UNDERSTANDING THE WRITING OF GENERATION 1.5 STUDENTS AND THE IMPLICATIONS ON WRITING INSTRUCTION: WHAT GENERATION 1.5 STUDENTS CAN TEACH US ABOUT WRITING INSTRUCTION

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UNDERSTANDING THE WRITING OF GENERATION 1.5 STUDENTS AND THE IMPLICATIONS ON WRITING INSTRUCTION: WHAT GENERATION 1.5 STUDENTS CAN TEACH US ABOUT WRITING INSTRUCTION

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Abstract

of

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Statement of Problem

As I conducted research for my thesis, I realized how more compositionists and
educators at both the college and secondary levels are discussing how they can help the
"remedial" students in their classrooms. One area that still needs further investigation is
multilingual/bilingual basic writers, in particular Generation 1.5 writers.

It is important that educators understand that Generation 1.5 students may have
different writing needs than the monolingual or native speaker. Instructors need to be
aware that Generation 1.5 students, in particular, have specific needs that need to be
addressed in the writing classroom.

Sources of Data

Four instruments were used to determine students writing experiences, including
their strengths and weaknesses in writing. One instrument was the initial survey given
during the basic writing classes. This survey was used to determine who I would choose to interview for my study.

Two students were chosen for the study. The second instrument would be the interviews with these students.

Teacher surveys were also given. The surveys were given to all the English 1 instructors and Learning Skills 86&87 instructors during the spring 2008 semester at CSUS. The surveys were placed in the instructors boxes. All surveys were collected during the spring 2008 semester.

In addition to the surveys, I analyzed a sample of their writing from the topic "Pay As You Go." Both students wrote an essay on this topic. In order to be able to compare and contrast their writing I chose the third draft of their first essay to analyze.

Conclusions Reached

This study will help instructors effectively teach Generation 1.5 students because it will give them a more in depth look at the difficulties that Generation 1.5 students have with their writing. Moreover, this study will help instructors develop their own curriculum that I would consider to be good teaching practices.

Susan Fanetti

Committee Chair

8/12/09

Date
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and father, Virginia Hernandez and Leonardo Antunez. They always believed that I would succeed despite the obstacles that came my way. I know that they would be proud of me.
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

I first became interested in writing about multilingual basic writers after reading Guadalupe Valdes’ “Bilingual Minorities and Language Issues in Writing: Toward Professionwide Responses to a New Challenge.” This article influenced my research on basic writing, for I decided to focus on the multilingual students, in particular “Generation 1.5,” at Sacramento State. As I conducted research for my thesis, I realized how more compositionists and educators at both the college and secondary levels are discussing how they can help the “remedial” students in their classrooms. I’ve read articles that deal with the teaching of basic writers through computer instruction, service learning projects, contrastive rhetoric techniques and the list goes on. However one area that still needs further investigation is multilingual/bilingual basic writers, in particular Generation 1.5 writers.

Although I did find impressive studies by authors such as Victor Villanueva, Raul Ybarra, and Jessica Williams, I did not find a wealth of information about the Generation 1.5 population. Why should we care about multilingual basic writers? The multilingual student is a growing population on our college campuses. California State University, Los Angeles conducted a small survey of approximately 1,000 students out of 20,000 to determine how many students spoke a second language. Fifty percent of these students
stated that English was not their native language. In addition when asked if they spoke another language besides English while growing up, 68% of these students said they had (Ko). Furthermore, in California State University Sacramento alone 12% of the student population has been identified as multilingual and this percentage does not include transfer students (Glasmire). Many of these multilingual/bilingual students are placed in basic writing classes because of their “writing deficiencies.” It is important that educators understand that these students may have different writing needs than the monolingual or native speaker.

Although research has shown that being bilingual or multilingual can have negative effects on the acquisition of a second language, in particular if the second language is not rhetorically or synthetically similar to the native language (Lightbrown & Spada, Ellis), I have also found other studies that say that cultural and language experiences can be used as a positive attribute in the writing classroom (Clark & Haviland, Soliday).

