also inextricably tied to the goal of college composition, which is to help students become “better writers.” Although definitions of what constitutes a better writer may vary, implicit in most teachers’ definitions of “writing well” is the ability to produce English that is unmarked in the eyes of teachers who are custodians of privileged varieties of English or, in more socially situated pedagogies, of an audience of native English speakers who would judge the writer’s credibility or even intelligence on the basis of grammaticality. (As a practicing writing teacher, I do not claim to be immune to this charge.) Since any form of writing assessment—holistic, multiple-trait, or portfolio assessment—explicitly or implicitly includes language as one of the criteria, writing teachers regularly and inevitably engage in what Bonny Norton and Sue Starfield have termed “covert language assessment” (292). As they point out, this practice is not problematic in itself, especially if language issues are deliberately and explicitly included in the assessment criteria *and* if students are receiving adequate instruction on language issues. In many composition classrooms, however, language issues beyond simple “grammar” correction are not addressed extensively even when the assessment of student texts is based at least partly on students’ proficiency in the privileged variety of English. As Connors has pointed out, “the sentence [. . .] as an element of composition pedagogy is hardly mentioned today outside of textbooks” (“Erasure” 97), and has become a “half-hidden and seldom-discussed classroom practice on the level of, say, vocabulary quizzes” (120). It is not unusual for teachers who are overwhelmed by the presence of language differences to tell students simply to “proofread more carefully” or to “go to the writing center”; those who are not native speakers of dominant varieties of English are thus being held accountable for what is not being taught.

The current practice might be appropriate if all students could reasonably be expected to come to the composition classroom having already internalized a privileged variety of English—its grammar and the rhetorical practices associated with it. Such an expectation, however, does not accurately reflect the student population in today’s college composition classrooms. In the 2003–04 academic year, there were 572,509 international students in U.S. colleges (Institute of International Education, *Open Doors 2004*), most of whom came from countries where English is not the dominant language. Although the number has declined slightly in recent years, international students are not likely to disappear from U.S. higher education any time

soon. In fact, many institutions continue to recruit international students—because they bring foreign capital (at an out-of-state rate), increase visible ethnic diversity (which, unlike linguistic diversity, is highly valued), and enhance the international reputation of the institutions—even as they reduce or eliminate instructional support programs designed to help those students succeed (Dadak; Kubota and Abels).

In addition, there is a growing number of resident second-language writers who are permanent residents or citizens of the United States. Linda Harklau, Meryl Siegal, and Kay M. Losey estimate that there are at least 150,000 to 225,000 active learners of English graduating from U.S. high schools each year (2–3). These figures do not include an overwhelmingly large number of functional bilinguals—students who have a high level of proficiency in both English and another language spoken at home (Valdés)—or native speakers of traditionally underprivileged varieties of English, including what has come to be known as world Englishes. The myth of linguistic homogeneity—the assumption that college students are by default native speakers of a privileged variety of English—is seriously out of sync with the sociolinguistic reality of today’s U.S. higher education as well as of U.S. society at large. This discrepancy is especially problematic considering the status of first-year composition as the only course that is required of virtually all college students in a country where, according to a 2000 U.S. Census, “more than one in six people five years of age and older reported speaking a language other than English at home” (Bayley 269).

THE POLICY OF LINGUISTIC CONTAINMENT IN U.S. COLLEGE COMPOSITION

The perpetuation of the myth of linguistic homogeneity in U.S. college composition has been facilitated by the concomitant policy of linguistic containment that has kept language differences invisible in the required composition course and in the discourse of composition studies. Since its beginning in the late nineteenth century at Harvard and elsewhere, the first-year composition course has been a site of linguistic containment, quarantining from the rest of higher education students who have not yet been socialized into the dominant linguistic practices (Miller 74). While institutions have used the composition course as a site of linguistic containment for non-native speakers of privileged varieties of English, institutions have found ways to exclude more substantive forms of language differences even from the composition course by enacting several strategies for linguistic containment. The first and most obvious strategy is to exclude language differences from entering higher education altogether by filtering them out in the admission process. Another common strategy, especially when the number of students from unprivileged language backgrounds is relatively small, is to ignore language issues, attributing any difficulties to

individual students' inadequate academic preparation. Even when language differences are recognized by the teacher, those differences are often contained by sending students to the writing center, where students encounter peer tutors who are even less likely to be prepared to work with language differences than are composition teachers (Trimbur 27–28).

