“Good Writing” in Increasingly Internationalized U.S. Universities:
How Instructors Evaluate Different Written Varieties of English

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how university instructors from various disciplines at a large, comprehensive university in the United States evaluate different varieties of English from countries considered "outer circle" (OC) countries, formerly colonized countries where English has been transplanted and is now used unofficially and officially to varying degrees. The study was designed to address two gaps in the research: (1) how instructors in increasingly internationalized U.S. universities evaluate different written varieties of English, since many international students may be writing in an L1 other than American English, and (2) how instructors’ first language and/or disciplinary backgrounds appear to affect their evaluations. Through a comparison of rankings and qualitative analysis of interview data, the study examines whether the participating instructors value the same features and characteristics in writing, such as text and organization features, found in American English and varieties of OC written English. In addition, it examines whether one's first or native language or one's disciplinary training affects the perception and evaluation of these particular varieties of English.

This study showed that what is currently valued and expected by instructors from various disciplines in U.S. universities is what may be identified as an “American” style of writing; participants expected an organization providing a clear purpose up front, including paragraphs of a certain length, and containing sentences perceived as more direct and succinct. In addition, given the overall agreement on the element of good writing demonstrated in how composition and content area professors ranked the writing samples, my study suggests that what is being taught in composition is preparing student for the writing expected in content area classes. Last, my findings add to World Englishes
(WE) research by adding a writing component to WE attitudinal research studies, which have previously focused on oral production. Almost equal numbers of Native and Non-Native English Speakers (NESs and NNESs) participated, and the NNESs appeared more tolerant of different varieties, unlike the preference for inner circle norms noted in previous studies.

This study, therefore, has implications for writing research and instruction at U.S. colleges and universities, as well as informing the field of World Englishes.
DEDICATION

They say it takes a village to raise a child; in my case, it took a whole family to finish this dissertation. To Jim, Christina, and Stephen, whose unflagging love, support, and constant encouragement made it possible.
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As I look back over the past five years, with the last 2 ½ spent on my dissertation, I want to express my thanks to the many individuals who have helped me on this sometimes difficult journey.

First of all, while finding a topic and writing my dissertation was a challenge, the mentoring given to me by my advisor and chair, Dr. Aya Matsuda, made it a less daunting and rewarding experience overall. Her research and scholarship in the area of World Englishes made me confident that I had an expert guide; furthermore, she has been the most responsive and supportive advisor that anyone could ask for. I first met Dr. Matsuda in the Heritage Languages class I took my first semester in 2009, which course stands out most in my memory, since we had students from many countries and backgrounds and explored a fascinating topic. I have also had the good fortune to work with her as a Research and Teaching Assistant since 2010, so I have come to know and learn from Aya in many different ways and venues.

I also want to acknowledge the contribution that Dr. Terrence Wiley has provided to me in my professional journey. He co-taught the Heritage Languages class with Aya, and I remember our interesting field trips in particular, to local Chinese and Japanese Saturday schools. In addition, I learned so much about English language and its hegemonic influences and impacts in his Language Policy and Planning class the following semester, something I had not previously considered. A year later I had the opportunity to work with him as an editorial assistant on the International Multilingual Research Journal. A brilliant scholar and researcher, I have truly valued his input during my Ph.D. journey.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines how university instructors from a variety of disciplines at a large, comprehensive university in the southwestern United States evaluate different varieties of English from countries considered “outer circle” (OC) countries, formerly colonized countries where English has been transplanted and is now used unofficially and officially to varying degrees (Kachru, 1983). In this sociolinguistic investigation, articles from newspapers published in the U.S. and three OC countries, India, Singapore, and Nigeria were read and ranked by participants, who then explained the reasons behind their rankings. Through a comparison of rankings and qualitative analysis of interview data, the study examines whether the participating instructors value the same features and characteristics in writing, such as text and organization features, found in American English and varieties of OC written English. These instructors were comprised of Teaching Assistants, Faculty Associates, and Assistant/Associate/Full Professors but all, however, are solely responsible for teaching a course in their own discipline, regardless of their title or rank. In addition, the study also examines what, if any, influence one’s first or native language or one’s disciplinary training has on the perception and evaluation of these particular varieties of English.

This study addresses two gaps in current research: one, perceptions of “how good” OC writing is when evaluated in an inner circle (IC) context such as an American university; and two, how language backgrounds may affect these perceptions of written World Englishes. While other studies have been done to try and identify what “good writing” is in L1 and L2 composition from a variety of student, teacher, and faculty
perspectives (e.g., Leki, 1995; Li, 1996), with many of them focused on the experiences of L2 writers (or “international students”) (e.g., Ferris, 2004; Raimes, 1991; Truscott, 1997), none have explicitly looked at reactions to OC varieties of written English in an American university. In addition, the influence of language backgrounds in faculty evaluation of these varieties, a factor shown to influence the evaluation of spoken Englishes, has not been investigated in the context of writing (e.g. Smith, 1982, 1993).

This study, therefore, has implications for writing research and instruction at U.S. colleges and universities, as well as informing the field of World Englishes.

**Internationalization of U.S. Universities**

**Students**

U.S. universities enroll many international students. According to the *Almanac of Higher Education 2012*, the number of foreign students enrolled at American universities “more than doubled over the 30-year period” from 1980-81, “with international students making up 3.5 percent of all students at American institutions by 2010-2011” (para. 1). In addition, “the annual rate of growth from 2009-10 to 2010-11 was 4.7 percent”, so this number of students is continuing to grow (Almanac, 2012, para. 1). In terms of actual numbers of students, 311,882 international students were enrolled at U.S. institutions in 1980, with 723,277 counted on American campuses in 2010-11. There was a slight dip in international student enrollment in the 5-6 years after 9/11, but the numbers have since recovered and continued to increase (Almanac, 2012; IIE, 2012).

These students come from numerous countries worldwide, and of the top 25 leading places of origin for these students in 2010-2012, China, India, and South Korea were the top three (IIE, 2012). More specifically, in 2011-12, of the 764,495 international
students who came from 25 countries to U.S. universities, China accounted for 25.4% or 194,029 students, India had 13.1% or 100,270 students in the U.S., with South Korean students comprising 9.5% or 72,295 of the total number of students. These three countries accounted for 48% of the international student population in the U.S in 2011-12. The countries of Saudi Arabia and Canada held the 4th and 5th places in 2012, with 34,139 or 4.5% and 26,821 or 3.5% of the total, respectively, although in 2010-11 the places were reversed. Saudi Arabian students in the U.S. increased by approximately 12,000 students from 2010-11 to 2011-12, from 3.1 to 4.5% of the total, which moved its student numbers ahead of Canada (see Appendix A for detailed information on the top 25 leading countries of origin of international students for 2011-12).

Of the three OC countries included in the study, in addition to India as the country with the second largest number of students on U.S. campuses, Nigeria was ranked number 19 with 7,028 students or .9% of this total. This was a slight decrease from the previous year, when 7,148 Nigerian students were reported at U.S. universities. Singapore did not make the top 25 list, but neighboring Indonesia had slightly more students in the U.S. than Nigeria at 7,131 in 2012. Another neighbor, Malaysia had just slightly fewer than Nigeria, with 6,743 students at American universities. Given the small population of Singapore, with 5 million total population compared with 249 million in Indonesia, 170 million in Nigeria, and 29 million in Malaysia, it is not surprising that they do not send a large enough number of students to the U.S to be included in the countries with the greatest number of students on U.S. campuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Choosing this country to be a part of the study was, however, done for reasons
other than the size of the student population on U.S. campuses, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

**Faculty**

In addition to increasing numbers of international students, faculty is becoming increasingly internationalized. While it is more difficult to identify the exact number of foreign-born faculty than international students and whether their first language is English or not, the literature confirms that their presence on U.S. campuses has been increasing. Foreign-born and international are terms that I use interchangeably, with the goal of identifying this group as having a different place of origin than that of the U.S., but recognizing that many international faculty become U.S. citizens.

In a recent article, Kim, Twombly and Wolf-Wendel (2012) discuss this growth, noting that full-time foreign-born faculty comprised 10% or 28,200 in 1969, increasing to 15.5% or 74,200 in 1998, and reaching 126,123 in 2007. Furthermore, according to Webber (2012), 28% of the U.S. labor force holding doctorate degrees in 2007 was foreign-born.

Kim et al. (2012) notes that one of the main reasons for this growth is due to the “changes in the U.S. immigration laws in the 1990s that allowed for ‘highly skilled’ workers, especially those with doctorates, to immigrate to the United States” (p. 28). Most of the international faculty is found in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields, and that these numbers are expected to continue to grow (Kim et al., 2012; Lin, Pearce, & Wang, 2009; Webber, 2012). In addition to their greater presence in the STEM fields, recent articles have examined such topics as productivity, finding that foreign-born faculty produce more refereed-journal articles than their U.S. born peers
(Webber, 2012). Like international students, faculty come from many different countries, with Asia leading as the source of the greatest number of international faculty regardless of whether they were “foreign-born foreign-educated (FBFD)” or “foreign-born with U.S. undergraduate degrees (FBUSD)” (Kim et al., 2012, p. 31).

After Asia, the other largest source of international faculty in both categories is Europe and Africa. Using data from a 2005-2008 survey of pre-tenure faculty to more specifically explore the origins of international faculty in both categories, Kim et al. (2012) reports:

Of the foreign-born foreign educated (FBFD) faculty, the largest numbers are from countries in Asia (62.3 percent), followed by Europe (17.2 percent), Africa (6.3 percent), and North America (5.2 percent). On the other hand, among foreign-born U.S. educated (FBUSD), 42 percent are from Asian countries, 31.6 percent are from Europe, Africa (7.3 percent), and the Caribbean (6.1 percent). More specifically, while nearly half the FBFD faculty members are from Asian countries, including China (20.3 percent), India (20.2 percent), and Taiwan (5.4 percent), the countries of origin are more geographically diverse among FBUSD. The largest percentages are from Germany (9.4 percent), followed by Iran (5.2 percent), Canada (5.2 percent), and Greece (4.5 percent). Only 4 percent and 3.5 percent, respectively, of the FBUSD are from China and India (p. 31).

As found in recent data for international students, international faculty whose degrees were obtained in other countries (FBFD) also had China and India as the two top countries of origin.
Importance of Writing in U.S. Higher Education

The ability to write well is critical to the success of all university students, including the thousands of international students who come to the U.S. annually to earn degrees in American universities. These international students do so for various reasons: many because they see English as the road to success because of its status as an important global language in business and other fields, while others do so because advanced degrees in particular subject matters are not available in their own countries (Macready & Tucker, 2011). They are also motivated to come by U.S. university efforts to recruit more international students through websites and international recruiting fairs; some universities also entice highly qualified students to enter their programs by offering scholarships to them. Last, universities typically provide support services specifically for these international students to help them with registration and other matters after they arrive in the U.S., in order to ease their transition into university life and their studies.

To enter American universities, international students have to prove they hold a certain level of English proficiency as measured by such tests as the ETS TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), IELTS (International English Language Testing System), or the ACT Compass (e.g., ASU-AECP, AECP; EWU-ELI, 2012; UCCS-IEP, 2012). Others enter certain universities by completing multiple levels in university Intensive English programs through a conditional admissions process; this means that the university will admit them to major programs of study if they complete these classes and attain certain grades (e.g., ASU-AECP, 2012; EWU-ELI, 2012). General English proficiency demonstrated through TESOL scores or successful completion of English courses, however, does not necessarily mean a student has enough English skills to
succeed in an American university. Among the four skills of English (reading, writing, listening and speaking), writing is considered particularly important in the university. Once admitted to the university, if they are seeking undergraduate degrees, students are typically required to take two (lower level) English composition courses and pass them with at least a “C as part of their general education requirements. In addition, some might require that students take at least one first-year/lower level composition course and one upper level Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) course.

Some students are exempted from some or all of these courses because they have earned credit by taking AP (Advanced Proficiency) exams and earned a high enough score on these exams prior to entering the university (e.g. ASU, 2012; EWU, 2012; UCCS, 2012). In addition, some may earn a high enough score on a different type of placement test that exempts them from at least one of the courses, such as a CLEP test (College Level Examination Program) (e.g., UCCS, 2012). Nonetheless, the fact that students are required to take and pass writing courses early in their college career, regardless of the major, indicates the importance of writing for college success. This requirement for undergraduates to take these courses is a reflection of complaints in recent years that American students writing skills have deteriorated and that “many students in U.S. schools fail to meet even the most basic writing standards” (Alber-Morgan, Hessler, & Konrad, 2007, p. 107).

These composition courses are important because they are also preparation for the writing that is done in the various fields of study available in the American university. Once students begin taking upper level courses, such as 300 level courses, they may be expected to write research papers from 5-8 pages in length or more. Their ability to write
these papers well directly impacts their success, since they often must earn a certain grade or GPA in their coursework for their particular major. While some classes such as history or American literature may require longer papers than disciplines such as math or science, students from all majors and disciplines need to know how to write.

**Statement of the Research Problem**

U.S. universities have become increasingly internationalized, with universities seeking to attract international students who have chosen to study in the U.S. for various reasons. This influx of international students includes students not only from the inner and expanding circles of English but also from the OC, those who write in English as their L1 or L2. Those writing in English, however, may be writing in a variety of English other than American English. While considerable research has been done on “Generation 1.5” and international students in U.S. universities, we know little about the writers/students who have completed their prior education in their home OC countries (and thus can fluently write in those English varieties) and now attend US universities. In addition, little is known about how their writing is received in various parts of the American university. This may be a problem because good writing in English, as previously mentioned, is important to the success of all American undergraduate students, both domestic and international students.

In addition to the internationalization of American universities by a larger international student population, they have also become increasingly internationalized through the recruiting and hiring of faculty from many countries. Yet, again very little is known about how their teaching may vary from their American counterparts, especially in terms of how they evaluate student writings.
In order to address these two gaps in the current research, my study investigates how instructors and professors at a U.S. university perceive OC varieties of English. In doing so, my study also investigates whether instructors’ disciplines and language backgrounds appear to affect their perceptions.

**Research Questions**

The study looks at the following questions and sub-questions:

1. What features and characteristics do university instructors from different programs and disciplines value in writing?
2. How do they respond to writing samples that include characteristics of English other than American Standard English?
3. Do instructors from composition programs and other disciplines (or content areas) respond differently to Outer Circle varieties of English, and if so, how?
4. Do NES and NNES instructors respond differently to Outer Circle varieties of English, and if so, how?

**Significance**

In the field of higher education, this study sheds light on the question of how linguistic diversity among students as well as faculty affects teaching and learning, especially in terms of how the evaluation of student papers may be affected by language differences. This has various policy and practice implications such as what type of services are needed to support international students, particularly those who are fluent in English but whose writing may place them in disadvantaged positions, as well as how to help students meet the expectations of professors from various language backgrounds and be successful in all their courses. The study is expected to provide insights into how
effectively our writing courses prepare students for later courses in their content areas by examining gaps between the expectations and responses of composition teachers and content area professors to OC English writing.

In terms of research, one area the study contributes to directly is the field of World Englishes, in which the global spread of English and consequent emergence of multiple varieties of English are studied from linguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives. In this field, there is a body of literature that has examined attitudes towards spoken varieties of different Englishes and factors that influence one’s evaluation of them. However, a study of attitudes towards different varieties of written English has not been conducted prior to this study—which is problematic given that much of the high-stake international communication in English involves written information.

Overview of the Remaining Chapters

Each of my chapters presents and discusses key components of my study. In Chapter 2, I provide the theoretical frameworks and assumptions underlying my sociolinguistic study. This chapter discusses my constructivist theoretical framework and how it is used and applied in this study of the linguistic nativization of Englishes, which is based upon the assumption that different Englishes reflect the cultures and societies to which they have been transplanted. In Chapter 3, I discuss and review existing research of what constitutes “good writing” in U.S. universities, with a focus on the types of features and characteristics identified in other studies. In addition, it will examine previous studies of attitudes towards spoken varieties of English, since this study builds on and augments this previous research by investigating attitudes towards written varieties. In Chapter 4, I define, with examples, what types of characteristics and features
of linguistic nativization are found in the varieties of English in Nigeria, Singapore and India, the Outer Circle countries included in my study. Chapter 5 describes, in depth, my data collection and analysis techniques, research site and participants, as well as my role as researcher. In Chapters 6 and 7, I present and discuss the rankings of writing samples and the analysis of interviews explaining the rankings, as well as the pedagogical, policy, and research implications of my findings. Last, in Chapter 8, I present my overall conclusions, limitations, and directions for future research.
CHAPTER 2
ASSUMPTIONS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is guided by a number of assumptions about English today, including what are considered outer circle varieties of English and what it means to be a Native or Non-Native Speaker of English. These assumptions have shaped my research questions and design, as well as my interpretation of the data and the significance of the results. In addition, my constructivist/constructionist theoretical framework guides how I have conducted my research and evaluated the results, a framework that accepts and values different perspectives created and shaped by diverse experiences and backgrounds.

Growth of English and World Englishes

English is a global language, with a level of growth not previously achieved in a world language (e.g., Crystal, 2008; Mackey, 2003; Yano, 2001). It is because of its importance in so many areas such as business, politics, and technology that millions of people learn English today, in their own countries as well as other English-speaking countries where they have gone to study, work, and live. But what do we mean by English-speaking country? While the majority of international students choose to go to the U.S. and Britain to study English, others also go to other countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and even Singapore (Macready & Tucker, 2011; Yano, 2003).

Singapore has not historically been considered a destination for students seeking to develop their skills in English, but today it is, particularly for students from Asia and Southeast Asia (Lim, 2010). This is due to particular efforts by the Singapore government to establish itself as an “education hub” (p. 37). It is has not been typically considered an English-speaking country and in Kachru’s concentric model of Englishes, a model that
has been at the heart of discussions about the English language over the past 30+ years, it is identified as an outer circle country. As described by Kachru (1992), inner circle (IC) countries consist of the UK, US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, where English is recognized as the “traditional” language of the country from both cultural and linguistic bases, used in all levels of personal and official life, even if it is not the official language of the country. The outer circle (OC) countries are comprised of formerly colonized countries such as India, the Philippines, Singapore, and Nigeria, countries with a long history with the English language and its use in institutionalized functions. English may or may not have official status in addition to other languages in these countries (e.g., Crystal, 1999; Kachru, 1992). Expanding circle (EC) countries are those where English is used, but generally as “performance varieties” that lack official status and are restricted in their use (Kachru, 1992, p. 387). China, Israel, Japan, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan are some of the EC countries Kachru identifies in his model (p. 356).

With the growth of English worldwide reaching a level exceeding that of any language before, however, with non-inner circle speakers of English outnumbering “native speakers” almost 3 to 1 today (Crystal, 2008), Kachru and other World Englishes scholars have questioned the continued ownership of English by inner circle countries. In OC countries such as Singapore, English is also spoken as a first language by many individuals and not just as an additional or second language. This idea that other varieties of English should be recognized in their own right has been a topic of serious discussion since the 1980s. It is a subject, however, which has included opposing and even contentious viewpoints. For example, Quirk and Kachru, both noted scholars, vehemently disagreed on this issue in the 1980s, with Quirk maintaining the importance of a Standard
English and Kachru countering that this is a deficit approach (Bamgboše, 1998). There appears to be much greater acceptance of the fact that different varieties do exist today, however, although not all may agree (Bamgboše, 1998). Yano (2001) and Bruthiaux (2003) takes these ideas even further, suggesting that Kachru’s circles of English are now outdated and that certain English varieties that have been classified as OC English should no longer be classified this way due to their lengthy history and establishment in certain countries. For example, Yano (2001) discusses how various Singaporeans “feel they are native speakers of English and they do have native speaker’s intuition,” an intuition associated by Kachru with native speakers (p. 122), and a factor related to “genetic nativeness” versus “functional nativeness” (see Kachru, 1988). In addition, Rajadurai (2005) criticizes the model’s framework and its “geo-historic bases.” This author points out that for the model to continue to be relevant, it must focus on the needs of individual speakers and their communicative competence in local and global settings.

Bruthiaux (2003) further criticizes the concentric model as overly simplistic in that it does not acknowledge the complexity of the types and varieties of English used within various countries themselves, and how often it is a minority that use the type of English associated with the model. For example, he discusses how British English has a number of varieties other than RP that may be used much more commonly, but how RP has been the variety typically associated with the that inner circle norm in Kachru’s model. He also discusses how it is limited in how it treats countries with a different colonization pattern, such as South Africa, where English is a relatively recent transplant but is an emerging variety that is widely used. To continue to be relevant, he suggests that it (1) must focus on English-speaking communities where they are found, and (2)
recognize that fundamental differences across various contexts do exist that must be considered for adequate language policies and practices to be developed.

Although Kachru’s model has been criticized, Kachru recognizes that the classifications and positions of the countries can change. He has written that the wall between circles is permeable; thus, it is possible for one country to be reclassified into another circle (Kachru, 1985; Kachru, 2005). Therefore, even if the concentric model may have limitations, it is still a useful model and framework to refer to in my study for two main reasons: one, it identifies how the different histories of English in particular countries such as those in my study have shaped its use in them; and two, it is still widely referred to in current literature discussions about English language. One could interpret Yano (2001) as suggesting Singapore is now an inner circle country because of the place of English in it today, but again, Kachru does allow for reclassification. Yano’s criticisms actually only bolster the argument that English is “owned” by many people and countries today other than those traditionally viewed as English-speaking countries.

In sum, I am not subscribing or endorsing the concentric model entirely but refer to the framework and use the term OC in my study as an efficient way to refer to the context of a particular variety of English and its users, a use absent in prior studies about writing in post-colonial countries where English is used widely for unofficial and official purposes. Due to the growth of use of English and World Englishes, my examination of whether different varieties of written Englishes are accepted by U.S. university professors adds to current World Englishes research.
Linguistic Nativization

Implicit to World Englishes is the concept of linguistic nativization, which is the adoption and modification of a language such as English to the local cultures and ideas in which it is used (Bamgboşe, 1998; Kachru, 1983). The forms of English found in both IC and EC countries are “essentially ‘contact varieties’, with their distinct characteristics of nativization and hybridity, in formal linguistic terms, and in their sociocultural features and identity constructions in sociolinguistic terms” (Kachru, Kachru, & Nelson, 2006, p. 4).

In discussing linguistic nativization in his article “Torn between the norms: innovations in world Englishes,” Bamgboşe raises the question of norms and the distinction between innovation and error in the nativization process, with “[a]n innovation seen as an acceptable variant, while an error is simply a mistake or uneducated usage” (p. 2). He makes the important point that unless innovations are accepted, “a non-native variety can never receive any recognition” (p. 2). He also notes that reference is often made to the “native” speaker in identifying norms of usage, but that this is itself problematic because identifying the norm is not always clear, and often there are a “series of norms, even in the same community” (p. 2).

In considering whether a particular form is an “error” or an “innovation” that is acceptable, Bamgboşe identifies five major internal factors to consider, namely “demographic, geographical, authoritative, codification, and acceptability factors” (p. 3). In using the five factors, he asks various questions related to how widespread usage is in these categories; for example, in terms of demographics, a large number of speakers using a certain form of an acrolectal variety, not a basilectal or mesolectal variety, would
indicate it is an innovation and not an error. In terms of geography, if a form is widespread geographically, the “higher its acceptance as a standard form” (p. 2) would also identify it as an innovation. The authoritative factor would involve whether teachers, media and other authority figures use it, and thereby endorse a form as innovative and not an error. Codification would be the inclusion of a form in a grammar, dictionary or similar type of book, clearly a recognition of “correct and acceptable usage” (p. 4) and not an error. Bamgboše considers codification and the last factor, acceptability of a form, the most important, although his explanation of just how to identify acceptability is somewhat amorphous.

Choosing the right words to describe different varieties of English is value-laden according to Bolton (2006), which makes it clear that avoiding such terms as “new” and “second language” is important, as they do not accurately reflect the historical background of these varieties. In addition, unlike Bamgboše, Bolton avoids the use of the term “non-native” in describing these English varieties, since he believes that also conveys a sense that they are not legitimate varieties instead of World Englishes. Other scholars choose such terms as localized forms of English to describe these nativized forms, such as Strevens (1992).

In my study I discuss particular nativized forms associated with Indian English, Nigerian English, and Singaporean English found in other research studies, but I do not try to identify the degree to which a particular form is considered “acceptable”. This is not necessary for my study, since my focus is on the reactions and perceptions of my participants to the writing samples they read and ranked, not my own or other researchers’ perceptions of whether differences in forms are acceptable. It is my
participants’ perceptions that drive the evaluation of particular forms, and whether they accept them or identify them as an error of some kind.

**Native or Non-Native Speaker**

Exactly who is identified as a Native Speaker of English (NES) or Non-Native Speaker (NNES) is not universally defined, with disagreements often related to whether particular English varieties are accepted as legitimate forms. An NES is often considered someone who learned English as their sole and primary language at an early age, before puberty (Strevens, 1992; Davies, 1993). An NNES is often described as someone who has learned another language first, learning English later on as a second or additional language, no matter how proficient they become. Some children may be simultaneous bilinguals, however, actually acquiring two languages in infancy. As Strevens (1992) points out, “there is a complex world of NN[E]S English that most native speakers are not aware of” (p. 38).

Just how complicated a universal definition of NES and NNES may be is suggested by the title of the book *The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality* (Davies, 2003). Born in Wales, author Davies presents the complexity of the issue in referring to his own background in the preface, describing himself as a “non-Welsh-speaking South Walian,” whose language was English, but a “stigmatised variety, stigmatised by themselves [South Walians] as much as by others” (p. vii). He discusses the issue of identity conflict of those in South Wales, England who spoke neither Welsh nor were “speakers of a prestige English” (p. vii.). Davies himself decides to learn Welsh as a second language, exploring his own issues of identity *vis a vis* the English language. In fact, throughout his
book and exploration of this idea of nativeness, Davies continually returns to the concept and importance of identity in the identification of what it means to be an NES or NNES.

As a part of Great Britain, an Inner Circle region, one may find it easier to accept the idea that the variety of English used by South Walians is English and therefore, Davies like others born there, is a NES. The concept of Nativeness seems more complex somehow, when moved to the outer and expanding circle countries, but should it be? Davies holds up the Native Speaker as a model of perfection, “like a healthy person in medicine (or indeed any such state of assumed perfection) where the only definition seems to be negative, a lack of malfunction: thus the native speaker would be someone who is not a learner (etc.) rather than someone who is something positive” (p. ix). As Davies (2003) mentions, one reason other researchers criticize the use of such labels as Native English Speaker and Non-Native English Speaker because the former is viewed positively and the latter has a negative connotations. Llurda (2009) discusses how the issue is increasingly debated in such large organizations as TESOL and often is very emotionally charged because identifying whether one meets the classification of an NES by that particular speech community is one of the main exclusionary and reductionist problems with using such terms.