**Purpose of My Research**

Generation 1.5 students will be the focus of my study. I have chosen to study Generation 1.5 students for several reasons. One reason is that I myself am a multilingual student---I learned Spanish as a child and then decided to take French courses in high school and college. I am aware of how difficult it is to learn a language; furthermore I
have first hand knowledge about how one’s culture can impact the way a person writes and perceives academic discourse.

Another reason is that I am a teacher of Generation 1.5 students at the middle school level. Every year I get students who are below the grade-level writing and reading requirements. After six years of teaching English, I have seen my multilingual students, in particular Generation 1.5 students, struggle to write academic essays and interpret texts. I have always wanted to know how to effectively prepare them for whatever writing experiences they may have in high school and college, for I believe that it is my responsibility as a teacher of Generation 1.5 students to know more about their writing difficulties as well the diversity of knowledge that they can bring into a writing classroom. Lastly, I anticipate in the near future being a composition instructor at a local college or university, thus I can use this research to enhance my own pedagogical practices.
Many instructors are unaware of the learning differences between multilingual students and monolingual basic writers. In a study done by Beverly Benson, Mary P. Deming, Debra Denzer, and Maria Valeri-Gold regarding the distinctions between basic writers and multilingual writers, they "examined topic development on an assigned topic and analyzed students' essay organization, content, and length" (59). The purpose of the study was to inform teachers about the differences between these two groups and how instruction can be modified to satisfy the instructional needs of both groups of students (59). In their study they identified that ELL (English Language Learner) writers "wrote shorter papers with more sentence-level errors". They also noted key instructional features that teachers should be aware of such as developing writing prompts that are not culturally biased, which would hinder writing performance; offering various topic choices for students to choose from; and understanding that essay organizational patterns may be a transference from their first language (Benson et al. 68). Understanding that there are differences between the two types of writers will help eliminate many misconceptions about ESL writers.

One misconception is: "since second language writers are in college, their language proficiency is no longer an issue; the language problems have somehow been taken care of before matriculation" (Williams 73). It takes many years for an ESL student
to become proficient in a language. Some students arrive to the United States when they are four or five, whereas other students arrive when they are in middle school.

When a student arrives at a very young age, they learn the customs and language of that country earlier. Whereas if they get here when they are 13 or 14, they would have received less exposure to American customs and English before entering college. Both students, even though they immigrated at different times in their lives, can still be considered Generation 1.5 students---as is the case with the students of this study. There are other factors that influence a student’s language acquisition such as how much schooling they received in their first language and how much exposure they get to the second language on a day-to-day basis. If students who are learning English are only exposed to English at school and nowhere else, then they would have less of an opportunity to practice English than a student who not only speaks English at school, but also with friends and family at home.

Furthermore many second language students may need further assistance in learning English in college because they may not have learned all the necessary vocabulary, writing, and reading skills necessary to be successful in academia. Some ESL students are able to take advanced placement classes to prepare for college, whereas others may not have had that opportunity because they were placed in English support classes. Thus it is a big misconception and disservice to second language students to assume that they do not need further assistance with language learning in college.
Generation 1.5 Students

Another factor that instructors of basic writing classes need to know is that not all multilingual students are created equal. In other words, one cannot group all multilingual students into one category, for there are several types of multilingual students: immigrant students, those who have recently arrived from another country, and also international students, these students received most of their education in their native country and took English as a second language in that country. Another group of multilingual students is Generation 1.5 students. They are considered Generation 1.5 because they are between generations—that is they share similarities from both generations (first generation and second generation). A Generation 1.5 student will share the qualities, such as customs and language, of their parents’ native country and/or their own native country if it is not the United States. For example some Generation 1.5 students are born in the United States; however because their parents are from another country, they adopt their parent’s customs and language.

