

At What Price Success?: The Academic Writing Development of a Generation 1.5 “Latecomer”

- This article examines the special academic language challenges of second language (L2) learners who enter U.S. schools as adolescents through a case study of a female Taiwanese immigrant. It describes her English language learning history, her performance on a university writing placement test, and her subsequent writing development and academic progress at a four-year university. The study considers social and educational contexts of learning that may hinder literacy development, both oral and written. It underscores the importance of providing English language learners ample opportunities for meaningful, negotiated interaction and extended discourse production in secondary classrooms, both English as a Second Language (ESL) and mainstream.

Perhaps the most typical language minority learner we have come to associate as a member of the Generation 1.5 population is one who has started U.S. schooling in elementary school and who, upon reaching adolescence, is a fluent bilingual despite possible academic language difficulties. However, as with some other terms that have characterized demographic populations in the United States, such as Baby Boomers, Generation 1.5 describes a large group of individuals of whom there are subsets with other identifying qualities; in other words, Generation 1.5ers cannot be thought of as a homogeneous group. For many postsecondary educators, the dominant characteristic of these U.S.-educated learners, in contrast to our international L2 students, is that they are truly bicultural as well as bilingual. On the continuum of Generation 1.5 learners, we can identify at one end those who arrived in the US at a very young age or are possibly even American born. At the other end of this continuum lies a subpopulation of permanent residents who entered the US as adolescents and who, upon entering postsecondary institutions, have completed most, if not all, of their junior high or high school education in the US. In some ways, this subgroup embodies even more than their earlier-arriving immigrant peers the biculturalism and bilingualism associated with Generation 1.5: They tend to use both first language (L1) and L2 in interactional contexts

outside the classroom, and some maintain close cultural identifications with the native country at the same time that they have, in various ways, adopted the trappings of American teenage identity.

As a university level ESL composition teacher, I have encountered some of my greatest teaching challenges working with freshmen who have spent enough time in U.S. schools (usually 4-5 years) to reject “ESL” as a stigmatizing label but who, on the other hand, still experience serious difficulties in college level reading. Many of these learners, as junior high or high school newcomers to the U.S., had been eager to learn English in order to interact with their American peers and be accepted by them as well as (and sometimes secondarily) to achieve in an academic context. Unfortunately, as Laurie Olsen (1997) has so poignantly described in *Made in America*, her two-year ethnographic study of immigrant newcomers at a California secondary school she calls “Madison High,” these learners more often than not find themselves both figuratively and literally on the margins of their schools. They fail to develop meaningful social relationships with native English-speaking peers, some of whom ridicule their accented English, and they form “ESL ghettos,” or exclusive L1 social groups along the perimeter of their school courtyards. In addition, these English language learners often lack access to a curriculum that gives them the language skills they need for advanced level work. As Olsen puts it, “The reality is that few immigrants get the preparation they need academically or the language development required for academic success” (p. 11). Upon entering a college or university, these underprepared students may find themselves overwhelmed by language demands; at the same time, many put their energies into developing ways to avoid at least some of these demands, choosing majors that emphasize mathematical abilities and courses that do not require papers and that assess only with multiple choice exams. These L2 learners may call upon roommates and others—including native English speakers if they find willing ones—to “check” (read: correct errors, rewrite unidiomatic language) drafts for courses with writing requirements. As researchers have noted (e.g., Johns, 1991; Leki, 1995), students who develop academic coping strategies to get around language deficiencies often, in terms of GPAs, look very successful.

The remainder of this article will present a case study of a permanent resident from Taiwan I call Jinny, a student I worked with in university ESL courses and individual writing tutorials for two years and who fits the profile described above of the “later-arrived” U.S.-educated immigrant. Arriving in the US at the age of 15 with only the barest foundation in English, she found herself, like so many of the students whose voices were heard in Olsen’s Madison High study, struggling to establish new social, cultural, and linguistic identities as an American and as an English speaker in a southern California high school.