In the same way that it is difficult to identify at what level of proficiency one feels they have mastered a language enough to say they are a speaker of that language, Llurda (2009) discusses how recent research also discusses the idea of a continuum in identifying oneself as a Native or Non-Native English Speaker, one that reflects the diverse experiences of various individuals. To demonstrate this complexity, Llurda (2009) mentions a study in which an individual identified himself as a native speaker of
Tagalog but had learned English first (citing Liu, 1999). In addition to this study, Llurda (2009) discusses a number of other studies looking at this issue of identification from different perspectives, including sociolinguistics and bilingual studies, discussing not only the complexity of identifying who could take these particular labels as well as the impacts on identity associated with doing so. Llurda points out the dichotomy between how applied linguistics might view the issue and refute the specific labels, and those who are English language teachers who perpetuate the distinction, suggested by advertisements hiring only teachers who are “native speakers.”

Recognizing that there is an unfortunate negative connotation often associated with the label of NES and NNES, I still do use this distinction in my study but for reasons associated with identifying a potentially different view of English writing because it was learned at a different point. It is not done to suggest any deficiency; it is done to explore if instructors from different L1 backgrounds appear to rank writing samples including different World Englishes differently.

In discussing the characteristics of Native and Non-Native speakers of a language, Davies identifies six criteria of a Native Speaker of English:

1. learned the language in childhood;
2. has intuitions about L1 grammar and what is acceptable;
3. has different intuitions about L2 grammar determined by comparing to his/her L1 grammar;
4. has a wide range of communicative competence in both production and comprehension
5. can write creatively at different levels (jokes, novels, etc.)
6. can interpret and translate into his/her L1 (pp. 210-211).

Also, he includes children who learn two languages during childhood as native speakers of both languages.

In discussing how a Non-Native speaker might be different, Davies accepts that with sufficient contact, all but criteria one, the age of learning the language, can be achieved by one learning another language. Just how grammar is learned, criterion 3, is related to childhood learning, and is the only other criterion that seems to distinguish a NES and NNES (p. 212).

In this study, I use Davies’ criterion #1 to define who is a native speaker of English in my study, as this is the only criterion that he acknowledges cannot be achieved in the learning of another language and is clearly applicable to the context of my study. In addition, while criterion #3 was developed in the context of someone who had learned another language or L2, I also include it as my study involves a comparison between different varieties of English that may include different grammatical patterns due to linguistic nativization. Therefore, I draw from but expand on the types of intuitions about grammar used by Davies in his discussion.

My operational definition of a Native English speaker for my study, therefore, is “one who has learned English as a child and has intuitions about its grammar given the variety of English learned in childhood.” It does include the complexity spoken to by Strevens (1992) in that it includes varieties of English from OC countries where English holds some form of official use if not official status, such as those varieties of English that are part of this study: Indian English, Nigerian English, and Singapore English. None of my participants, however, were from OC countries; this was not intentional but the
result of those who responded to my request to participate, as discussed in my methods sections. My participants were born in the U.S. or from various EC countries, with the U.S. participants having learned American English and those from EC countries also typically having learned American English or British English varieties. The U.S. born participants also, in general, considered themselves monolingual with limited proficiency in other languages that they studied after childhood, typically from middle school to college.

Conversely, an NNES in my study is defined as “one who has learned English after childhood.” I do not include intuitions in the definition as it, per Davies, includes learning English at a young age, during childhood. Therefore, although the NNESs in my study have very high levels of English proficiency as instructors in a U.S. university, with some having been in the U.S. for many years and who now may speak English more than their L1, they are not included in my operational definition of an NES. I make this choice because of the site of my study in a U.S. university and the fact that most if not all of my pool of NNES participants learned English, typical of many of the international faculty present on U.S. university campuses today, as an L2 after childhood. Their acquisition of English was therefore also similar to the language learning of my U.S. born participants, however, they have retained and improved their mastery of English while the former has lost most of their L2 proficiency due to nonuse.

**Constructivist/Constructionist Framework**

My research design is guided by my choice of a constructivist theoretical framework, with the key tenet of this framework being that, for humans, all perception is socially constructed. As explained in Patton (2002), the foundational questions in social
construction and constructivism ask, “How have the people in this setting constructed reality? What are their reported perceptions, ‘truths,’ explanations, beliefs, and worldview? What are the consequences for their behaviors and for those with whom they interact?” (p. 96). In addition, constructivism assumes that “the human world is different from the natural, physical world” and “the world of human perception is not real in an absolute sense, as the sun is real, but is ‘made up’ and shaped by cultural and linguistic constructs” (p. 96).

My study explores the participants views or perceptions of good writing, without making a value judgment about the viewpoints held since, from a constructivist framework, “each one’s way of making sense of the world is valid and worthy of respect as any other (Crotty quoted in Patton, 2007, p. 97). It is also constructionist, however, in that it explores whether different varieties of English are acceptable and why, as “social constructionism emphasizes the hold our culture has on us: it shapes the way in which we see things…and gives us a quite definite view of the world” (p. 97). Since the participants in my study come from a variety of language backgrounds, the influence of varied backgrounds on their perceptions of the writing samples they ranked is shown in their interviews.

Constructivism is a theoretical framework used in almost all academic disciplines today, but particularly in educational studies of teaching and learning (Ensslin, 2004). What this means is that instead of an individual student simply absorbing the teachings of the instructor, each individual maintains “operational autonomy” in their learning, acquiring “knowledge in their own particular ways according to their own cognitive discipline, pace, and plan” (p. 309). My study includes many teachers of
writing, who may themselves be more “instructivist” than “constructivist” in their own approach to teaching writing, since they are teaching a particular skill. This has been found to be the case in studies, for example, of language instructors who are purportedly teaching from constructivist principles, but really are not because it is difficult to change a teaching approach of many years (Sercu, Garcia, & Prieto, 2005). The other participants who are instructors who do not specifically focus on the act of writing itself, still have their own expectations of what should be in a good paper based upon their own backgrounds and learning. In each case, my choice of a framework means that my focus is on understanding why certain writing is perceived better or worse, focusing on areas of agreement and disagreement in the rankings of the writing samples and what this might mean for students in universities today.

Following a constructivist framework, my study attempts to identify perceptions about writing that includes OC writing forms, minimizing my own influence on these perceptions as much as possible. I have done this in how I conducted my study, limiting comments about the samples and any of my own perceptions of them as much as possible. My selection of writing samples, however, also reflects a constructivist framework in that it applies these principles to me as the researcher, including the fact that my own perceptions of differences in the samples is shaped by my own background and experience as a writer and an native speaker of English. In Chapter 4, I discuss in detail the features of linguistic nativization found in the three OC varieties included in the writing samples, with Chapter 5 describing in depth how those features influenced my own selection. While I refrained from making my own judgments or ranking of the
articles, my own perceptions of differences from standard American English did drive my selection of the samples.

Other writing studies using a constructivist framework acknowledge the importance of prior experiences on the reading of text: “Assuming that old knowledge meets new, constructivist researchers have theorized that the active processes of integrating prior experience involve first elaborating information beyond what is given in a task or source text (Greene & Ackerman, 1995, p. 389). As researcher, I took my prior knowledge of an American English standard and applied it to the selection of samples, integrating it with the new knowledge I had learned from research about linguistic features of the OC varieties I chose to include. Furthermore, the old knowledge my participants brought to the task of ranking the writing samples is from their own training in writing and expectations of writing as university instructors, although the short newspaper articles used in my study was very different from the types of papers they normally read.

In sum, my study is guided by constructivist principles on more than one level, not only in the selection of the writing samples themselves by myself as researcher, but also in the evaluation of the perceptions of the writing by the participants in the study.
CHAPTER 3
REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

There are many books and articles about the elements found in good writing for younger and older students in a variety of American classrooms (e.g., Kirby & Liner, 1981; Leki, 1995; Li, 1996). While my study focuses on writing at the college level, reviewing the literature on what is “good writing” at various academic levels, including high school, provides valuable insights into the elements that writing experts overall think are important. In addition, I review Contrastive Rhetoric, World Englishes, ESL Writing, and Writing Across the Curriculum studies, since they investigate the elements of good writing from various perspectives that are relevant to my study. Last, I review the literature on attitudes towards different Englishes, since my study also investigates this in the context of written OC Englishes.

High School Writing Studies

What writing instructors think is important in U.S. high schools is instructive in understanding what students have been told in their previous writing classes, those in which most students first learn to write papers of substantial length before entering college. The book by Kirby and Liner (1981) describes the elements found in good writing. In Inside Out: Developmental Strategies for Teaching Writing, these high school writing teachers ask, “What is Good Writing”, the title of their seventh chapter. Liner answers in the first sentence, saying, “I know good writing when I read it” (p. 88).

So, what does this mean? Kirby and Liner suggest that perceiving quality in writing is almost innate, like our perceptions of quality in general, but recognizes that this not particularly useful to students and others. To better identify what is found in
examples of good writing, they provide the following 10 criteria as those that are most important, in two interrelated categories:

The Kirby-Liner Working Criteria for Good Student Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Writing is Interesting</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Voice</td>
<td>One human being talking to another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Makes the reader believe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong, recognizable imprint of the writer</td>
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<td>2. Movement</td>
<td>Words building/pull the reader along</td>
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<td></td>
<td>It goes somewhere with variety</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A sense of order</td>
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<td>3. Light Touch</td>
<td>Writer doesn’t take himself/herself too seriously</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Even-tempered</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Informative</td>
<td>Important</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has substance/says something</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adds to our experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Inventive</td>
<td>Unique experience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Something new/or something old in a new way</td>
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<tr>
<th>Good Writing is Technically Skillful</th>
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<tr>
<td>6. Sense of audience</td>
<td>Makes contact with the reader</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Anticipates reader’s needs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Compliments the reader with meaning</td>
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<td>7. Detail</td>
<td>Concrete</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Photographic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Selective</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Words that put the reader there</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Rhythm</td>
<td>Words that sing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sounds effortless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Form</td>
<td>How it looks on the page</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is looks like in print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Mechanics</td>
<td>Observes conventions of spelling, punctuation, usage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kirby and Liner emphasize that these two categories cannot be separated; it is not enough for the piece of writing to be interesting. Unless the technical aspects of good writing are also included, the writing will not be effective. A particular work will not sustain the reader’s interest if it not well-crafted because how the “words, sentences, paragraphs are manipulated…affect our judgment of a work and either frustrate us or add to our pleasure as we read” (p. 92). According to these authors, “Good writing is interesting to read, and good writing is written with technical skill” (p. 91).

In addition to the ideas put forward by Kirby and Liner, Li (1996) confirms and adds to their list of elements valued in American English writing. As a comparative study examining whether American and Chinese high school writing teachers value the same features and characteristics in writing, it is particular useful in highlighting what some of these American norms may be. In Li’s study there were four teacher-participants, two each from the U.S. and China, who analyzed six different writing samples from students in each country; each participant evaluated and ranked translated texts of writing identified as “good” by the teachers in their respective countries. The findings were that the teachers rated the writing samples very differently depending upon their country of origin, determined through lengthy interviews by researcher Li with each of them. This finding was further supported by Li’s follow-up survey of 60 American and Chinese writing teachers, 30 from each country, although the number of samples was smaller.

In terms of specific differences, Li’s study found that American teachers were not particularly concerned with the “moral propriety” of the samples of narrative writing they
evaluated, as the credibility of a piece was important only in the narrative style chosen.

The Chinese teachers, however, were not concerned about the credibility of the narrative style, since in Chinese the credibility of the piece is “based on the plausibility of the story and the characters rather than the propriety of its narrative style” (p. 118). For one of the American teachers, if a narrative was heavy-handed, for example, that meant he did not believe the story “emotionally, however much I may approve intellectually of the outcome….the critical ingredient lacking in the piece is ‘to show and not to tell’” (p. 118).

In addition, the study supported the importance of using “definite, specific, concrete, language” in American English writing, contrasted with “a Chinese literary tradition that prefers a densely selective and suggestive narrative style” (pp. 119-120). The American teachers appeared to find a credible narrator to be one with “certain type of temperament….restrained detached, and controlled, rather than sentimental, dramatic, and emotionally involved” (p. 122), with the latter embraced by the Chinese teachers. In addition, there was a difference in the American teachers emphasis on “flawless logic and an opening that leads the reader immediately to the action” and that of the Chinese teachers, who prefer a “mingling of qing (human emotions) with jing (natural scenes) with the end of the piece bringing the piece to “a definitive closure” (p. 126).

Li’s study highlights the fact that American English writing may have particular norms that are different from those in other cultures and countries. Other contrastive rhetoric studies at the university level will be discussed below, as well the validity of such studies, but Li (1996) does appear to support the importance of many of the elements Kirby and Liner list in American writing such as a preference for concreteness,
the value of having a light touch, and the importance of believability. It also adds and fleshes out other elements, such as the importance of showing and not telling in creating a credible story, and the importance of a logical approach that goes immediately to the action.

**College Writing Studies**

There have been many college writing studies about writing and the elements found in good writing from different American university perspectives. Those that are particularly relevant to the design and foci of my study are Contrastive Rhetoric, World Englishes, ESL writing, and Writing Across the Curriculum studies.

**Contrastive Rhetoric Studies**

Contrastive rhetoric (CR) is a field of study that evolved out of the ideas of Robert Kaplan, beginning in the 1960s with his comparative analysis of paragraph structures in English and other cultures. Kaplan (1966) reports the results of his study of approximately 600 international student essays written in English at an American university; his sample originally included 700 essays, but he discarded 100 since they were from “linguistic groups too small within the present sample to be significant” (p. 15). He found that the other essays, however, reflected different cultural thought patterns from those of American students. Kaplan gives visual representations of these different thought patterns to illustrate these differences. He describes English as dominantly linear in approach, contrasted with those of several other cultures including Arab, French, Spanish, and certain Asian cultures. In particular, he identifies Semitic (Arabic) writing as having a style reflecting their use of intricate parallel structures, Oriental (defined as Korean and Chinese by Kaplan, specifically excluding Japanese) as having an indirect or
circular rhetorical style, with Romance and Russian paragraphs as containing multiple
digressions not found in linear English writing (p. 21).

Kaplan’s stated goal in doing and reporting the results of the study was to provide
practical assistance to teachers of English, that their knowing these “cultural differences
in the nature of rhetoric supply the key to difference in teaching approach” in the
teaching of reading and composition to foreign students (p. 11). In his discussion of the
elements of a good English paragraph, he discusses how English writing has its roots in
ancient “Platonic-Aristotelian” sequence, with an emphasis on how a logical sequence of
thought is reflected in the elements of the paragraph. Specifically, he describes how the
use of a topic sentence followed by subdivisions of that statement, with examples and
illustrations, is an example of a linear thought sequence found in English writing.

His description of different cultural thought patterns has been criticized as overly
simplistic and is controversial (e.g., Canagarajah, 2002; Leki, 1991; Yang & Cahill,
2008). According to Canagarajah (2002), one of the main problems with Kaplan’s
theories is that they suggest that different cultures are homogenous and unvarying,
overlooking “the considerable hybridity and heterogeneity evident in each community”
(p. 35). Leki (1991) notes, however, that Kaplan’s rhetorical patterns have been used in
ESL textbooks, with the problem being that some ESL classes “actually taught that
English speakers think in a straight line while Asians think in circles and others think in
zigzags” (p. 124). Leki’s discussion of writing pedagogy in an ESL classroom
acknowledges the value, however, of raised awareness of the possibility of different
culture writing norms, but that L2 writers of English do have to conform to the
expectations of the culture they are in. Leki discusses how one Chinese graduate student
was told to be herself in writing in an English literature class, but “quickly realized that she could not possibly be “herself,” her Chinese self, and write a text that would be acceptable, or even comprehensible, to an English-speaking audience” (p. 139). As she relates, this student “found herself forced to develop an “English” self, one that would correspond to the expectations of “self” in the U.S. academic discourse community” (p. 139).

A more recent study, however, provides a contrast both to Leki’s example and Li’s study of differences between American and Chinese writing, challenging the description of Chinese writing as indirect or circular in organization. Yang and Cahill (2008) reports a study of 200 essays in an American university, 100 American and Chinese university essays (50 from each cultural background), plus 100 written by beginning and advanced Chinese learners of English. The researchers found that there are more similarities than difference in the American and Chinese students’ writing, with both having a preference for directness in text and paragraph organization, although American writing appears to have the stronger preference. Yang and Cahill note that modern Chinese writing manuals also encourage more directness, which they suggest should encourage more focus on similarities in writing organization, unlike Kaplan’s emphasis on differences.

While Kaplan may have oversimplified the differences in cultural rhetorical styles, his identification of English as having certain organizational elements does have support from other research identifying elements expected or preferred by U.S. teachers and university instructors. As discussed above, Kirby and Liner’s emphasis on the importance of “words pulling the reader along” and “a sense of order in the movement of
CR studies are relevant to my study because even though the writers are using varieties of English, the OC varieties may reflect elements of the culture where they have developed that may be different from American English elements and its own historical traditions. My study, therefore, examines whether the U.S. and OC samples reflect a particular form of organization. In addition, I analyze whether other elements or organizational patterns appear to differ based upon the country of origin, and if this appears to influence instructors’ evaluations and rankings of particular writing samples.

World Englishes Writing Research

Canagarajah (2006) examines the place of WE writing in U.S. university composition classes from a theoretical perspective, suggesting code meshing as one approach to bringing in different varieties into English composition. He does not focus on OC varieties, however, but WE varieties in general. Canagarajah identifies where standard forms still must be adhered to, and where more creativity and code-meshing is more acceptable. Matsuda (2012) also examines the complexity of the issues around written WE varieties, particularly pedagogical implications for expanding circle contexts. Matsuda (2012) further explores the issues of how to treat the issue of teaching dominant and nondominant English forms, noting that students should at least be aware of these
forms and the “fuzzy and negotiable” perceived boundary between what is “acceptable” as a variation, and what may be unacceptable and considered an error in usage (p. 372).

Other studies of written WE varieties include OC varieties such as those from Singapore and the Philippines, but also EC varieties from China (e.g., Thumboo & Sayson, 2007). These varieties and their acceptance as valid written English forms appear tied to the idea of a unique or different context than the type of writing expected in typical American university classrooms or textbooks, and mainly considered acceptable as different literary genres or examples of literary creativity (e.g., Bamgbose, 1998; Goke-Pariola, 1987; Gargesh, 2006; Kachru, 2005). Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, for example, is a widely read and globally acclaimed book containing OC English features, in this case Nigerian English (e.g., Bamgbose, 1998; Goke-Pariola, 1987). It is required reading for English or Language arts classes in American middle and high schools, but the focus is on plot and other elements so the fact that the English used may vary significantly from typical textbooks or other English literature, is considered part of the story (S. Collier, personal communication, May 20, 2013). Where specific OC varieties are currently embraced in American classrooms, they appear to be in literature like this.

To summarize, while there have been theoretical discussions about WE varieties in American university classrooms, how OC written varieties are accepted in U.S. classrooms in typical academic writing has not yet been studied.

**ESL “Good Writing” Studies**

While the focus of my study is not ESL writers but OC writers, one study that investigated faculty attitudes towards ESL student writing is particularly useful in
illustrating what faculty from various content areas think is important in writing. Leki (1995) reports a study investigating student and faculty views of good writing, and is titled similar to Kirby and Liner’s chapter seven, namely, “Good Writing: I Know It When I See It” (p. 21). Like those authors, Leki acknowledges the complexity of identifying exactly what makes a particular piece of writing good, adding that “the concept of good writing is concept bound, that what is good writing in one instance is not successful for all circumstances, that different contexts impose different even contradictory constraints on writers” (p. 24).

Leki also refers to and builds on an earlier study by Deidrich (1974), where 53 readers from all walks of life were asked to comment on and rank 300 essays from 1 to 9, and found “very little consistency among the rates, no universally agreed upon objective standards for rating these texts” (p. 24). Leki (1995) builds on Deidrich’s study by examining whether there is consensus about the concept of good writing in universities, asking 15 ESL faculty and 14 professors from different content areas/disciplines to read and evaluate four essays on very different subjects written by 20 ESL students from freshman ESL courses. Comments by ESL and subject area faculty showed they were primarily concerned with content and not formal structure. In fact, many did not really like formulaic writing. They pointed out that students often appeared to be making contradictory assertions, mainly because they did not develop their ideas enough, so the content did not make sense. In addition to content concerns, a good introduction where faculty could tell where the paper “was going as early as possible” (p. 32) was important to them, which students often did not provide. In addition, they said student did not provide conclusions that demonstrated real insight. Leki suggested this might be a
reflection of what is taught in English classes to students to avoid showing their point of view in their writing, in contrast to the importance placed by content area faculty on students’ developing their own points of view. This was, however, a problem noted by faculty in student writing in general, and not just those of NNES writers; students have a tendency to avoid drawing conclusions, and this “reluctance detracts from the quality of their written work” (p. 33).

Like the Deidrich study, Leki found very little consensus about which essays met faculty’s criteria for evaluation of good writing. There was agreement that “organization, logic, development” were important, but otherwise “for individual teachers quite different aspects of writing appeared as most salient in their evaluations” (p. 35). Content did make a difference, and those professors who knew the subject matter the best were generally the most critical of the essays, which ranged from such diverse subject as nuclear power, welfare programs in the U.S. versus Sweden, and resistance to traditional notions for behavior by Muslim women. Leki did, however, find a difference in the ESL writing instructors and other faculty in terms of the importance of content, with the latter much more focused and engaged with the ideas expressed in the essay. Both groups did focus on “rhetorical issues such as the need for introductions, theses, development, and so on”…but the “content area faculty focused more on “quality of information or argument” (p. 39). Students did identify this difference between writing teachers and subject matter instructors regarding content, even if they didn’t meet their expectations otherwise.

**Writing Across the Curriculum Studies**

Since my study examines the perspective of university instructors from a variety of disciplines towards various writing samples, examining Writing Across the
Curriculum (WAC) studies was also important to the design of my study. WAC developed out of the increasing concern about the ability of students to write, and involves an approach to writing that involves faculty from a variety of disciplines, not just English or composition instructors. According to Griffith (1985), WAC began in a small, Pennsylvania liberal arts college in the mid-70s, with general excitement and growth in programs that were funded by not only university funds, but other general education and foundation grants.

The development of these programs varied; some were started rather informally by initiatives from university writing center staff, through brown bag lunches between interested faculty and English department initiatives. Others began more formally and with “more fanfare,” such as the development of programs in response to state law, such as the Florida law requiring first and second year students to write “a minimum number of words during the first two years of college” (p. 399). Others developed more formally were like that at the University of Michigan, whose program began in response to complaints about students’ writing abilities. In a 1985 survey, Griffith found that writing centers, faculty workshops, and particular courses were key components in nearly all of them, with one key effect of the faculty workshops “to help faculty outside of English realize, most for the first time, that they are not absolutely helpless in the face of poor writing,” and to help them “distinguish between good and bad writing” (p. 401). In 1985, WAC was a popular and growing approach to teaching writing.

Almost 40 years later, WAC programs do still exist at many universities, but they do so in a variety of forms (Condon & Rutz, 2012). Since WAC programs began in the 1970s, some programs have changed, such as one of the earliest WAC programs
established in 1975 at Carleton College. These changes occurred due to an assessment of the program in 1996, where the challenges of creating separate and often additional work for students and faculty was identified:

As one might imagine, both faculty and students wearied of this arrangement over time, despite valiant attempts by Writing Program directors to offer regular workshops on assignment design, responding to student writing, and so forth, as well as to make themselves available for individual consultation with faculty. As a group, faculty became less and less likely to offer WAC courses, given the extra work and what appeared to be arbitrary decisions expected of them. General cynicism prevailed among students, many of whom simply avoided writing until they were forced into a large project for their senior capstones. To no one's surprise, such students were unprepared for lengthy, sophisticated projects, which resulted in additional work for faculty advisers (Condon & Rutz, 2012, p. 18).

Carleton College’s WAC program evolved from an established program within the overall curriculum to one considered a more “integrated one”, where it is not treated as a separate program with particular courses, but one considered the approach more generally within the college curriculum. Washington State University’s current WAC program is also described as an integrated program, and means that there has been a shift from “control over writing to the practitioners in a field, rather than continuing the notion that we in an English department or a writing program somehow have charge of writing” (p. 10). WAC programs are still considered by many researchers to be a better approach than the current approach found in universities, namely the English 101 and 102 classes required today for most undergraduates on most American campuses today (DePalma &
Ringer, 2011, citing numerous authors refuting the idea of positive transfer from writing courses, p. 136).

More recently, WAC programs or approaches have been explored in depth the context of second language learners in the university setting, with supporters of this approach seeing it as a better way to provide students with contextualized approaches to writing (e.g., Leki & Carson, 1994; Janopoulous, 1995; Zamel, 2000). The purpose of this approach, echoing Condon and Rutz (2012), is to approach writing from the contexts of a variety of disciplines, instead of treating it as an activity learned in English and writing based courses whose purpose “is to fix students’ language and writing before and in order to take on what is assumed to be the real work of the academy” (Zamel, 2000, p. 8).

While hundreds of WAC articles have been written since its inception in the 1970s, none of them have specifically considered the reactions of university instructors to OC varieties of English, the focus of my study.

**Attitudes towards Different Varieties of World Englishes**

While other studies do not investigate university professor attitudes towards written OC English varieties in particular, there have been many studies examining attitudes towards spoken EC and OC varieties (e.g., Matsuura, Chiba, & Fujieda, 1999, Smith, 1982). These studies examine attitudes of EC participants from a variety of countries such as Brazil, Japan, China, and Singapore (e.g., Chiba, Matsuura, & Yamamoto, 1994; Chiba, Matsuura, and Fujeida, 1999; Friedrich, 2000; Matsuda, 2003; Matsuura, Chiba, and Yamamoto, 1995; & Sasayama, 2013). I will discuss some of the key points from some of these studies, which are very relevant since approximately half of my faculty participants are from EC countries. In addition, I review studies suggesting
that NESs and NNESs may respond differently to different World Englishes because of their own personal investments in learning English (Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 2007).

**Prestige Variety Studies**

There have been many studies about the acceptability of certain varieties of English, and which varieties are preferred or even considered when participants are asked about English. For example, Friedrich (2000) and Matsuda (2003) found that when their respective Brazilian and Japanese participants were asked about English varieties, the only varieties that they appeared to be aware of were American and U.K. varieties. 54% of Friedrich (2000)’s participants also identified American English as the most prestigious variety, although 26% of the 190 participants identified American and British English as equally prestigious. Similarly, when interviewing the 34 Japanese students in a 12th grade classroom, Matsuda (2003) found that students appeared confused when asked about varieties of English other than American or British; these were the varieties they preferred to learn.

Similarly, Matsuura et al. (1994) found that Japanese students were less tolerant of non-native English varieties and preferred American accents. This study investigated Japanese students attitudes towards American English and observed that American English was perceived more positively than non-native varieties of English; proficiency in English did not necessarily correlate with attitudes; motivational factors towards non-native accents were important; and students who perceived English as a world language were more tolerant of non-native accents. This study was later expanded by the same researchers, Chiba et al. (1995), through an investigation with 164 Japanese college students of the relationship between attitudes toward different varieties of English,
English speakers and their cultures, and the English language and indigenous languages. It found, in general, that the participants who had a favorable perception of American and British people, culture, and language were also less approving of non-native accents. Matsuura, Chiba, and Fujieda (1999), however, in their study of 106 Japanese college students’ reactions to different English varieties including Irish English, suggested that the earlier Chiba et al. (1995) study might reflect students’ lack of familiarity with the different varieties. In their study, students had a greater understanding and positive attitude when they had had previous exposure to a variety such as Irish English.