Moreover, many Generation 1.5 students are born in another country, thus they will be combining their own native practices with the new ones they learn in their new country. Essentially, that is what Generation 1.5 students are doing, they are blending two cultures and creating their own culture from that. Their new culture, or Generation 1.5, is a combination of both—the old and the new, which often results in conflicting messages. For example in Borderlands/ La Frontera, Gloria Anzaldúa writes about the struggles she had as a Mexican American living in the United States. For example in her poem
"Cihuatlyotl, Woman Alone," Anzaldua explains how torn Mexicans can feel when they are a part of more than one culture (Anzaldua 173). They understand the importance of their Mexican culture; however, they may not always feel that they are completely Mexican because they are either born in the U.S or have been highly influenced by American practices. These poems exemplify the inner struggle many Generation 1.5 students encounter during their lives when they belong to two cultures.

According to Jessica Williams, a teacher in the M.A TESOL program and director of the ESL composition program at the University of Illinois, Generation 1.5 students view the United States as their home; she also states,

Some are fluent in spoken English; many have little literacy experience in their home language, over which some have uncertain command. Their educational background and experience may overlap with those of their native English writer classmates. Yet their writing shows many characteristics typical of second language learners (Williams 75).

As Williams notes, Generation 1.5 students are unique students because they appear to be caught between two linguistic and cultural worlds. They may not have complete command of either their native or second language and as a result "they do not fit into any of the traditional categories of nonnative English speakers enrolled in college writing courses" (Singhal 1). Thus not only do they have typical basic writer writing difficulties----lack of organization, coherence, and focus on essays---- but they may also receive interference from their native language.
These students are not only struggling to learn academic discourse, but they still encounter challenges with the acquisition of the English language. Because these students have been mainly educated in the U.S, professors might assume that they are proficient in English, especially since they speak fluent English. According to Gwen Gray Schwartz, many Generation 1.5 students are not "academically" proficient in either their first or second language because they did not receive much academic instruction in their first language, which has shown to help with the acquisition of a second language (46). In order for a student to be literate in their native language, they need to receive a minimum of twelve years of "uninterrupted, active learning" (Schwartz 46).

During that "uninterrupted" and "active learning" students are learning the vocabulary and particular language components of their native language; additionally, they learn the complexities of reading and writing (Schwartz 46). Thus if that student's learning is disrupted due to immigration or relocation, the student will not learn all the necessary functions of their native language, which is necessary for the successful acquisition of a second language; they use their first language to help them understand and learn a second language. (Schwartz 46). If a student is not able to refer to their first language for assistance with a second language, this may create difficulties in the acquisition of that second language. As a result, these students have lower than average reading and writing skills in their first language.

In Schwartz's article she explains the process of second language acquisition and how students are expected to acquire a language at a faster pace even though they are not
ready yet. It can take a student ten years or even longer “to be fully literate in a language” (Schwartz 46). Thus when a student enters the university after being in the country for five years, they will most likely not have college-level writing or reading skills. Just because these students do well in their high school classes, it doesn’t mean that they are prepared for the intensity of college writing or reading. Although some teachers may have a rigorous curriculum, it is not the same as the curriculum of a college class. They may get exposure to college-level writing and reading assignments, but it will not occur every day. In addition, teachers at the high school level have many other responsibilities, such as reinforcing behavior guidelines, encouraging students who are not motivated to graduate or go to college, and most commonly, remediating students who are below grade-level. Although I have witnessed many students spend their middle and high school years taking courses that will prepare them for college, however, when they enter the university they have low scores on placement tests. These students are often surprised because they considered themselves to be hardworking and motivated. At Sacramento State, as well as other California State University campuses, students take the English Placement Test (EPT) in order to determine if students are ready to take the regular English classes at Sacramento State. In order to verify language proficiency, the test requires students to write an essay and complete a multiple choice test (Sacramento State Learning Skills Center). These scores are used to determine whether students will enter the mainstream English classes, or if they need to go into the learning skills track.
Why should educators learn more about the writing of Generation 1.5 students? As mentioned, these students are increasing in numbers on our college campuses. In many cases Generation 1.5 students are not placed into the ESL tracks at universities because their writing is very similar to the native basic writer. As Williams states, they share writing commonalities with both ESL students and basic writers. Instructors of basic writing classes will benefit from learning more about these students’ writing challenges and their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Academic Discourse and Identity