The policy of containment is enacted most strongly through the placement procedure, which is unique to composition programs in the sense that students do not normally have the option of choosing a second-language section—perhaps with the exception of speech communication courses. The all-too-common practice of using language proficiency tests for composition placement (Crusan 20) is a clear indication that the policy of linguistic containment is at work. Even when direct assessment of writing is used for placement, the use of holistic scoring may lead raters to give disproportionate weight to language differences because “a text is so internally complex (e.g., highly developed but fraught with grammatical errors) that it requires more than a single number to capture its strengths and weaknesses” (Hamp-Lyons 760). Based on placement test results, many students are placed in noncredit “remedial” courses where they are expected to erase the traces of their language differences before they are allowed to enroll in the required composition course. In other cases, students are placed—sometimes after their initial placement in mainstream composition courses—in a separate track of composition courses for nonnative English speakers that can satisfy the composition requirement. These courses, though sometimes costly to students, provide useful language support for them and are necessary for many students who will be entering the composition course as well as courses in other disciplines where the myth of linguistic homogeneity prevails. At the same time, these placement practices also reify the myth by making it seem as if language differences can be effectively removed from mainstream composition courses.

In the remainder of this essay, I examine the emergence of the myth of linguistic homogeneity and the concomitant policy of linguistic containment in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries—the formative years of U.S. college composition. U.S. higher education during this period is marked by several influxes of international students, many of whom came from countries where English was not the dominant language. Each of these influxes was met not by attempts to reform composition pedagogy but by efforts to contain language differences—efforts that continue even today. I focus on developments before the 1960s because it was the period when a number of significant changes took place. Although English had long been part of U.S. higher education, the English language began to take the center stage in the late nineteenth century through the use of English composition as part of the college entrance exam (Brereton 9) and through the creation of the English composition course that tacitly endorsed the policy of unidirectional

monolingualism (Horner and Trimbur 596–97). It was also during this period that language differences in the composition classroom became an issue because of the presence of a growing number of international students, and many of the placement options for second-language writers were created (Matsuda and Silva; Silva). My focus is on international students because, until the latter half of the twentieth century, resident students from underprivileged language backgrounds were systematically excluded from higher education altogether (Matsuda, “Basic” 69–72).

WAVES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND THE POLICY OF CONTAINMENT

The image of U.S. college students as native speakers of more or less similar, privileged varieties of English had already been firmly established by the mid-nineteenth century. Although the larger U.S. society had always been multilingual (Bayley 269), language differences were generally excluded from English-dominated higher education of the nineteenth century. The assumption of the native-English-speaker norm was, at least on the surface, more or less accurate in the mid-nineteenth century, when access to college education was restricted to students from certain ethnic, gender, religious, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds. As David Russell notes, U.S. colleges before the end of the Civil War were “by modern standards extraordinarily homogeneous, guaranteeing a linguistic common ground” (35). While U.S. higher education began to shift from exclusive, elitist establishment to more inclusive vehicle for mass education during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the traditional image of college students remained unchallenged for the most part. Although the creation of what have come to be known as historically black colleges had provided African American students access to higher education since the early nineteenth century, they did not affect the dominant image because they were physically segregated from the rest of the college student population. In fact, those colleges served as the sites of containment—ethnic as well as linguistic. The Morrill Act, first passed in 1862 and then extended in 1890, gave rise to land-grant institutions across the nation that made college education open to women as well as to students from a wider variety of socioeconomic groups. Yet, native speakers of nonprivileged varieties of English did not enter higher education in large numbers because the ability to speak privileged varieties of English was often equated with racialized views of the speaker’s intelligence.