Despite Hino (2009)’s argument for a “de-Anglo-Americanized” form of English, Japanese English (JE), a form that better reflects Japanese values, very recent studies like the 2011 study reported in Sasayama (2013) still indicate that American English is still the preferred variety in Japan. Sasayama used a verbal guise test and closed-end questionnaire to investigate the opinions of 44 Japanese college students, and found, among other things, 77.27% wanted to “sound like an American person when speaking English” (p. 12). 65.45%, however, also did agree with that JE should be accepted in international communication. Sasayama concluded that AE appeared to be more associated with power, but that students “wished that JE, the English that many of the respondents themselves probably spoke, to be accepted internationally” (p.14).

Other studies such as Smith (1992) also investigated language attitudes in oral production. Smith (1992) reports a study in which the understanding of different varieties of English was examined. Individuals from nine different countries were selected and listened to a conversation between individuals from inner and outer circle countries and to then rank them in terms of intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability. In this
study, most participants preferred standard varieties of English from inner circle countries, particularly those whose first language was not English.

Last, Jenkins (2007) analyzes attitudes towards English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) by examining three texts written by NNES English instructors about certain features of ELF in a book chapter titled “ELF attitudes observed in speech and writing.” ELF, as Jenkins defines it, refers to the use of English primarily among NNES, but also includes interactions with NES’s of English. For Jenkins, however, ELF is not one particular English form that is or should be used by all; it allows for different varieties as well. Of the three texts Jenkins examined, one was written about ELF in general, the second focused on pronunciation, and the third focused “on ELF generally and lexicogrammar specifically” (Jenkins, 2007, p. 112). Jenkins found that two of the NNES English teachers were overtly opposed to the concept of certain features in the varieties included in ELF, and that while the third expressed support, it did so in a way that evaluates it “against the yardstick of NS English norms (mainly British or American) rather than in its own right”, thereby creating an “orientation in reality [that] has more in common with those who oppose ELF in principle than with those who support it” (p. 112).

Another more recent study expanded on these studies by looking at “inner circle” participants’ attitudes towards accents from other inner circle countries. Hiraga (2005) was a study of British attitudes towards six different varieties of English accents, three from Britain (RP, urban Birmingham, and rural West Yorkshire) and three from the U.S (American English spoken by a radio announcer, urban New York City, and rural Alabama) (p. 295). 32 University of Oxford students in southern England participated.
Hiraga looked at two dimensions, status and solidarity, finding that the American English accents were rated higher than both of the non-RP British dialects by the British participants. In terms of solidarity with the language of their country, they ranked urban Yorkshire, Network American and urban Alabama higher than RP and Birmingham dialects, with urban NYC the lowest. Overall, Hiraga found that “Network American gained a consistently high ranking (the second) in terms of both status and solidarity dimensions. Overall, the participants judged urban varieties of American English as disparagingly as they did urban British varieties (p.305).

My study, therefore, expands on these earlier attitudinal studies by examining whether how written instructors perceive various written OC varieties in a study which includes both American English and OC writing samples.

**NES and NNES Attitudes towards Different Varieties of English**

Within the above studies that focus on attitudes towards different varieties of English, scholars suggest that NESs may actually be more accepting of different varieties that NNESs. For example, as discussed, Smith (1992) reports an early study with NESs and NNESs from nine different countries in which the understanding of different varieties of English was examined. While the focus of the study was the intelligibility, comprehensibility and interpretability of English speech, finding that those with exposure to the most varieties had the best grasp of the deepest level of meaning or interpretability, comprised mostly of NNESs; however, it also noted that the NNESs were the most critical of what they considered non-standard English.

Jenkins (2007) observed that NNES may be less accepting of non-standard spoken varieties of English than NESs because of their own investment in learning
English. As mentioned, Jenkins study analyzed reactions towards the idea of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), finding that three NNES teachers of English really did not accept it, or to the extent one did, it was in reference to primarily British or American English norms. In commenting on the NNES teachers’ reactions, Jenkins suggested that part of the reaction against the idea of ELF, even though they expressed some ambivalence about it, may come from the fact that they had invested so much time into mastering English themselves. Jenkins remarked,

[it] is, then, entirely understandable that those who have invested considerable time and effort in acquiring ‘native-like’ English may feel threatened by talk of ELF”…these individuals and “countless other NNES ELT professionals like them, have always been given to understand that excellence in English equates with near-nativeness. ELF, by contrast, calls into question not only the wisdom of their having invested their lives in working towards this goal, but also their identities as teachers, which have until now depended on their success in achieving it (pp. 122-123).

As these studies suggest, there may be different reactions towards different varieties of English based upon faculty’s own language backgrounds. To explore this, I asked all my participants questions about first and second language learning, who were equal numbers of NES and NNES. In addition, I analyze their comments about the writing samples to see if they reflect any influence related to their perceptions of “correctness” in the use of English in the writing samples to see if there appears to be a difference in tolerance or rejection of different forms depending upon whether they are NESs or NNESs.
CHAPTER FOUR

VARIETIES OF ENGLISH REPRESENTED IN THE STUDY

Nativization

“Linguistic nativization” is the adoption and modification of a language such as English to the local cultures and ideas in which it is used (e.g., Bamgboye, 1998; Kachru, 1983). There is a large body of literature that attempts to describe different varieties of Englishes, particularly those varieties found in formerly colonized countries where English today is used as an L1 or additional language, or what Kachru (1983) labels “outer circle countries” in his three concentric circles of English. In my study, I chose to include writing samples from three of these countries, India, Nigeria, and Singapore, given their lengthy histories with English and its current widespread use in these countries. This also meant there was a large availability of English newspapers to choose writing samples from in each of these countries. Two writing samples from each of these OC countries were included with two American English newspaper samples in my study.

Before choosing which newspapers to draw the samples from in each country, discussed in-depth in Chapter 5, I first reviewed the literature about what features are characteristic of Indian, Nigerian and Singaporean English that reflect the nativization of English in these countries. These varieties, also called localized forms of English (LFE), are forms which have “distinctive mixture of features of grammar, lexis, pronunciation, discourse, and style” (Strevens, 1992, p. 34). In addition, I looked at other features of the nativization of English, since it may also occur at a rhetorical or organizational level (e.g., Kaplan, 1966; Kachru, 1983; Li, 1996).
In each country in my study, there are different varieties used, some of which are more widely used than others. One of the main issues discussed in nativization studies is whether the differences found are considered “deviations” versus mistakes (Kachru, 1983), or “innovations” versus errors (Bamgboṣe, 1992). Kachru (1983) describes deviation as an appropriate way to describe the types of “context-determined linguistic innovations” that are “pragmatically essential” responses to the different cultural and linguistic settings in which they occur (p. 2). Bamgboṣe (1992) expands this discussion of innovations versus errors in the nativization process, identifying five major internal factors to distinguish between the two. Bamgboṣe identifies these factors as “demographic, geographical, authoritative, codification, and acceptability factors.” Whether a nativized feature is an innovation or an error may be decided by answering the following questions: “How many people use the innovation? How widely dispersed is it? Who uses it? Where is the usage sanctioned? What is the attitude of users and non-users to it?” (p. 3). While Bamgboṣe identifies “acceptability” as the ultimate test of an innovation versus an error, codification and authoritative use are most important, particularly uses codified by their inclusion in dictionaries, grammars and other composition sources. Uses authoritatively sanctioned by examining bodies, such as the acceptance of a form in the standardized entrance exams taken by students, would also be important evidence that a new use is an innovation and not an error.

In examining each of the nativization features of the OC varieties in my study, I first provide a brief overview of the history of English in each country and its status, including information about particular characteristics of English usage there. In each country there may be a range of nativized varieties, with less formal, spoken varieties
often containing more “nativized features” such as the mixing of English and local
languages or code-mixing (Pandharipande, 1987). The scope of my description, however,
is primarily focused on identifying what types of nativized fixtures exist that are more
likely to be found in written discourse, forming the background for my selection of
newspaper writing samples that reflect such features. In particular, I focus on the
following categories in each looking at IE, NE, and SE: loanwords, new lexical items,
grammatical variations, idiomatic expressions, and particular stylistic or organization
characteristics.

**Indian English**

**History.** English has had a long history in India, beginning in the 1600s when a
monopoly on trade with India and the East was given to a group of London merchants
who then formed the East India Company (e.g., D’souza, 2001, p. 3; Kachru, 1983). The
colonizers ultimately departed, but the language remained (e.g., D’souza, 2001;
Annamali, 2004). English is not, however, an official language of India; it is an Associate
Language. Hindi is the official state language. According to D’souza (2001), while many
Indians do learn English, the choice of what languages are taught in the various Indian
states is a local language policy choice. While there are limitations on what states can do,
for example, “in general each state follows its own policy with regard to the role
allocated to English education” (p. 4). Thus, while English may play a leading role in
northeastern states, Hindi plays the leading role in others. In addition, there is a “Three
Language Formula” in India which “ensures the teaching of English, Hindi and the
regional language,” but it is interpreted differently in the various states (p. 4). For
example, in some states an English exam must be passed as part of earning a degree or
diploma so its learning is accentuated, but other states do not require it and in those states, English language acquisition is therefore emphasized less. As D’souza points out, this results in some students in India having a lot of prolonged exposure to English, with all of the education in English, while others may have only a few years. Thus, English is “not a common language shared in the same degree by all Indians and is not the obvious choice when people from different language backgrounds get together” (p. 4). While there are different varieties of English used in India, it is educated Indian English (IE), which cuts across regional and language barriers, although there may be variation depending upon level of education (D’souza, 2001).

Kachru’s book *The Indianization of English*, a compilation of his studies on this issue from 1960-1981, gives an in-depth analysis of the different features and characteristics found in Indian English and why they have occurred. Kachru writes that “Indianness in Indian English….is the result of the acculturation of a Western language in the linguistically and culturally pluralistic context of the subcontinent” (Kachru, 1983, p. 1). Cultural influences that influence the language are, for example, the importance of politeness in interactions such that others’ self-esteem will be enhanced, as well as more deferential treatment reflected in the addition of particular honorific suffixes “ji” or “sahib” to names (Gargesh, 2006, p. 105).

Kachru notes, with no negative meaning intended, that the “Indianization of the English language is a consequence of what linguist have traditionally termed *interference* (or transfer)” (1983, p.1). He agrees with linguist Randolph Quirk that Indian English can be labeled as an interference variety of English, but Kachru views it from a process perspective in explaining how Indian English has evolved to be its own variety. Also,
when he uses the term “interference,” this interference can be due to phonology, but it is also shown in “grammar, lexis collocations and transfer of idioms from Indian languages into English” (p. 80). Other researchers dispute this label of interference; Annamali (2004) writes that the nativized varieties are what is taught in India today, and include nativized lexicon, grammar, and unique discourse features of intonation and stress that go far beyond the concept of interference. In later writings, Kachru focuses on the “functional nativeness” in how English is used in India (Kachru, 2005). Regardless of labels, researchers agree that there are particular features found in Indian English.

**Nativization Features**

**Loanwords.** One particular nativized feature of IE is the borrowing of words from other local languages in India, such as “bandh” for “strike”, “challan” for “bank receipt”, “goonda” for hooligan, and “swadeshi” for “one’s own country” (Mukherjee, 2007, p. 174). Other examples are words for units of measurement drawn from other Indian languages, such as “crore” meaning “10 million”, and “lakh” for 100,000 (Gargesh, 2006).

**Different/New Lexical Items.** Indian English contains new lexical items made up of compound words, such as “batchmate” for “classmate”, “beer-bottle” for “bottle of beer”, “to prepone” for “to bring forward in time”, “schoolgoer “for “pupil/student”, and “shoebite for blister” (p.174). In addition, Mukherjee (2007) notes how lexical items may have different semantic meanings from British English, for example, such as the use of the word “boy” for “butler”. Also, forms that are considered archaic in current day British English, for example, are still used in IE such as the word “thrice” (Mukherjee, 2007).
Other lexical items are formed in IE that vary from other IC forms through the addition of particular prefixes and suffixes. For example, in IE the prefix *de-* is used to create new words as in “de-friend, de-confirm, de-recognize”… In addition, adding the suffix *–ee* is done to create words such as “affectee, awardee, or recruitee” (Mukherjee, p. 175).

New lexical items are also created through different collocations or juxtapositions of words such as “illicit liquor, illicit den, and illicit liquor den”, collocations different from other English varieties (Mukherjee, p. 175). Reduplication also shows transference from local languages and results in diverse lexical forms, as in “little little drops of water” or “big big trees” (Pandharipande, 1987, p 150).

**Grammar.** Mukherjee (2007) demonstrates how IE differs grammatically in its use of articles and choice of prepositions:

Indian speakers of English tend to deviate from British English grammar, for example with regard to article usage (e.g., BrE *a piece of chalk* _ IndE also *a chalk*), invariant tag questions and question tags (e.g., BrE *He has left, hasn’t he?* _ IndE also *He has left, isn’t it?/ . . . , no?*), the use of progressive forms with stative verbs (e.g., BrE *I simply don’t understand* _ IndE also *I am simply not understanding*), and the position of adverbs (e.g., BrE *I always drink coffee* _ IndE also *Always I drink coffee*”) (p. 175).

In addition, new prepositional verbs have also been created in IE, such as “approach to, comprise of, discuss about, order for, and visit to” (Mukherjee, p. 175). Last, words such as “both” vary grammatically, used in both affirmative and negative sentences instead of just affirmative sentences.
**Idioms.** Idioms reflect the local culture in which they have evolved. Kachru (1983) cites translated IE idioms such as “may the fires of ovens consume you” or “a crocodile in a loincloth” as two examples of Indian English translations that are very different from other English varieties. Gargesh (2006) provides the example of a novel juxtaposition of idioms in IE, such as “I am in very good health and hope you are in the same boat” (p. 106).

**Organization/Style.** Pandharipande (1987) writes that words and phrases in IE are often the reflection of the transfer of logic from other indigenous languages found in India, which results in a particular IE style of sentence structure. Building on Mukherjee’s identification of different grammatical patterns above, he describes logic in his analysis of the nativization process as “the underlying thought patterns in the grammatical structure of a language (p. 151). Pandharipande (1987) discusses how many features of IE reflect transfer from Hindi in tag questions where “isn’t it” is used instead of a form such as “hasn’t he”, since in Hindi the tag question would refer to the entire proposition and mean “is it not true” instead of focusing on the individual (p. 151). In addition, the formation of compound words such as “rumour hungry film magazines” is a reflection of the “nominal style” of Indian languages (152), where it is normal to take clauses and verb phrases and create “complex structures with an enormous number of embeddings” resulting in complex sentences. To illustrate this complexity and a style particular to IE, he includes the following excerpt from the June 30, 1982 edition of the newspaper *India Today*:

_The open revolt by the two parties and the declaration by their leaders that they were no longer prepared to have things imposed upon them not only took away a_
lot from the front’s hitherto cohesive image—which stood in contrast to the splintered congress—but also indicated that in the days to come chief minister Jyoti Basu will face opposition, not only from the other side in the Vidhan Sabha, but also from these allies of this party (p. 152).

In addition to discussing the complexity of IE sentences as a reflection of the transfer of logic used in other Indian language, Pandharipande refers to and agrees with Kaplan’s identification of Indian paragraphs as being circular in format because they contain digressions, compared with a more linear format used in other “native” English varieties (p. 153). As this is an older article, it seems to reflect that the idea of World Englishes is still an emerging concept that Pandharipande embraces to some degree, but still has ambivalence about as shown in the use of “native” in describing other Englishes.

Other researchers describe how IE has forms such as administrative talk that stylistically mark it as different. “Minister may like to pass orders” means “the file is sent to the minister for his signature”; also, in administrative language you never “write letters” or “inform anyone”, you “address communications” or “intimate” (Gargesh, 2006, p. 105). Last, Gargesh describes how informal talk and newspapers may mix English and other codes, marking it as IE, such as in the India Times 2004 headline “PM shatters babus’ dreams” with the subheading “Officials Can’t Take Leave for Foreign Assignments” (p. 105).

**Nigerian English**

**History.** The history of English in Nigeria is a lengthy as that of India, with West African “interpreters already being sent to Britain for training” in the 1500s (Omoniyi, 2006, p. 174). These early contacts are considered the precursors to the development of
the pidgins and creoles used to facilitate early trade between West African countries such as Nigeria and European countries (e.g. Banjo, 1993; Omoniyi, 2006). Its more formal use, however, began during its colonizing era in the 1800s. One main difference from India, however, is the status of English within the country. According to Omoniyi (2006), English is the official language, among 420 languages used within the country. English is stressed as the road to higher socio-economic status, and the entrance exams to secondary schools list English language first of the nine different potential subjects students will be tested on. These students must “sit for a minimum of eight 8 and a maximum of nine (9) subjects” (Onomiyi, p. 182).

Linguistic researchers have identified several varieties of Nigerian English (NE), some which are considered more acceptable than others. Building upon Brosnahan (1958)’s identification of four varieties broken down by educational levels, Banjo (1993) also identified four varieties, but used tests of local acceptability and international intelligibility to identify which variety would actually be considered the most acceptable or standard variety of NE from both perspectives. Two of the varieties are marked by influences from other languages in the country in not only particular lexical and grammatical features, but also in phonological features such as prosody and stress. These varieties, Varieties 1 and 2, may be widely used, but are not considered internationally intelligible and therefore would not be what the standard for Nigerian English. Banjo (1993) writes that while the other two varieties are considered more internationally intelligible, the one containing more nativized features (Variety 3) is more socially acceptable to Nigerians than the one closest to that used internationally. That variety,
Variety 4, is really an exonormative model and not the endormative NE standard to be taught, for example, in Nigerian schools.

Particular Nigerian English features in the language are what Adejiba (1989) describes as lexico-semantic variations in NE. Adejiba identified six causes for these differences:

(a) Socio-cultural difference between the English and Nigerian people

(b) Pragmatic aspects of the dynamics of a multilingual context

(c) The exigencies of varying discourse constraints and modes in English and in the indigenous languages

(d) The indomitable, pervasive, and omnipresent influence of the media

(e) The standardization of idiosyncrasies and errors, and

(f) The predominantly formal medium of the acquisition of English (p.166).

Nativization Features

Loanwords. Borrowings from the many different local Nigerian languages include such words as “agbada”, which is a Yoruba name for a type of garment worn in many parts of Nigeria, and “tuwo”, a Hausa word for food usually made from corn or rice (Adejiba, 1989; Banjo, 1993). Others are words such as “obi” and “eze”, which are Igbo words for king and chief, respectively (Banjo, 1993, p. 271). Many other loanwords are found in Nigerian English.

Different/New Lexical Items. Examples of socioculturally based differences that have led to the creation of new lexical items are shown in such sentences as “I wore my new wrapper to church”, with “wrapper” referring to a “piece of cloth tied around the waist or body”; “I have paid the bride price on my fiancée”, with “bride price” referring
to “the items paid to a bride’s family by the groom’s family before a marriage can be contracted” (p. 166). Both of these examples show how a particular Nigerian social practice is expressed in English. Another example is “chewing stick”: this is the name for a “slim, slender stick used in cleaning the teeth” (p. 166). It reflects how a word like “toothbrush” is modified given what is used to accomplish the cleaning of teeth in a different culture and locale.

Some pragmatic differences due to language contact show the influence of various Nigerian languages such as in the sentences “I hear a call” or “I hear a smell” (p. 166). Another example is the NE phrase “the market is not moving…the article does not move” meaning “there are no sales”. (p. 166). Another example is “long legs” meaning “undue influence” as in the phrase “Mr. Dairo used long legs; otherwise he would not have been admitted into the university” (p. 166).

In terms of different discourse restraints, Adejiba (1989) identifies greetings and respect for elders as other influences creating different lexical items and patterns in NE. Greater age is the most important determinant of which verbal strategies are used, and certain cultural norms dictate the choice of particular words. For example, it is not polite to use an elder individual’s name, so a younger person would say in NE “My senior brother has left for Lagos” (p. 169). This researcher suggests that the “excessive use” of “sir” for men and “ma” for females in greetings is at least partially due to this demand for respect, but may also be a historical legacy of the master/servant relationships in Nigeria’s colonial period (p. 169). Another discourse marker is indirectness when speaking of things that are considered indelicate to discuss bluntly. Adejiba suggests this is one reason proverbs are so widely used. One example used is that instead of more
directly saying “to deliver a baby, to put to bed” is used as in “My wife put to bed yesterday” (p. 170).

**Grammar.** While researchers such as Banjo (1993) might classify grammatical differences in Nigerian English as “error” rather than innovation, Banjo recognizes that these grammatical differences are widespread and used by individuals from all educational levels. Kperogi (2012) also agrees that grammatical errors are the second source of differences, “drawn from innocent grammatical errors initially committed by our media and political elite. These errors were repeated several times in the media and, in time, got fossilized and incorporated into our linguistic repertoire” (para. 13). Kperogi notes, however, that “[t]his mode of language change, of course, takes place in all other varieties of English, including British and American English. Kperogi also discusses grammatical uses that are considered uniquely Nigerian, acknowledging that this is an area of controversy where some might consider this a reward of “sloppiness and intellectual laziness” (para. 43) He discusses the confusion, as he describes it, of parts of speech, with a word like opportune, noting “[w]e use this word as if it were a verb when, in reality, it's an adjective in British and American English. It's common to hear our politicians say "I have been opportuned to serve my people" (para. 53).

Another example of a grammatical difference found in NE is the addition of the "-ly" forms to words that are already adverbs. Prominent examples are "outrightly" and "downrightly"--words that do not exist in any English dictionary” (Kperogi, 2012, para. 56). He also notes that NE is marked by preposition errors, consisting of the (1) wrong choice of a preposition or (2) omission of the preposition altogether. While Kperogi says he is not making a judgment and writes about how usage of different forms over time can
become acceptable, he uses the phrase “usage error” frequently in his discussion of these forms.

**Idioms.** Adegbija (1989) cites the influence of media in coining new expressions and standardized idiosyncratic usage as the source of particular nativized features in NE. In the media, expressions that are vivid and exciting often are created or given legitimacy by their very presence in media: examples given are the “backing the camera “to mean “back to the camera”, or “national cake” to mean “rights, privileges, items to be shared by the citizens of Nigeria.” Likewise, standardized acceptance of idiosyncratic usage of vivid phrases such as those found in idioms provide other nativized examples. For example, “a man of timber and caliber” means “a very important and influential personality” (p. 170). Other recent research by Adeyanu (2009) has also focused on particular areas of nativization such as idiomatic expressions used in Nigerian English. Adeyanu raises the problem of intelligibility in a global context because unlike other lexical items that may be different in NE but their meaning can be understood, idiomatic expressions often have very different meanings than what they suggest. For example, he uses “bush-meat” as a lexical example whose meaning can be deduced from its components, compared with “long throat” to refer to greed (p. 9). Adeyanu provides tables with 102 NE idioms, which demonstrate the variety of expressions and how their meaning is often very different from what one using a different variety of English might expect.

**Organization/Style.** The formal character of English teaching in Nigerian schools means that Nigerian English is often flowery and bookish sounding, even biblical and archaic in its discourse patterns. This formal teaching is identified by Adejiba as the
reason for the “highfaluting tendencies of some Nigerian English speakers” (p. 171). In addition, “‘big words’ or ‘jaw-breaking words’ constitute a symbol of knowledgeability and learnedness….whoever has his verbal quiver full of them tends to command respect among users of English” (p. 171).

**Singaporean English**

**History.** English has officially been in Singapore since 1819, brought by its modern founder, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (D’souza, 2001). In Singapore today, English is one of four official languages, along with Tamil, Malay, and Chinese as the other three. English is, however, the main language of government and also the language of instruction in schools (Leimgruber, 2011). Bilingualism is emphasized in Singapore and most students are bilingual in English and one of the other official languages; English, however, is the common factor (D’souza, 2001). In fact, bilingualism in Singapore is defined as “competence in English and Malay/Mandarin/Tamil” (p. 4). In Singapore all students have at least eight years of education in English, so “it is thus a common factor cutting across ethnic and linguistic barriers” (D’souza, p. 5).

While linguistic tolerance exists in terms of a relaxed attitude at an informal level where active code-switching between English and other languages occurs, Singapore’s official language policy actively discourages the use of other dialects in, for example, TV and radio programming (p. 5). The Singapore government is actively involved in the promotion of standards for English, bringing in “foreign experts time and time again to comment on the way English is used by the locals and to help ‘improve’ the standard of the language” (p. 6).
There are two main types of English used in Singapore: Standard Singapore English (SSE), which is considered very similar to Standard English, but Colloquial Singapore English (CSE) is commonly used by Singaporeans (Leimgruber, 2011). CSE, often called Singlish, is a shared colloquial variety of English that “cuts across all barriers of education, ethnicity, proficiency, etc…” (D’souza, p. 7). Singlish is “basically English with code-mixing and borrowing from the other languages spoken in Singapore” (D’souza, p. 8). Singlish may be spoken between people who know each other well, but also with other Singaporeans even if strangers, and “appears to be the preferred variety” in informal situations (p. 8). Singlish can consist of the mixing English and other languages, or the addition of the particle *lah* or *yah* to a phrase. While the government may push the “Speak Good English” movement and emphasize Standard English, Singlish is considered the common dialect of Singapore (Bokhorst-Heng, Alsagoff, McKay, & Rubdy, 2007; D’souza, 2011). Ironically, as D’souza (2001) demonstrates in discussing literary creativity of Singapore and India, it appears that creativity and growth in the use of Singlish in such areas as theatre has occurred largely due to the emphasis by the government on standards in written English. Another example of how Singlish or CSE is different or nativized from how it is used in other countries is in the use of the word *ever* in response to Yes/No questions. Ho and Wong (2001) give this example:

Q: You (*ever*) eat this fruit before?

R: (Yes), *ever*.

As they point out, this is different from how it would be posed in Standard English, which would be as follows:
Q: Have you (ever) eaten this fruit before?

R: Yes, I have.

(p. 79).

Ho and Wong (2001) also give an example of how the use of *ever* in CSE varies in affirmative sentences, such as: “This share *ever* hit forty dollars,” which means “this share has hit forty dollars before” (p. 79).

Singlish is considered the common dialect of Singapore; however, this spoken discourse form of nativized uses of English in Singapore newspapers is almost nonexistent in Singapore newspapers and the few I found were in less formal, conversational forms of writing such as blogs. This is likely a result of the fact that, as in radio and TV programming, the Singapore government discourages the use of non-standard English forms in newspapers as well. The blog “For Art’s Sake” includes an example of the addition of the particle *wah* to comment on a well-attended performance of *butoh*, an avant garde dance form. At the end of the blog, the writer wrote “Wah, so drama” to summarize his reaction to the performance (Mayo, 2012).