Multilingual students and basic writers have the most difficulty learning academic discourse. Academic discourse or academic literacy has been defined in many ways and for the purpose of this research I will provide the definition that I see accurately describes the idea of an academic discourse. According to Meena Singhal, academic English is “a variety or a register of English used in professional books and characterized by specific linguistic features associated with academic disciplines” which is most prominent in colleges or universities (3). Her definition is broad and complex which is how I see academic discourse. Essentially it is learned and used in a college setting and each particular subject matter has its own discourse. Thus the discourse that is learned in the English department isn’t exactly the same discourse that is used in the social sciences.
The discourse will include specific terminology, purpose and formatting for writing assignments, the rhetoric and language used in each subject can also be different. There are many other components to academic discourse that Singhal argues are “both definable and teachable”(4). Singhal believes that literacy is the major component of academic discourse. In order for students to be successful in higher education they will need to analyze texts and develop their own opinions on what they read (4). The analysis of texts by itself involves the ability to decipher main arguments, the author’s supporting evidence, key vocabulary, and then determine what the student own perspective is based on prior experiences and knowledge of the subject matter. Additionally, in discussions they will need to assert these opinions in an educated or “academic” manner so as to convince classmates and professors.

In Lives on the Boundary, Mike Rose describes his own entrance into “academic discourse” when his professors taught him how to think and read critically:

I developed the ability to read closely, to persevere in the face of uncertainty and ask questions of what I was reading...My teachers modeled critical inquiry and linguistic precision and grace, and they provided various cognitive maps for philosophy and history and literature (58).

Understanding academic discourse was a process that required the efforts of many teachers he had while at Loyola University. When Rose learned how to read a text for academic purposes, he viewed reading in a different way. He began to see it as a tool to understand the arguments of scholars that had been speaking a foreign language to him.
Understanding how to read a text in depth, paved his way for success in academia; he later states that learning academic discourse helped him develop “a set of tools with which to shape a life” (58). Although Rose immediately saw the benefits of learning the components of academic discourse, this may not be the case for multilingual-multicultural students.

One of the reasons multilingual writers encounter difficulties learning the academic discourse of a university is because of the implications it may have on students’ first language and/or cultural background. Min Zhan Lu states that a dissonance between a student’s academic discourse and the home language is created (27). Victor Villanueva would agree, for learning the academic discourse can be problematic for many students; they must learn “racelessness”—asserting that one is choosing to speak “correct” English. Racelessness can create a separation between the person who is “raceless” and the people who have decided not to learn “correct” English (Villanueva 40). Thus it may be difficult for some students to adopt a new way of speaking and thinking, for they may connect it with a loss of identity. Therefore they may find it difficult to assimilate into the American culture.

In addition community members or family members who are not accustomed to this new language may see the learning of academic discourse as a threat because it is foreign to them. I have personally encountered this experience after graduating from college. I returned to the community that I grew up in and realized that I no longer belonged. Old friends and the community treated me differently because they saw a
change that I had not realized had taken place. I had brought the discourse that I learned in college to local social gatherings and was immediately labeled as “the other.” They no longer saw me as one of them, for somehow I was tainted in their eyes. As a result, I feel a disconnection with my Mexican roots and I have a hard time identifying with them because in some way I feel that I have let them down.

Mike Rose also experienced a cultural dissonance when he entered the university life. During his freshman English class, he remembers feeling lost and alone and simply “out of [his] league”. He later recounts how he felt very different from his classmates because he was surrounded by the unfamiliar: the well-traveled and the well-read; he describes the discovery of his feelings of inferiority by stating “[w]ith the exception of one train trip back to Altoona, I had never been out of Southern California, and this translated, for me, into some personal inadequacy” (43). Although Mike Rose was not a multilingual student, he experienced what many multilingual basic writing students feel when they enter this “new life” that is often extremely different than their “home life.” Furthermore the connection between language and culture is also addressed in “Language Identity and Language Ownership: Linguistic Conflicts of First-Year University Writing Students” by Yuet-Sim D. Chiang and Marcy Schmida, where they “highlight the cultural and linguistic web of home language and English for students from NELB [non English language background]” (Harklau et al. 94). Many second language students, in particular Generation 1.5 students, may be new to college life. They may be the first person in their family to attend college, so they may not have exposure to what it is like to be a college
student. I, for example, was the first person in my family to attend college. Thus the transition between home life and college life was extremely hard.

