Student-Centered Grammar Feedback in the Basic Writing Classroom: Toward a Translingual Grammar Pedagogy

Amanda Sladek

ABSTRACT: This article discusses a method of grammar feedback in Basic Writing that asks students to determine the extent of grammar feedback the instructor provides on their writing. Student-directed grammar feedback acknowledges students' agency and ownership of their own languaging and aligns with translingual writing pedagogy. Drawing on students' preferences for their grammar feedback as well as their written explanations of these preferences, the author argues that a truly translingual approach to grammar feedback is one that engages students in discussions and debates about language, gives them the knowledge they need to consider their language critically, and ultimately honors their agency over their own language, including their agency in requesting help in conforming to standardized English.

KEYWORDS: antiracism; Basic Writing; feedback; grammar correction; language; predominantly White institution; PWI; standardized English; translingualism; White instructor

Marking grammar in student writing has always induced a sort of cognitive dissonance for me, even before I could articulate why. Early in my teaching career, which I began as a graduate student, I understood that many of my students wanted to master standardized[1] English and it was my job to give them all the tools they might need to achieve their goals. But I also quickly realized that enforcing standardized English disproportionately affected the grades of students of color, multilingual students, and working-class students. I did what I thought I needed to do to minimize the negative effects of grammar marking on students' grades and self-confidence: keeping actual editing marks to a minimum, putting "grammar and mechanics" at the bottom of my rubric and assigning it a nominal number of points, and

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grading in any color other than red. Meanwhile, my studies began to shift simultaneously toward writing pedagogy and English language studies, and my grammar correction approach, which seemed student-centered at the time, just didn't seem to align with what I was learning: language standards are artificially developed, no variety of English is linguistically superior or inherently correct, and the education system is designed to disenfranchise the very students who were most negatively impacted by my grammar marking. Yet, I didn't see an alternative, particularly when students continued to point to grammar as one of their main concerns in their writing.

I faced what Melinda J. McBee Orzulak calls a "linguistic ideological dilemma," which arises when "teachers who take up linguistically responsive positions that value student language variation still struggle in moments of enactment due to expectations that they serve as gatekeepers for 'standard' English(es)" (176). For me, these dilemmas are informed by my position as a White, middle-class writing instructor teaching linguistically heterogenous students at a predominantly White institution (PWI).[2] I am, of course, not the first White writing instructor to narrate their experience confronting their own privilege, linguistic and otherwise, in the classroom. Scholars such as Octavio Pimentel et al., Matthew R. Deroo and Christina Ponzio, and Sarah Stanley have undertaken such explorations of the dilemmas inherent in confronting their privilege in order to effect antiracist writing pedagogies. Emily Machado et al. describe three such dilemmas, two of which are most relevant here: "a sense that attention to grammar in feedback can enhance and/or inhibit written communication" and "apprehension about whether grammar instruction empowers or marginalizes linguistically minoritized students" (39).

These dilemmas are related, the authors argue, in that they are rooted in a monolinguist, prescriptive language tradition. Even instructors who attempt a more descriptivist approach to language and acknowledge the existence of multiple grammars can face these dilemmas due "in large part to pervasive deficit language ideologies in society" (Machado et al. 39). Regarding the belief that attention to grammar in feedback can enhance writing, a review of the literature on error correction in second-language students' writing notes general agreement that these writers find grammar correction helpful (Ferris 105). Nichole E. Stanford reports similar attitudes in US-born Cajun students as well as their instructors. Even some of the leading proponents of code meshing and World Englishes in the classroom caution instructors that "in order to be 'heard' in the dominant discourse, multilinguals" (and, I would add, other linguistically minoritized students) often "need

to learn the existing rules of the discursive practice they wish to be heard in [as well as] how to resist and rewrite the rules, norms or values to serve their interests by meshing the rules" (Michael-Luna and Canagarajah 59).

While I don't believe that you must, as the saying goes, "know the rules to break the rules," I can't deny that some facility with the language of the discourse community a student is targeting does help them communicate within that community, and in the case of academic communities, that means facility with standardized academic English. And a writing class is the place most students expect to gain this facility. The dilemma arises from holding this in tension with the knowledge that excessive (and even non-excessive) grammar marking can lower students' writing confidence and stifle their creativity, a fact that has been well established by scholars including Nancy Sommers, Mike Rose, and Asao B. Inoue (and verified by the experiences of hundreds of writing instructors, myself included).

The second dilemma, an "apprehension about whether grammar instruction empowers or marginalizes linguistically minoritized students," is also complex and one that I am still working through as a White writing instructor. Machado et al. explain that at the heart of this dilemma is the tension between the fact that instructors want to give minoritized students access to the prestige language variety while being mindful of the fact that this practice may "reinscribe language marginalization" (46). This one is difficult because my privilege prevents me from truly understanding where my underserved students are coming from; as I commit to the ongoing work of unlearning my internalized White supremacist assumptions and enacting antiracist pedagogy, my positionality and lived experience mean that my understanding of racism will always be incomplete. In the opening of a 2017 *JBW* article, Stanley describes this positionality in terms of stage directions, setting the scene of the "TEACHER"[3] (a stand-in, she explains, for herself that could just as easily be a stand-in for me) as "a cerebral, well-intentioned, but oblivious WHITE authority" struggling to reconcile her own privilege in her writing feedback to a student of color (5-6). Though the article doesn't focus exclusively on language, she goes on to describe her dilemma in a way I feel is apropos: "*. . . given how the world surrounding how my classroom operates . . . then what should be my response to this particular writer?*" (6). When I settle on a method for responding to grammar, I am doing so as a White language authority, and my presence as the authority brings with it all the violence that we enact on people of color in the larger society. So when students of color specifically tell me that they *want* a type of feedback that I'm hesitant to provide, such as explicit corrections to standardized English,

figuring out how to minimize violence can be complicated. Not surprisingly, as I became more aware of how to discuss and assess language in a way that values students' identities and languaging practices, I found that my sense of dilemma intensified.