The investigation of Jinny’s academic English language development, starting with her arrival in the US and continuing through her junior year as a

university student, was part of a research project conducted with two colleagues, Roberta Gilman and Norinne Starna, from my campus's writing program. Through case studies, we explored how Guadalupe Valdés' (1992) distinction between two groups of second language learners related to the academic language development of Generation 1.5 students we had worked with extensively in ESL and mainstream composition classes. One group of learners, whom Valdés termed "incipient bilinguals," can be characterized as still acquiring fluency in English; the writing of these students typically has frequent and varied grammatical "errors." Learners in the other group, termed "functional bilinguals," have advanced proficiency but produce systematic errors, often described as "fossilized elements" or "fossilizations." Valdés maintained that "incipient bilinguals" need ESL instruction, whereas "functional bilinguals" should receive specialized instruction within mainstream composition. She noted that educational institutions need to establish criteria to distinguish these two kinds of learners. While many Generation 1.5 students fall into the latter category of functional bilinguals, others who have previously been mainstreamed in secondary school find themselves placed back into ESL courses in postsecondary institutions after English language diagnostic exams.

In our case study research, my colleagues and I worked with students who had been designated as ESL on the University of California's Subject A Examination. In this diagnostic exam, high school students who have been admitted to University of California (UC) campuses have two hours to read a 700 to 1,000 word passage and write an essay; most essays are later holistically scored by trained writing and ESL instructors in a single session at the Berkeley campus. The resulting scores do not determine specific placements at UC campuses, but a nonpassing score requires that the student be placed into a preparatory composition course. Nonpassing essays with significant nonnative English errors are designated ESL; this distinction is confirmed by at least one ESL specialist. Many of the writers who get ESL designations are Generation 1.5 functional bilinguals, including American-born students.

With the three students whose literacy development we studied, we included as data audiotaped and transcribed interviews about their secondary school experiences and samples of high school writing where available, followed by a close analysis of performance on the Subject A. We then looked at these students' university writing development (including writing assignments spanning a number of courses), written notes on our conference and tutorial sessions, and audiotaped interviews. Two of these students were described in Frodesen and Starna (1999): Alex, a native Spanish speaker we considered a functional bilingual, began his university composition instruction in a special preparatory program within the Writing Program; the second student, Min, a native speaker of Chinese was placed into the ESL Program and required to repeat an ESL course, but eventually made a very successful transition to the Writing Program and excelled in mainstream

courses, including those with significant writing requirements.

Although Jinny and Min have some similarities in their backgrounds—most notably the age at which they arrived in the US, their low English proficiency upon arrival, and their attendance at secondary schools with many speakers of their native languages—the results of their years in U.S. schools were quite different. These differences included their writing development over three years at the university, their abilities to participate successfully in university classroom discourse, and their attitudes about their academic language abilities. Min, a confident L2 writer and speaker, made significant progress in developing linguistic and rhetorical competence, and participated actively in classes despite pronunciation problems in English. In contrast, when Jinny discussed her writing, she typically noted problems and difficulties, and she was talkative only in individual conferences.

The data used for Jinny's case study were her Subject A Examination, drafts and final papers from two ESL courses and two Writing Program courses, audiotaped tutorials, and one audiotaped and transcribed interview; Jinny gave permission for all of these data to be used for this study. On the one hand, Jinny's college career seen holistically can be regarded as a success story, since she did, after all, complete her baccalaureate degree at a research university with an overall B- GPA despite serious difficulties with written English, and she has been employed since she left the university four years ago. On the other hand, the details of her academic language struggles raise questions about the price of this success for her (and students like her) in terms of major selected, coursework chosen, and postbaccalaureate access to a wide range of career opportunities that require college-level written communication skills. Jinny's experience serves to remind us of the significant influence that social identifications and interactions have on L2 academic language development, especially during the emotional and physical turmoil of adolescence. In addition, her story underscores the critical need for secondary ESL curricula that will develop the advanced level academic competence necessary for entering university undergraduates.

The Beginnings of Jinny's U.S. Education

Like many other Taiwanese immigrants in southern California, Jinny's parents established residence in the United States solely to provide their children better educational opportunities than those available in Taiwan. The family made the transition in stages, with Jinny's college age sister and father moving in 1989 to a city about 20 miles south of downtown Los Angeles, while Jinny, the second of three daughters, remained in Taiwan with her mother and younger sister. A year later, the rest of the family followed, and Jinny, at the age of 15, began her American education at the ninth grade level, in a high school with a large Asian student population..