In addition, because my family had not gone to college, they did not understand the difficulties that I was experiencing. I felt very alone and isolated from not only my own family but also from my peers at University of California, Davis. I knew I didn’t fit in because I was poor and a minority. It took me years to accept that it was okay to be different and because I was different it didn’t mean that I did not belong in college.

Many second language learners may also feel the same way because they belong to a different culture and speak a different language. Thus for second language students to experience a cultural dissonance is relatively normal. However in order to be successful in academia, they will need to understand that their unique experiences will enhance their education and the education of the students in their classes.

Understanding the Language Needs of English Learners

Whereas Villanueva, Rose, Chiang, and Schmida connect language learning to cultural issues, Mina Shaughnessy approaches this topic from a different perspective—as an educator. She argues that the languages that students bring to the classroom should be validated. In Errors and Expectations, Shaughnessy argues that instructors need to have “respect for linguistic variety” of their students (Lu 28). In other words, she believes that students come into the university with their own discourse, which should be seen as a positive attribute to the university, not a negative one. Moreover she argues that the
teachers have the greatest ability to make a difference in their students’ writing; she states that “good teachers create good programs, that best programs are developed in situ, in response to the needs of individual student populations” (Shaughnessy 6). Teachers need to understand the writing challenges of their students and develop a plan that will help them overcome these challenges. Not all students have the same writing problems and it would be naïve and detrimental to the students, if an instructor assumes that all her/his students have the same difficulties. Some students may have problems with organization whereas others might have a hard time with sentence structure errors. Shaughnessy analyzed the writing of her students, she describes this process: “We have sorted and analyzed various features of their writing in order not only to describe what goes wrong or what is missing but to understand the logic that underlies their behavior as writers” (275). Shaughnessy argues that not only is it important for instructors to know their students writing weaknesses, but also the instructor should analyze why the students are having these problems with their writing.

Learning academic discourse is especially challenging if a student is not a native English speaker. In “Undergraduate Second Language Writers in the Writing Center,” Jessica Williams argues that “learning a language is not the same thing as learning to write in that language” (74). Second language writers are learning a second language and learning how to write in that second language at the same time-- which is more complex than a monolingual student is required to do (74). She argues that learning academic language can be very challenging for second language learners, especially “reading and
engaging unfamiliar texts, extracting information and using it in creating their own texts” (76). According to Meena Singhal’s “Academic Writing and Generation 1.5: Pedagogical Goals and Instructional Issues in the College Composition Classroom,” students need to have “academic literacy” in order to be successful in college (4). Some components of academic literacy are the ability to think critically, do research, and engage in academic conversations (Singhal 4). Second language students will be required to analyze texts in their classes and understand the author’s argument. They will also need to relate the text to their own personal lives and develop opinions based on those connections.

These skills are difficult for most students to learn, but it can be even more challenging for the students whose first language is not English. They need to learn a new way of thinking and talking in order to be successful in academia, which may take them many years to develop. Second language students will also need to learn how to do research. The research process can be especially challenging if they have not been exposed to doing research in high school. Instructors need to be aware that many of their second language students will not have prior knowledge of research. Thus, they may need to have more lectures than usual on the fundamentals of research.

Furthermore many second language learners in basic writing classrooms may still have difficulty understanding texts due to their unfamiliar vocabulary or concepts; “they may decode slowly, word-by-word, often failing to make sense of the entire text” (Williams 76). This information is pertinent because basic writing instructors may assign their students academic texts that may be too rigorous for a student who is still learning
the language. Thus instructors need to be aware that a multilingual student’s inability to finish reading assignments or accurately analyze texts is not about lack of motivation---which is a common misperception---but it has to do with problems understanding the language. Ulla Connor adds that a teacher should examine a student’s writing for signs of L1 interference. This information can help instructors understand how and why a student’s first language impacts the organization of their essays (Kroll 218). Thus it is important for the instructor not to make assumptions about the student’s language abilities and or motivation until, he/ she has thoroughly analyzed the student’s writing and has established a conference with that student in order for the student to articulate to the instructor what his/her difficulties are with writing.