At first, I tried to minimize the impact of grammar on students' grades as much as possible—marking errors without taking off points before eventually pivoting to labor-based contract grading (modeled after Inoue), which eliminates the problem of point values but doesn't provide much guidance in marking the actual papers. Around this time, I also finished my graduate program and began teaching at a small Midwestern state university, an appointment that included two sections per semester of Basic Writing (called English for Academic Purposes at my institution[4]). It was also around this time when my work in language studies began to engage more directly with languaging and translingualism as named concepts. But I struggled to integrate these ideas into my teaching in ways that students seemed to find interesting and relevant, perhaps partly due to the fact that my own languaging (especially in professional contexts) tends to be fairly close to standardized, if casual, English. As a model, I'm not exactly translanguaging in an easily observable way, though I am communicating in a way that is authentic to me and my background. Yet, there are many ways to practice translanguaging, as this term encompasses several interrelated principles, methods, and perspectives.

While translingual pedagogies are diverse, they typically strive toward several of the following worthwhile (and interrelated) goals:

- Rejecting the "pathologization of different Englishes that do not meet a narrowly defined set of standards dictated by . . . a privileged few" (Lee, *Politics* 2)
- Questioning the boundaries that separate languages (Horner and Alvarez)
- "Understand[ing] how meaning-making practices can be brought to the attention of writers, so that they gain awareness and sensitivity to language difference and heterogeneity" (Lee and Alvarez 267)
- Helping students understand and expand their linguistic repertoires and developing their critical language awareness (De Costa et al.).

These goals can be achieved through a variety of pedagogies, curricula, and assignments, many of which are beyond the scope of the present article.[5] Yet, because translingual pedagogies reject the idea that one language or variety is superior to another, it can be reasoned that a truly translingual approach to grammar feedback would not require students to conform to standardized academic English and would not necessarily correct deviations from this artificial norm (Lee, "Beyond"; Schreiber and Watson). In my heart, it seemed as though I couldn't work toward translingual pedagogical goals while still correcting grammar. But I also had classrooms full of students telling me that they wanted to work on their grammar, sometimes specifically asking me to mark their grammar as rigorously as possible. Most of my students want access to the prestige language variety. The reasons behind this are complicated and require a nuanced response, which I discuss in the next section, but my race and class privilege complicate my practice of translingualism, as my own academic journey has been aided by forces that make many of theirs more difficult. I felt the need for some sort of middle ground, a way to give students some of the grammar feedback they sought within a translingual framework while attempting to build a more critical understanding of grammar.

This is when I decided to engage students more directly in their own grammar feedback by working with them in determining the type and scope of grammar feedback they wanted. I decided to study their responses more systematically in 2018 in an effort to improve my process of soliciting students' assistance in responding to their grammar. Here, I describe my attempt to bring translingual pedagogical goals in line with my own grammar feedback practices, as well as students' response to this feedback and the ways they advocate for their own needs within translingual grammar assessment. For my data, I solicited and analyzed anonymized reflection responses students submitted with each major assignment in two sections of BW that I taught in Fall 2018, wherein they indicate whether they want me to mark grammar in their assignment and why. My findings prompt a more informed reckoning of goals for translingual pedagogy and grammar feedback for my Basic Writing students and possibly BW populations generally. Before turning to students' responses, though, I describe my specific approach to grammar feedback in relation to similar approaches and translingual pedagogy more broadly.

GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION AS IDEOLOGICAL DILEMMA

As previously noted, translingual pedagogy is incompatible with grammar assessment that requires students to produce writing in standardized academic English and penalizes them for deviations. This traditional approach communicates that language variation is unacceptable in academic contexts and reinforces the linguistic fiction that academic English is inherently superior to the languages and Englishes students use in their daily lives. Even seemingly progressive language policies—such as allowing students to write in their preferred language only for some assignments or for early drafts—send this message when we ask for high-stakes projects and final drafts in standardized English (Canagarajah). These practices work against the development of translingual dispositions, which Xiqiao Wang (drawing on A. Suresh Canagarajah) defines as "an attitude of openness toward language difference and negotiation, through which students develop metalinguistic awareness of their rhetorical repertoire and cultural knowledge as resources for learning" (57-58), because the language choice (standardized academic English) is made for students. They do not have the opportunity to think about how to use their language to achieve their own goals.

More importantly, judging students based on the language standards of the academy, even if only in certain assignments, perpetuates the system that creates their disenfranchisement. Scholars such as Canagarajah and Vershawn Ashanti Young therefore argue for code meshing, which Young explains "blend dialects, international languages, local idioms, chat-room lingo, and the rhetorical styles of various ethnic and cultural groups in both formal and informal speech acts" (114). These practices, which validate students' languaging while inviting critical engagement with their language as an academic resource, can be especially generative in the BW context, as BW students' academic histories are often characterized by a lack of language validation. Yet, while code-meshing approaches certainly can work within translingual pedagogies, I agree with Bruce Horner and Sara P. Alvarez that code meshing is not synonymous with translingualism, primarily due to its focus on linguistic features rather than "the social relations *of the language users to the language*" (20).