Jinny's English proficiency prior to her arrival in the United States was minimal. For two years she had studied English three hours a week in her junior high school, where she, in her words, "learned the basics like A,B,C,

D and the basic sentence like, you know, "Today I play." Spending most of their classtime working on grammar and writing exercises, the students rarely spoke English in class; it was, in other words, typical of English instruction in Taiwan at that time. From her description of the class, it is no wonder that Jinny, like many other Taiwanese adolescents before and after her, arrived in the United States having studied English but lacking ability to speak more than a few words. When asked how she had at first coped in an American school with such limited English skills, Jinny focused on the social alienation, on the difficulty of making friends with anyone other than Chinese speakers:

...you don't, you make fre—it hard to, it's hard to make friend. Like, so, mmm... I—just my friends all Chinese and someones like Americans they come by making fun of you and...is bad.

She also focused on the ostracism she encountered in some of her classes:

...when I was freshman I really don't like my P.E. because you need to play like with a group and it is hard to find people to play with you. So you were kind of by yourself.

With such limited social interaction in English, it is not surprising that Jinny remained in ESL classes throughout her high school education rather than making the transition into mainstream English. Her ESL courses, judging from Jinny's descriptions, did little to help her develop either spoken or written discourse competence. In fact, they resembled the English curriculum in her Taiwanese junior high school: lots of grammar and writing, not much speaking. Unfortunately, she had the same ESL teacher all three years of high school, one who, in Jinny's opinion, didn't really know how to teach English to nonnative speakers; as Jinny put it, she just knew how to give assignments. When the classes did have discussion activities, they were typically unstructured small group discussions, which, as Jinny recalls, often ended up as an opportunity for students to converse in their native languages. Her experience, as she tells it, contrasts sharply with the rich language environment of the ESL class described in Harklau's (1994) ethnographic study of ESL versus mainstream classes in a secondary school. Classes taught by a veteran ESL teacher in Harklau's research featured small groups led by the teacher and her aides, discussions in which every student was called on several times, open-ended questions for students to answer with sample responses modeled by the teacher, and extended composition projects. In addition to oral and written comprehensible input enhanced by visual aids and comprehension checks, there was, overall, emphasis on structured participation and self-expression. In Jinny's ESL classes, although the classes provided little structured interaction, Jinny did at least make friends and speak English with students from Korea and Japan as well as with some Chinese students whose dialect was different from hers.

During the summer after her first year of high school, Jinny asked her parents to fund an expensive Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT®) preparation

course since she wanted to apply to colleges. In her university placement essay written during her senior year, she describes this experience, explaining that her parents were “amazed” by her desire to take the course. They thought of her as wanting only to be with her friends and have fun, not as someone who would use her time studying. Although they granted her request, they apparently did so with considerable skepticism that Jinny would actually benefit from it. According to Jinny, while she was taking the course, whenever her parents found her doing anything besides studying English, they would, she wrote in her essay, “scold on me for waste my time.” Jinny’s efforts to achieve an acceptable (albeit marginally so) SAT score appear to have paid off. Despite her struggles with English, she scored 330 on the verbal section, much lower certainly than her math score, which was close to 700, but high enough to gain her admission to a UC campus. Thus, upon graduating high school, Jinny followed in her older sister’s footsteps, becoming the second child in her family to gain admission to a four-year research university.

Assessment of Jinny’s Writing as an Entering UC Undergraduate

The two on-campus ESL specialists who reread Jinny’s Subject A Exam, which had received both a nonpassing score and an ESL designation, disagreed on the placement, with one rater placing her into the lowest of three ESL courses offered for undergraduates and the other into the middle level. A third rater agreed with the middle level placement. The differing rater judgments were due, perhaps, to the unevenness of Jinny’s essay in both developmental and grammatical control.