Other examples of written differences are in literature that is really considered forms of literary creativity (e.g., Keong, 2007; Quayum, 2007; Wagner, 2007), but, again, I did not find these examples in the numerous newspaper articles I read. I searched not only in national Singapore papers, but also read over 40 articles in student newspapers from several different universities to see if I could find examples of nativized SE features. I was unsuccessful, particularly in articles about topics of national interest. After reading many of the articles from Singapore newspapers, however, I began to note a
difference from the style of writing I was familiar with in American English newspapers: the organization of the articles seemed very different.

**Nativization Features**

As discussed, finding nativized features in the same categories noted in IE and NE in Singapore newspapers was very difficult, as Standard Singapore English appears to be the only form that appears to be promoted and sanctioned in this media venue and very close to what would be defined as “British Standard English”. The main feature I did note had to do with organization and style.

**Organization/Style.**

One particular feature that I found in Singapore newspaper articles that was different from those found in the papers of the other countries in my study was the way in which paragraphs were organized and presented. Most of the paragraphs were composed of one sentence, although each might be 1-3 lines long including punctuation, compared with paragraphs consisting of several sentences found in samples from the other countries. I found this pattern of writing consistent between the student and national newspapers, evidence of a different organizational structure that seemed a different type of nativization from that evidenced in the Indian, Nigerian and American English articles. After reading over 100 articles from Singapore papers, I decided that this organizational structure was pervasive and different enough to mark Singapore writing, at least in newspaper articles, worth investigating in my study. I confirmed my observations in piloting my writing samples with other AE speakers, as discussed in Chapter 5.
Conclusion

In summary, English has gone through a process of nativization in India, Nigeria, and Singapore, but widely used spoken varieties such as Singlish may not be easily found in written newspaper articles because of government or other influences. In each country because of the other languages also used whose status may be equal or more official than English, there may be different varieties used that are considered more or less socially acceptable and internationally intelligible. As discussed, the use and status of English in the three OC countries in my study varies in its official status and how widespread its use is throughout the country. In India, it is an associate language, with Hindi the official language, and the amount of English learned by students varies by region. It is not necessarily the common language used between Indians from different regions. In Nigeria, English is the official language, the primary one used as the language of government and schools and is widely used as a lingua franca. In Singapore, English is one of four official languages, but all students are exposed to at least 8 years of English. It is the common language used in the country, however Singlish is the popular, colloquial form that cuts across all social classes and marked by code-mixing and other nativized features frowned upon by the government.
CHAPTER 5

METHODS

Design of the Study

I chose to conduct a qualitative study as the most appropriate way to obtain rich, in-depth and detailed descriptions of the reasons for my participants’ rankings of the writing samples and potential influence of their L1 background (e.g., Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). My study consisted of two main parts: first, the participants read and ranked the writing samples; second, they answered open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview about the reasons behind their rankings as well as their own educational and language backgrounds. I designed my study where the time commitment was greater than it might be in a closed-end question survey, for example, but still fairly limited in order to encourage as much participation as possible. Most instructors took one (1) to one and a half (1 ½) hours overall to complete both parts of the process.

Research Site

The interviews were conducted at a large, comprehensive public state university in the southwestern region of the United States. This university has over 75,000 undergraduate and graduate students, and is part of a larger state university system. It offers composition classes and majors in numerous disciplines, and has been increasing its recruiting of international students and faculty in recent years. In addition, many composition instructors are Teaching Assistants (TAs), both domestic and International Teaching Assistants, a common feature of larger public universities today. Having access to composition instructors and professors from a variety of language backgrounds was one of the guiding principles for my choice of this research site.
Participants

My study included a variety of instructors, both in disciplines, language backgrounds, levels and ranks. To answer my research questions about whether composition instructors and instructors in other disciplines value the same features and characteristics in “good writing”, I recruited participants from these different groups. In addition, because I was also exploring the potential influence of L1 language backgrounds, I recruited approximately equal numbers of NES and NNESs (as defined in Chapter 2), 10 NESs and 9 NNESs. Furthermore, my participants were from a variety of levels and ranks: many were TAs, particularly among the composition instructors, which I expected given the large size of the university and the fact that many English 101 and 102 courses are taught by Teaching Assistants (TAs). Of my other participants, some were assistant, associate or full professors, with others holding lecturer status. All of the participants were either in PhD programs or held a PhD in a particular discipline.

I did not, however, attempt to select faculty from any particular country of origin, as this was not the main focus of my selection process and would have been very difficult to achieve. In my recruitment of international faculty participants, I tried to target fields in the university where larger concentrations of international faculty are typically found, such as STEM fields. While unintentional, none of the international instructors who responded to my request for participation were from OC countries: they were all from various EC countries and had typically learned American English or British English varieties of English.

Within the two broader categories of participants the first group was composed of eight university composition teachers, four NESs and four NNESs, all of whom teach one
or more of the required undergraduate English composition courses to both international
and American students. For domestic or resident American students, these are English
101 and 102; for international students considered NNESs at this particular university,
there are separate sections (English 107/108). International students, however, can elect
to take English 101 or 102, but most are advised to and do enroll in those separate
sections. Of this group of eight instructors, six were TAs and two were full-time
instructors who have already completed their PhDs. Of these eight, six currently teach
English 101/102 and two teach English 107/108. All but one of the participants has or is
studying for a PhD in Rhetoric in Composition; the other has a PhD in a related
discipline.

The other group of participants consisted of 6 NES and 5 NNES subject area
university professors (11 total), whose specialties are in disciplines other than English
Rhetoric and Composition studies. They were recruited from diverse various subject
areas such as construction, engineering, biology, education, philosophy and astrophysics.

Procedure

First, I identified which features and characteristics marked the particular varieties
of English in my study. Then, I went through the process of identifying and selecting the
articles I would use in my study. Finally, I recruited and met with most of my participants
in-person (17 of 19), followed by one Skype and one phone interview.

Identification of Potential Newspapers

I first identified 3-4 widely read national newspapers from the U.S., then those
ones identified as comparable in terms of type and level of readership from the OC
countries in my study. In selecting the American papers, I asked American friends, family
members, and colleagues as well as drawing from my own experience as a reader of American newspapers. I identified *The New York Times, The Washington Post, and USA Today* as three widely-read papers I would consider selecting articles from for the American writing samples. The collective impression was that *The New York Times* was the most intellectual of widely circulated American newspapers, with *USA Today* considered easier to read and more accessible to a broader audience in terms of language, length of articles and presentation (color pictures and advertisements used throughout make its reading more “fun”). In addition to asking other Americans which 3-4 newspapers they considered the most popular in the U.S., current research supported my choices. I found that *The Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and The New York Times* were ranked as the top three papers in terms of circulation, with *The Washington Post* in 5th or 6th place (Vega, 2011). Since *The Wall Street Journal* is a business paper, I decided not to include it as a source of newspaper articles because of its more technical, financial orientation. In my final choice of papers for the source of the American writing samples, I decided I would include one each from *The New York Times* and one from *USA Today* as a reflection of two popular newspapers using American English, and then proceeded to search for suggestions for similar papers read in the three other OC countries in my study.

For potential sources of Indian newspapers, I received suggestions from two Indian students through a contact in the international student office at a large, regional comprehensive university. Each student suggested more than three widely read papers, but there was overlap in two of them, so I picked these to consider first. They were *The Times of India* and *Indian Express*. The others suggested were *The Hindu* and *Hindustani Times*. In addition, I searched for the top 10 and top 50 Indian papers on the internet; the
top 10 only included one paper in English, *The India Times*. When I searched for the top
15, they included more papers in local languages than English, reflecting India’s
complexity and use of many different languages. When I searched for the top online
papers, however, *the Times, Hindustan Times, Indian Express, and The Hindu* were in the
top six of 25 Indian papers, with the others in a language other than English. Ultimately, I
chose to use articles from *The Times of India* and *Indian Express* (one from each)
because the samples I found in them seemed to best reflect Indian English nativization, as
well as being the two papers mentioned by both sources.

For widely read national papers for Nigeria, I asked a Nigerian student at a
regional, comprehensive U.S. public university for suggestions of papers comparable to
the American ones I planned to use. This student suggested *The Guardian, This Day, and
The Punch* as 3 widely read papers, with *The Guardian* as the most like *The New York
Times*. When I asked which one was most like *USA Today*, the student was not familiar
with it, but suggested *The Sun* when I said it was a paper that used colorful ads and
shorter less complex language. The student did label *The Sun* a tabloid, however, which
made me question its comparability. I also pulled up a list of the top 50 Nigerian papers
in English on the internet, and all of these suggestions were near the top of the list.
Further internet research about levels of circulation and readership convinced me to use
an article from *The Guardian* and another from *The Punch*, as well as from the reaction
to articles in my two pilot studies.

Last, another university contact put me in contact with two former Singaporean
university colleagues, who also suggested two of the same three sources of widely read
newspapers, *The Straits Times* and *Today*. *The New Paper* and *The Business Times* were
mentioned as well, but not by each of them. As with the other sample selections, I checked on the internet to see what the circulation/readership was of these papers in Singapore. In each case, however, all were owned by SPH Holdings (SPH); as of October 12, 2012, 7 of the top 10 newspapers in Singapore were owned by SPH (AsiaOne, 2012). Of these ten, the seven SPH papers were all in English with *The Straits Times*, *The Business Times*, and *The New Paper* all listed in the top three positions, respectively. *Today* was not in this list but was actually started as a rival to *The Straits Times* in 2000. It is a free, online paper, unlike the others which require a subscription. After looking for samples and through testing various articles with my test participants, I decided to use articles from *The Straits Times* and *Today*. The fact that both of these articles were also the ones mentioned by both contacts and are considered rivals, from different companies, also influenced to my final choice.

**Selection of Topics**

In selecting topics for the articles, my choices were made with the overarching goal of limiting any influence on their rankings that might be related to awareness of where they were written. I did not want the participants to be sensitized to the country of origin prior to reading the samples so that their evaluation of the writing would be based upon their initial reaction to word choice, organization, and other features without any possible prejudgment or bias based upon which country from which they come. To achieve this, I selected articles that would not immediately mark their country of origin due to the topic by picking topics that were more global or universal in nature.

One of the challenges I encountered in my search of for global topics was that many news articles were distributed and written by writers from IC countries in the OC.
papers, often British and American writers. To address this, I began focusing on the topics that appeared to be important topics in all countries based upon the number of articles I found, such as education or energy. I searched in news, editorial and opinion pages, looking for articles containing nativization features, and it is from these areas of the newspapers that I have drawn my writing samples. After reading hundreds of articles, at least 40 from each country written in September and October 2012, I decided that topics such as solar energy, teaching and reading, were important in all of the countries in my study and would be good topics to draw from.

I initially tried to find samples from the same section of the paper, such as all from opinion, news, or editorial pages, with the initial belief that these would provide my participants with articles that were most similar except for features associated with the nativization of English in the particular country. As mentioned, however, when the topics were global news topics, often the writers were IC writers working for a large organization such as the Associated Press, whose articles were included in various OC papers. This seemed the case in particular with Singapore papers. Following the principles of emergent design flexibility where the researcher adapts the study design as circumstances require, not being locked into an original design (Patton, 2002), I broadened my choice of articles to include opinion and editorial articles demonstrating nativization (see Appendix for a more in-depth breakdown of newspaper articles read from each country).

In selecting the articles, however, because my focus was to select articles that reflected particular nativization features, I did not select them as articles that would
necessarily be written for an international audience. I made my selections based upon, as discussed above, the fact that they were in widely read newspapers in each country.

Length, Formatting and Editing

In selecting the articles, I chose articles between 326 and 1,131 in length words in length. I chose shorter articles for one main reason: I wanted to include at least two writing samples from each of the countries in my study, but to encourage as much participation as possible I decided I needed to limit the time spent reading and ranking them to as close to 30 minutes as possible. One criticism of print newspapers today is that the articles are too long, which is why people are reading on the internet, which generally has shorter articles (Kingsley, 2010). According to MacMillan (2010), Reuter’s news editors don’t like articles exceeding 500 or 600 words. Four of my articles were under 600 words (Articles B, C, D, and H), three 700-800 words (Articles E, F, and G), with the longest article, Article A, at 1,131 words in length. In my pilot studies, discussed in more depth below, I verified that articles of this length would meet this criterion.

Before giving them to participants, I reformatted them using Times New Roman, 12 point font, again to minimize any differences in how the articles might look or be perceived for this reason and to keep the focus of the participants on the elements they identify with “good writing”. This font type and size is one preferred in the social science fields such as sociolinguistics, and required by American Psychological Association (APA) style guide, which ultimately drove my selection.

Again keeping a focus on the perceptions of the features found in good writing, I removed references to country names or individuals that would identify the article to that country, which occurred only a few times in some of the articles. In these cases, in order
to avoid any influence on the reading and potential sensitivization of the readers to the English varieties of the articles, I edited it out by replacing it with something like “our country” or “this country”. I did not, however, change spelling, leaving the British spelling used by the countries other than the US.

Pilot Studies

Last, before selecting the final articles used in my study, I did test studies with two different native AE speakers twice, using different samples each time. Their feedback on features of nativization confirmed my perceptions of differences from AE. In addition, my choice of topics was influenced by their comments, as some initial topics were noted as “boring or uninteresting”. For the same reason I excluded some other topics, where there was a huge difference in ranking where how good the writing appeared tied to the content. Leki (1995) identified content as an important factor in how faculty with expertise in a particular area reacted to particular essays, so this made me sensitive to the importance of content and again, followed the concept of emergent design flexibility.

In conducting my pilot studies twice with the same participants, I compared their responses to the ranking of one set of articles and then another. Their remarks ultimately led to my final article selections. Some of the comments that were made about a particular variety showed a strong reaction to a particular word choice or organizational format, which again informed my final article selections.

Data Collection Timeframe

Selecting and testing the articles took approximately six weeks, beginning at the end of September, 2012. After this, my data collection took place over approximately 18
weeks, from October 24, 2012 to February 19, 2013. Most of the data collection occurred during two concentrated trips to the research site in mid-November and again three weeks later, in early December. 17 participants were recruited in 2012 and met with me in person, where they read the samples and I then interviewed them in person immediately thereafter.

Two more interviews occurred in February, 2013, with one by Skype and the second by phone, so 19 instructors participated overall. The gap between the bulk of the interviews and the remaining two was due to end of semester exams, the winter break, and workload of potential participants at the beginning of the new semester. It was increasingly difficult to find participants for various reasons. When I began my study, I enlisted the assistance of various department heads on a trip to the research site in mid-October, including the heads of the English composition program and the other departments; these individuals sent out my recruitment email to various members of their departments or programs which prompted a fairly good initial response, particularly from composition instructors. I also followed up with my own recruitment emails a few days after the emails were sent from the various program heads, which also encouraged participation. Interest began to wane towards the end of my second trip, however, due to approaching exams and the upcoming holidays.

In early January, just after classes began, I again sent out many recruitment emails, but most were ignored or the participant responded that he or she was unavailable due to prior commitments or an excessive workload. I finally was able to connect with my two final participants in February; one of them helped me recruit my final participant. This technique had worked well in obtaining the participation of more participants in
2012. Often potential participants simply did not see or receive my email. When I asked one participant why he had not initially responded to my general email or the one sent first by a program head, he did not even recall receiving it. By asking some participants if they knew someone else who might be interested, I was given other names of individuals to contact. Often they had mentioned it to their colleague, so that helped lift my email from the mass of emails so that it could be opened and considered. I was, however, very careful to limit how I contacted individuals so that their participation was voluntary. I reminded them that their identities and information was confidential and that they could choose to withdraw at any time, even after the completion of the interviews.

**Data Collection**

There were two key sections to the data collection after the participants were recruited: first, the participants read and ranked the selected writing samples and then, I interviewed them about their rankings and what features and characteristics in the writing influenced their rankings. In addition, I also asked them questions about their personal backgrounds, but not until after they had explained their rankings.

Before my participants began reading, I told them they would read samples from national newspapers around the world, and then asked them to read and rank the samples according to their view of what good writing was, evaluating them from the perspective of their role as a university instructor. I did not give them a definition of “good writing,” since I was interested in their perspectives and did not want to influence them by providing such a definition up front. In addition, I did not ask them for their definition of good writing, since I was interested in understanding their practices and beliefs as reflected in their actual practice, and asking for such a definition up front also might have
influenced the way they evaluated the samples. Similarly, I did not provide a rubric for them to use as this would have influenced how they evaluated the samples. Some did ask if there was a rubric or other type of guideline they should follow, but I reiterated that there was no rubric and that they should evaluate and rank the writing samples based upon their own views of good writing as a university instructor. Again, I did this because I did not want to influence how they ranked the articles. Two or three chose to create their own rubrics, reflecting their own practices in evaluation, but most did not. I told them that I preferred that they not write on the samples, but they could take notes. Most did; I generally provided each participant with blank piece of lined paper to write on, which they then referred to in the interview.

In giving directions, other than saying that the articles were from broadly circulated national papers in different countries; I did not specify who the audience for the articles were. Again, I did not want to overly sensitize them to the source of the articles and the fact that different varieties of English were included, since the goal was to see how participants evaluated the articles acting in the role of instructors in a U.S. university, reading writing samples in the way they would read student papers. A few did try to clarify where they were from, and I reiterated that they were from national papers that were widely read.

**Instrument**

The interview questions were broken into two main parts, with the first section designed to understand why they ranked the samples based upon the organization, grammar or other features (see Appendix for interview questions), and the second part to understand more about them and their personal backgrounds. The questions in the second
part were critical to exploring how their own language learning in particular, and status as an NES or NNES, might affect their evaluations.

Before beginning each interview, I told my participants that their interviews were confidential and asked if I could tape-record the interviews, which all participants agreed to. I also told them that they did not have to answer any questions they did not want to answer, and could withdraw at any time from my study before or after the interview (as standard procedure for studies involving human subjects). In my instructions I also told my participants they would read eight short newspaper articles from four different countries, but I did not mention that the study or samples included different varieties of English. I did not mention or discuss language backgrounds before they read the articles, only in the second part of my interview, since I wanted to avoid sensitizing them to these issues. This was a critical feature of my study design. In the instructions, I told the participants I had removed any explicit references to countries, but I did not indicate it was done for any reason related to language or Englishes.

I conducted my 19 interviews in a semi-structured manner using with open-ended questions in order to create a more natural process and discussion (Patton, 2002). 18 of the 19 interviews immediately followed the reading and ranking of the eight writing samples. In only one, the Skype interview, was there a time lag between the reading/ranking of the articles and the interview, but it occurred within two days after I sent the instructor the writing samples.

Most of the interviews took approximately 30 minutes, with the shortest taking 20 minutes and the longest approximately one hour. For the most part, the questions about the rankings of the samples followed the order listed in the questionnaire, but when
asking about their personal backgrounds, I often asked the questions in a slightly different order because it was more natural to do so as several brought up their language learning in response to my earlier questions about their education. Overall, however, I adhered to a similar protocol with all the participants in how I gave directions, presented the samples, and interviewed them. I made an effort to limit additional commentary, although I did often murmur “umhum” or make a similar comment in order to show I was actively listening.

**Data Analysis**

My analysis was inductive and comparative (Patton, 2002). It was inductive in that I immersed myself in the details and specifics of my data in order to find important themes and categories (p. 41), and comparative in how I organized and evaluated the data based upon different instructor types, including language backgrounds (p. 50). I began my analysis using a higher level approach first in order to get a broad overview of my findings, and then delved deeper into the results by examining transcripts of the interviews, notes and observations I made during my interviews. The tables I created, found in Chapter 6, vary to reflect the different types of participants including various subcategories.

After analyzing the data from this broader, quantitative viewpoint, I read interview responses I had written during each interviews and my notes taken during and immediately after interviews to begin identifying themes explaining the reasons for the rankings, and if L1 background and language learning appeared to influence their rankings. After identifying these themes, I read the transcripts of the interviews and noted particular comments and quotes that were related and provided deeper insights. In
particular, I noted insights I felt were particularly salient to what university instructors think is good writing. I also analyzed the comments about language learning, in order to see if any patterns or themes emerged that explained why particular samples were ranked the way they were, and if there appeared to be any particular differences between NES and NNES perceptions.

**Role of the Researcher**

As researcher, my role included my activities as recruiter, interviewer and interpreter of the results. As discussed, I first made the decisions about the countries from which I would choose writing samples to be included, and then selected those that would be evaluated by the participants. I then identified potential pools of participants, recruited, and began interviewing them in November, 2012 as an ongoing process to allow flexibility and obtain as many participants as possible.

One of my main concerns in interacting with my participants was to avoid influence or bias from my background as an English writing instructor since 2008, although mainly in preparatory, noncredit classes in Intensive English program at three different universities. I wanted to avoid influencing my participants on the merit of any of the writing samples, so I took steps at multiple stages of the process in order to limit this bias. First, I did this by piloting my writing samples with other AE speakers and writers to confirm my perceptions of differences between varieties, focusing on nativization features in their selection but not ranking the samples myself. Second, in presenting the articles and asking interview questions, I was careful to avoid commentary about the articles regarding particular phrases, expressions, forms of organization, or any other areas that were explored in the interview. Last, I crafted the interview questions to reflect...
a neutral stance towards World Englishes in general, particularly in reference to an AE standard, and in my directions, did not emphasize that the writing samples were written in different varieties of English, just that they were from newspapers in four different countries.

**Trustworthiness and Authenticity**

Two important criteria in constructivist studies are trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). To establish trustworthiness, I followed their four constructivist criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These four criteria are parallel to those identified in other “objective” studies following a “positivist paradigm”, namely internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. These criteria are necessarily different, however, because a constructivist framework is based upon a social construction of reality. There is not a “real world” to measure against, but one whose interpretation is constructed by individuals from their own value systems and experiences (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

**Trustworthiness**

**Credibility.** To create a credible research study, a researcher must present the information from a neutral standpoint, avoiding any predisposition to “prove a particular perspective or manipulate the data to arrive at predisposed truths” (Patton, 2002, p. 51). In my study, credibility refers to how I investigate and report the perceptions of good writing by U.S. university instructors where OC varieties of English are included in the samples. My “progressive subjectivity” in selecting writing samples is one of the key features establishing credibility, since it reflects my own perceptions and awareness of the differences in the OC varieties, key to the selection of the writing samples. As I read
more about nativized forms such as different collocations or lexical choices, I was more sensitive to them when reading newspaper articles from the three OC countries in my study. In addition, as I searched for samples in various newspapers, my growing perceptions of differences in OC English varieties made me broaden my choice of the articles to choose in order to present my participants with clearer examples of nativization.

I also used triangulation as a method to establish credibility in selecting the samples, as in “cross-checking specific data items of a factual nature” instead of using it as a positivist credibility check (Guba & Lincoln, pp. 240-241). I did this in my selection of the newspapers to consider in my study: I cross-checked my university contacts’ suggestions of widely read newspapers in the U.S. and the OC countries against current readership and circulation figures on the internet. Last, my own knowledge of AE as a native speaker, writer, and writing teacher also added to the credibility of my study in choosing samples that reflected different varieties of English.

**Transferability.** Transferability, the parallel to external validity, refers to the generalizability of the results of my study. While I do not think that it is possible to generalize the results of my participants’ reactions to writing samples including OC varieties to all U.S. university instructors on all campuses, I do believe that the ranking and elements identified and discussed in detail by my 18 participants, both NNES and NES, do provide significant insights to others investigating good writing in other contexts. My tables summarizing the features of good writing expected by university instructors informs the field of writing, as well as the detailed descriptions of why certain features are preferred or rejected, provides suggestions for future researchers to consider.
Dependability. Dependability is a parallel criterion to the positivistic criterion of reliability, which traditionally requires that the methods and procedures used do not change over time. In a constructivist study, however, there is a built-in expectation that there will be modifications due to the unfolding nature and emergent design of these types of study. In my study, I broadened my selection of writing samples to include more than one type of article, since that captured more examples of nativization that could then be evaluated against other varieties more explicitly. The writing samples themselves, however, did not change during the study once I made my selection, and I followed the same process each time with my participants in presenting the articles and then interviewing them soon thereafter.

Confirmability. The final criterion, confirmability, is parallel to the positivist criterion of objectivity and is concerned with the idea that the “data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts and persons apart from the evaluator and are not simply figments of the evaluator’s imagination” (p. 243). The data itself is the source of confirmability in this constructivist study, as well as the “logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes” (p. 243). In my study, I report the responses and evaluations of the participants to the writing samples in a way that I believe presents their perceptions accurately. I do this by presenting the overall rankings of the articles in table formats broken out by instructor types, as well as by language backgrounds to make a coherent presentation of the findings. Furthermore, I provide detailed descriptions of their perceptions and comments that explain their views of the elements of good writing.
Authenticity

In addition to trustworthiness, authenticity is important in a constructivist study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Fairness is the key criteria, and “refers to the extent to which different constructions and their underlying value structures are solicited and honored with the evaluation process” (p. 245-46). In my process and in the reporting of my participants evaluations of the writing samples, I have followed the same protocol in presenting the articles to them, interviewing, organizing and analyzing the results. I did not comment on any particular article or variety of English in discussing the articles with them, and did not suggest any particular ranking of the articles. Last, I took notes while recording the interviews, and checked the accuracy of the transcriptions, which were all done within 1-2 weeks after each interview. I asked questions about the language backgrounds of all the participants in order to see if any of their constructions of the merit of the writing were influenced by different backgrounds or potentially different value systems.

Following Guba and Lincoln’s suggestion, my role as evaluator in analyzing the data was “to seek out, and communicate, all such constructions and to explicate the ways in which such construction – and their underlying value systems – are in conflict” (p. 246). Including approximately equal numbers of NES and NNES in my study and reporting their rankings and comments, while discussing how their own language backgrounds might impact their evaluation of the writing samples, is one example of how I authenticate my study.
Limitations of the method

One of the limitations of the study and method used was that the number of writing samples my participants reviewed and ranked was limited, but this was necessary in order to obtain participation within the proposed timeframe of the study. Asking busy individuals to add a lot of additional reading to their workload, as well as the time to be interviewed about their choices, required this limitation. In addition, while it would be preferable to have an even greater number of participants, this study with 8 composition instructors and 11 instructors from other disciplines who participated fully in the process provides valuable insights.

Conclusion

My study design and analysis reflects constructivist principles throughout, both from my own background as an AE speaker and writer, as well as the perceptions of my participants. In the following chapters, I report the rankings, evaluations and features identified as important in good writing by university instructors, if language backgrounds appear to matter, and the significance of these findings.
CHAPTER 6

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

In this chapter I present and analyze the data gathered through my interviews with the 19 instructors in my study. The names used are all pseudonyms, but ones chosen to reflect their L1 language backgrounds and give a deeper sense of their identities while still protecting their confidentiality, names commonly used in the countries of their birth. My analysis focuses on answering my research questions, which I present in four parts:

Part 1: What features of good writing are valued by university instructors?

Part 2: How are English varieties other than American English perceived and do they appear to be accepted equally?

Part 3: How does the particular discipline of the instructor appear to affect rankings of various writing samples?