Horner and Alvarez instead focus on labor and choice, arguing that even seemingly monolingual texts (such as those that attempt to approximate standardized English) can therefore be the result of translingual processes. They further explain that their perspective of translinguality, one that I agree with,

> [shifts] the sense of language use from consumption to production—even when the acts of production appear merely to exactly 'reproduce' conventional forms. There is far less emphasis, or concern, with doing what is recognizably 'new' (a hallmark demand of neoliberalism). Indeed, newness per se is from this perspective an irrelevant criterion . . . Instead, there is an insistence on the role played by the concrete labor of every instance of writing and speaking, reading and listening in sustaining and revising any and all language, whether seemingly conventional or not, the social relations advanced through such usages, and the responsibility for contributing to such relations . . . The fact that much of that labor is likely to be directed toward maintaining those social relations currently obtaining does not make it any less productive, nor does it obviate the value of recognizing the role of language work in sustaining and, potentially, changing such relations. (20-21)

Taking this view, evidence of translingual dispositions is not always present in the text. Rather, it's reflected in students' thought and labor as they make choices about their language within a translingual framework. Therefore, students who choose standardized grammar for their final products can still engage in translingual processes as they engage in the labor of determining and defining their goals, needs, and languaging strategies.

Difference is inevitable even when writers compose with the goal of conforming to standardized academic conventions, and students still exercise agency by determining "what kind of difference to attempt, how, and why" (Lu and Horner 592). And, I would argue, this is true of *all* students in the classroom, not just those whom we have determined have developed "enough" of an understanding of translingualism or of their own language use. Though translingual pedagogies ideally facilitate and build upon the knowledge students need to engage in translingual laboring, I concur with Lucas Corcoran that BW language pedagogy must begin with "the belief that students already possess profoundly nuanced understandings of language and rhetoric and their socio-political, cultural, and material implications" (61). As important as it is for students to discuss the politics of language, translingualism, code meshing, and related issues, and as much as I try to incorporate them into my own classroom, I also don't want to position myself as the arbiter of whose languaging decisions qualify as legitimate.

This is especially true since much of the work happens internally, beyond the instructor's awareness.

This leaves several questions that must therefore inform pedagogy: How do we determine if a student has developed a translingual disposition if the texts they produce do not code mesh in ways that we recognize? How do we respond if a student makes a languaging choice that we ultimately feel is misinformed or misguided? How can we determine whether students' writing is 'translingual enough,' if such degrees of translinguality are even possible? And how do we respond if a student rejects translingualism altogether? A translingual approach to writing pedagogy and grammar would not *require* students to code mesh or communicate in a typically "non-academic" language or variety—or, more accurately, it assumes that even a text written in standardized English "can result from a translingual writing process" (Schreiber and Watson 95) such as Horner and Alvarez describe. In fact, denying students correction to standardized English when they ask for it can in such instances strip them of their agency to make choices about their own language (Shapiro et al.), which works against the goals of translingual pedagogy.

At the same time, though, research confirms that students' desire for grammar correction frequently comes from an internalized deficit perspective—the idea that their language is incorrect, nonacademic, or inferior, perhaps reinforced by previous school experiences. Indeed, even some within the English discipline still argue that standardizing students' language helps ensure their future success. We see this argument in publications intended for writing scholars (Lazere), general academic audiences (Jenkins), and the public (Fish). The perception that students' language is deficient is often the product of a culture that uses judgements of language as thinly veiled fronts for judgments of race (Rosa and Flores, Inoue, Young) and/or culture (Stanford). Because this attitude is so endemic in education and society at large, students may be unaware that they've internalized racist judgments of their language and writing. As Inoue asks:

> When students discuss writing quality . . . how will they negotiate the ways that any "text is evaluated" against a dominant white discourse? . . . How will they understand past or present evaluations of texts, of their own texts, as more than an individual's failure to meet expectations or goals, but also as a confluence of many other structures in language, school, and society, forming expectations they (and their teacher) have little control over? (19)

Inoue goes on to caution that, without critically interrogating the systems that create linguistic disenfranchisement in the classroom, even a class that attempts to give students as much freedom in their languaging as possible "can easily turn into a class that asks students to approximate the academic dispositions of the academy" (19).

Thus, the dilemma: We can and should provide the education students need to recognize and critique the racism, sexism, and ableism embedded in language standards and make informed choices about their grammar feedback (as I discuss further in the next section), but as Jerry Won Lee argues, we also

> need to reject the notion that any particular criterion can be set for all students . . . and do our best to understand students' individual aspirations and the means to achieve those aspirations. For advocates of translingualism, this does mean accepting the possibility that translingualism may not be what every student wants. Translanguaging assessment means continuing to reimagine assessment as attending to student aspirations on an individual level rather than merely reacting to disciplinary trends. ("Beyond" 185)

Ultimately, students must be regarded as the experts on their own experiences, goals, and needs. We can lead our classes in discussion, analysis, and critique, but I as a middle-class, White English professor—with all the privileges that entails—have much less to lose in negotiations of language than my students of color, my students who speak stigmatized Englishes, or, really, any of my students (none of whom have a PhD in English). I can share my knowledge with them, as they share their knowledge with me, but I ultimately can't speak for them or tell them what's best for them. I don't see this position as a contradiction, though it is sometimes an uncomfortable place to sit, one that involves constant negotiation and adjustment as I attempt to keep the larger context in mind while working with the students in front of me.