One of the major institutional initiatives that contributed to the exclusion of language differences was the creation of the entrance exam—first instituted at Harvard in 1874 and then quickly and widely adopted by other institutions. The entrance exam at Harvard was motivated in part by “a growing awareness of the importance of linguistic class distinctions in the United States” (Connors, *Composition* 128).

Harvard course catalogs during this period indicate that the entrance exam at Harvard included “reading English aloud” or writing with “[c]orrect [. . .] spelling, punctuation, grammar, and expression” (qtd. in Brereton 34). Miller also points out that “forms of this examination became the most powerful instrument for discriminating among students in higher education” (63), effectively excluding students who did not fit the dominant linguistic profile. Even in the nineteenth century, however, the assumption of linguistic homogeneity in higher education was not entirely accurate, and it moved farther and farther away from the sociolinguistic reality of U.S. higher education. One group of students who brought significant language differences were international students who entered U.S. higher education through different admission processes and therefore were not subject to linguistic filtering (Matsuda, “Basic” 71–72).

The history of international ESL students in U.S. higher education goes at least as far back as 1784, when Yale hosted a student from Latin America; in the mid-1800s, students from China and Japan also attended Yale and Amherst College (King 11). The first sizable influx of international students came in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when U.S. higher education began to attract an increasing number of students from other countries as it developed research universities modeled after German institutions. Most of these international students were from Asian countries that were “undergoing modernization with the help of knowledge acquired from Western countries” (Bennett, Passin, and McKnight 26). During the late nineteenth century, European students also came to U.S. higher education “not so much seeking an education that was not available to them at home, as out of a desire to see America, the ‘country of the future’” (Institute of International Education, 1955 *Handbook*, 6).

In the late nineteenth century, when many of the international students were sponsored by their governments, language preparation was generally considered to be the responsibility of individual students or their sponsoring governments, and U.S. colleges and universities usually provided little or no institutional support for international students’ cultural and linguistic adjustments. For instance, students from China and Japan, most of whom were sponsored by their respective governments, usually received language instruction before coming to the United States. In many cases, however, their language preparation was less than adequate by the standard of U.S. institutions, and they were sent to preparatory schools, where they were “placed in classes with the youngest children” (Schwantes 194). The Japanese government continued to send students to U.S. colleges; however, they were selected by a rigid examination, and their progress was monitored by a supervisor sent by the Japanese government (Institute of International Education, 1955 *Handbook*, 4). By the 1880s, the practice of holding the sponsoring government responsible for providing language preparation became difficult to sustain as the number of govern-

ment-sponsored students declined, giving way to an increasing number of privately funded students (Bennett, Passin, and McKnight 32).

The second influx came in the early part of the twentieth century, when internationally known research institutions began to attract a growing number of international students, most from countries where English was not the dominant language. Although in 1911 there were only 3,645 international students in U.S. higher education, the number began to grow rapidly after the conclusion of World War I (1914–18). This change was due partly to European students' dissatisfaction "with their own traditions of education" as well as Asian students' need for "new foundations for modern systems of education" (Kandel 39). Another factor that contributed to the growth was the national interest of the United States. The U.S. government's growing concern with post-WWI international relations—especially with European nations—prompted the establishment in 1919 of the Institute of International Education (IIE) with support from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The IIE was successful in "stimulat[ing] interest in student exchange, [and] encouraging public and private groups to sponsor international students" (Institute of International Education, 1955 *Handbook*, 7). By 1920, the number of international students had reached 6,163 and was continuing to increase (Institute of International Education, 1961 *Handbook*, 230). In 1930, U.S. colleges and universities reported the presence of 9,961 international students (Darlan 105).