Jinny’s Subject A task was to summarize and evaluate an excerpt from Gloria Watkins’ (bell hooks) book *Talking Back*. In the passage, Watkins describes her family’s resistance to her leaving her small Kentucky hometown to attend Stanford University; they feared, as Watkins saw it, that they would lose her forever. Watkins then discusses how honest communication helped her to maintain family bonds and to value skills and talents various family members had, regardless of their educational level. Jinny’s response to the prompt, which asked writers to identify both the conflicts and the sources of connections Watkins describes and then react to her analysis, was to some extent rhetorically appropriate: she responded directly to the first part of the topic, noting conflicts and connections, and then related her own experience, discussed above, of her parents’ not wanting to fund an SAT preparation course because they didn’t believe she was a serious scholar. Her language use, however, obscured meaning in a number of places, creating considerable distraction for readers with the frequency of errors throughout. Jinny’s linguistic difficulties no doubt contributed significantly to the assignment of the holistic scores to her essay at the system-wide scoring session: two 2s on a 6-point scale, indicating serious difficulties in reading and writing.

Jinny’s Subject A essay did demonstrate some skill, on both mechanical

and rhetorical levels, in using source materials in her writing. She had taken care to underline the title of Watkins' book and had used quotation marks for some phrases taken from the passage.

She had also attempted to interweave Watkins' points in her own discussion, noting similarities between her experience and Watkins' and using the passage to support her conclusion. The development did not entirely succeed, however, most noticeably due to faulty comparisons. For example, in likening her own experience to Watkins' uncertainty about the value of education, an uncertainty stemming from her parents' ambivalence toward book learning, Jinny stated: "As same as her feeling, it really drive me insane, sometimes." This comparison, which followed the discussion of her parents' scolding her for wasting time when she was not preparing for the SAT, was inappropriate since, based on the content of her essay, Jinny's parents, unlike Watkins', did not disapprove of her studying. Another faulty comparison in her concluding paragraph related the appreciation Watkins developed for her family with Jinny's feeling that parents should support their children and make them feel like a "better" or "superior" person.

These rhetorical problems would not warrant the low holistic scores Jinny received. Nor would the rhetorical weaknesses account for her subsequent placement by the campus ESL instructors into an ESL course two levels below the Writing Program preparatory composition course. Jinny's essay most certainly fit Valdés' (1992) ESL category of "having many errors." More significant, however, were the types of errors; they indicated a writer who would most likely need more than one quarter of ESL instruction to write effectively in mainstream classes across the curriculum.

A relatively short 439-word essay, Jinny's response did not have a single error-free sentence. While this measure of errors does not distinguish serious errors from less serious ones, it does tell us something about writing proficiency. Along with the many word level problems (verb tense, verb forms, word forms, noun number, article usage, agreement errors), Jinny's essay had a number of sentence structure problems that prevented a clear understanding of her ideas. Consider, for example, the following paragraph from her essay, one which summarizes part of the Watkins' passage:

From her view, "keeping far to home" was the biggest problem they have. Her parents adamantly opposed her to attend Stanford University because they fear that they would lose her forever and they thought college education might do to her minds even they felt unenthusiastically acknowledge its importance. Watkins says, "resolution and reconciliation" has been important to her and both of it affects her development as a writer. But from her parents, they didn't understand why she could not attend a college nearby. To her parents, they thought any college would graduate, and make her become a teacher. Such as these make Watkins felt so utterly painful and led to intense conflict.

Similar to many basic writers, both native and nonnative English

speakers, Jinny had borrowed phrases from the source text, paraphrasing only slightly if at all, and had used them in ways that did not fit syntactically or semantically into her sentences. Watkins' phrases "their fear that they would lose me forever," "they feared what college education might do to her mind," "they unenthusiastically acknowledged its importance," "they did not understand why I could not attend a college nearby," and "I would graduate, become a school teacher" are all taken from the text, minimally changed to indirect forms of reported speech (e.g., "I" to "she") and used as the core information for her summary. Campbell (1990) notes that this use of background information, which she terms "Near Copies," may result from an awareness of the need to paraphrase but at the same time an inability to do so appropriately under time constraints. In making changes to the borrowed sentences, Jinny had produced structures which reflect a lack of linguistic knowledge regarding syntactic collocation constraints (e.g., the error resulting from replacing the verb "fear" with "thought"; the complementation error created by inserting "unenthusiastically acknowledge its importance" after "felt"). One phrase was misquoted: The unidiomatic "keeping far to home" was actually "going so far from home" in the passage. The inability to edit misquotes appears to be a common problem among developing L2 writers; what stands out as obviously misquoted to a native speaker or fluent bilingual due to faulty syntax or missing words will often go unnoticed by a developing bilingual writer even when she reads the sentence aloud.