From this, it's logical to conclude that a one-size-fits-all approach to grammar feedback doesn't work. A translingual approach to grammar feedback is one that "recognizes that all students . . . already mobilize multilingual resources and deploy translingual practices to . . . *forge agentive identities*" (Xiqiao Wang 59, emphasis added). Part of respecting students' use of language to exercise agency means respecting their wishes regarding grammar

feedback, sharing with them the knowledge they need to make informed, reflective choices, and encouraging them to share their linguistic knowledge with us. Thus, there is room for grammar feedback in translingual writing assessment; however, it must be student-centered and accompanied by writing instruction designed to develop students' translingual dispositions.

A central component of both my framework and those that inspire it is student choice, informed by the labor of critical reflection, though student choice in grammar feedback is not unique to translingual pedagogy. For example, Ryan P. Shepherd et al. describe "grammar agreements" that ask their L2 composition students to choose between "'extensive,' 'focused,' and 'minimal' feedback" on their grammar (44). Each option involves different amounts of grammar marking, with the "extensive" option asking instructors to mark most grammatical errors and requiring students to meet with the instructor outside of class and the "minimal" option only asking the instructor to mark grammar when it impacts meaning. While most teachers in their study found the agreements useful in promoting student agency over their grammar feedback, the authors note the potential for this model to increase instructor workload, particularly if many students request the "extensive" option. Moreover, research demonstrates that such extensive grammar marking is less effective than focused grammar marking, leading the authors to suggest reconsidering or eliminating the "extensive" option (51). Shuichi Amano takes a different approach to grammar agreements with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Japan, asking them to choose between three different types of grammar marking (ranging from explicit correcting to just noting the locations of errors) and questions focused on expanding and developing the content of their writing. To Amano's surprise, most students chose the content-focused questions over grammatical feedback. Neither article discusses translingualism by name, though both approaches highlight student agency in their own grammar feedback by asking students to reflect on the feedback that best serves their needs and honoring their control over their languaging.

In the following section, I describe a self-study of a similar approach to student-centered grammar assessment in my Fall 2018 BW classrooms and offer my findings into students' responses to this approach. While students' responses indicate a persistent focus on standardized English conventions, they also show that, when given the chance to decide how their grammar will be assessed, some students gage this decision with thoughtfulness and, in some cases, a burgeoning translingual awareness.

INSTITUTIONAL AND COURSE CONTEXT

My university serves the small towns and rural communities of the (mostly socially conservative) central and western portions of our state. We have a significant population of first-generation students: 41.9% of undergraduates self-identified as first-generation in 2020. Roughly 74% of undergraduates self-identified as White in Fall 2021, while about 13.5% identified as Latinx (our next-largest ethnic group on campus). Roughly 87% of undergraduates are under 24 years old (University Online Enrollment Factbook). While BW at my institution reflects these demographics to a certain extent, it is more diverse in terms of ethnicity, age, and language. While I don't have an exact figure, based on my experience teaching the course, I would estimate that roughly 30-60% of students in a typical section of ENG 100A self-identify as multilingual. The diversity of students in the class is also reflected in their attitudes toward standardized English, their confidence in their writing and language, and their level of concern over academic grammar conventions.

Our BW course carries as much credit as other courses in the introductory composition sequence but does not count toward students' general education English requirement. Students are typically placed into this course based on exam scores (at the time of the study, the English portion of the ACT or a departmental essay exam, though we have since transitioned to a directed self-placement model) or the recommendation of the University's second-language support office. Others, most often nontraditional students, elect to take the course as a refresher before the general education composition course. At the time of the study, the University offered 1-2 BW courses per semester, though that number has increased recently to 2-3 due to changes in our student population's needs and our shift to directed self-placement.

The stated goals of the course according to the University's course catalog are for students to become more "analytical, interpretative, and self-conscious of the persuasive motives of writing" while "[learning] to develop, organize, and express complex ideas that are appropriate for the academic context." While there are no stated grammar goals in the course description and no set course objectives instructors must meet, the description of the next course in the sequence, Introduction of Academic Writing, includes "stylistic, grammatical, and punctuation skills," so grammar is typically integrated into both courses.

Michael T. MacDonald and William DeGenaro describe a pilot BW curriculum designed to foster a "transcultural ethos," and our courses utilize

many similar practices: "multilingual text selection," "modelling written code-meshing," "drawing on knowledge from inside and outside the text," "regular low-stakes writing assignments," and working with scholarly texts about transcultural language use (31). However, unlike their course, I don't devote my entire semester to language issues. I typically structure the course around four units, each focused on a different genre. While the specific projects change from semester to semester as I revise the course, they almost always include at least one project focused on students' own languages and literacies, a research project, a multimodal or multimedia project, and a final revision assignment. For example, a typical project sequence might include a literacy narrative, reading response (where I provide a list of potential texts that includes code-meshed examples), an "argument two ways" assignment (described below), and a revision assignment (typically one that asks students to revise a previous project to a multimodal and/or public[6] genre).