There are many factors that influence how well a student will understand a new language; one key factor is the age the student begins learning that language. Educators need to be aware that not all second language students will learn how to write at the same time or from the same techniques. In How Languages Are Learned by Patsy M. Lightbrown and Nina Spada, a study that was conducted by Jacqueline Johnson and Elissa Newport determined that age was an important indication on how well the students did on their grammatical test. The study showed that students who arrived in the U.S between the ages of 3-15 did significantly better than the students who arrived in the U.S between the ages of 17-39. Based on these results they were able to determine that “there was a strong relationship between an early start to language learning and better performance in the second language” (Lightbrown & Spada 64). Consequently students
who get a later start or who arrive in the U.S later in life perhaps 12 or 13 may have different language abilities than a student who arrived when they were 4 or 5. The acquisition of a language is very complicated and each second language student will exemplify how this is true.

One factor that definitely impacts how easily a student will acquire a language is their exposure and knowledge of the grammatical functions of their first language. In “Coming to Terms: Generation 1.5 Students in Mainstream Composition” Gwen Gray Schwartz argues that if a student learns a new language before understanding the grammatical functions of the native language it would make it harder for that student to learn the second language (46). This happens because a student should know how their native language functions in order to transfer that language knowledge to the second language. Even if the two languages are different, the student can use his first language in order to understand the complexities of their second language.

For example, when I was learning French I used my knowledge of Spanish to understand key vocabulary and my expertise in English to understand the parts of speech in French. Knowing Spanish and English gave me an advantage when it came to learning a third language. Schwartz further adds that “students need at least twelve years of uninterrupted, active learning to be fully literate in their first language” (46). Consequently, if a student leaves their native country and doesn’t finish learning their native language for at least 12 years, they will have a difficult time learning their second language. Many students that I have taught at the middle school level have told me that
they arrived to the U.S when they were in elementary school and some even in middle school. These students did not get the opportunity to completely learn their first language. Many of my students did not even attend school everyday in their native country. It is no wonder why these same students were not able to pass the state's standardized test, for “it takes at least five years for students to score at the 50th percentile” (Schwartz 46). And in order to become “fully literate in a second language, [it] takes up to 10 years or more” (Schwartz 46). If a student in not literate in their first language, it makes it more difficult to learn a second language. For example, if a student never learned what a verb and noun is in their first language, learning those parts of speech will be more difficult because it will be a foreign concept. A student would not be able to apply their prior knowledge of nouns and verbs to understand what a noun and verb is in the second language.

As a middle school teacher, I'm expected to make students whose first language is Spanish be proficient by April for the state test. Many of the students that I have in my classes are Generation 1.5 students who arrived in the United States when they were in elementary school. Most of these students are not literate in their first language because when they entered school in the United States they were taught in English. There is some support for these students by bilingual resource teachers; however many of these students are mainstreamed and expected to learn as much as native English speakers.

After every test, I'm expected to analyze the results and state why my English Learners are still not proficient in English. Because I am aware of how long it can take a student to be proficient in a language, I know that many of my English Learners will not
be proficient by the end of the school year and they may not be until they are in high school or even college. For these students, language learning will never stop. They will constantly be learning new American academic discourse, such as idiomatic expressions or writing techniques that they were not exposed to when they were younger.

**Teaching Writing to English Learners**

Not only is it important to know the reasons why multilingual students have problems learning academic discourse, but also how these students’ writing needs can be effectively met. Teachers need to develop methods/practices that will help these students be successful. Stephanie Vandrick, for example, explains the type of literature that can be used effectively in the multilingual writing class and how it can be used to “enhance writing instruction” (Kroll 263). She explains that multicultural literature, for example, can be especially beneficial because it helps students “learn about other cultures and allows them to identify with characters and situations that may be from their own or related cultures” (Kroll 275). When students see their culture or language represented in a book, it shows them that their cultural practices are valued in society.