Jinny's essay did attempt a variety of sentence structures; in fact, the variety of sentences, as structurally problematic as they were, argued for a higher ESL placement level than that for writers who produce strings of simple sentences or compound ones joined by coordinating conjunctions such as *and*. It was difficult to evaluate Jinny's entering essay in terms of vocabulary usage, which may be considered a subcategory of grammatical competence, since much of the essay had appropriated phrasing from the text, both with and without citation. The amount of borrowing from the source text, combined with inappropriate collocations, such as "a rich class" to describe the expensive SAT preparation course, suggested that Jinny had not yet acquired the lexical resources in English needed to successfully meet academic writing tasks at the university level.

On the level of discourse competence, Jinny's Subject A essay also demonstrated a need for further language development. Although Jinny did use discourse markers for cohesion and topic shifts, they were usually in some way problematic. She often introduced topics with noun phrases that reflect Chinese topic/comment structure (as well as informal speech), producing what composition handbooks sometimes term "double subjects": "Gloria Watkins, her passage from the book *Talking Back*, describes the conflicts as separating her." Sometimes a transition was insufficiently elaborated (as in the use of "truly" to indicate agreement with ideas stated in a previous paragraph) or unidiomatic ("as same as my feeling").

In summary, the overall impression we get from the analysis of Jinny's entering Subject A Exam is of a writer who had not yet acquired grammatical and discourse competence needed for college level writing. On the other hand, her attempts to use complex sentence structures, to create text coherence through transitional phrases and reference, to use citation conventions, and to interweave source material and her own ideas indicated skill in the basics of essay writing. Consequently, Jinny's on-campus placement into the middle level of ESL seemed, to paraphrase Huot (1996), a recognition of both her limitations and her promise as a writer.

University Writing Development and Ongoing Assessment

As it turned out, Jinny ended up spending four quarters in ESL before being promoted to a mainstream composition course in the Writing Program. Three of these quarters involved classroom courses, including a required repeat of the highest level, ESL 3, with me as her instructor. Jinny then spent an additional quarter working in tutorial twice a week with me. She did not make the transition to the Writing Program composition course until the spring of her sophomore year, having failed to enroll in an ESL class for one quarter during the freshman year. At that time she continued with the ESL tutorial course in conjunction with the preparatory writing course. Thus, I was directly involved with Jinny's writing development for an entire year.

During the time she was enrolled in my ESL 3 course, (fall quarter of Jinny's sophomore year), Jinny's behavior and writing proficiency were similar to those of many of the other female Asian students in the class. In discussions, she was reticent. She sometimes seemed embarrassed to speak out in class when called on and rarely volunteered answers, but would occasionally venture a response if I looked directly at her while raising a question. Like the female Hispanic students in Losey's (1995) study of student output in a mixed monolingual and bilingual classroom, Jinny may have, during whole class discussions, felt intimidated by some of the more orally proficient male and female students. These students were from European, middle Eastern and Hispanic backgrounds, all of them older than the other undergraduate students in the class. While Jinny's class participation in whole class activity was not high, she did participate actively in the frequent small group tasks and was in every other way a "good student," turning in all assignments and meeting frequently with the instructor to work on draft revisions.