The literacy narrative and "argument two ways" assignments are particularly revealing of students' language attitudes and practices. In their literacy narratives, students often discuss topics such as learning English as a second language or learning the literacies involved in an extracurricular activity or group. They compose this for an audience of their classmates, so it serves an introductory purpose in addition to supporting the language-related goals I discuss here. Because this is the first major assignment, we also spend time in this unit discussing translingual approaches to language; language discrimination and policing; code meshing; the relationship between language, identity, and power; and the historical development of standardized English. We read texts such as Gloria Anzaldúa's "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," Young's "Should Writers Use They Own English?," and writing from previous students (always shared with permission), as well as texts that call into question print-based definitions of literacy, such as Tony Mirabelli's "Learning to Serve: The Language and Literacy of Food Service Workers." We also analyze representations of dialect and code meshing in popular media.[7]

In the "argument two ways" project,[8] students must create two versions of the same (or a similar) argument: a thesis-driven academic research paper and a second version composed for an audience of their choice, using whatever genre they choose. Students also complete a worksheet that prompts them to analyze the differences in the rhetorical situations and how they tailored different aspects of their communication (including their grammar and language) to fit. Though this project does not specifically require students to write for a nonacademic audience (they can write a presentation to

be delivered to the University's Faculty Senate in addition to their research paper, for instance), I encourage them to use this project to write about an issue they care about and address a community they're already part of, using the language they use with that community. This project provides a great opportunity to discuss how languaging norms vary across and even within communities and gives students the chance to demonstrate their rhetorical dexterity. Though standardized English isn't required for either portion of the project, most students choose to attempt standardized English for the academic portion.

Early in the semester (before the first project is due), I explain how I approach grammar in students' projects. As we discuss it in class, the information is projected on a slide that is also posted to the course Learning Management System (LMS) page for the duration of the semester (see figure 1).

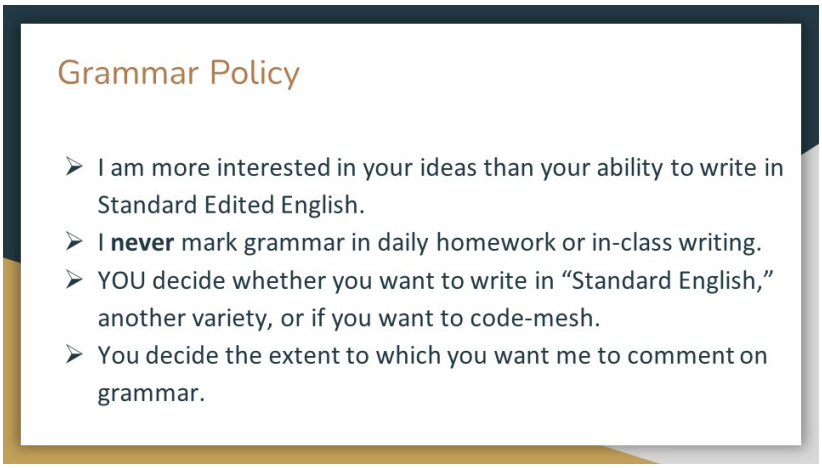

Figure 1. Grammar feedback policy as presented to students.

I explain that this policy is open to revision based on input from students, though so far I haven't received any requests for changes (though I do get some initial confusion).

For students who want grammar feedback in their projects, I use an approach inspired by Richard Haswell's minimal marking. As I explain to students, I use the electronic feedback mechanism built into my university's LMS to highlight areas students may wish to edit. If there is a particular pattern of "error," I provide an explanation (or, more often, a link to an

explanation) in marginal comments. I encourage students to work through their grammar questions with me during office hours or with a writing tutor, though I do not require them to do so. This way, the students who want more guidance on grammar get it, but they decide whether and how this guidance takes place. If they come to my office hours, I guide them through making the edits themselves, explaining conventions and showing students where to apply them as needed. Though I of course can't speak to the conversations students have with tutors, peers, or others as they make any desired grammatical edits, this practice still gives them more ownership over their editing process than they would have if I were to simply edit their writing myself, as they decide whom (if anyone) to consult and the type of help (if any) to request.

In the days after we go over the grammar policy, we discuss some possible reasons why students may or may not want to conform to standardized English and why they may or may not want grammar feedback on their projects. We return to these issues periodically throughout the semester, particularly in the third unit as students negotiate how to frame the same message for two different audiences. Though language is not an explicit focus of every unit, it recurs as a theme or the subject of example texts as we explore other writing topics throughout the semester; for example, we often use Canagarajah's "The Place of World Englishes in Composition" to practice reading and annotating academic texts during the research unit.

With each project submission, I ask students to specify whether they want me to mark deviations from standardized English in their writing, giving them the option to elaborate on their answer if desired. Students complete their reflections in the form of surveys distributed electronically via the course's LMS page. They are graded on completion. Unlike Shepherd et al.'s previously-discussed grammar agreements, I ask these questions in the context of a set of reflection questions I developed (some of which I adapted from Kathleen Blake Yancey's *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*; see Appendix) to promote critical thinking, meta-awareness of linguistic and rhetorical choices, and writing knowledge transfer (Yancey; Yancey et al.). Students answer the same reflection questions with each major project submission. For the study described below, I focus on the fifth and sixth questions:

- Do you want me to make grammatical editing marks on your submission? Remember that grammar/usage doesn't negatively impact your grade either way.
- Why do you want me to mark/not mark for grammar?

STUDY METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

Data Collection and Limitations

My data comes from BW students' anonymized responses to the fifth and sixth questions of the reflections they submitted with each project in Fall 2018. Every student who was enrolled in either section the course for the entire semester was included in the study sample, with a total of 36 students. I tracked responses across the first three major projects in the course, as the final project, a collaborative website, did not allow for easy grammar feedback. Unfortunately, I was not able to collect information from students' actual projects or their classroom interactions due to the limits of my IRB approval, which is a significant limitation to this study. In the future, students could provide further insight into their views of translingual pedagogy through interviews or via documentation of their comments in language-focused discussions. Additionally, as I did not anticipate studying students' reflection responses when I taught during Fall 2018,[9] I did not collect information about students' language background, ethnicity, gender identity, age, or other potentially relevant demographic information. Considering students' grammar feedback requests against these characteristics would be a fruitful area for future research. And because the data was anonymized, I could not track specific students' responses across the semester, though that would be interesting to examine.