Part 4: In what ways does first language background appear to affect the rankings of various writing samples?

Overview

In order to answer these four questions, I first analyzed the instructors’ rankings of the various samples and their reasons for these rankings, both from notes taken during the interviews and from my review of the transcripts of these interviews. As I did this, a very recursive process, themes emerged highlighting why certain articles were ranked higher or lower than others due to perceptions of particular writing features in these articles. Table 1 below is a compilation of the different rankings, with a key to the articles’ countries of origins and titles of newspapers also included for reference. The instructors’ areas of expertise and whether they are an NES or NNES are also included.
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% of Those Who Ranked Articles in the Upper Half

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<tr>
<td>83%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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U – Upper Half (Ranked #1-4).
ENG – English; P – Philosophy; C – Composition; S – Science; E – Education; U – Urban Studies

*This instructor ranked articles differently; they are not included in totals but are discussed below.

**Article Key:**
A - 3 missed chances – *The Straits Times* (Singapore) (sustainable population strategies)
B - On the backfoot: On the corruption issue, politicians are doing a shoddy job of defending themselves – *Times of India* (India) (political corruption in India’s Congress)
C – U.S. finalizes steep tariffs on China’s solar panels – *USA Today* (United States) – (tariffs imposed to resolve trade dispute)
D - Ping pong fears – *India Express* (India) – (crackdown in China on citizens due to security concerns)
E - Want to Ruin Teaching? Give Ratings – *New York Times* (United States) – (criticism of proposed teacher ratings based upon student test scores)
F - Teachers and national development – *The Guardian* (Nigeria) – (poor teacher compensation affects quality of teaching and national development)
G - Time to revive the reading culture – *The Punch* (Nigeria) (importance of reading to society)
H - MNCs want more clarity on foreign worker policy – SICC CEO says changes to law make it hard for firms to plan for next four to five years – *Today Online* (Singapore) (multinational companies want more information about how foreign worker policies will affect them)
As illustrated in Table 1, there was a particularly strong preference for one of the articles, Article E, as well as an equally strong dislike for another article, Article A. Article E, “Want to Ruin Teaching? Give Ratings,” a U.S. *New York Times* article criticizing the use of teacher ratings based upon student test scores, was ranked highly by most, with 50% ranking it as number one and 83% ranking it as number one or two (or in the “acceptable group” by an instructor who ranked articles this way as discussed below). Overall, 83% ranked Article E in the top half or “acceptable” (i.e., #1-4). On the opposite end of the rankings was Article A, “3 missed chances,” a Singapore *Straits Times* article about sustainable population strategy, ranked number eight by 67% of the participants, with only 22% ranking it in the top half (or 78% in the bottom half). It was also in the “send back” group by Instructor #4.

The rankings for other articles varied more, although there was quite a bit of agreement on whether a particular article ranked in the top or bottom half or in the middle. Article C, “U.S. finalizes steep tariffs on China’s solar panels,” a U.S *USA Today* article about tariffs being imposed to resolve a trade dispute, was ranked in the top half by 72% of the instructors; additionally, it was ranked number one or two by eight (8) instructors (44%). Article D is from India’s *India Express*, and talks about a recent security crackdown on citizens in China by the Communist Party, ranked in the upper half by 56%, same as Article G, “Time to revive the reading culture,” a Nigerian *Guardian* article about the importance of reading to economic stability and prosperity. Ranked slightly lower was Article F at 50%. This article, titled ‘Teachers and national development,’ is another Nigerian newspaper article about how teacher welfare is important to overall national development from *The Punch*. 
There were three articles ranked lower, with only 33% of the participants placing Article H, “MNCs want more clarity on foreign workers” in the upper half. This Singapore Today Online article discusses the concern of multinational corporations operating in Singapore. Article B, “On the backfoot: On the corruption issue, politicians are doing a shoddy job of defending themselves,” a Times of India article about corruption in India’s Congress, was ranked lower, with 28% of participants ranking it in the upper half, just slightly higher than the 22% who ranked “3 missed chances” there.

**Part 1: Features of Good Writing**

To answer the first question, I explored the features of good writing identified as important by the instructors in my interviews with them about the ranking of the samples. One point that was raised initially had to do with the use of newspaper articles for the writing samples; it was mentioned frequently in the discussion of how they were ranked. In general, most noted that this type of writing was not the type they normally evaluate as instructors; two instructors, however, had moderate to extensive backgrounds in journalism, which initially led to their different reactions to the choice of samples. Professor Jones, in particular, found it very difficult to rank the articles against each other because she viewed them as four different subgenres including news, commentary, opinion and editorials that you would not typically rate against each other, so she separated them into “ok” or “send back” to writer. She did revisit and combine her initial groupings into two main types during our interview, however, putting them into “news” and “opinion” subgroups. The other instructor who had worked as a journalist, Professor Grant, ranked them two ways initially: one by subgenres of news and opinion and the
other as a whole group, as most instructors in the study had. The group ranking is what we discussed in our interview.

Even though newspaper articles are not normally the type of writing my participants evaluate in their current roles as university instructors, they had definite ideas about how the articles should be organized and what kind of information should be provided. Overall, the features or characteristics identified as most important in their rankings fell into two main categories: organization and content.

**Organization**

The organization of the articles was mentioned by almost one-half of my participants at the beginning of their interviews about their rankings. More specifically, by “organization,” participants referred to (1) how information was presented within the article, (2) paragraph length, and (3) sentence structure.

**Presentation of ideas.** There appeared to be a certain expectation about how and where information should be presented. Professor Petrescu, an engineering professor, said he purposely tried to evaluate the articles on “his perception of the need of the American reader.” He described American style as following a format that could be described using the acronym bluf, which means

…bottom line up front. Sometimes it’s referred to as ‘tell them what you are gonna’ tell them, then tell them what you told them,’ but, practically, the American reader needs to see the structure of what she or he or she is gonna’ read at the beginning of the writing…. and the structure of the paragraph should go from general to particular rather than the other way around…so based on that I have done my evaluations.
Professor Stone also noted the importance of presenting information at the beginning of a piece of writing in his ranking of Article C, saying, “Number 2 I ranked was C. This was on the solar panels…I thought it was competent. It gave you the information you needed up front.”

In addition to putting key information up front, my participants noted the importance of an organization that was linear, logical and interesting throughout, where purpose and message were critical to the overall effectiveness of the piece.

Professor Stockton noted how American English writing prefers a linear presentation of ideas. She mentioned how this poses a challenge with many of the Asian students she teaches as a composition instructor, noting that “their organization is more circular and they can’t understand why we want to have everything linear.”

While others did not explain exactly what they meant by a logical presentation of ideas, linearity appears a closely related idea. Professor Smith said, referring to his own writing principles,

So when I talk about these things they have good organization, take home lesson, built a logical case, those are all things that I do all the time in my work, using writing as one of the main tools to be able to get a story together on this. So I’m always, telling the people who work with me we’re telling a story here. What’s the story? It’s got to be an interesting story. If it’s not an interesting story no-one’s going to want to read it.

Professor Arnold also described the importance of logical reasoning, and particularly a clear purpose in achieving the goal of the writer. He liked “Want to Ruin Teaching? Give Ratings” the best, saying
I thought that it had the best and clearest explanation of what it was trying to do, I guess. And there is a very clear statement from the person who was writing its belief, what they were writing about. It had a really clear kind of like logical reasoning and also it tried to like establish like the writer’s credibility. It tried to make appeals to people’s emotions. Like it was very obviously written who was used to trying to persuade people through their writing. It seemed like to me it was very clear what the purpose was.

In discussing other articles, Professor Arnold expanded his comments about the importance of purpose and how it was missing in other articles such as Article H, “MNCs want clarity on foreign worker policy.”

*Liz:* What did you or did you not like about it?

*Professor Arnold:* It wasn’t clear like what like the genre of this was. I wasn’t actually on a lot of them and that was kind of an issue not knowing, really knowing what the purpose or the genre of the writing was.

Other participants did not explain as explicitly what they liked, but common terms used in describing the articles they preferred, often referring to Article E and C, were that they were well-organized and clearly written.

**Paragraph length.** Another important organizational feature was related to the length of paragraphs in various articles. In his discussion of American writing style, Professor Petrescu noted, “So there should be a certain length of paragraph which is easy to read by the American reader that’s about four to five sentences in a paragraph.” Professor Kahla, an engineering instructor, agreed with him. In describing why he liked
Article E the most, he specifically mentioned the way the paragraphs were structured, saying

Well, it was very well written. The style was very easy to follow. The format was easy to follow as well. There were spaces between the paragraphs. Each paragraph has its own idea. It was kind of like a nice segue to the next paragraph. It was spaced out…

This particular paragraph length was a feature perceived as missing in the lowest ranked Article A, "3 missed chances," which was comprised of one sentence paragraphs, although often 2-3 lines long. When I asked Professor Kahla which one he ranked last, he picked Article A, again mentioning the paragraph structure.

Liz: Which one did you think was worst?

Professor Kahla: Worst was A.

Liz: And why is that?

Professor Kahla: It was hard to follow. Very small paragraphs. Some paragraphs were one sentence so, whoa, you know they had just had one sentence so I didn’t see why they spaced it out this way. It does get the point across but it was really hard to read.

Professor Lee, another engineering professor, also found Article A’s paragraph usage problematic, saying that there were “too many paragraphs, and most of the paragraphs has only one sentence, and some of those sentences are very long and the logic between those sentences is not very clear to me.” In discussing Article D, “Ping pong fears,” he mentioned how overly lengthy paragraphs could be a problem too, saying “This one goes
to another extreme in the lands of the paragraph. The paragraphs is just too long. I don’t like very short paragraph, I don’t like very long paragraph either…”

Professor Chen also agreed with him about Article A, saying “the format; it’s only one sentence a paragraph compared to some other article…well this one I feel like the ideas have jumped from one to the other…”

Adding to this in his later interview, Professor Garcia described it this way, saying, “It’s like someone taking notes and then just make a bulleted list of facts of things…”

Not everyone disliked this article, however. Professor Dukov, a composition instructor, liked it, choosing it or D as number two. “A, I kind of thought it was great. It was very well-organized, very strong voice…”

Professor Lin, another composition instructor, ranked it number one. She also noted the short paragraphs used in “3 missed chances” but said that once she got used to it, really liked the organization of this article overall. She said

I really don’t like short paragraphs at all….I feel like the short paragraphs cannot explain the issue well, but if you put it separately to me it’s like you are talking about separate things, but when I look at this it actually is connected with each other, so, it’s just I’m not used to that...

In fact, Professor Lin said she would consider using “3 missed chances” as an example of good organization for students taking first year composition courses, saying

I think I might use this kind of article as like a writing sample with my students, so that they can learn how to, especially like most of my students are beginning writers, so they are kind of like confused sometimes with how to organize the
article and how to find evidences for their argument, and I think is a really good example for that.

**Sentence Structure.** The choice of sentence structure was also a factor affecting ranking and an important feature of good writing. How succinctly ideas were presented, including whether active or passive voice was used, and how quotes were presented affected rankings. There was a preference for more direct or less wordy sentences, including active voice and a smooth integration of quotes.

Most of the comments about sentence structure, however, arose where the preferred features were missing. For example, although Article E and C were the most highly ranked, exactly why was often not discussed in great detail compared with comments about articles that were ranked lower. For example, Professor Connors had this to say when asked about the articles he ranked #1 and #8:

*Liz:* Which one did you pick as #1 or best?

*Professor Connors:* I picked E as the best. I thought it was the most clearly written, pretty well-organized. It’s just basically overall a pretty good essay.

*Liz:* Ok. How about the worst?

*Professor Connors:* The worst was B. It had, um, poor phrasing in a number of places. It didn’t come together as well.

*Liz:* …What did you put as #2?

*Professor Connors:* #2, I put C. It was kind of almost approaching, kind of a professional level article….it certainly had the level of organization you would expect in a newspaper or website. Professional.
As with many participants who ranked articles E or C near the top, Professor Connors did not go into great detail about what specific elements made them better.

Another example of a preference for more direct sentence structure is given by Professor Silva. In discussing his low ranking of Article D, “Ping pong fears,” he said:

I think it’s convoluted, it’s probably too much wording, the words are not matching well, the sentences are too long or they look or they seem too long….basically his argument could be stated in a more, uh, less complicated way or shorter or he could have organized his writing a more objective way…

Professor Arnold agreed with him about Article D, noting issues with how the ideas were presented and saying,

I was very interested, I wanted to continue reading it once I got into it, but it had some kind of phrasing that kind of didn’t quite work for me, like what is this person trying to say, like I wanted to have them be there and be like, what do you mean?

Professor Davis had this to say about Article A, which he ranked last: “I had no idea of what the first sentence told me. The fourth line or the sentence you had there, I don’t think that was a sentence. I don’t think the fifth one was.” This may be due to this particular writer’s command of English, also discussed more below in the section about content, as he and others suggested that this seemed like someone whose first language was not English.

Other elements in sentence structure were also important, reflecting a preference for more active voice. Professor Stone had this to say about Article F, “Teachers in national development”:
Here I felt they had a good idea, there were parts that I thought were clunky and I remember running across something like nominalization, every time I run across nominalization that kind of gets on my nerves. I’m not sure if this was the piece but one of them…taking the noun and putting ize on it is a real pet peeve of mine…and the passive voice.

Later in his interview, Professor Arnold had this to say about Article H: “it seemed like a parade of quotes, if that makes sense. It didn’t feel like the author really ever got into it. It was a repeated summary of other people’s views.”

**Content**

Content was the other element identified as a key component in the ranking of the articles. More specifically, my participants identified the following elements as important: (1) the topic itself, (2) vocabulary/word choice, (3) details, and (4) appropriate background/contextualization for articles read by a broad audience. In establishing the initial context for an article, the title was also considered important by many.

**Topic.** While several participants said that they tried to be neutral towards the topic, others acknowledged that it did influence their rankings because of their personal interest in the topic, knowledge or expertise, or whether they agreed with the position presented by the writer.

Of those who said they tried to be neutral towards the topic, Professor Petrescu said, “So when I evaluate them, I evaluate them on style rather than on content. Because when you asked which one did I like best, [that] would be on content rather than style.”

The newspaper articles generally covered topics of a more global or universal nature such as those related to education or energy, with a mixture of policy and political
pieces, but within these categories the content still appeared to impact the rankings. Some addressed the effect of content on their rankings very explicitly. For example, Professor Torres, an education professor, identified how knowledge of a topic was integrally related to its ranking.

*Liz:* Of these papers, which were labeled A through H, which one did you like the best?

*Professor Torres:* Well, this is interesting because *(laughing)* liking and not liking a topic has a lot to do with how familiar one is with a topic, so I found myself for example first, looking at the “3 missed chances” and I struggled through that one; I went through it, reread it, and changed my ranking on it just so you know what I was going through. The criteria that I used for the liking or disliking is the following: I looked at the topic and that affected whether I was going to get into it or not and really chew on that….familiarity with the topic made some difference how the writer treated the topic, the depth, the lightness, and then the conclusions….I think that we interact with not only with the writer and style and so on but also familiarity with what’s happening.

Although as an educator he could be presumed to find the topic of teaching interesting, it was because he had *so* much knowledge of this topic that he rated the most popular article, Article E, very low. The arguments put forth in “Want to Ruin Teaching? Give Ratings” simply did not convince him.

Professor Stockton, also a long-time educator/composition instructor, echoed these sentiments about Article E, saying, “it’s you know, well-written and it’s presented
nicely but I *(laugh)* you know, it’s…it doesn’t work for me because I’ve heard that same old story again and again and again, that same old argument…”

Conversely, some instructors explained how their passion or interest in a particular topic may have influenced their rankings. Professor Johnson, for example, explained why content was important to her and how it may have led her to ranking Article F, “Teachers and national development”, highest. She said that while she was reading it

I was thinking I don’t know if it’s the writing I liked the best, or if it’s because I’m biased and I like the article and the opinions that the author put forward in there….This subject matter did speak to me. I agree about the welfare of the teaching right and the career and path for teachers and I, so I think I connected with what the author said.

**Vocabulary/Word Choice.** The content of the articles was affected by choice of words used by the authors in more than one way: how they added or took away from the reader’s understanding of the content, and how they affected the perception of the balance of the article.

In discussing the highest ranked articles, many of my participants described them as “clear” or well-written, with the choice of words and vocabulary appearing key to this description. For example, in ranking Article C about solar panels number one, Professor Silva said he did this because “…the sentences were complete and well-constructed, vocabulary was easy to understand.” Professor Garcia agreed about C, saying “Article C is not only well-structured, the language is very clear…”

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Professor Grant, discussing why he ranked Article H number one, said: “It clarified difficult terms….It used vocabulary appropriate for the situation but not jargon or anything that the person involved with the situation wouldn’t understand.”

Conversely, articles containing words that seemed uncommon, such as “backfoot” and “flak” in Article B, or “po-faced” in Article D, were identified by several participants as words they did not know, and which they found odd or confusing. This led to lower rankings of these articles by many of my participants and, as discussed in depth in Part 2, seems particularly tied to the features found in different Englishes.

The choice of words was also important in how neutral or slanted an article was perceived. Most participants expected balanced articles, ones that were more neutral in how information was presented. Where this was lacking, it appeared to affect the articles’ rankings. For example, Professor Lin ranked Article D last because it seemed biased due to the words chosen by the author in this article.

Liz: Which one did you like the least?

Professor Lin: Ping pong fears.

Liz: Why is that?

Professor Lin: Because I come from China. I think, I don’t know, like most of the articles that I read especially in magazines when they talk about China…really negative words and a lot of words sound really bad and though they are just different issues in China, they use the words like repetitively which is to me is like a cliché to describing China, which I think is really like a bias.

Details. My participants also noted the importance of details included by the writer to support his or her arguments or ideas in ranking the articles. Articles containing
more specific details were better received and higher ranked; those containing general information or perceived as presenting generalizations were viewed as lacking in good evidence for the claims being made.

The types of details considered important included the presentation of information in various ways. For example, Professor Smith said this about Article C, “U.S. finalizes steep tariffs on China solar panels,”

I rated it very high. It was very clearly written. The first lead paragraph was, caught my attention, talked about how these tariffs are expected but there’s this loophole, so it’s got me intrigued with what’s this loophole gonna’ be, is it gonna’ be, it’s kind of really doing the whole thing. I’m also interested in the topic which helps and it’s a very timely one, cause that helps a lot, but basically it was a very well structured paper, outlined in journalistic style where they outlined what the issues were and there’s quotes and follow-ups and was just really well done in very good journalistic style.

In discussing why he ranked Article E near the top, Professor Harris also mentioned the importance of details such as the use of specific examples. He said he ranked E number 3 because

I liked the fact that they give a specific example up front to demonstrate a case where they let a teacher go, because although this person had top test scores, their behavior in the classroom, their treatment of their students, you know, was a problem and therefore felt they had to let them go. And that worked well because the person wanted to make the point that this wouldn’t be possible if you had a
top down approach to scoring or evaluating or making decisions about retaining teachers.

Professor Dukov also liked the details in E, saying, “I thought the argument is really well-rounded; it was very persuasive. I loved the examples.”

Where there was a lack of specific details such as examples or quotes, my participants reacted differently. For example, Article F, “Teachers and national development,” was considered to be too general by many. Professor Jones put it in her “send back to writer” group, saying,

So, the writer loses me in the first line, because I have nowhere to go to be part of the conversation. So, the reader doesn’t have credibility as in this case with generalizations, and a generalization substitutes for thought, and using clichés shows the writer at the level of clichéd thinking. So I don’t give credibility to that kind of writing, and that’s why I would send it back to the writer for clarification if I were the editor.

Professor Jones had a similar critique of Article G, “Time to revive the reading culture,” about which she said

So in G, the points of reference are not clear at all….I would perhaps say the writer is working at the level of generalizations rather than specifics, and if the writer put in some specifics then I would as a reader be able to, I wouldn’t have to bring so much of my own knowledge to the page, I wouldn’t have to do the work the writer hasn’t done which is in terms of research and specificity.
Background/Contextualization

Closely related to details is the importance of providing enough background or contextualization, identified by approximately half of the instructors as key in understanding the articles in my study. This feature seemed particularly tied to the genre chosen, newspaper articles, mentioned in various comments. In his interview, Professor Connors, a scientist who also teaches writing courses, spoke to the importance of establishing context:

*Liz*: Did the content make a difference to how you ranked these?

*Professor Connors*: Of course. Not the least of which is that some of these you don’t understand the context until you’re well into them, so that can’t but help influence your judgment partly because you don’t even know what is being talked about. This isn’t entirely, necessarily the author’s fault because maybe in the context it was published it was clear what was being talked about, but when I receive these here as just, you know individual papers, there’s some cases I have simply no idea until I’m already a third of the way through of what’s being addressed.

In a later interview, Professor Chen, a composition instructor, mentioned how context affected her understanding of the article, saying

*Professor Chen*: The last one’s the “3 missed chances”….it could be read so many different ways…. this one I feel like the ideas have jumped from one to the other so I was thinking it’s possibly I don’t have enough background knowledge about this so I need to put lots of effort…whether I actually have similar understanding
or concept about this….I don’t really know what is it really about and reading along toward the end I’m not really sure….

Professor Grant also ranked “3 missed chances” very low, next to last, citing the problem of context.

*Liz:* Ok. So the second to the worst?

*Professor Grant:* Is A. Which again lacked any contextualization. Didn’t know what was going on. They gave…they said these numbers which again lacked any contextualization….I didn’t know what these numbers were connected to or what they meant. I think it was kind of a gimmicky way to lead into these 3 missed opportunities, but it just didn’t work at all for me.

Professor Silva also ranked Article A last, saying “there’s no background information…it is clear that there are some, uh, vague information on this because I don’t know about what’s going on and the paper doesn’t provide that…”

The title was also considered very important in establishing the initial context for the content of an article. For example, Professor Garcia said in referring to “3 missed chances,” that he “didn’t like it all because, I mean from the start, the title does not provide any idea of the content of the article.”

Professor Smith also stressed the importance of a good title, and said it was one of the features he really liked in “Want to Ruin Teaching? Give Ratings.” He said, “Well, first of all, the title was really intriguing…. I think the key thing was that it caught my attention in the very first sentence, title and the first paragraph…”
Professor Chen also stressed the importance of a good title, and how that was a problem for her in Article A, saying, “even though I kind of know, but going back to title, it like kind of mentions what are the missed three chances, like I don’t really know….

The importance of the title seemed to vary depending upon the particular article, as shown in this exchange:

*Liz*: How about the titles?

*Professor Connors*: Actually, I didn’t necessarily weigh that a whole lot. Again, perhaps, that gives you a little bit more, for example, on my lower ranked ones, something like “3 missed chances” doesn’t really tell me itself very much, right. H was my second to worst, “MNC’s want clarity on foreign worker policy,” that at least gives you some more orientation on what’s being addressed here.

Professor Petrescu, in talking about the importance of titles, discussed how newspaper article titles also may have additional elements that they should have to be particularly effective, remarking

These are newspaper articles right? They have to have a grabbing factor making it to the top of the first page…and these titles are not having the same punch as the top contender which was E. Neither D nor F. They are more general look at the comparison between “Want to Ruin Teaching, Give ratings?” That’s immediately controversial and the other ones are kind of benign – “Ping pong fears” and “Teachers and national development”…they don’t’ have the same punch.

**Mechanics**

Spelling and punctuation were not generally identified as a problem affecting these writing samples, likely because they were edited newspaper articles, but it did
matter where it affected the flow of the writing overall. For example, how commas were used was mentioned in particular by Professor Davis with respect to several of his lower ranked articles. While noting that he has a tech editor for his own publications, he was very aware of punctuation, later realizing that there was a consistent pattern. As he observed, “Wait a minute….in fact it’s in several of them, you are putting a period outside the quotation mark. Everything I write goes inside the quotation mark. Maybe it’s a different style manual, I don’t know.”

When I asked about this specific question, some said that if there had been significant problems it would have bothered them, but others, often composition instructors or the honors college participants who teach writing, said it was something they normally do not consider that important. When asked about spelling or other issues, Professor Smith said, “I don’t remember any. If I found them I would’ve remembered and that really annoys me.”

Composition instructor Professor Arnold reflected a different viewpoint:

*Liz:* In general was grammar or punctuation something that jumped out at you with these particular articles?

*Professor Arnold:* Not really. And that might be just my kind of background. Just with how working with people with writing is, I would ignore that until other issues were be resolved if that makes sense. So, for me, all the other things that were going on just stood out first to me.

**Conclusion**

While different weight was given to particular elements of good writing by my participants, organization and content were mentioned most in their rankings of various
articles. Summarizing the various points they made, expected an organization providing a clear purpose up front, including a form made up of paragraphs of a certain length, with sentences that are more direct and not overly wordy.

Content and its related components were also frequently discussed in the discussion of why an article was ranked a particular way and whether a reader would find an article interesting in the first place. How it is presented may be evaluated differently if one has an expertise in a subject, however. How much context or background information is needed is influenced by the reader’s familiarity with the subject, which a good title can help to provide.

Last, mechanics such as spelling and grammar were not noted as a particular issue, but might have been if there had not been the editing done as newspaper articles, especially for the non-composition instructors.

**Part 2: Varieties of English**

In order to answer the second research question about the acceptability of other varieties of English, I first analyzed the rankings and discovered there was a decided preference for the American English articles, Articles E and C. These articles are of different genres: E is an opinion piece and C a news story but in either case, over 70% of my participants ranked these two articles highest, summarized in Table 2 below.

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<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
<th>Article Rankings (Ranked #1-8, with #1 the highest ranking)</th>
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<tr>
<td>% of Those Who Ranked Articles in the Upper Half</td>
<td>83% U</td>
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<td>N – News</td>
<td>O – Opinion</td>
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Looking at the reasons given for the highest and lowest ranked articles, plus comments about other articles ranked in between, particular features and characteristics found in the different varieties of English seem to account for many of different rankings. As in the previous section, I will focus on the two areas mentioned most: organization and content.

**Organization**

As discussed in Part 1, there seemed to be particular expectations for how information should be presented in writing, particularly in terms of how explicitly the purpose of the article was made evident, and its form in terms of features such as paragraphing and sentence structure.

**Presentation of Ideas.** In describing the highest ranked articles, the U.S. newspaper articles E and C, my participants used the words “clearly written”, “clear purpose” and “logical” frequently to describe them. For example, in describing Article C, Professor Silva ranked Article C number one saying, “it was very clear and organized in a sequenced way, meaning the sequence of information was kind of coherent.”

At the other extreme was Article A, “3 missed chances,” which seemed to be challenging for many readers in that they found it confusing or “chaotic” (Professor Smith), and had particular features related to paragraphing that really bothered readers (Professors Chen, Garcia, Kahla, Lee, Lin, and Stockton). Several instructors actually guessed that “3 missed chances” was from Singapore due to their own travels and experiences in reading newspapers there.