By the end of the quarter in which Jinny had enrolled in ESL 3 for the second time, she had completed three quarters of university level ESL; she had written a number of papers based on assigned readings, with required drafts for peer response and instructor conferences, and had completed many other assignments intended to help students improve editing skills, increase academic vocabulary, and develop syntactic complexity. However, her writing portfolio, consisting of in-class and out-of-class writing, indicated that she was still struggling with language at the sentence level, producing a

variety of structural errors such as incorrect complements and relative clauses. In Jinny's portfolio introduction essay, addressed to the ESL instructors who would be reading it, she enthusiastically summarized the improvements she had made over the quarter and cited the work on editing and revision that had helped to advance her writing skills. She emphasized how she had learned to recognize her own errors and correct them. While these activities may indeed have helped Jinny in the long run, her writing for the quarter did not demonstrate the kind of proficiency that would seem necessary for successful completion of a mainstream composition course.

On the other hand, a comparison of Jinny's ESL 3 essays with the Subject A Exam she wrote in her senior year of high school indicated development in discourse competence as well as somewhat more sophisticated expression. Her essays had more overall fluency and in general used transitions and other cohesive devices more appropriately. The following example from the first unrevised draft of her final out-of-class essay, an argument for continued government funding of research to explore possibilities of extraterrestrial life, illustrates both the rhetorical strengths and grammatical difficulties typical of Jinny's writing at that time:

Nowadays, many scientists are interesting on study if there are other civilizations besides human beings on Earth. However, some people think it is a waste of time and money in studying and researching intergalactic civilizations. On the contrary, they deem it the government should use these moneys in other appropriate uses such as to provide some welfare programs which can precisely benefit people. In my opinion, I think it is a wise use of money to examine and study civilizations in outer space. By doing this is not only a new discovery in the scientific field, but also to the advantage of us in some ways.

This excerpt from Jinny's essay, with its frequent, and, in some cases, serious structural errors, does not seem to reflect the English proficiency of a functional bilingual. While the ideas are comprehensible, there remain numerous problems with complementation, such as the gerund rather than infinitive structure "in studying and researching," with word forms (the present participle "interesting" instead of the past participle; the base form "study" rather than the gerund "studying"), and with mixed constructions, such as in the last sentence which employs "doing this" as both the object of an introductory prepositional phrase and the subject of the sentence and which lacks parallelism in the structures linked by the correlative conjunctions "not only... but also." The ESL designated essays of entering freshman whom we place into mainstream composition courses have neither the frequency nor, in general, the seriousness of error that was still evident in Jinny's writing.

Because of Jinny's continued difficulties with sentence- and word-level structures, during the ESL portfolio reading sessions, the ESL Program decided to place her into a one-to-one tutorial course I taught. During the 20 sessions of the tutorial, Jinny's participation, like that of the Mexican women

in Losey's study, was markedly different from her classroom behavior: in contrast to her timidity in class, Jinny frequently controlled interactions in the tutorials, asking questions, explaining her motivations for structures she had produced in her writing, and even frequently interrupting me to clarify a point or raise a question about something she did not understand. Such behavior suggests that she was quite motivated to improve her writing skills. With Jinny's ESL 3 portfolio writing serving as the "text" for grammatical instruction and editing practice, she seemed to gain an understanding of some of the structural constraints in English that she had frequently not observed, such as the uses of various types of *that* in clause formation (complements, relative clauses, comparative clauses). She also learned correct forms of idiomatic expressions that she had previously misused in her papers. Whether this intensive work in fact helped Jinny develop more control of sentence level structures and use more appropriate vocabulary in the long run is not clear, even with her successful completion of two mainstream composition courses, Writing 1 and 2, in which she received B-grades. From looking at her in-class writing and drafts versus final papers in the Writing 2 course, it was obvious that much of Jinny's success had resulted from her diligence in getting instructor and tutorial assistance with revision. She seemed to have steadily developed her rhetorical competence; as a result, her final papers were quite acceptable. And her fluency appeared to have improved by the end of the first mainstream course, as noted by her Writing 2 instructor, who commented on how much she had written in 20 minutes on her first day writing sample. In-class writing and drafts of out-of-class papers, however, while syntactically more mature, retained a high frequency of word and sentence level errors as evidenced by the following excerpt from an in-class writing:

When I came to United States, I had problem on speaking and writing English. My writing skill was very low even sometime people had hard time reading my paper....Now I still continue learning English and learning how to write better and trying to improve my English at the same time. For me, I think this is a discovery, because learning English is a long process, and through the process I am not only learning English but also discover the mistakes I have been made and then improve these.