The growing presence of international students from non-English-dominant countries became an issue among hosting institutions. Some educators recognized the problem of the traditional pedagogy based on the dominant image of students. Isaac Leon Kandel, for example, wrote that international students did not benefit as much from the instruction not because of their lack of ability but because "courses were organized primarily with the American student, familiar with American ideals, aims, history, and social and political background, in mind" (50). The solution, however, was not to challenge the dominant image but to contain issues of linguistic and cultural differences by providing additional instruction—an approach that might have seemed reasonable when the number of international students was relatively small. To provide linguistic support for those who did not fit the traditional image of college students, institutions began to develop special English-language courses. According to a 1923 survey of four hundred institutions, all but two institutions stated that they had "provision for special language help by official courses or by voluntary conversation classes" (Parson 155). Although it continued to be "a common rule to refuse admission to students who are unable to speak and read English," about 50 percent of institutions offered "special courses for backward students" (155).

In 1911, Joseph Raleigh Nelson in the Engineering College at the University of Michigan created the first English courses specifically designed for international students (Klinger 1845–47), followed by Teachers College of Columbia University,

which created special courses for matriculated international students in 1923 (Kandel 54). Harvard University created its first English courses for international students in 1927, and George Washington University and Cornell University followed suit in 1931 (Allen 307; Darian 77). While there were some exceptions—such as the program at Michigan, which continued for several decades—many of these early programs were ad hoc in nature. The initial innovation at Harvard ceased to exist after a while and, by the 1940s, second-language writers at Harvard had come to be mainstreamed into “regular” sections of composition courses with additional help from individual tutoring services (Gibian 157). At George Washington, the separate section of composition “used the same materials as the sections for Americans and [. . .] was conducted by the same teacher”; however, “none of the English instructors really desired to teach that group,” and this program was later found to be unsuccessful (Rogers 394). The courses at Columbia, which allowed students to enroll simultaneously in college-level courses, were also found to be ineffective in containing language differences (Kandel 54). Other institutions, especially where the number of international students was relatively small, dealt with language differences “by a process of scattering foreigners through different courses, so that they must mingle freely with others, rather than segregating them for group study in classes where they may persist in using their own language” (Parson 155).

Following the announcement of the Good Neighbor Policy in 1933, the State Department began to bring international students from Latin America to provide them with scientific and technical training, a development that led to the creation, in 1941, of the English Language Institute (ELI) at the University of Michigan. As an intensive program, it separated students from the college-level courses for a period of several months while they focused on developing their English language proficiency. Although the program was initially intended for Spanish-speaking graduate students from Latin America, it later broadened its scope to include undergraduate students and students from other language backgrounds. The Michigan ELI provided a model for intensive English programs throughout the United States and in many other countries, paving the way for the next wave of ESL courses, which were created after World War II (Matsuda, “Composition” 701–06).

Although the number of international students had declined somewhat during the Depression and World War II, the conclusion of the war brought another influx of international students. The international student population surged from less than 8,000 in 1945 to 10,341 in 1946 (Darian 105), when the United States replaced Germany as the most popular destination for international students. The number doubled in the next two years and, by 1949, there were 26,759 international students (Institute of International Education, 1949 *Handbook*, 7, 14). To contain the language differences these students brought with them, an increasing number of institutions—including those that had relatively small but steady enrollments of in-

ternational students—began to create separate English courses and programs on a permanent basis (Schueler 309). In 1949, Harvard once again created a special non-credit course for small groups of students from Europe, providing a preparation for the required composition course (Gibian 157). At about the same time, Queens College developed a multilevel intensive English language program with its own teaching and testing materials (Schueler 312–14). Tulane University also created a noncredit English course for second-language writers. Sumner Ives reported that all nonnative English speakers at Tulane, unless “individually excused,” were required to enroll in a special English course for nonnative speakers before taking the required English course. This program was unique in that the status of the course was determined after the beginning of the semester. Based on a reading test during the orientation, the teacher would decide whether each student should move to a “regular section” or remain in the remedial course. When most of the remaining students had limited English proficiency, the course was taught as a remedial English language course, using the materials developed by the ELI at Michigan. The course became credit-bearing when a large number of students had reached advanced English proficiency, and the textbooks for regular sections of composition courses were used (Ives 142–43).