Analysis

First, I imported the survey results from the course LMS into Excel (keeping each project's results in a separate tab) and sorted the responses based on whether the student elected to receive or not receive grammar feedback. Then, using an inductive approach informed by grounded theory, I read through the responses several times, making note of common themes (presented in the following section). Once I'd generated a list, I imported students' responses into NVivo and tagged each according to theme. Finally, I repeated the process with the untagged responses (tagging each according to emerging themes) until each response was associated with a thematic tag.

FINDINGS

Table 1 presents the number of students who requested grammar feedback with each project, with "other" referring to students who requested

feedback only on specific features (spelling, comma usage, etc.) or for students who expressed no preference (giving responses such as "you can if you want to").[10]

Table 1. Students' Preferences for Grammar Feedback

	Yes	No	Other	No Submission	Total
Project 1	29	1	3	3	36
Project 2	24	6	3	3	36
Project 3	23	7	1	5	36

As demonstrated by the table, in each project, most students asked for grammar feedback. However, the number of students who elected not to receive grammar feedback grew with each project. Nearly one fifth of total students (and 22.5% of students who submitted a reflection) chose not to receive grammar feedback on the third project.

Yet, these numbers mean little without knowing the rationale behind students' decisions; as discussed previously, even the decision to receive grammar feedback can be agentive. Students' rationales are broken down by theme in table 2 and explained below.[11]

Most often, students' justifications for wanting or not wanting grammar feedback were focused inward. Several expressed *insecurity* about their grammar, like a student who noted that they wanted grammar feedback because: "I received a bad evaluation of grammar in peer review. He or she . . . suggested speaking aloud for finding grammatical errors. However, I'm not a native English speaker, so it's embarrassing to say, I don't know where I was wrong even if I read aloud." Occasionally, students would opt out of grammar feedback for similar reasons: "This was the most rushed paper by far due to family issues so there might be a lot [of grammar issues]. Funny because its[12] a paper over procrastination."

Conversely, other students chose whether to receive grammar feedback based on their *confidence* in their grammar: "I think I was good on this paper and do not really feel like I need [grammar marking] at this time" or "I would want you to mark for grammar because I've really worked to have a good grammar." While these responses do uncritically position "good" grammar as a writing goal, they also show some self-reflection. The students have thought about the degree of effort they've expended on conforming to

Table 2. Themes Informing Students' Grammar Feedback Preferences

	Project 1	Project 2	Project 3	Total
Good Grammar = Good Writing	6	8	9	23
Insecurity	7	5	5	17
Looking toward Future (general)	6	5	3	14
Looking toward Future (specific)	5	5	4	14
Confidence	1	4	2	7
Compare to Past Assignments	3	2	2	7
Grammar Less Important	1	2	1	4
No Explanation Given	4	2	5	11
Total	33	33	31	

standardized English (though they do not provide specific descriptions of that effort), and unless grammar correction from me is a tool that can help them achieve their goals (such as "native" speaker-like communication or praise for hard work), they can do away with it. Unfortunately, most students did not provide justifications or rationales for their goals in their responses, so their anonymized reflections offer little insight in that regard. And again, while I can help the class interrogate the institutional and societal influences behind their attitudes toward language and grammar if they choose to, their goals are ultimately theirs to determine and explain (or not) as they see fit.

I was pleased to see that several responses did indicate a burgeoning awareness of some social influences that affect grammar perception and assessment. For instance, even though I did not include an option to ask me to only focus on specific grammatical features (an option I've included in subsequent semesters), several students' responses demonstrated an understanding that *grammar is less important* than content or that not all grammar "errors" are perceived as equally serious. For example, one student wrote:

"If I misuse a word, or did something that makes no sense, please mark it" before explaining that they did not need feedback on punctuation. Indeed, misused words and unclear meaning are more likely to interfere with the author's message than the occasional misused semicolon. When students did ask me to focus my attention on specific issues, they were almost always spelling and word choice. While these aren't grammatical features per se, the fact that they rank foremost among students' correction requests suggests an awareness that meaning takes precedence over minor surface features.

A few students even stated this outright. One student noted: "Most people don't read papers and go wow they are missing a lot of commas and stuff. I believe that what we have to say is more important than grammar." Statements like this, though relatively infrequent, indicate that some students are thinking about their grammar in the context of their writing as a whole. However, few rationales explicitly point to the development of a translingual disposition as Xiqiao Wang defines it: "an attitude of openness toward language difference and negotiation" (57). Only two comments specifically address language variation: one (in response to the first project) in which the student requested no grammar feedback because English is their third language and their "first two language doesn't have use grammars"[13] and one (in response to the second project) asking for grammar feedback but that I "take it easy on some of the language because it is not formal writing at all." While these responses lack detail, they do present language variation nonjudgmentally.