In addition there are many articles from the *Journal of Basic Writing* that also discuss pedagogical techniques for multilingual students (Crisco, Duym, Chavez, Gergen, Williams & Garcia, Soliday). A theory that discusses language acquisition that is also influenced by the work of Lev Vygotsky is the Interaction Hypothesis. It provides insight on how to reach second language learners, “for it focuses on the role of negotiation of
meaning in language acquisition. The Interaction Hypothesis increases students’
comprehension by interacting with the instructor; “when learners participate in
interaction, they are able to tailor the input to their own level of proficiency by signaling
the interlocutors about language they do not understand” (Williams 81). This interaction
can help students understand what they are not understanding in the reading or writing
assignments.

In some cases second language learners may not understand what they are doing
incorrectly on writing assignments. This negotiation opens the door to communication
where the instructor or tutor can work together to understand a student’s text and ideas. In
this way, instructors can identify the language problem-areas of their students and they
can receive the explicit “correction feedback” needed on writing assignments (Williams
83). Furthermore the strategies that a teacher uses to respond to a multilingual writer can
also impact their writing proficiency. Second-Language Writing in the Composition
Classroom provides many sources about analyzing the writing of second language
learners in order to provide the adequate support needed to improve their writing
(Ramanathan & Atkinson, Ferris & Roberts, Severino). One effective way to provide
students with feedback on their writing is through writing conferences. Writing
conferences can be especially beneficial because it gives students the change to discuss
their writing weaknesses with the professor. During writing conferences, instructors can
show students repetitive errors in their writing in both content and conventions. Because
conference are normally one on one, students feel more comfortable talking about their writing and learning why they make the mistakes they do and how to correct them.

According to How Languages are Learned, Patsy M. Lightbrown and Nina Spada argue that student will use their favorite method to learn a new language based on the experiences they have had with that method. The decision to use a particular learning strategy such as group work or visual diagrams is based on the students’ individual learning styles or beliefs about how they should learn a new language (Lightbrown & Spada 59). Teachers can use this information to help them teach students that are not only learning a new language but native speakers as well. A questionnaire can be developed in order to assess what learning styles or strategies students prefer. Although instructors may not be able to use every strategy mentioned by the students, they would be able to come up with some common techniques mentioned in each classroom.

The use of “teaching” questionnaires can show the instructors the various ways their students learn most effectively; in addition it shows students that the instructor does in fact care whether or not the students learn the material being taught. In “Working with Generation 1.5 Students and Their Teachers: ESL Meets Composition” the authors describe some major ways teachers can help Generation 1.5 students meet their learning goals. For example as mentioned above teachers need to be aware of the students “backgrounds and self identification.” (Goen, Porter, Swanson, VanDommelen 147).

Teachers need to know what prior learning they have done, such as if they attended the majority of their schooling in the U.S or in a different country. Other factors that will
affect their current learning are prior writing/reading experience and home language. Many instructors may not be used to asking their students for this information; however, teachers need to keep in mind that they are not simply being “nosy” but that they are using this data to create a pedagogy that will benefit their students.

They further argue that a pedagogy designed for Generation 1.5 students needs to “take[e] advantage of learners’ strengths as oral communicators” (Goen et al. 147). From my observations, Generation 1.5 students have an easier time communicating their ideas for an essay or describing what they want to say for their counter argument; however when it comes to writing it down, they may make many grammatical errors that prevents them from getting their points across. Thus encouraging students to discuss their ideas in a group or with partners can be especially beneficial for the development of ideas and analysis.