From the writing sample alone, Jinny would still seem to be in a developing bilingual stage.

A Final Assessment: Jinny as a Functional Bilingual

After four quarters of university ESL instruction in addition to two quarters of mainstream composition, it was questionable to what extent Jinny's writing proficiency would develop further. At the end of her third year at the university, she had been in the US for seven years. Recent research suggests that the number of years it takes second language learners to achieve near-nativelike academic English proficiency is greater than was previously thought (Collier, 1989). Yorio's (1989) study, (cited in Valdés,

1992) found that nonnative speakers with 5 to 6 years of residency had difficulty producing nativelike writing after exiting ESL classes. Although almost all our ESL students making the transition to mainstream classes retain, like the students in Yorrio's study, some nonnative forms, those like Jinny who continue to have considerable problems with sentence and clause structure as well as idiomatic phrasing generate a great deal of concern for mainstream composition teachers.

Although Jinny was overall a successful student in her majors of Mathematics and Business Economics, her educational and social paths at the university and the strategies she used to cope with her language difficulties had, in some ways, contributed to her lack of progress in developing greater proficiency in English. At the end of her junior year, she had avoided taking the third required writing course in the Writing Program. Like one of the international students in Leki's (1995) study of coping strategies used by ESL students to meet university writing demands, Jinny had adopted the strategy Leki calls "taking advantage of the first language and culture" (although she had done so in a way different from the student Leki describes). She had met other university writing requirements through courses in the Chinese department where, she says, "[it] is easy to get good grade." To meet her other course requirements for graduation, she chose courses that were primarily mathematically based, feeling more comfortable, she said, in these classes than in ones that required a lot of reading.

Though Jinny's oral English was somewhat fluent, it was quite ungrammatical. By nature rather shy, she rarely, if ever, spoke voluntarily in her classes, using English only when she was involved in a group project. Away from the university, she spoke Chinese almost exclusively in her social interactions; when asked what percentage of her time she spent speaking Chinese and what percentage English outside of classes, she responded: "I would say all Chinese. ...We think is weird if you know how to speak Chinese but you speak English." All in all, Jinny's use of English as both a high school student and college student was largely restricted to classroom contexts and even there her productive use of spoken English was quite limited.

As Valdés (1992) has discussed, deciding how long an individual can remain a "language learner" is a complex question. Many of the ungrammatical forms in Jinny's writing appeared, after three years, to have become "fossilized." In other words, she may have passed beyond what Valdés termed as the incipient stage. In clarifying this distinction, Valdés stated, "[N]o matter how many features remain that are nonnative-like, there is a point at which an individual must be classified as a functional bilingual rather than as an incipient bilingual" (pp. 101-2).

In fact, Jinny's life post-college appears to validate her status as a functional bilingual. In a follow-up telephone conversation years after she had graduated, I found out that she was employed by an international firm and had a position in which she had to spend a great deal of time speaking

English on the telephone. As a result, her oral fluency had improved considerably, a feat she had not been able to accomplish in school, perhaps partly because of her limited associations with English speakers outside the classroom.