Other students consider their grammar in relation to past or future work. Those who *compare to past assignments* would often express curiosity over whether their grammar was improving, as in the case of one student who straightforwardly noted in their second reflection, "I want to see how much I have improved." As there were many students who *looked toward the future* in their reflections on their grammar feedback, I felt it appropriate to separate them into two groups: those who thought about *specific* contexts in which they would need to communicate in standardized English ("I have to take English 101 and 102, plus write many other papers for various classes. Although you do not grade for grammatical errors, other instructors do, and I would like to get better.") and those who made more *general* statements about the importance of standardized grammar for their futures ("So I get the chance to see what I did wrong so I can improve in the future").

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many students' responses did implicitly rely on the assumption that *good grammar equals good writing*, the theme that occurred most frequently across responses. These students sometimes expressed

resistance to or outright rejection of translingual ideas. One multilingual student specifically equated "beautiful" writing with "native" style, writing: "In the future, I want to write like a native English style and speed. I want an essay like anybody says it is beautiful." Another student emphasized how seriously they take grammar across all three reflections, connecting it to their career goal of teaching elementary school.[14] The fact that a large majority of students in each project asked for grammar feedback may also point to the pervasiveness of the belief that standardized grammar is necessary for effective writing. It's difficult to unlearn, particularly if students come from of high schools or ELL programs that emphasize grammar. Naturally, some students default to what they've been conditioned to value or, after considering translingual approaches to grammar, ultimately reject them (as I discuss further in the next section). The classroom provides opportunities through curriculum and structures to foster awareness of student's agency as language producers, including their agency to reject translingual ideas. Jerry Won Lee argues that this potential for rejection must be a crucial component of building a translingual classroom ("Beyond"). And while the belief that good grammar equals good writing runs counter to the goals of my class and to translingual approaches to grammar, we can use even these students' responses as a springboard toward developing a more complete understanding of language, as I discuss in the final section.

STUDENT AGENCY, INTELLECTUAL RIGOR, AND TRANSLINGUAL DISPOSITIONS: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering students' responses on their own, I initially felt discouraged. While some students do show thoughtful reflection and even awareness that standardized grammar is not the most important feature of good writing, there are no outright rejections of the status of standardized academic English, no celebrations of one's own language (unless it was their mastery of standardized English), and not even many fully-articulated explanations for choosing standardized English. This was consistent across projects regardless of audience. It's easy to conclude from an initial read that students did not develop translingual dispositions. Yet, it's important to consider these responses in the broader context of the classroom and students' larger educational goals. Keeping in mind Corcoran's assertion that "students already possess profoundly nuanced understandings of language and rhetoric" (61), as well as the internal, sometimes-invisible labor of translingual negotia-

tion, I want to resist making sweeping judgements about students' language awareness, especially as it applies to their language outside of school. This is especially true when "profoundly nuanced understandings of language" might include the understanding that they will be punished for nonstandardized language forms in other classes or situations.

With this in mind, I look to other signs of students' progress toward developing translingual dispositions. Most of these come from their engagement with other elements of the class. While students were seemingly reluctant to apply anything but a prescriptivist lens to their own work, they were more open to discussing translingualism in the abstract or as it applied to the course material. When it wasn't tied to evaluation of their writing, I noticed that students engaged in debates about the relationship between language and power, the purpose of language standards, and the functions and rhetorical potential of code meshing. They expressed thoughtful ideas about the course readings, bonded over shared experiences with English education, and shared insights from their own language background—for example, regional slang or phrases from their other languages. Even most of the students who resisted translingual ideas grappled with them in a way that required critical thought. Yet, not all did, which leads me to my first recommendation.

Recommendation 1: Respond to Reasons for Translingual Rejection

Even if a student uncritically rejects translingualism,[15] there are still good reasons to honor their decisions over their grammar feedback. While we as instructors may know that competency in standardized English conventions does not guarantee future economic success and that the desire to conform to standardized or "native" English is often a response to the West's false claims of language ownership, we should not ignore, dismiss, or intellectualize our students' concerns that their ideas will be dismissed or they will lose access to opportunities because of others' judgments of their language. As Inoue and Stanford each note, when future instructors penalize students for nonstandardized grammatical features, students are likely to internalize this failure, and they will certainly be held accountable for any consequences brought about by lowered grades. Further, ignoring students' requests for grammar help can lead them to lose confidence in their writing instructors (Ferris), and all students deserve to feel prepared and supported as they enter future writing situations. If I've done my job as

an instructor, students should have had the opportunity to learn the forces behind language judgments and decide how to respond to them.

Recommendation 2: Minimize the Evaluative Space; Amplify the Critical-Interrogative Space

Still, I found that, even though many students were still worried about their grammar, they eventually began to respond to the message that good writing is about more than grammar. During one-on-one draft conferences, I noticed that students began to focus more on ideas and expression rather than editing. The students who wanted editing help would generally schedule a separate meeting to focus on sentence-level concerns, meaning that rather than spending all our one-on-one time with editing, we were able to work through a variety of writing issues in our discussions. This meant that students produced more original, complex, and developed papers than they would have if they'd expended most of their energy on sentence-level concerns (as many had been doing previously). Even for the students who can't or won't engage with translingual perspectives, this is still a desirable outcome. Again, these meetings took place separately from any sort of evaluation, leading me to wonder how the evaluative context, even under labor-based contract grading, impacts students' attitudes toward their language. I'm unsure whether students truly are reluctant to let go of their preoccupation with standardized English in their own writing or if it's the evaluative context specifically that triggers this preoccupation with standardized English as, even in the absence of traditional grading, responding to writing automatically shifts the discussion of grammar back to a mainly textual endeavor. This question would be an interesting one to explore in future research and teaching.