**Paragraph Length.** The type of short paragraph structure found in “3 missed chances” was specifically identified as a preferred Asian structure, however, by Professor
Petrescu, who said that in ranking this article last, he was ranking it from an American perspective. He contrasted the American approach with Asian culture, saying this was clearly written for an Asian reader, there are extremely short paragraphs…there’s an absence of structure in introduction…giving structure in the introduction is an insult in Asian culture…because it implies the reader would not be able to figure it out with a little bit of scaffolding.

Professor Petresucu added more comments about the difference between American and Asian writing. He thought Article C reflected the one sentence principle found in Asian writing (even though it is an American newspaper article), although he was aware of some differences, saying And those have short paragraphs, they are not down to one sentence even though there are many of them being there, I see C practically have one sentence paragraphs…I didn’t notice it at the time because they are longer sentences this is why they didn’t come up, but the flow is rather chopped because of that which is again closer to the Asian thinking…...I’m gonna’ give you facts and you are gonna’ put them together, that’s a sign of respect for pure intelligence, and I’m gonna’ keep giving you facts until the day after tomorrow ‘cause time has zero value.

Two of the three participating instructors who are Asian did not like the short, one sentence paragraphs used in “3 missed chances,” however, and even the third, Professor Lin, expressed a general dislike for short paragraphs. This may be a reflection of their training in how to write in English; what they might prefer in articles written in Chinese may be quite different, but this was not explored in my study.


**Sentence Structure.** Preferences for varying sentence structures found in different varieties of English were reflected in the rankings. Several of my participants thought certain articles were too wordy, containing excessive passive voice, and containing different word order than they were used too. For example, Professor Garcia had this to say about the Article G, “Time to revive the reading culture,” which is from the Nigerian newspaper *The Punch.* Although still ranking in fairly high at number three, he said

> The reason I put it in that place that one is because I think that the language is a little bit, let’s say verbose…some of the words that he or she uses are not expanded for a general audience and that must mean that this paper, uh, newspaper, I believe that he or she is a little bit presumptuous, and the language is not American English, it’s obviously British English.

Professor Arnold made a similar comment about Article G, saying, “I thought that overall the definition at the beginning of “reading” was a bit much…it seemed like an attempt to display vocabulary.” He did also rank it as number three, however, saying that the person “had a great voice, like their vocabulary is really nice, and they are passionate about it.”

Professor Davis found the other Nigerian article, Article F about teachers and national development, simply difficult to read. He ranked it number seven, saying “the order of words in the sentence just made it very difficult. I had no idea what I would call paragraph five was trying to tell me. I just couldn’t follow the meaning.”

Professors Harris noted that Article F had a lot of passive voice, with Professor Jones agreeing in discussing this and other grammatical features:
‘The president’s uncharacteristic admission of failure of government policies’ *(reading out loud)*, so, we have a lot of passive tense in this one, and I noticed that in others too, but there were bigger problems, so the president’s uncharacteristic admission of failure of government policy on school teachers’ welfare could not have been more, the author uses the word ‘apt’, I would have said appropriate, ‘coming as it were on an occasion marking the World’s teachers’ day.’ So ‘were’ is awkward here. Coming as it were, you know, it’s not exactly grammatically correct. It’s just unnecessary…you could say ‘coming on an occasion marking’ and just take that out to make it better.

Last, while he didn’t identify the voice as passive, Professor Smith had this to say about Article F, ranking it #6:

I’m a teacher. I should be interested in this *(sigh)* but this was so boring. Just boooring *(emphasis)*, boring, just boring. Now ok, so teachers should be respected and get paid more, well, ok, I agree with that but it just, you know, didn’t go anywhere….Taking a real important topic and making it dull.

Many of these comments reflect and support some of the features noted by Nigerian English researchers, namely the effect of the formal character of English teaching in Nigerian schools. According to Adejiba (1989), the reason for the “highfaluting tendencies of some Nigerian English speakers” *(p. 171)*. In addition, “‘big words’ or ‘jaw-breaking words’ constitute a symbol of knowledgeability and learnedness….whoever has his verbal quiver full of them tends to command respect among users of English” *(p. 171)*.
Content

My participants’ perception of content due to particular characteristics of the Englishes in my study appeared to affect its various elements, but in different ways. The following discusses how their perceptions were shaped by these features within the subgroups of Topic, Vocabulary/Word Choice, Details, and Background or Contextualization.

Topic. The topic did matter to the participants, but it did not seem to affect rankings in the way that other characteristics of the different Englishes in the articles did. For example, while the U.S. newspaper articles were more popular, topic did not necessarily appear to be the main reason - other features related to organization or content were cited more frequently than the topic itself. In addition, while Article E about ranking teachers was ranked highly by most, Article F was also about teachers but ranked much lower, which appears to be due to certain perceptions of Nigerian English characteristics discussed below and not the topic.

Other features than the topic also appear to be why Article A, “3 missed chances,” was ranked near or at the bottom by most participants. This article was about population strategy, but many participants had trouble discerning what the 3 missed chances were and even what the article was about. While Professor Lin did identify the topic and ranked it higher than most as number four she did not, however, do this because of the topic, although it did affect her rankings of other articles. As she said,

I feel like this article was sort of interesting but I am not really interested in the topic, but I think like the organization of this article is really clear and the
evidences from the article are very strong. So I kind of just like the writing, the organization, the format, but not very interested in the topic.

Similarly, Professor Smith ranked the other Singapore article on foreign worker policy, Article H, number four for reasons other than topic, saying, “It was clearly written, it made the point of what the people want, what business people want is to have a clear, stable policy. It wasn’t an exciting paper; it didn’t grab me like…but it was clear, it had a message, I liked it.”

**Vocabulary/Word Choice.** Vocabulary or word choice seemed to have a particular impact on how the different articles were ranked, suggesting differences in how Englishes were perceived according to the participants in three key ways. One way was specific to the words themselves, where words were identified as odd or different from what they normally encounter; next, the presentation of the words in some of the articles seemed to affect how they were perceived, sometimes considered too wordy or verbose; and last, how neutral or biased an article was perceived depended on the choice of words.

**Unusual words.** The word use of the word “backfoot” in Article B was mentioned as strange or unusual by several participants. This article is from the *Times of India*. Even though I did not mention in my instructions that different varieties of English were included in the sample, Professor Stone, for example, seemed particularly aware that the samples represented different Englishes. He said some of this had to do with the musicality or rhythm of the piece, but that the use of certain words like “backfoot” in some articles was a key indicator for him. He noted
The one I am very confident was U.S. English is this one…..I think E. I would bet that almost every other sample is non-US English….For example ‘On the backfoot,’ that’s not an expression used much in U.S. English.

Also mentioned was the use of the word “flak” in Article B, which Professor Connors said was just not correct and should have been caught by an editor. He ranked Article B in the last place, explaining how the choice of words influenced his ranking.

So B, which was my last. So, for example, the first sentence of the second paragraph ‘his statement has come in for flak. Well, that is just grammatically not correct. A statement does not come in for flak.’ This is the kind of thing that could be easily corrected. But it’s kind of a bad sign that an editor or somebody didn’t catch that. Many of these, even the worst one here, could be edited into something that would be publishable. But in cases like this, an editor should catch this kind of thing. It’s just not....Style is one thing. Those are more debatable issues. But, again, the way we use the word flak in our standard culture usage of that term, it’s a colloquial term. So again, even in using it in an article like this, one could argue maybe it’s too colloquial, but if you’re going to use it, it’s certainly not used that way.

Professor Stockton agreed with Professor Connors, but had this to say about “On the backfoot: On the corruption issue, politicians are doing a shoddy job of defending themselves”: “And then B was a curious or peculiar mix of English idiomatic expressions (laugh) which kind of made it fun to read.”

Another term, “po-faced”, was also mentioned by several participants as unusual or odd. It was found in Article D, ‘Ping pong fears” and was from another Indian paper,
India Express. As Professor Grant noted, “They used a term po-faced I wrote down…I didn’t know what it was.”

Professor Johnson made a similar observation, saying

It talks about lurid security nightmare and, um, these different types of words and then it used…this could just be me but by resorting to a po-faced secrecy… I have no idea what po-faced means and that kind of bothered me that the wording that they used was kind of strange and kind of weird.

Others said they thought that some words used by the writers of the articles were just wrong, or that the writer was translating. For example, Professor Garcia said

And then I have Article F which is the ‘Teachers and national development.’ I have here the author use the wrong words to express ideas, his or her control of English is not the best, and some of the sentences are really, really confusing and you don’t understand what the meaning of some of the ideas that he or she is trying to communicate. And after that I have article B, which is again full of wrong words, it doesn’t, is an opinion piece in my perception, but I think that again this is not a person that has complete command of English so they fail to communicate…

Professor Petrescu thought that the writer might have been translating in “3 missed chances,” saying that it appears “to be a translation from a foreign language with some of the words, I think they are called idioms, not being the way they flow in American speech.” Professor Jones agreed with him, saying

I think this was written by somebody whose first language isn’t English. I think that because of the way the words are put together, for example, ‘public
consultation on the population draws to a close.’ I have no idea what that means. Public consultation, so I think that means public comment. On some issue about maybe population control ‘is over,’ and so when I read it as a reader, I translate it into those words, and I don’t know if that’s what the author means, so there’s sort of an attempt ‘come the end of this month,’ there’s an attempt to alert me to, a finish, and if I want to give comment on this thing proposed I have to think about doing it now. So it communicates in that way. This structure reminds me of the way Asians say things. I have worked in Japan…

Professor Silva also agreed, saying, “The way the sentences are constructed, the syntax seems reversed to what I’m used to in English.” He also ranked “3 missed chances” last.

**Neutral or biased.** In addition to words that seemed unusual, how neutral or biased an article appeared mattered to the participants. More than one instructor identified that U.S. newspapers are supposed to present information in a non-biased way, and that some of the words used were more inflammatory or than they would typically see, thereby creating an article that read like propaganda. As Professor Jones said about the use of the word “flak” in Article B, which she put in the “send back to writer” group,

So words, like in the second paragraph, ‘this statement has come in for flak and deservedly.’ That makes me think that the author doesn’t know what flak means, in this statement. And the author relies on the word ‘it’ far too much to help the reader participate in that way, it comes across to me as propaganda.

While Article B was not particularly popular and put in the lower half by 68% of the instructors, with no-one picking it as number one, Article D, “Ping pong fears” was
ranked higher and chosen as number on or two by five of my participants, even though
they may have recognized it was biased. Several mentioned how it was creatively written,
which appeared to make it more entertaining, even if it was considered less neutral than
typically found in the newspaper articles they might normally read in the U.S. Its
creativity related to word choice was what made it enjoyable. As Professor Smith said

It’s interesting and very timely. Some of the things were interestingly stated,
about the type leashes and various things and examples. Some of the wordings
and examples for months were timely and interesting. I believed it made the case
pretty well in a short amount of space. It wasn’t as good as the other two but it
kept my interest; I enjoyed reading this one.

Professor Dukov said the same thing about D, ranking it a tie for number two with
Article A. She said “it was just really interesting, one of those pieces that you kind of
enjoy reading.”

Professor Stockton also enjoyed this article, mentioning its colorful language, but
noted how the choice of words did create a biased article.

Well, it’s uh, China’s ruling party keeps a paranoid vigil (reading), that is clearly
not coming out of a Chinese newspaper (laugh), it’s much more fluent and I’m
really not sure who wrote it but I think this one is a very biased…words like
“lurid”, (laugh) “jittery, cracks and things like that, “under siege”, and I just I
don’t know where it fits, you know. It’s very well written in a sense but is very
biased, “the communist party well red-faced” and “under siege” this is clearly,
um… I wouldn’t call it an attack, but…it’s very well-written, it actually is, and
got quite colorful language…
Just how highly an article ranked, as in the case of “Ping pong fears,” really seemed to depend upon personal preference and how its assertions were supported.

Professor Harris said

So it’s got some overheated rhetoric in the first paragraph which, of course, grabs the attention, but it also is needs to be backed up, and that’s what the second paragraph does pretty well, it brings in some facts and evidence, but the last sentence of the whole piece sort of dulls the whole point, so it loses I think its effectiveness.

He still did rank it fairly highly at number four, behind Singapore articles A and H (which he ranked as either one or two equally), and Article C, the U.S. newspaper article about solar energy.

In discussing what is normally found in U.S. newspapers Professor Jones, who has an extensive background in journalism, said this in talking about Articles B and D, and U.S. newspapers in general

And if this was in a newspaper, as you mentioned, that would make sense since this too would be not an American paper, because we don’t talk about the communist party this way. This has a slant to it. B has a slant to it, so B and D both have slants to them, and that is a distinction that we make in this country, we try to be neutral….a publication requires three sources in order to try to show some balance.

**Details.** The highly ranked American English articles were identified as containing more specific details than others. The use of generalities or less specific details was considered particularly bothersome in the two Nigerian articles, Article F
about teaching and Article G about reading. This particular feature may be a reflection of one of the Nigerian discourse markers, a preference for indirectness (Adejiba, p. 170).

As did Professor Jones (whose comments were presented in Part 1), Professor Grant found Articles G and F about reading and teaching too general, noting that the lack of specific details meant their arguments weren’t well supported. He said

So with the ‘reading culture,’ this one felt amateurish…like what I read from my students as an English comp teacher. But on the second page, however, there’s a lot of good reporting here of giving programs that have already been established. That’s why I liked it better than F. In F, ‘the teaching profession should be made more honorable and lucrative,’ so giving these kinds of big abstract ideas without backing them up, without giving any reasoning behind it or support; whereas G wasn’t well written to begin with on the first page, but on the second page well here’s these programs and they are working. And so it gives something to back up the ideas that they put forth in the editorial.

The use of generalities was also the problem noted by Professor Harris in talking about the Indian newspaper Article B, “On the backfoot: On the corruption issue, politicians are doing a shoddy job of defending themselves.” He said

So B would be the next one, next to last. Let’s see if I can make sense of my notes, this is the first one I read. So it mainly deals in generalities and his opinion, so for example, and adverbs are always a giveaway to things like that, so there’s a line there where the author says surely there’s a better explanation….. So when I see surely I think of the opposite, I’m not sure. So it’s unconvincing as an opinion piece for that reason, and the point really isn’t reached till the end of the
penultimate paragraph, so that has to do with disclosures of incomes and assets, so it was talking about political corruption, but it’s unclear what the real problem is until near the end of the piece.

**Background/Contextualization.** How much background or context was expected by my participants appeared to depend upon how familiar a topic was to them. This appeared to be one of the main reasons that “3 missed chances” by so many participants, as well Singapore newspaper Article H, “MNCs want more clarity on foreign worker policy.” Professor Stockton had this to say about H:

*Professor Stockton:* And then, the last one is very very interesting. I’ve been to Singapore like five different times, I love Singapore (*laugh*).

*Liz:* So you knew…

*Professor Stockton:* And I, you know, I would be totally lost in this, this was written for Singaporeans and only Singaporeans (*laugh*), and otherwise I would have been totally lost because every time I would go between Singapore and Malaysia, or something I mean it was all this kind of stuff, looking at all your cards, and everything and where you been and where you going, and so this for a very specific audience and it may work for them fine, but anybody trying to read this outside of that and not knowing about this, they would be totally lost, it’s poorly written. I would put it down around the third from the bottom, I really think I would.

Even though Professor Smith did like Article H and ranked it in the upper half, he also did suggest that his knowledge of the area helped. As he said, “And then four is H, about MNC’s want more clarity on foreign worker policy. I figured that it’s from
Singapore halfway through. It wasn’t clear at the beginning but I’ve been to Singapore a lot.”

Professor Arnold made the comment about context in this way:

*Liz:* What did you rank as number two?

*Professor Arnold:* C. Example C would be, and in my notes, ‘cause I read them in order, A, B, C. So my notes in C begin with ‘thank god, context.”

*Liz:* Ok. So can I quote you?

*Professor Arnold:* Yes.

**Conclusion**

The participants in my study did appear to have expectations of organization and content reflecting an American English style of writing, and many reacted negatively to features in the Englishes they perceived as unusual or different. When the articles were not perceived to be as clearly written or paragraphs were short, as found in the Singapore article ‘3 missed chances,’ they were ranked lower. If they were very wordy or used passive voice, such as in the case of the Nigerian articles, they were often ranked lower. Last, the use of words that were different or less neutral, which also occurred with the articles from Nigeria and India, they were ranked lower. Details and Context were also important in how different articles were ranked.

**Part 3: Disciplinary Differences**

In order to answer Research Question 3, whether the discipline of the instructor appeared to affect the rankings of the writing samples, I selected participants for my study from two main categories, those with backgrounds and training in composition and those with backgrounds in “other” disciplines. Eight officially teach composition courses
but of the 11 who come from other disciplines, not all teach a course in their particular discipline. In particular, the “other disciplines” group also includes three instructors from varying backgrounds who teach a first year writing course to students in the honors college of the university, but it is different than other composition courses in its emphasis on the Great Books series. In addition, they do not have the same training as the composition instructors in the study who have a Master’s or PhD degree in Rhetoric and Composition. Honors students also take at least one first-year composition course, often adding an additional project to in order to earn honors credit for the class.

As it turns out, the rankings of the articles by groups overall did not differ significantly. In Chart 1, I present the rankings for each group, and discuss any apparent differences. Of those from other disciplinary backgrounds, six come from backgrounds in Engineering, two from Education, two from Science, and one from Urban Studies. In Chart 5, I compare and discuss the rankings within the different disciplines in two main categories, without including the composition instructors, highlighting any areas of difference.

Although the sample size is limited, the study provides some preliminary and interesting insights regarding possible differences in rankings by faculty from different disciplines.

**Composition/Other Disciplines**

Looking at Chart 1 and comparing the two broader categories, composition instructors (CIs) and other instructors from other disciplines (OIs), there was quite a bit of agreement between the groups on most of the articles. The CIs and OIs ranked the articles, in general, almost exactly the same for all but two of the articles. For example,
A, E, F, G, and H were ranked very closely by both groups, within 4-13% of each other, which equates to only one instructor ranking articles differently at the most for each article.

Where there appears to be more of a difference is in the perceptions of Articles B, C and D. Whether these differences are actually significant when analyzed from an individual viewpoint will be discussed in the sections for each article in the discussion below.

**Chart 1 - Rankings of Articles in the Upper Half by Composition & Other Instructors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Composition Instructors</th>
<th>Other Disciplines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Article B Ranking.** Article B was from the *Times of India* titled “On the backfoot: On the corruption issue, politicians are doing a shoddy job of defending themselves.” This article about political corruption in India’s Congress was ranked more highly by CIs when ranked in aggregate, with 43% ranking it in the upper half compared with 18% of the OIs, a 25% difference. In addition, 73% of the OIs ranked it lower in ranking it number six through eight compared with 38% of those CIs.
Looking more closely by individual rankings, however, the differences appear less significant, particularly in terms of actual numbers of participants, as 3 CIs and 2 OIs ranked it in the upper half, and two of the OIs ranked it number two or three. The main reasons given by those in each group were that they found it clear and well-organized.

For example, of the CIs who explained in more depth why they liked it, Professor Chen ranked it number two, saying

I guess because the organization of this article is more like student essays I’m used to reading, I guess this is the reason why I kind of like it…The genre, the writing style’s not like that, but I guess this is like the major reason…it’s clear, it’s organized, it’s easier to understand is the major reason I like this.

CI Professor Silva ranked it as number four saying it “has a good vocabulary and sentence structure, it is sequenced well, and if it wasn’t for the use of probably some specialized language I would say it’s the text, the message is clear to understand.”

OI Professor Kahla also liked Article B, ranking it number 2 because “it was straight to the point. It was fairly short. The paragraphs made a lot of sense. There was
four of them each had a different idea. I’m pretty passionate about the topic, politics and corruption and all that stuff. So that was a big one. And it was easy to follow.”

OI Professor Torres ranked it number three, but didn’t really explain why, although he did note that in his rankings he wondered about where or for whom the articles were written, saying

The context in which the piece that was written, I don’t know if the audience was the U.S., was it international audience, so I was picking up on that so there was a certain amount of ambiguity floating around a lot of these pieces too that I was having difficulty grounding them, this was a piece for an Asian audience, for a British audience, for an Indian audience, from the continent of India, all this stuff was cross and crisscrossing my head.

Conversely, of CIs and OIs who ranked it lower, it was generally related to different or unusual word choices. For example, CI Professor Stockton said she ranked it number seven largely due to the “curious or peculiar mix of English idiomatic expressions.” CI Professor Arnold also noted the use of “odd colloquialisms” and ranked it number seven. Finally, OI Professor Connors, as quoted in Part 2, really objected to how the word “flak” was used, saying it was ungrammatical. He ranked this number eight.

To sum up, when looked at more closely, the difference in rankings was less significant when examined more closely, although the CIs appeared to like Article B slightly more.

Article C. Article C, the USA Today article titled “U.S. finalizes steep tariffs on China’s solar panels” initially appeared to be preferred by OIs more strongly than CIs,
with 82% of the OIs ranking it in the upper half compared with 57% of the CIs, also a 25% difference. Similar to Article B, however, this preference appears less significant when analyzed and shown by individual rankings in Chart 3.

The difference in ranking appears mainly related to how instructors perceived its organization overall, but in general, the rankings seemed spread out for individuals in both groups. For upper rankings, of the seven OIs who ranked this article number #1-3, “clear” or “clearly written” was mentioned by four of them. As Professor Torres said, who ranked it number one, “it was clear, it was engaging me, it drew me into the piece. I thought on the whole the piece was as I said engaging, it was written in clear style, and it was convincing.” Professor Garcia ranked it number one or two, liking it and Article E equally, but noting they were different pieces (news versus opinion). As he said, “Article C is not only well-structured the language is very clear, the sources of information are completely identified, all the ideas are presented in the writing, references which is nice to find in a piece like this, it’s really informative, that’s why I liked it.”
Similarly, of the three composition instructors who also ranked Article C in the top three, “clear” was also used to describe it by Professor Silva, who ranked it number one, and Professor Grant, who ranked it number three.

CI Professor Grant also mentioned the importance of context, and how this article established it well. As Professor Grant said, “It had a clear lead. It establishes context….it establishes and answers the most likely questions that a reader would have right from the very beginning. It gives quotes from pertinent people. Gives statistics. Everything I’d like to see in a newspaper article it had.”

On the other hand, the two OIs that ranked it number six or seven said it was because they thought it had incomplete ideas (Professor Davis) or did not like its presentation of ideas, with some short paragraphs although not as short as in Article A (Professor Lee). CI Professor Lin ranked it #6, saying that “I don’t really have interest in the topic, that is one reason and find they have a lot of quote and I don’t know, I just personally don’t like too many quotes in the article.” Professor Dukov ranked it #7, agreeing with both Professors Davis and Lee, saying it was “very chopped. That’s the main reason why I, I say it didn’t flow at all, it was just super short paragraphs not related.”

In sum, while there appeared to be a difference initially between the groups in the rankings of Article C between the OIs and CIs, they really were more similar in rankings than not.

**Article D.** Article D was the *India Express* article about the crackdown in China on citizens due to security concerns, titled “Ping pong fears.” Like Article C, while the aggregate numbers suggested that OIs preferred Article D more than composition
instructors, with 64% OIs ranking it in the upper half compared with 43% CIs, closer examination showed that the rankings were actually spread out among individuals in both groups.

Those that liked this article found it interesting, with vivid imagery, such as OI Professor Stone who ranked it number one, saying, “I thought it was fresh; it was specific.” CI Professor Stockton also ranked it number one, although she recognized that it was very biased, saying “it’s very well-written, it actually is, and has quite colorful language.”

CI Professors Grant and Lin, however, ranked it number 8 because the former found it confusing, with problems with numbering, and Professor Lin felt it made too much of a case and was biased. OI Professor Garcia, who ranked it #7, also had a problem with the abbreviations and numbering used in this article.

In sum, there did not appear to be a significant difference in how the two groups ranked this article when looked at individually instead of in aggregate.
Engineering/Other Disciplines

Within the disciplines other than composition, there were again two main categories: those from a variety of engineering backgrounds, and those from a variety of other backgrounds. Six of the 11 participants came from engineering specializations including civil, electrical and construction engineering. The others were from other fields including Education, Science and Urban Studies. Chart 5 below reorganizes the other instructors into these two categories and shows their rankings in the upper half in these two groups: Engineering (EIs) and Other Disciplines (ODIs). Because only engineering had several participants, comparing it to the other group provides a more meaningful basis for comparison, although the numbers in each group are still relatively small.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Engineering</th>
<th>Other Disciplines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In comparing the EI rankings with those of the ODIs, there was agreement on the ranking of most articles, within 3-10% on five of the articles. The ones where there was the greatest agreement were A, B, and E, with the instructors agreeing on their rankings...
in the upper half within 3% of each other. In addition, there was general agreement about
the rankings of Article F and G, which were within 10% of each other.

Apparently greater differences were found in the rankings of Articles D and H, both ranked lower by those from other disciplines, with the converse in the case of
Article C, which was ranked universally in the upper half by EIs but only by 50% of
those from other backgrounds.

**Article D.** Article D was the article about security issues in China titled “Ping pong fears.” Within these two small groups of six EIs and five ODIs, this article initially appeared to be preferred more strongly by the Engineers when considered in aggregate, with 83% of the Engineers ranking it in the upper half compared with 40% of the ODIs.

Looking at rankings presented individually, set forth on Chart 6 below, these differences appear less marked, with the five instructors in other disciplines ranking it in a variety of places, including two who ranked it as number 1-2 compared with the two Engineers who ranked it number 2 and 3.

Looking more closely at the reasons why they liked it from both groups, EI Professor Smith, said #3 because of its language, saying “some of the wordings and examples for months were timely and interesting. I believed it made the case pretty well in a short amount of space…I enjoyed reading this one.” Professor Petrescu ranked it slightly higher at #2 or 3, using the lens of the American reader, saying it “had good bluf, good paragraph length.”
Of the two ODIs who ranked it even more highly, Professor Stone ranked it #1, saying “I thought it was fresh; it was specific. They mention the Communist party, Congress, and then they used very fresh imagery when they described the imaginary citizen army that might threaten the Congress, the Party Congress.” Professor Torres ranked it #2, partly because he had just heard about ping pong diplomacy a day or two ago on NPR and acknowledged that for him, that may be why he connected to it so much.

Thus, while initially Article D appeared to be ranked more highly by engineers, looking at the specific breakdown shows that there were ODIs who also liked it and ranked it highly.

**Article H.** Article H, the Singapore article about foreign worker policy, was ranked more strongly in the upper half by the engineers, with 50% ranking it in the upper half compared with 20% of the ODIs. While this difference is also marked in the individual rankings within these two small groups for the upper rankings, looking at the
groups for the other participants in the lower rankings shows as much or more agreement.

As shown in Chart 7, three EIs ranked it #1-4 compared with only ODI ranking it #4, but three of the EIs ranked it #5-7, and four of five ODIs ranked it #5-7 as well.

Of the EIs who ranked this article highly, Professor Harris ranked it or Article A as number one, with the difference being that A was “intending to persuade versus one that’s analytical.” Professor Davis ranked it #2 saying this was because “you could follow the flow of ideas.”