Implications

In reflections over time on the interviews, conversations, and writing samples used to tell Jinny's story, I have considered the implications of her experience from different perspectives. From one perspective, her situation points to the difficulty ESL Programs may have in knowing when to promote students into mainstream composition courses with confidence that they will be successful learners in these contexts. Many of us who teach 10 or 12 week courses have a hard time seeing in such a short time whether or not our instructional efforts make a difference. Because I worked intensively with Jinny one-on-one over several quarters, I was able to see both the progress she was able to make toward understanding English syntax and the limits of what we could accomplish together. McKay and Wong (1996) raise the question of why some learners are able to progress in the target language in some contexts and others don't. In their study of junior high school students, they examined the multiple discourses of learners in and out of classrooms and stressed that L2 learners who lack proficiency in English and must negotiate complex social identities in communicative situations seek ways to gain communicative power that may be counterproductive to developing L2 proficiency. This could include resistance to certain forms of instruction in teaching contexts or dependence on L1. Citing Peirce's (1995) work on social identity, McKay and Wong agree that the simplified notion of learner motivation might be better replaced by the concept of investment, in which individuals value language development in relation to their communicative needs in establishing identities in social interactions. It is no surprise, then, that L2 learners such as Jinny, who are shut out of meaningful communication in the target language, both in classroom settings and in their social life outside the classroom, enter universities after years of U.S. schooling without having developed academic language proficiency. Like many Generation 1.5 immigrants who began their life in the US in California secondary schools L2, Jinny holds painful memories of being made fun of and ostracized by native English speakers, finding acceptance only with her native Chinese-speaking friends and others L2 students in her ESL classes, and recalls few opportunities for meaningful negotiated language interactions in her classrooms. Those of us who teach ESL in postsecondary institutions often hear expressions of dismay and surprise from colleagues across the curriculum about our U.S.-educated L2 students' lack of academic writing proficiency. Other college faculty express these opinions directly to the students, such as the Sociology professor on my campus (a native speaker of German) who told one of my Chinese-speaking students that he couldn't understand how her writing could be so terrible after getting a high school

education in the US. As we know, many international nonnative English-speaking students develop strong English literacy skills without oral fluency; these students, if educated in a non-English-speaking country, are able to separate their study of English for Academic or Specific Purposes from other contexts in which, unlike our immigrant students, they can use L1 exclusively for communication.

With the latest chapter of Jinny's story, in which she has by necessity gained greater fluency in oral English through her workplace requirements, we can only wonder what her English language abilities might be today if her high school experience had offered more meaningful and varied social interactions with English-speaking peers both in classroom contexts and extracurricular activities. While it is true that orally proficient bilingual students often experience difficulties with advanced academic English, less fluent Generation 1.5 learners who have difficulty with a variety of syntactic structures and idiomatic phrasing in spoken English also typically have more problems than their orally fluent L2 peers in the conventions of written English. Academic literacy is not limited to reading and writing; learners must also develop academic oral proficiency (Scarcella, forthcoming). U.S.-educated learners who enter postsecondary institutions lacking near-native proficiency in "everyday English" do not generally have strong academic oral English skills; in other words, everyday English and academic English proficiency are interrelated.

Obviously, as educators we cannot force L2 immigrant and native English-speaking students to interact socially outside our classrooms. However, educational institutions can develop curricula, programs, and extracurricular activities that encourage meaningful, negotiated oral interaction in the classroom for all students, L2 and native English-speaking learners alike. In observations of mainstream secondary classes, Harklau (1994) found the lack of interaction between mainstream teachers and L2 learners "quite striking": Students were often "withdrawn and noninteractive" in these classes, with little opportunity for producing extended discourse. She noted that the L2 learners often just "tuned out" mainstream instructional interactions, especially when teachers got off topic or used language the students could not understand, such as puns, irony, or sarcasm. In addition to structuring meaningful opportunities for interaction within classrooms, schools can help native English-speaking students better understand and appreciate the difficulties of learning a second (in contrast to a foreign) language. As one example, at a Los Angeles high school, students were allowed to speak only in Spanish (whether or not they knew the language) for a day so that nonnative Spanish speakers could get a better sense of how it felt not to be able to communicate in their native language. More generally, high school curricula could offer linguistic or sociolinguistic courses exploring issues in second language acquisition and language diversity in American culture. This suggestion is included in *Academic Literacy: A Statement of Competencies Expected of Students Entering*

California's Public Colleges and Universities (Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates, 2002) in its section discussing ways that teachers and administrators can work together to ensure the special needs of English language learners. Through such courses, native speakers of English could gain greater sensitivity to the challenges their L2 peers experience in developing English proficiency.

Current research in K-12 contexts has increasingly focused on the broader social contexts of learning and the influence of social interactions on academic language development in K-12. From Jinny's experience and that of many other L2 learners who come to the US as adolescents, it is often the case that even the most intensive intervention at the college level cannot make up for the lack of enriching and meaningful language learning environments during the junior high or high school years. Thus, educators must increase collaborative efforts to provide rich language experiences and appropriate feedback on language output for L2 learners in ESL and mainstream contexts.

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