Recommendation 3: Enhance Potential for Reflection

Another site for critical interrogation of students' language ideologies, perhaps the most important one from a response standpoint, is the written reflection. While the students studied here were invited to reflect on their grammar feedback preferences, few chose to do so in the survey, and I believe the wording of the reflection itself contributed to this reluctance. There is definitely more potential there to provide space for students to reflect on the tensions and contradictions inherent in course instruction, for example, and to elicit reasons students might want to conform to or subvert standardized English. The reflection can be reframed to gain more

insight into the kind of labor involved in students' translanguaging, and if instructors and students track and discuss these responses throughout the semester, students' evolution in thought provides yet another rich site for reflection (and future research).

Recommendation 4: Use Translanguaging to Build Metacognitive Awareness

Finally, while allowing students to choose their own level of grammar feedback may seem overly permissive or lacking in rigor to some, I believe it is actually more intellectually demanding than applying a uniform grammar policy across students, with the potential to even lead to "transferable meta-knowledge of writing" (Xiqiao Wang 60). We know that standardized English isn't always going to best meet students' writing goals within the rhetorical situations in which they find themselves. In the "Argument 2 Ways" project, for instance, students who submit TikTok videos or Twitter threads know that they're more likely to engage their audience with more conversational language (and, in the case of social media, length constraints like Twitter's 280-character limit may prevent them from using standardized academic English—hence, conventions like using numerals 2 substitute 4 words). Even in more traditionally "academic" writing situations, students may choose to code mesh in service of their argument, like Anzaldúa or Young. By refusing to judge all student writing according to standardized English conventions, openly encouraging students to code mesh as desired, and asking students to explain their language choices in their writing, we invite them to truly think about their language goals. This metacognitive awareness of language, built through reflecting on their languaging, helps build students' genre awareness and facilitates their growth as writers (Driscoll et al.). As Xiqiao Wang alludes to, this metacognition has also been linked to writers' ability to transfer their writing knowledge to various rhetorical situations (Yancey et al.), which would be interesting to further investigate. Despite some instructors' fear that the lack of enforcement of standardized English does not prepare students for the "real world," in reality a translingual approach to grammar assessment likely serves as even better preparation.

By highlighting students' voices in the conversation surrounding translingual writing feedback in BW, I hope to extend the dialogue on the teaching applications of translingual theory and provide insight into how our pedagogies are taken up by students. Students' responses resist neat categorization: though most students ask for help with grammar standardization, for

instance, their reasons for doing so vary in content and depth. Beyond this, the fact that students seemed reluctant to describe in detail the translingual processes behind their text production—giving reflection responses that, in many cases, seem to privilege standardized English—while appearing more comfortable discussing translingualism in the abstract, is interesting and warrants more systematic investigation. Asking students to be active negotiators in their own grammar feedback may not end language discrimination or erase the power dynamics inherent in the teacher-student relationship. Yet it may allow for more individualization, more critical thought, and a more accurate in-class representation of how language actually functions through agency and choice.

Notes

1. I use "standardized grammar," "standardized English," etc. rather than constructions like "Standard English" or "Standard Edited English" because it "stresses the agency involved in the standardizing process" (Stanford 79) and somewhat avoids the implication that other varieties are "substandard."
2. Both my PhD-granting institution and my current university are PWIs. I further discuss my current class and university demographics in a later section.
3. The capitalization reflects the genre convention of capitalizing character names and other important elements in stage directions.
4. Despite the title, the course is not an EAP course in the traditional sense of the term; it serves as our Basic Writing course. I refer to it as Basic Writing or BW throughout the rest of the article to reflect the course's purpose more accurately.
5. Two recent collections, *Linguistic Justice on Campus: Pedagogy and Advocacy for Multilingual Students* (eds. Schreiber et al.) and *Teaching English Variation in the Global Classroom: Models and Lessons from Around the World* (eds. Devereaux and Palmer), as well as the final section of *Reconciling Translingualism and Second-Language Writing* (eds. Silva and Zhaozhe Wang) and the article "Confronting Internalized Language Ideologies in the Writing Classroom: Three Pedagogical Examples" (Slinkard and Gevers) are excellent resources for those looking to learn more about specific teaching practices that advance translingual goals.
6. Students can opt out of the public sharing component or share their work anonymously.

7. For more detail about these lessons, see Sladek and Lane 2019.
8. Thank you to my former MA student Kimberlee Haberkorn for the initial inspiration for this project.
9. Because I removed identifying information from students' responses, I was able to receive IRB approval to use them after the end of the semester.
10. While I did not specifically indicate that students could provide responses other than "yes" or "no" this time, students' responses from this semester inspired me to explicitly note in future semesters that students have the option to request feedback only on specific features or to provide me with more nuanced direction.
11. Table 2 does not include students who did not submit reflections.
12. To preserve the authenticity of students' voices, I present their comments without editing for spelling and grammar conventions unless such editing is necessary to clarify meaning.
13. This is almost certainly untrue, as most linguists hold that all languages have a grammatical system (Anderson). It's likely that the student's other languages have a very different grammatical system than English and that the student's knowledge of these languages' grammars may be more internalized than academic.
14. Though I was not able to track specific students' responses due to their anonymization, this student consistently referred to their major and referenced previous responses in their subsequent responses, so I can confidently conclude the responses come from the same student.
15. When I refer to students who "reject translingualism," I mean those who, after engaging in class discussion, explicitly reject translingual goals or principles and/or remain committed to the superiority of standardized English (not those who produce seemingly monolingual texts, which can be the result of translingual processes).

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