Of the EIs putting it in the lower rankings, however, Professor Lee ranked it #5 and said the use of a lot of abbreviations interfered with comprehension about the content “because every time we try to read the sentence I need to go back and look what abbreviation stands for. It’s kind of stoppage….too much stoppage.” He noted that he is from China and that in China they use abbreviations more conservatively. Professor Petrescu also ranked it six or seven because of the use of an acronym in its title and in the article and a lot of “single sentence paragraphs.” Professor Kahla also noted this about H, saying “It was one sentence per paragraph. Super hard to follow. Again the topic is pretty interesting, workers’ rights and all, but it was hard to follow and I couldn’t read it.”

![Chart 7 - Ranking of Article H by Instructors from Engineering & Other Disciplines](chart7.png)
Of the ODIs ranking it number five, Professor Stone read it as like of list of bulletin points, and Professor Johnson also noted a lot of acronyms that made it difficult to understand. Last, ODI Professor Connors ranked it lowest of the group at number seven, saying that “the very first sentence here is just an overloaded sentence, it’s trying to provide context, but it actually overloads the reader with, you know, a four line sentence that is just too much at first to get a sense of what is being addressed and what is being talked about.”

In sum, when analyzed individually in Chart 7, there was a lot of agreement in the article rankings by individuals the two groups. In general, features of this article that were not liked very well by either group. In particular, the use of acronyms was confusing, and also the structure of the paragraphs bothered several individuals.

Article C. Article C appeared to have the greatest difference in rankings, preferred more strongly and ranked in the upper half by all (100%) of those from other disciplines compared with 67% of those with engineering backgrounds. In addition, of the five ODIs, two ranked it number one and four ranked it number one or two.
The main reasons ODIs ranked this highly had to do with how “clear” the writing was, (Professors Garcia and Torres) or competent and professional (Stone and Connors). Professor Johnson was the only one who ranked it lower as #4, saying “C is ok, but no real opinion. It’s just a bunch of statements that were cited or said and no opinion one way or the other. Just a very bland kind writing.” Her comments reflect the fact it was a news story and may not be the type of article she prefers.

The main difference in how Article C was ranked between the groups was shown by the comments of EI Professor Davis, who ranked it number six, and EI Professor Lee, who ranked it number seven. These two professors perceived this article as having “incomplete ideas” or not having the best structure.

Thus, those from other disciplines did appear to prefer Article C somewhat more than those from engineering backgrounds.

Approaches to Evaluation

The approaches to evaluating the articles varied among the participants, although the composition instructors seemed to focus on elements more widely discussed in composition than did others. Some of the instructors asked if there was a rubric they should use but I told them there was not, to just evaluate them as they would normally evaluate student papers. This led to a variety of approaches to ranking the articles and crossed disciplines, with some still creating a rubric, and others assigning grades. For example, Professor Harris, a professor with an engineering background who teaches an honors college writing course, said in discussing his ranking of Article C as #3 and D as #4
I give you a B-, but it did have a balance to it and multiple sides, but it did lack Chinese sources and citing Chinese sources and developing it’s points so it’s not as strong I don’t think as the other two. Next I would rank D, give it a B-/C+ somewhere in that range. And this is more of an advocacy piece that has some typos that are in it. So it was hard to know some of the data that are cited, and what they really are.

While using a rubric or assigning grades crossed disciplines, composition instructors did use more specialized composition language in evaluating and discussing the articles. In particular, the word “genre” was used by four of the eight composition instructors in their discussion of the articles compared with two of 11 instructors from other disciplines, one of whom also teaches writing in the honors college. “Evidence” was used by five of eight composition instructors, compared with only one from the other group of “non-composition” instructors, but is also the one who used genre in his discussion and teaches an honors writing course.

“Argument” and “Audience” were two other vocabulary terms used by both groups in discussing their evaluation of the articles. “Argument” was mentioned by six composition instructors and six from other disciplines, three of whom also teach writing but in the honors college. “Audience” was mentioned by three from each group. As a percentage of their particular group, however, composition instructors used these particular words found in composition more than those from other disciplines.

Within the composition instructors, some instructors used these terms much more frequently than others in their analysis. For example, CI Professors Jones, Grant, Chen, and Arnold mentioned “genre” numerous times in their discussion of the articles,
although not necessarily at the same point in the interview. Professors Jones and Grant brought it up immediately, which appeared to be related to their backgrounds in journalism. Professor Grant said, in discussing Article H, the article he ranked #1, “Umm…as far as a genre newspaper is concerned it contextualized the problem; it based it in evidence.”

Professor Jones also began her analysis as follows, saying “I separated them into two categories. One is a category of best in each genre and the other is a category where I would simply send it back to the student or to the writer…”

In the case of Professors Jones and Grant, their background and training in journalism appeared to further impact how they approached genre in their evaluation. For example, Professor Jones explained how her training the and the orientation of the writing department intersected in her evaluation, saying

The ones I would send back to the writer are A, B, D, and G. Because there are gaps in the information. And the writing…it’s not as crisp. The grammar is fair enough. But my issue is that it leaves the audience in limbo. And so, one of the things we teach in this department that is unusual is the rhetorical situation and that consists of why the writer is writing this piece, which is exigence. It consists of who is your audience and who you are writing for and why they should care, and it also consists of constraints which involve audience and also length and the time element and course in this case there’s no virtual representation…

Professor Grant also discussed “exigency” in why he ranked Article C as number three. As he said, “So this one again is like H in that I was looking at it in terms of being
a straight up news story. It had a clear lead. It establishes the context. It establishes exigency and why this is important.

Later in her discussion, Professor Jones brought in other elements particular to the how she approached the genre of newspaper articles, saying

There’s one or two other items that follow under the rhetorical situation. There’s also a sense of purpose that’s involved with connecting with the audience: are we here to entertain, are we here to inform, or are we here to persuade. And so the second category, genre was one of the categories of the rhetorical situation, the second category has 3 genres in it. Commentary, which is different from editorial, there’s commentary and editorial. Different in terms of structure and two news stories, one that approaches the information with an analytical lead, and the other with a kind of a standard lead known as the inverted pyramid.

The other words that were mentioned most frequently and more often, percentagewise, by the composition instructors were “evidence,” “audience,” and “argument.” Composition instructor Lin discussed the importance of evidence in her choice of Article E as number one and D as number eight. As she said about D, “I don’t know it’s like criticizing China but just use two cases….I don’t think that’s enough evidence to make an argument as big as it is.” Professor Harris, the instructor who used both evidence and argument frequently in discussing the articles, teaches writing in the honors college. He began his discussion of the articles and he ranked both A and H number one depending upon how the type of piece, argumentative or analytical, was considered. Later when he talked about his ranking of Article D as number four, he focused on how it was based upon facts and evidence.
Professor Jones was the instructor who mentioned “audience” most out of the composition instructors, although Professor Stockton also mentioned it several times. While Jones used it more broadly to describe how she approached the evaluation of the articles in general, Professor Stockton mentioned audience in particular in discussing Article H, from Singapore, saying that it was written for a specific audience and that this would make it difficult for others to understand. Similarly, of the three non-composition instructors who mentioned “audience” in the discussion, Professor Torres mentioned it particularly in the context of the cultural background of the audience, as he tried to figure out exactly what group the articles were targeted towards, thinking internationally.

In sum, instructors from other disciplines did often implicitly refer to such concepts as genre, but the composition instructors seemed to approach and discuss articles using vocabulary that reflected their training in composition and rhetoric. Also, as mentioned in Part 1, the composition instructors indicated that they might actually be less sensitive to mechanics issues including spelling and grammar, as several indicated they try to look beyond such issues to get to the content of the writing.

Some interesting insights into writing were provided by two of the instructors in more technical fields, one in a science field and another in engineering. Professor Stone had this to say about writing

Great scientists tend to be great writers actually. Which is not well known. Part of the problem is that great scientists often wrote in other languages. Einstein’s German, from friends of mine who read German and teach German literature, say that he’s a fabulous writer. Some of the translations serve him ill, there are others that serve him better. Durac, one of my favorites, who wrote in English, British
English, but in English, who discovered antimatter is a fantastic writer. Not all
great scientists are great writers but I think as a rule most great scientists really
are actually quite good at writing. I think because they have to think about using
words to communicate things that are often not easily communicated even in
pictures. And therefore I think you have to choose your words carefully since you
are making an argument after all. And you have to bring the reader along with
you….you have to know how to communicate, how to use analogies, how to think
through what’s a good analogy, what’s a misleading analogy. So all these areas of
communication you really, really have to think about. So I think you should be a
good writer. It really shows if you’re a scientist trying to communicate and you’re
a poor writer.

When asked why he responded to my request to participate, Professor Smith, who
is trained as an engineer but also does quite a lot of human subject research, said it was
he really enjoys writing. When I expressed the view that some might be surprised that he,
as an engineer, would like to write so much, he elaborated that

Oh, I think writing is absolutely the most fun and important thing in my career. I
wish I had more time to do it, to write the things that I want to write, not the
things that I want to say and do too much. Reading and writing are the most fun
things. For me writing is part of the discipline of the job. You know, it’s how I
sort out my ideas, and have something good to say and say it well. I don’t
consider something I have to do and it’s an integral part of everything I do and I
use it as part of my thinking (emphasis).
While I tried to limit my own biases, I did have some preconceptions about certain fields and writing that were completely wrong, as shown by this last exchange. I do think that those who responded to my request to participate may have naturally more interest and comfort with writing, which is why it was a study that appealed to them. This is what Professor Stone said, when I asked why he agreed to participate.

I was interested in the fact that you were interested in writing, and since I spend a lot of my time deciding, grading, and evaluating students on their writing, I’m more interested in evaluating them on their argument….So I have to admit what you’re doing interested me and I thought this is certainly something where I can be helpful. Sometimes people send me a request and it’s something that it will take class time or something else I’m not particularly interested, and I’ll recommend they go see somebody else. I thought what you are interested, well, it’s what I’m interested in...

As a final note, as found in previous studies such as Leki (1995), there were differences in rankings due to the disciplinary area of the professors in this study where students wrote essays on various topics. In that case, the greater knowledge of the professor of a particular topic often meant an essay was graded more critically and often lower. Similarly, as shown in the discussion of the importance of content in “good writing” features, a deep knowledge of a topic, even if it meant the topic was of interest to the instructor, could mean a lower ranking. This was particularly evident in the very low ranking by Professor Torres of the most popular article, “Want to Ruin Teaching? Give Ratings,” since he found its arguments unconvincing. As previously discussed, I did try to minimize the impact of content that was specifically tied to countries by my
selection of global topics, but the expertise of the participant still did have an impact in the rankings for certain articles.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the eight composition instructors and 11 other instructors agreed on the rankings of most of the articles, although composition instructors appeared to like Article B slightly more than instructors from other disciplines. Breaking the category of other disciplines down further, where there were six instructors from engineering backgrounds and five from other disciplinary backgrounds, there was again a large amount of agreement on most of the articles. The main difference in rankings when analyzed more closely had to do with Article C, as those from the small group of other disciplines generally ranked Article C higher than those from the slightly larger group with engineering backgrounds.

**Part 4: Influence of L1 (Native or Non-Native English Speakers)**

In order to answer research question 4, whether first language background appears to affect the rankings of the writing samples, I selected participants from two groups: Native Speakers of English (NESs) and Non-Native Speakers of English (NNESs). 10 of my participants were NESs and nine were NNESs. As with disciplines, there was actually a large amount of agreement on article rankings between these two groups.

In order to analyze any particular differences, I organized the rankings by group below in Chart 9. It is organized by the size of any difference in how particular articles were ranked. I then analyze and discuss where there appear to be differences and why, using the comments and discussion from my interviews with participants.
As shown in Chart 9, there was a large amount of agreement on how most of the articles were perceived and ranked by NESs and NNESs. The rankings of Articles A, C, D, E, F and G were close or the same, within 0-12 percentage points of each other, which equates to no more than two participants ranking an article differently at the most.

**Articles H and B.** The greatest difference in rankings in the upper half were for Article H and B, “MNC’s want more clarity on foreign worker policy” and “Ping pong fears.” There were differences of 22% and 56% when these were ranked in aggregate. To determine whether there were actual differences in how these articles were perceived by the different groups, I also analyzed the individual participant rankings in Charts 10-11. These charts reflect numbers of participants from each group instead of percentages, since there were equal numbers of NESs and NNESs because I did not include Professor Jones’ rankings. Her comments and insights are valuable, but she did not rank articles the same way so I am not including her in the charts.

**Article H.** Article H initially appeared to be perceived differently by the two groups; it was ranked in the upper half by 44% of NESs compared with 22% of the NNESs. 3 NESs ranked it #1 or 2, and only one ranked it closer to the bottom as number
seven. Conversely, only two of the NNESs ranked it in the upper half, and four ranked it #7-8. While initially there appeared a greater preference by NESs for this article when viewed in aggregate, upon closer examination as shown in Chart 10, individuals from the two groups were generally in agreement, with most ranking it in the lower rankings.

Of the three NESs who ranked Article H highly as #1 or 2, Professor Grant explained why in depth. He ranked it number one, saying, “as far as the genre newspaper is concerned it contextualized the problem, it based it in evidence. It clarified difficult terms. It didn’t use…it used vocabulary appropriate for the situation but not jargon or anything that the person involved with the situation wouldn’t understand. The writer appears in control, I guess.”

Professor Davis, who didn’t like several of the articles, ranking several news and opinion articles all near the bottom as number six, ranked it number 2. Comparing it with Article E, which he ranked number one, he said, “it didn’t read quite as well as E, teachers, but you could follow the flow of ideas.”

![Chart 10 - Article H Ranking by NESs & NNESs](image-url)
Of the one NNES who ranked this article in the upper half, Professor Chen, ranked Article H number one because “I feel like in terms of the genre or writing style, I feel like this is what I imagine article in a newspaper should be like.”

In general, however, the NESs and NNESs in the study ranked this lower, with five NESs ranking it #5-7 and five NNESs ranking it #6-8. Of the NESs ranking it lower, as discussed in Part 3, Professor Connors thought this article put too much information into the first lengthy, four line sentence, overloading the reader with information. He ranked it #7. NNES Professor Dukov ranked it even lower at #8 saying it was “solely based on what somebody else said…I didn’t get any analysis or the writer did not express his or her perspective on the issue. It was just what someone else had said and then how other responded to it.”

In sum, individual participants generally agreed about this article, and most did not rank it as highly as several of the other articles.

**Article B.** The different ranking of Article B, however, suggested that the background of English as an L1 or L2 did affect how this *Times of India* article was perceived. 56% of the NNESs put this article in the upper half of the rankings, while none (0%) of the NESs did. Plotting individual rankings in Chart 11, this difference is still marked, and there appears to be a greater tolerance for particular features in this articles by NNESs than NESs.

Five of the nine NNES ranked Article B in the upper half, however, and three as #2 or 3. Professor Chen ranked it #2, noting it was more like the types of student essays she normally reads. Professor Kahla also ranked it number two, saying “It was straight to the point. It was fairly short. The paragraphs made a lot of sense. There was four of them,
each had a different idea.” He really liked it because of the topic too. Professor Torres did not explain his ranking of this article as #3.

In looking at the reasons for the overall lower rankings by NESs, six of whom ranked it #7 or 8, there were particular words or phrases in this article that really seemed to bother some of the NESs such as “On the backfoot: On the political…” or, as Professor Connors noted, the misuse of the word flak in the phrase “the statement has come in for flak.” He was the instructor ranking this article the lowest at #8, and as previously discussed in Part 3, had particular difficulty with the choice or words and other expressions in this article. Of the five other NNESs who ranked this article number seven, three specifically mentioned the use of different or odd words, idioms, or colloquialisms in their rankings.

In addition, Professor Stone, who ranked this article #7, also mentioned the choice of words in this article, but said that his biggest problem was that “it’s hard to know what the article is about up front. There’s something about corruption. It’s too vague. It doesn’t have a fresh example.” Professor Harris agreed, saying “it mainly deals in generalities and his opinion, so for example, and adverbs are always a giveaway to thinks like that, so
there’s a line where the author says ‘surely there’s a better explanation’…so when I see ‘surely’ I think of the opposite, I’m not sure.”

Professor Jones agreed with both Connors in the discussion of words such as “flak”, but also Stone and Harris in putting Article B in the “return to writer” group. She said part of the problem with the article is that “it’s not specific, so what would help me as a reader understand this as an outsider is, to know first of all, what the issue is….with context. So, the writer loses me in the first line, because I have nowhere to go to be part of the conversation.” Furthermore, she did not like its use of generalities and clichés, which is a type or writing she does not find credible.

Of the 3 NNESs also ranked this article #6, word choice also appeared to be an issue. Professor Petrescu, the professor who ranked articles from an American reader’s point of view, observed that

B has a cumbersome sentence setting. If I were to give a guess this probably from Indian culture which is, the thinking is much more involved in putting together the sentences. But then there’s something funny here which makes me believe that if it is from there, it’s not a native speaker of English. It has what I call 50 cents words in 10 cent structures. So an explanation of what it means there are some…if you were paid by the length of the word and 50 cent words are very heavy complicated words which usually show a higher level of education whereas the structure of the sentence doesn’t match the same level. So it happens very often when you see people using English as a Second…I’m an ESL guy.

Professor Lee also noted that word choice affected his ranking of this article near the bottom as #6, saying

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B, the issue of me with this one is that I’m not very familiar with the terms this author was using. And uh, I really, not very clear. I know what he’s talking about but the reading process keeps like, some of those maybe I’m not familiar with those words, my vocabulary is not the same as this person. And also the topic is not very familiar, for example for this teaching related topic I’m very familiar, this corruption issue I know generally what it is but I really not clear about some details that he is talking about. . . .

To sum up, while there were also NNESs who did not like many of the words used in Article B as well, there was more acceptance of this article by other NNESs. The NESs did not, on the whole, like this article.

**Conclusion**

While there was agreement on rankings in general on most of the articles, Native and Non-Native English speakers did appear to diverge in their perception and tolerance of certain features found in one article in particular, Article B. The use of particular words reflected nativized features of Indian English, plus a lack of specifics, were particular features that several of my NES participants identified as problematic.
CHAPTER 7
DISCUSSION

As discussed in Chapter 1, the research problem driving my study was related to the internationalization of U.S. universities by students and faculty, where students may be writing in a variety of English other than American English. In addition, faculty may be non-native speakers of English, and may therefore have different expectations of student writing. Since “good writing” in the U.S. university is critical to student success, I asked these four research questions: 1) What are the features of good writing? 2) Are other varieties of English accepted equally? 3) Does the discipline of the instructor matter? 4) Does the first language background of the university instructor matter?

In this chapter I revisit my research questions, discussing my findings in Chapter 6 in depth and what may be drawn from these findings, relating it to other research studies and how it ties to and builds on these studies. To do this, however, I reorganize the discussion into two parts, answering questions 1 and 2 together, then 3 and 4, since the findings are integrally related and intertwined. Last, I discuss the implications of my study from pedagogical, policy and research standpoints.

**Part I: What Features of Good Writing are Valued and Expected by University Instructors in this Study including Different Written Varieties of English?**

The features of good writing identified by my participant instructors supports a preference for an inner circle norm that is identified as an “American style of writing,” meaning that certain features of the outer circle varieties in my study that varied from these norms were not accepted equally. This led to lower rankings of these other varieties. One possible reason for this preference appears to be the way writing is taught.
in American classrooms from elementary throughout graduate school levels. Another possibility is that participants have developed certain expectations and ideas of what is good simply through exposures to essays that follow that pattern. Both the expectation of certain features and how it is taught, creating this expectation, are discussed below.

**U.S. University Instructors Prefer an “American Style of Writing”**

While different weight was given to particular elements of good writing by my participants, organization and content were mentioned most in their discussion of their rankings of various articles. As discussed in depth in Chapter 6, my participants expected an organization providing a clear purpose up front, including a form made up of paragraphs of a certain length, with sentences that are more direct and not overly wordy.

In content, my participants expected word choices that they perceived as unbiased, containing vocabulary that they were familiar with, specific details, and contextualization for subject matter they were less familiar with. In content, familiarity with the topic also influenced whether a reader might find an article interesting in the first place; however, expertise in a particular subject or topic area could also mean that the article was evaluated more critically and lower. Conversely, where the participant did not have much familiarity with the subject, greater contextualization, including a good title, was important.

**“American style” organization.** The preferred organization expressed by my participants towards my writing samples is one that has been identified as “an American style of writing” or as Professor Petrescu described it, writing with the “bottom line up front.” As discussed in Chapter 3, this type of writing organization was also noted in Leki (1995), where U.S. professors emphasized a preference for good introduction where
faculty could tell where the paper “was going as early as possible” (p. 32). In addition, as one instructor of first-year writing for international students at a large U.S. university in fall 2013 told her students how to structure their essays, quoting her high school communications instructor, “it seems annoying, but in American writing you tell them what you’re going to tell them, you tell it to them, and then you tell them what you told them.” (J. Brown, personal communication, January 8, 2014).

Another feature that was expected was a certain paragraph length; they did not indicate exactly what length was necessary, but their reaction to articles that missed their expectations indicated what was not acceptable. In addition, they expected the writing to be succinct and direct, using active voice and avoiding passive phrasing. Again, it was when they encountered a sample that did not contain these elements that they were the most explicit in describing their preferences.

**OC variety differences.** Where the organization was found lacking, for example, was demonstrated by how Singapore Article A, “3 missed chances, was perceived. It was considered confusing by many of my participants - several said they did not know where it was going. They had an expectation that the articles would inform them in a “logical” way that they could easily follow, an expectation this article did not meet. In addition, several expressed their dislike for the short, one sentence paragraphs found in this article.

This use of one sentence, albeit sometimes lengthy paragraphs was mentioned in particular by the NNES instructors. This may be a reflection of what they were told when learning English if they asked how long their paragraphs should be, a question often asked by beginning writers of English. In addition, a certain paragraph length is reflected in the types of models that English learners are given as they begin writing paragraphs
and essays in English (e.g., Oshima & Hogue, 2014; Herzfeld-Pipkin, 2006). While Oshima and Hogue (2014) in the first chapter tells students that a good paragraph can be as short as one sentence or “as long as ten sentences or more,” the authors then add that a good paragraph needs to be “long enough to develop the main idea clearly” (p. 3). In fact, almost all of the model paragraphs in this textbook are five or more sentences in length, and the discussion of how to create a good paragraph is broken down in a way that suggests a good paragraph does need to be a particular length. For example, the book says that a good paragraph contains multiple elements such as a topic sentence, three supporting details, and possibly a concluding sentence. In addition, the book’s visual representation comparing the elements of a paragraph and essay suggests very strongly that there should be multiple sentences (p. 78). Therefore, while students are told a paragraph can be very short that is not, in reality, what they are taught.

In addition to the issue of form, the expectation for succinct, direct sentences was not met by Nigerian newspaper Articles F and G, about teaching and reading, which meant they were ranked lower. For example, Professor Harris, in ranking Article F from Nigeria, had this to say about the word choices in the article,

…And then excessive passive voice which is just connected to the whole jargon thing, and I wrote down a quote, “Teachers lives must be affected for meaningful impact.”

Conversely, in describing features of two highest ranked articles, the American articles, several participants used adjectives such as “clear” and “logical.”

“American style” content. In addition to an organization telling them what they would be reading about at the very beginning of the writing sample, my participants also
generally expected articles to present information in an unbiased way, where the word choices were perceived to be more neutral. This was similar to the findings in Li (1996), where the American teachers found a credible narrator to be one with “certain type of temperament….restrained detached, and controlled” (p. 122). Furthermore my study supported Li’s finding of the importance of using “definite, specific, concrete, language” in American English writing (pp. 119-120), as my participants had a definite preference for specific details.

**OC differences.** The Indian and Nigerian articles, in particular, did not meet many of my participants’ expectations for certain American style preferences such as an unbiased presentation of information, with specific details. They perceived that the Indian newspaper articles, in particular, contained word choices that were not neutral, with some choices identified as “propaganda.” As discussed at length in Chapter 6, both the Indian articles and Nigerian articles were criticized for overgeneralizing and/or not providing specific details to support various assertions.

**American Style Writing Norms Reflect Widely-Spread Teaching Practices**

**Mainstream U.S. classrooms.** The preference for the American writing feature of a *bluf* organization may be the result of what is taught in U.S. classrooms from an early age, one that is underscored and emphasized in textbooks, but also in how media presents information in mediums such as newspapers. Kirby and Liner’s book on good writing for U.S. high school students expands upon what students learn when they first start to write in elementary school where the structure of a good paragraph, with a topic sentence telling readers at the beginning what it will be about, is first taught. This is expanded in middle school, where most students first encounter the five-paragraph theme
paper, where how to write a good thesis statement describing what the essay will be about, is typically introduced. In high schools today, students generally learn to expand their writing to include such concepts as “voice” and how to write in other genres including creative writing. As Kirby and Liner’s list shows, however, there are particular elements that are important that emphasize what is considered “logical” in American writing.

The features my participants found important were also mentioned in the other studies I examined, although their choice of words to describe these elements varied. For example, of Kirby and Liner’s 10 criteria for good student writing, discussed in Chapter 3, six were also mentioned by my participants (my participants’ wording is in italics). U.S. high school teachers Kirby and Liner (1981) listed these elements, with number in their list included: (2) movement, meaning a sense of order (logical), (3) light touch (neutral), (4) informative (content) (6) sense of audience (context), (7) detail (specific details versus generalizations), and (9) form (paragraphing). As Kirby and Liner said, good writing is not only interesting but also technically skillful, and both elements must be present for it to be effective.

U.S. college composition textbooks remind and instruct students about the importance of a thesis statement in many of the academic papers they write, where the purpose is often “to inform.” As Sheehan and Paine (2013) write in Chapter 2, “Topic, Angle, Purpose,” students should first identify what the purpose of their writing is and then create their thesis statement or “main claim.” Speaking to the student-reader, the authors say, “Your thesis statement guides your readers by announcing the main point or claim of the paper” (p. 20). They go on to discuss how the thesis statement “will usually
appear in your introduction….Then, it reappears, usually with more emphasis, in the conclusion” (p. 20). Fulwiler (2002) also emphasizes that the type of writing college students typically do has communication as the main goal, adding that it is not just communicating to instructors but also in writing “letters, applications, and resumes to potential employers.” According to this author

The general guidelines for such writing are well known: Communicative writing needs to be obviously purposeful so both writer and reader know where it’s going. It needs to be clear in order to be understood. It needs to include assertions supported by evidence in order to be believable. And it needs to be conventionally correct in terms of spelling, mechanics, and grammar in order to be taken seriously (p. 36).

This author does also acknowledge that there are “interesting exceptions to these guidelines” but that “they are the rule in most academic writing” (p.36). In Chapter 24 of this textbook, Fulwiler discusses the main exception, creative nonfiction, which uses a variety of strategies that vary from other writing genres. In this situation directness and a clear purpose up front would not be expected.