The number of ESL writing courses continued to grow. In 1953, according to Harold B. Allen, about 150 institutions reported the existence of English-as-a-second-language programs for international students; by 1969, the number had nearly doubled. In addition, 114 institutions reported that they offered summer programs for international students (Allen 308). Initially, many of those courses were offered on a noncredit basis as preparation for a regular English requirement. These courses focused not only on writing but also on reading and oral communication skills. Noncredit English courses for nonnative speakers offered at many institutions adopted the textbook series developed by the ELI at Michigan, and intensive language courses modeled after Michigan’s ELI also became widespread, providing systematic instruction before second-language writers were allowed to enroll in regular college-level courses.

Yet a semester or two of extra language instruction was often not enough to help students fit the dominant image—after all, learning a second language is a time-consuming process, especially for adult learners—and they continued to bring language differences to college composition courses. For this reason, institutions began to develop a separate track of required composition courses for second-language writers—courses that were designed to keep language differences out of the required composition course. In 1954, Michigan’s Department of English Language and Literature in the College of Literature, Science, and Art created one of the first credit-bearing ESL composition courses that paralleled the sections of English courses for native speakers of English (Klinger 1849). The University of Washington followed

suit with a three-credit composition course for second-language writers, which emphasized purposeful cross-cultural communication with an audience rather than the language drills or linguistic analyses commonly used in intensive language programs at the time (Marquardt 31).

EMBRACING LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES AS THE NEW NORM

The assumption of linguistic homogeneity, which was more or less accurate in U.S. higher education institutions of the mid-nineteenth century, became increasingly inaccurate as linguistic diversity grew over the last two centuries. Yet the growing presence of international students did not lead to a fundamental reconsideration of the dominant image of students in the composition classroom. It was not because the separate placement practices were able to eliminate language differences. For a number of reasons, none of these programs was able to contain language differences completely: because language learning is a time-consuming process; because students often come with a wide range of English-language proficiency levels; and because developing placement procedures that can account for language differences is not an easy task. As Ives wrote, “neither a frankly non-credit course for all, nor [NNES students’] segregation into separate but parallel courses, nor their distribution throughout the regular courses is completely satisfactory” (142). Instead, the dominant image of students remained unchallenged because the policy of containment kept language differences in the composition classroom from reaching a critical mass, thus creating the false impression that all language differences could and should be addressed elsewhere. In other words, the policy of unidirectional monolingualism was enacted not so much through pedagogical practices in the mainstream composition course as through delegation of students to remedial or parallel courses that were designed to keep language differences from entering the composition course in the first place.

The policy of containment and the continuing dominance of the myth of linguistic homogeneity have serious implications not only for international second-language writers but also for resident second-language writers as well as for native speakers of unprivileged varieties of English. Many institutions place students into basic writing classes without distinguishing writing issues and language issues partly because underlying language differences are not easily discernible by observing student texts that seem, at least on the surface, strikingly similar to one another (Matsuda, “Basic” 74). As a result, basic writing courses often enroll many second-language writers—both international and resident—although many basic writing courses, like the credit-bearing composition courses, are designed primarily for U.S. citizens who are native speakers of a variety of English (68).

By pointing out the problem of the policy of containment, however, I do not mean to suggest that these placement practices be abandoned. On the contrary, many students do need and even prefer these placement options. As George Braine suggests, many—though certainly not all—second-language writers prefer second-language sections of composition, where they feel more comfortable and where they are more likely to succeed. To deny these support programs would be to further marginalize nonnative speakers of English in institutions of higher education where the myth of linguistic homogeneity will likely continue to inform the curriculum as well as many teachers' attitude toward language differences. Instead, composition teachers need to resist the popular conclusion that follows the policy of containment—that the college composition classroom can be a monolingual space. To work effectively with the student population in the twenty-first century, all composition teachers need to reimagine the composition classroom as the multilingual space that it is, where the presence of language differences is the default.¹

NOTE

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