This author also discusses how there can be delayed-thesis papers in which conclusions are not stated up front, “but examine a variety of conditions or circumstances to be considered before a decision is made” (p. 37). Thesis-first papers are, however, “common in academic as well as technical and scientific writing because they emphasize the transmission of an idea or information clearly, directly, and economically, thus helping readers get rapidly to the point” (p. 37).
In addition to broader composition books, author Bailey’s *Writing & Speaking at Work, A Practical Guide for Business Communication*, further expands on what good writing today means in the types of writing used in business settings. This author suggests that “Writing Plain English” is the best approach, and lists five elements as particularly important that will help writers avoid “bureaucratese” or writing in an overly formal, academic way. He suggests that individuals in business settings do five main things to achieve plain English speaking and writing: use common words, contractions, pronouns, active voice, and a proper tone (pp. 5-7). In addition, Bailey discusses the use of electronic tools such as grammar check to help avoid passive structures, and also the best way to avoid an overly formal, bureaucratic tone. While not everyone takes a business writing class, this type of writing is commonplace and again, reflects elements favored in American writing that my instructors also favored.

**ESL classrooms.** In addition to what is taught in U.S. mainstream classrooms, ESL students, both younger students who may be part of an immigrant population and international students planning to enter U.S. universities, learn this *bluf* style of American writing organization in textbooks for ESL writers. Like younger American students, ESL writers first learn how to write a paragraph, with the first objective the mastery of the topic sentence, again found at the beginning of paragraphs which tells the readers what they will read about (e.g., Oshima & Hogue, 2014; Herzfeld-Pipkin, 2006). Once students can do this, they move on to an essay made up of many paragraphs. They are taught to how to create a good thesis statement, which is typically found in the first paragraph and tells readers what they will read about in the rest of the essay. The topic sentences in ensuing paragraphs repeat the key words used in the thesis statement, tying the reader
back to this blueprint provided up front at the beginning of the essay. Finally, the summary paragraph repeats and emphasizes key points, but stays within what has been discussed, essentially “telling them what they were told.”

First-year undergraduate composition textbooks that recognize the fact that many student writers are from a variety of language backgrounds other than English also offer tips to these writers about English writing, particularly American English expectations. Maimon, Peritz, and Yancey (2012), in their The Brief McGraw-Hill Handbook, tell students that they must be aware of the audience for who they are writing, saying

Colleges in the United States and Great Britain, and English-speaking culture more generally, emphasize openly exchanging views, clearly stating opinions, and explicitly supporting judgments with examples, observations and reasons. Being direct is highly valued. Audiences in the United States expect speaker and writers to come to the point and will feel impatient without an identifiable thesis statement (p.12).

**Graduate school experience.** The preference for American style of writing or inner circle norm continues at the graduate level in U.S. universities. In graduate work, writing lengthy research papers of 10-20 pages is a common requirement, with organization of these lengthier papers to follow the types of style guides expected in particular disciplines. These guides further promulgate the bluf style of organization, including the use of specific headings to further clarify the points the graduate student is making (e.g., the APA manual, the Chicago Style guide).

In addition to graduate coursework, most of the writing and writing instruction graduate students receive, especially in writing Master’s theses or PhD dissertations
occurs after this coursework is completed. In PhD programs in particular, extensive writing occurs during the writing of dissertation proposals and the dissertation itself. Dissertations reflect an organization that emphasizes an “American” or inner circle style of organization, with the format also following an organization containing various chapters which each tell the readers, at the beginning and up front, what will be discussed in the chapter. Then, at the end, there is typically a conclusion or summary of what was discussed or “told.” Furthermore, the structure of the dissertation overall includes an introductory chapter telling the audience what to expect in the chapters to come and finishes with a concluding chapter, which summarizes what was discussed. These dissertation elements also reflect the conventions of the books published in U.S. academic circles.

In addition to the dissertation, graduate students become accustomed to a certain format or model of inner circle or American style writing in the academic journals for their respective fields of study. This is not just limited to graduate students, but also once they finish and become faculty themselves. For example, in submitting an article for publication, graduate students and faculty have to run the gauntlet of the peer review process, with its acceptance typically influenced by inner circle norms. If it is not accepted, they can often resubmit, but this opportunity to revise and resubmit involves a process where the author is encouraged to conform to the academic community’s practices. Writing articles following current norms and models provides a greater likelihood it will be accepted. Inner circle norms, both American and British English norms, dominate international academic publishing, with authors again required to follow particular formats, such as APA 6th Edition or Chicago Style in the U.S., depending upon
the journal itself. While one English journal published in the U.K. has recently taken the step of eliminating the requirement that a particular style guide be followed, *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, with ELF and WE author and scholar Jennifer Jenkins as editor, this is the exception and not the rule (Reisz, 2012).

**Conclusion**

My study finds that U.S. university instructors today prefer an “American style” of writing in terms of organization and content, which may not be found in certain OC varieties. This preference is from systemic teaching practices that emphasize particular features. The pedagogical and policy implications of this finding will be discussed later in this chapter.

**Part 2: Does Discipline and Language Background Matter?**

My study investigated whether what composition instructors expected in good writing seemed to match that expected by instructors in other disciplines by comparing the rankings of the various articles by these two groups. In general, they agreed, with the main difference appearing related to L1 background, not a particular discipline.

**L1 Background Influences Perceptions more than Disciplinary Differences**

My participants generally agreed on the features of good writing with one key difference: NNESs had a greater tolerance for the use of “uncommon” terms and generalities than NESs. This finding of greater tolerance makes this study unique, as this is different from findings in previous research on the perception of different spoken varieties of English.

In my study, for example, native and non-native English Speakers agreed on the rankings of most of the articles with one main exception, the *Times of India* Article B.
titled “On the backfoot: On the corruption issue, politicians are doing a shoddy job of defending themselves.” This is particularly significant given that the second largest group of international students in the U.S. today is from India, where English may be students’ L1 or additional language. These rankings suggest that students using other Englishes in U.S. universities may find that their instructors react negatively to some uses that would be acceptable in their home countries.

NNES composition instructors generally ranked Article B higher than NES composition instructors. For example, three of four composition instructors who were also NNESs who ranked it #2-4 (out of the 7 who ranked articles #1-8), and in the other disciplines, two of five NNESs ranked it #2 or 3 (out of 11 total).

As shown in Chart 11, when separated by language background, Article B was ranked towards the bottom of the rankings by the NESs, with six of nine ranking it #7 or 8. All ranked it in the lower half. It was also sent back by Professor Johnson, the
composition instructor who ranked articles differently. There were two main reasons it was ranked lower: one, the use of unusual words or colloquialisms and the use of generalizations. While three of the nine NNESs also ranked this article lower at number six, and two specifically agreed with these reasons, one of them was Professor Petrescu, who said he specifically evaluated articles from an American or NES perspective. Overall, NNESs appeared to have more tolerance towards particular features found in this Indian English article than NESs.

**Knowledge of World Englishes.** In other studies involving oral production, NNESs had less tolerance towards different varieties of English other than standard or inner circle varieties. For example, Smith (1983) and Chiba and Matsuura (1995) reported studies in which participants were less tolerant of non-standard spoken varieties of English. NNESs greater tolerance for Article B may be because they were less aware of the differences in colloquialisms that appeared odd and unacceptable to the NESs. This may also be because their greater exposure to a variety of Englishes made them more able to understand the different types of colloquialisms. As noted in Smith (1992), even though there NNESs appeared to be less tolerant of non-standard or non-inner circle spoken varieties, there was understanding of the deepest level of meaning or interpretability by NNESs, who had more exposure to different varieties of English. The reason for their greater tolerance of features in the different varieties in my study compared with spoken English is interesting, however. Spoken and written communication are different but why there was this greater tolerance towards the choice of words is unclear. Even more time may be spent in mastering written English compared with spoken English (Cummins, 1982), so Jenkins (2007) comments about NNES
intolerance towards non-native spoken English varieties, as a reflection of their own time and investment in the process, should also apply here. It may be that the genre of newspaper article affected what was perceived as appropriate or not, where the use of colloquialisms in general in a student essay, for example, might be less acceptable.

The NESs in my study were born and raised in the U.S., and while most had studied another language, few if any claimed any particular level of proficiency. Conversely, several of the NNESs had proficiency in three or more languages, and all at least two. The very strong reaction from some NESs towards features of Article B as “wrong” does suggest variations from American English has implications in a U.S. university on various levels, both from pedagogical, policy, and research levels, which I will discuss in more detail in the final section of this chapter. This NES level of awareness of nativized features different from AE, features that led this article to be uniformly ranked lower, shows how their greater exposure to the “inner circle” norms, taught from an early age on both out of school and in school, affects perceptions. This “intuition” about differences is one of the two main criteria that identifies those who were defined as NESs in Chapter 2.

Lack of Disciplinary Differences

The fact that there did not appear to be disciplinary differences may be a reflection of the topics selected and the particular features of the newspaper genre. I selected newspaper articles on topics of broad or global interest, which may be one reason that there was so much agreement on the rankings. Previous studies such as Leki (1996) showed less agreement, particularly in the perceptions of the subject-matter instructors with more expertise in a particular area, but this study’s writing samples were
very different in type and topic. They consisted of student essays on four very different and diverse subjects such as nuclear power, welfare programs in the U.S. versus Sweden, and resistance to traditional notions for behavior by Muslim women. The subject-area professors also observed that students often made contradictory assertions, as well as avoiding or not drawing conclusions in their papers.

My study, like Leki (1996), showed the influences of the topic or content, especially in the case of the two very experienced instructors who ranked Article E low even though it was ranked highly overall. More of the critiques of the samples in my study, however, had to do with lack of support in terms of details, not contradictions or lack of conclusions. Because these were newspaper articles, where a concluding paragraph is not a key element given the importance placed upon providing as much information as possible early on, since readers may not read an article completely, one of the main issues identified in the student essays in Leki was much less important. In addition, as edited newspaper articles, other issues with spelling, punctuation and grammar that might have affected the perception of the samples between disciplines were minimized. Comments made by my instructors when I asked about spelling or punctuation, however, suggest that composition or other writing instructors at the university level might be more forgiving than those in other disciplines. Several of them said that they generally ignore these kinds of issues, while professors from other disciplines said if these problems had been there, it would have been an issue for them. For example, one of the engineering professors was bothered by the use of British punctuation and spelling, although he did not recognize it as such. The comments by the composition and writing instructors in my study does also appear to be different from
how the ESL instructors in Leki (1996) might treat such issues, as Leki found they focused on form.

My study’s samples, while they contained different grammatical structures such as passive voice that were commented on, were therefore more uniform than student papers or samples would be. Thus, there may have been more agreement on rankings across disciplines given my choice of newspaper articles as writing samples because particular “mechanics” elements such as punctuation or spelling were not as present, as well as the lesser importance of a concluding paragraph in a newspaper article.

**Conclusion**

My study found that the NNES participants were, overall, more tolerant of certain features found in Article B, from India. This tolerance may be because they have been exposed to greater varieties of English and could therefore understand the different expressions. Also, it could be because they are not as aware of certain American English expressions, so it did not influence their understanding of the content or matter as much to them as it did to those from primarily monolingual AE language backgrounds. In addition, in my study the composition instructors and those from other disciplines had similar expectations and agreed in general on the rankings. The type of writing samples used, however, may account for a greater agreement on the article rankings overall, since some of the features found important in other studies such as concluding paragraphs are less important in newspaper articles.

**Part 3: Implications**

The overarching finding from my study is that U.S. university instructors today, regardless of discipline or language background, have an expectation that writing follow
American English of norms. Consequently, varieties of English that do not follow these inner circle norms may not be accepted and students could be penalized if they write using their nativized forms. As discussed in this chapter, U.S. university instructors today may grade student papers lower if they use certain features acceptable in their own countries. Some examples of this are in Singapore English where shorter paragraphs without a lot of scaffolding between ideas may be the norm, Nigerian English where wordier, less direct organization is acceptable, and in India English where colorful idiomatic expressions may be very different from American English. My findings that certain nativized features of Indian, Nigerian, and Singaporean English are not accepted or considered “unusual” by instructors on U.S. university campuses has pedagogical implications for composition, general education, and faculty.

Implications for Composition

One of the implications, for example, is related to the significant numbers of OC students, including Singaporean, Nigerian, and Indian students, who are found on U.S. campuses today. In fact, Indian students currently comprise the second largest group of international students on U.S. campuses today. For OC students, English is often their first or an additional language, often learned simultaneously with another language, and if they enter U.S. universities as undergraduates, they often take English 101 composition courses with American students. In larger universities such as the one where my study took place, they may also choose to enroll in a first-year composition course with other international students, but it is their choice and they are not automatically placed in these courses.
It is in first-year composition that OC students can first be made aware of the conventions of American writing style and the expectations of instructors in various fields of study. This can be done from an “additive” and not “subtractive” approach to language learning (Peregoy & Boyle, 2014), where their literacy in their own variety of English can help them more easily become aware of and learn another written variety. While typically used in L1 and L2 situations, it can also be applied to this situation in the way that literacy in one language helps individuals learn another language. Framing it this way to make OC students aware that there may be different expectations than what they are used to, possibly drawing in the entire class to discuss differences, could be made into a very positive and interesting learning experience.

In addition, research into U.S. dialects and how they are perceived gives other ideas for how to approach this. Some U.S. teachers have, for example, used the idea of code-switching with students whose English language variety is African-American Vernacular (AAVE) to familiarize them with what is considered Academic or Standard English (e.g., Wheeler, 2009). Even though they are using a dialect of English, it is often not accepted or perceived negatively, so students are taught to think of code-switching to a different English in academic settings. Using this idea as well as the concept of informal and formal registers, OC students could also be taught to think of American English as simply another formal variety to add to their repertoire of English.

Given the level of agreement on most of the article rankings across disciplines, this probably already occurs to a great degree. Since there were some instructors in my study who did, however, like or at least accept some of the unusual word choices and colloquialisms found in IE Article B in particular, often NNESs, it is important to train all
composition instructors who work with OC students of the importance of choosing appropriate vocabulary for academic papers. Again, using the idea of “register” seems most appropriate way to address this, since many of the words that were objected to in my study are idiomatic in nature. Raising the overall awareness of all students of the perils of using idiomatic expressions in academic papers would be the most culturally appropriate approach. While knowing American English idioms is helpful, particularly in understanding what other students and professors are saying, students in general, regardless of country or origin, can typically write better academic papers by avoiding the use of idioms. They present a level of informality that is often not well-received in university papers, and avoiding their usage will avoid the pitfall of using the wrong expression. They may be appropriate in some types of writing, such as feature story in a journalism course, however, this is not the typical type of writing expected of students. Last, while it was not a significant issue in my study because these were edited newspaper articles, it still matters. Students still need to be made aware that spelling and grammar does matter, and possibly even more so to instructors in other disciplines, so they need to proofread and edit their papers carefully.

**Implications for General Education**

As campuses become increasingly internationalized, universities could consider adding coursework about World Englishes as a general education requirement, as either a one semester course or as a significant part of a cultural course requirement. Many universities already do require a cultural diversity class, so adding a significant component related to the different varieties of English found today would indicate
support from the upper echelons of university management for a more globalized viewpoint and acceptance of different varieties.

**Implications for Faculty**

Faculty training about different varieties World Englishes and why students from different countries may use particular expressions or organize their writing a certain way may be another way to create more awareness and tolerance of different varieties. While it may be unrealistic to expect instructors in various disciplines to accept different forms to a great degree, it may lead them to be more tolerant or at least assist students in modifying their writing to meet their expectations throughout the duration of a course, instead of immediately expecting it. If instructors are clear about what their expectations for papers in their classes are, including explicit comments about avoiding passive voice and using idiomatic instructions, these are technical aspects associated with writing that can be mastered by students if they are given the opportunity. While there may be currently an expectation that students should know these things from the first day, in a global world and international campus a greater level of tolerance can be created, especially if it is supported by the university administration. Over time, with a raised level of awareness, instructors might begin to think differently about exactly what is “good” English writing or that there is not necessarily “one” particular way to express ideas effectively.

**Research Implications**

My study adds to existing research on writing and World Englishes attitudinal studies by including perceptions of good writing where a variety of written Englishes are included. It demonstrates that even though U.S. universities today are increasingly
internationalized by both students and faculty, American English “inner circle” norms are still favored in writing across disciplines and regardless of instructor language background. This preference is emphasized and perpetuated by systemic teaching practices and writing throughout all levels, with academic journals and other publishing emphasizing and reemphasizing these norms.

My study also shows that while current publishing and teaching practices may perpetuate this inner norm, the fact that there are increasing numbers of international faculty does suggest that there may be a change occurring. The greater acceptance or tolerance by NNESs for Article B from India overall shows that increasing numbers of international faculty may ultimately influence how different varieties of writing is perceived. This may be, as discussed above, due to their greater knowledge and exposure to different varieties of English which means they may be able to interpret these varieties more easily, as noted in Smith (1992) in the context of an oral study.

Until the inner circle models of writings emphasized and perpetuated in the publication of academic journals and other types of writing expected of graduate students and faculty in particular, however, it will be difficult to change expectations (see Jenkins, 2014). Since publishing is such an important requirement for aspiring and existing faculty advancement in many universities today, particularly public universities such as the one in this study, broadening writing norms to embrace other varieties of English will be a major challenge.
CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Conclusions

As presented in my introductory chapter, the increasing internationalization of U.S. universities by students and faculty is the context in which this study is situated and what makes this study significant today. Specifically, my study was designed to address two gaps in the research: (1) how instructors in increasingly internationalized U.S. universities perceive different written varieties of English, since many international students may be writing in an L1 other than American English, and (2) how instructors’ first language and/or disciplinary backgrounds appear to affect their perceptions.

As intended, this study informs writing pedagogy for undergraduate students in multiple ways. First, it informs writing pedagogy and research on “good writing”, particularly what instructors of various types are looking for and how they respond to different varieties of English. It shows what is valued and expected in organization and content features in the U.S. university, which is currently a preference for an “American” style of writing. Second, it informs writing program curriculums by identifying, through the comparison of how composition and content area professors rank the writing samples, whether current writing programs are actually preparing students for the writing expected in content area classes. Including a selection of participants from composition and other disciplines suggests that what composition teachers expect does match what other instructors expect as well, validating the importance and relevance of what is taught in composition classes today. Significantly, my study found that there was overall agreement in what was considered good writing across disciplines. Last, this study adds
to WE research by adding a writing component to WE research studies, which have previously focused on oral production. Since I included almost equal numbers of NES and NNES instructors, I was able to probe whether expectations for good writing varied between these groups, and found that NNESs appeared more tolerant of different varieties, which is different from the preference for inner circle norms noted in previous research studies.

**Limitations of the Study**

**Sample Size.** One limitation of my study was that it was limited in size, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions when looking at the evaluations of the writing samples in the smaller groups, particularly in comparing those from engineering backgrounds (EIs) with those from other disciplinary backgrounds (ODIs). In that case the small size of the participants in each group, six EIs versus five ODIs, does make it difficult to draw conclusions, because the reaction of one or two individuals could influence the rankings much more than they would in a larger sample. It is easier to draw conclusions from the rankings of the larger groups such as the entire group (19), NESs and NNESs (9 and 10), or composition and other instructors (8 and 11).

**Wording of Questions.** Some of the way I phrased my interview questions may have influenced the responses of my participants somewhat in how they phrased their responses. For example, I asked “which article did you like the best? Which did you think was the worst?” In retrospect, I would choose more neutral wording such as just using #1 (or first) and #8 (or last). My wording did not affect their rankings, since they had already done this, but may have influenced the words they chose in response. I used informal
language to create a more comfortable atmosphere, but it may have had some impact on how they relayed their perceptions to me.

**Selection of Articles.** I think the selection of Article A, “3 missed chances,” was a good choice in that the reactions to it really highlighted what my participants expected in good writing, mainly because they found this article to be missing many of these feature. I do not know, however, if this article is representative of Singaporean English or English typically used in Singaporean articles other than in the type of paragraphing used. Several participants identified it as a possible translation, which was not the same comment about Article H, also from Singapore. Article H, about foreign worker policy. It was ranked higher and did not have many of the same critiques directed at it as “3 missed chances.”

In addition, both of the Nigerian articles were found in the opinion pages of the newspapers, instead of one news and one opinion story as in the articles selected from other countries. Article F did appear to contain more elements of a news story, however, particularly since Professor Jones included it in that category, but selecting a story from a news section might have impacted the rankings the Nigerian articles somewhat.

**Title.** I may have inadvertently caused the ranking of “3 missed chances” to be lower as well because I edited out after the title, its subtitle “Singapore’s population strategy,” in an effort to avoid any impact on rankings that could be associated with an awareness of where the article was written. Professor Lin, who did like this article, was able to identify that it was about a sustainable population strategy, which was not clear to others. Again, the problem of context was identified by many, and that the article seemed to presume the audience knew about the topic already. Had I left in at least part of the
subtitle such as “Population Strategy” that might have assisted readers in establishing context, especially those who indicated that they pay attention to titles.

**Directions for Future Research**

**Other genre studies**

My study adds to previous research on good writing by using newspaper articles as the genre for my study; it would be interesting to explore the perceptions of good writing using other texts such as business letters, letters of recommendation, or academic articles. Using OC student essays where developmental issues could be minimized could also significantly add to existing research. One of the reasons I did not choose to use OC student essays in the current study was because of time limitations and the complexity of finding a samples of student essays demonstrating particular linguistic nativization features not related to their stage in writing development.

**Contrastive Rhetoric studies**

My study showed a preference for an American style of writing. In future studies, I would build on my existing research to investigate how Intensive English Program (IEP) students process the different models they are given against their own writing backgrounds and if the cultural expectations, for example, continue to change as noted in Cahill (2008). In this study, Chinese and American writing was not found to be as different as in past studies such as Leki (1991), where one Chinese student found that they had to create an American self in order to write in English. Cahill’s study suggests that more recent writing teaching in China is closer to the American model, which may be a reflection of the emphasis on the nationwide push to learn English in recent years. My study’s Chinese participants, who also did not like the short paragraphs found in
Singapore articles A and H, and who were all under age 35, may reflect these changes. It would be interesting to explore with Chinese and other IEP students whether it is the training or preparation in how American English writing is supposed to be that has influenced their perceptions. Furthermore, it would be interesting to investigate whether the American style they have learned has also influenced how they might write in their own L1.

**World Englishes courses**

In addition to this study, since the U.S. is becoming internationalized not only on U.S. campuses, it would be interesting to consider how the inclusion of a World Englishes course in instructor training across disciplines might impact perceptions of good writing, or possibly impact the viewpoints of instructors. In addition, an examination of how ESL program textbooks present the preferred American style, and the emphasis on models that may be very formulaic, could be revisited.

**Replicating this study in OC countries**

Replicating this student in collaboration with university professors in one or more of the three OC countries in this study would provide interesting insights about how inner circle norms are perceived in those settings. In addition, it would inform the field of World Englishes to do this study on a university campus in another inner circle country such as England or Australia, to see if there are any differences in perception. Last, a collaborative study with colleagues in multiple OC institutions could mean student essays that really reflect writing in that country would be among the samples that instructors could read and evaluate, where developmental issues could be largely avoided and a rich source of information on how differences in writing could be explored.
Final Thoughts

My study did show that today, there is a preference in U.S. universities across disciplines for a writing style that still does reflect inner circle norms. If some of my suggestions are implemented such as the inclusion of World Englishes training for students and faculty in general coursework or other faculty development programs, this might at least create an environment that is more accepting, at least initially, of students using different styles of writing. Given the institutionalized and widespread teaching of writing practices from early grades on, with an even greater impact in the universities as undergraduate, graduate, and faculty are encouraged to follow in textbooks and other forms of writing, it will likely be a while before much change occurs. As U.S. demographics continue to change and the numbers of non-inner circle English users continues to grow worldwide, including on U.S. university campuses, however, just what is considered “good writing” may evolve to a broader and more globalized form.
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APPENDIX A

TOP 25 LEADING COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
## International Students: Leading Places of Origin

**2010/11 - 2011/12**

**TOP 25 PLACES OF ORIGIN OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, 2010/11 - 2011/12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Place of Origin</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2011/12 % of Total</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>157,558</td>
<td>194,029</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>103,895</td>
<td>100,270</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>-3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>73,351</td>
<td>72,295</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>22,704</td>
<td>34,139</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>27,546</td>
<td>26,821</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>-2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>24,818</td>
<td>23,250</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>21,290</td>
<td>19,966</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>-6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>14,888</td>
<td>15,572</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>13,713</td>
<td>13,893</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>12,184</td>
<td>11,973</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>10,301</td>
<td>9,621</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>-6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>9,458</td>
<td>9,347</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>8,947</td>
<td>9,186</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>8,777</td>
<td>9,029</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>8,098</td>
<td>8,232</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>8,136</td>
<td>8,032</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>8,236</td>
<td>7,626</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>6,942</td>
<td>7,131</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>7,148</td>
<td>7,028</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>5,626</td>
<td>6,982</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>6,735</td>
<td>6,743</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>6,456</td>
<td>6,295</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>-2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>5,491</td>
<td>6,281</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>4,330</td>
<td>4,924</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>4,692</td>
<td>4,805</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX B

ARTICLES USED IN THE STUDY
Articles by Country of Origin:

**American newspapers** –

C – U.S. finalizes steep tariffs on China’s solar panels – *USA Today*

E - Want to Ruin Teaching? Give Ratings – *New York Times*

**Indian newspapers** –

B - On the backfoot: On the corruption issue, politicians are doing a shoddy job of defending themselves – *Times of India*

D - Ping pong fears – *India Express*

**Nigerian newspapers**-

F - Teachers and national development – *The Guardian*

G - Time to revive the reading culture – *The Punch*

**Singapore newspapers**-

A - 3 missed chances – *The Straits Times*

H - MNCs want more clarity on foreign worker policy – SICC CEO says changes to law make it hard for firms to plan for next four to five years – *Today Online*
Interview Questions – Composition Teachers

Ranking Questions:

1. In ranking these papers, what made you rank the papers:
   a. #1 (best)
   b. #6 (worst)
   c. Middle rankings (2-5)

2. Were there any particular grammar or punctuation errors that influenced your decisions?

3. Were there any organizational errors that influenced your decisions?

Background Information

1. What is your educational background?

2. How long have you been teaching undergraduate students?

3. Do you work with lots of international students?

4. What languages do you know? How proficient are you in each of them? When did you first start learning English? Which language do you consider your first language?
   a. What do you remember about your language learning?

5. If English, have you learned another language?
   a. What do you remember about your language learning?
Interview Questions – Non-Composition Instructors

Ranking Questions:

1. In ranking these papers, what made you rank the papers:
   
   a. #1 (best)
   
   b. #6 (worst)
   
   c. Middle rankings (2-5)

2. Were there any particular grammar or punctuation errors that influenced your decisions?

3. Were there any organizational errors that influenced your decisions?

Background Information

1. What is your area of expertise/subject area?

2. How long have you been teaching undergraduate students?

3. Do you work with lots of international students?

4. What languages do you know? How proficient are you in each of them? When did you first start learning English? Which language do you consider your first language?
   
   d. What do you remember about your language learning?

5. If English, have you learned another language?
   
   e. What do you remember about your language learning?