Lastly the authors of “Working with Generation 1.5 Students and Their Teachers; ESL Meets Composition” add that a curriculum for Generation 1.5 students would deal with the “gaps students have as academic writers by helping orally fluent learners develop as communicators in the written mode” (Goen et al. 147). Generation 1.5 students need to understand that there is a particular discourse to be learned when they write an academic essay and discusses their writing. There is a difference between college writing and high school writing and the faster Generation 1.5 students know about “this secret” they will be able to learn how to imitate it.
Generation 1.5 students need to know that there is a particular pattern to academic writing that incorporates a specific vocabulary and approach to a text. When they uncover this new discourse, they will effectively be able to understand the readers' expectations. In addition they will see the connections, whether they are different or similar, between the written and oral "patterns" of their first and second languages (Goen et al. 147). Some Generation 1.5 students are taught in high school how to write a college paper; in particular if they are enrolled in an Advanced Placement class. Many Generation 1.5 students do not get exposure with academic writing until they get to college---that's when they realize that they are underprepared. As a result many of these students, when given the placement test, do not test into a regular freshman English class and instead are placed in remedial or ESL English classes. Thus many Generation 1.5 students will need extra assistance learning basic essay/writing concepts that should have learned in high school.

Moreover when instructors are creating their curriculum to teach Generation 1.5 students they need to have some flexibility during their instruction, for students will have different learning strengths and weaknesses. They will have ideas and questions during instruction and may need to be "quizzed" to see if they do understand a certain concept. A quiz can be checking comprehension orally or having students work in partners and come up to the board to practice key concepts, such as creating leads or writing a thesis. If students know that their instructor is willing to stop their instruction to answer questions or clarify ideas, students will feel that they are truly in a learning environment.
Furthermore, it is also important that instructors help students develop their strengths and improve on weaker areas. Acknowledging that students are good in a particular writing area, such as developing a strong introduction, will give students the confidence they need to continue writing. If instructors only point out the weaknesses in the students' writing, then they may feel discouraged and may want to give up altogether. I think that it is human nature to want to know and perhaps even be complimented on areas that one is strong at; it helps one build self esteem and pride.

Similarly, students also want instructors to tell them that there is at least one thing that they are doing correctly, which they should be proud of. I remember when I was in my first writing class as an undergraduate, my writing instructor would compliment me on my intuitive responses and strong analysis—something that other writing teachers had also mentioned to me as well. Because I already knew that I had great ideas in my essays, I knew that improving the coherence of my ideas would be easy. I was willing to spend some time with a writing specialist on campus to improve my mechanics and grammar because I knew that the correction of this problem would only make my essays stronger and my confidence in my writing higher.

Many Generation 1.5 students may not feel that they are academically prepared when they take their first writing class. In "Uses of Background Experience in a Preparatory Reading and Writing Class: An Analysis of Native and Non-native Speakers of English" by Diana Becket, she explains that Generation 1.5 students may not have had many opportunities to write in high school (54). In addition, they may struggle to
participate in class because they don’t have the confidence to express complex thoughts in front of the classroom. Discussions are essential to understanding the text that the students are going to write about. Through discussions students exchange ideas about the piece they read and decipher what their stance is on the argument. However if a student does not have the academic vocabulary to participate in class discussions, they may feel inadequate. These feelings of inadequacy prevent Generation 1.5 students’ voices and experiences from being heard. There are many things that instructors can do in order to make the transition from high school writing to college writing easier for Generation 1.5 students.

According to Catherine E. Stoicovy and Lynn Quezada’s article “Interdisciplinary Curriculum, Teaching and Learning for Generation 1.5 Adolescents in a Pacific Island Classroom,” they discuss how instructors can “scaffold literacy learning for Generation 1.5 students” (3). They introduce five learning strategies that will help Generation 1.5 students “(1) culturally responsive instruction (2) literature circles (3) interdisciplinary learning (4) integration of instructional technology in the curriculum, and (5) aesthetic stance to reading” (Stoicovy and Quezada 3). “Culturally responsive instruction” relates to understanding the interests of the students and using that to build a curriculum that would be relevant to them. If students can relate to the literature that is being taught in the classroom, they will more likely be successful. They will become interested in the subject matter and on their own achievement in the class. Thus teachers should consider the students own interests when choosing reading and writing materials. Choosing a text or
writing prompts that most students would see as engaging and important to them will make learning more enjoyable. According to Stoicovy and Quezda, literature circles can also be beneficial for students.

During literature circles, students read and discuss one book in a small group. Thus a group of five would be reading one particular book and another group would read another book. Teachers can have the students choose from a list of books or assign the books each group will read herself. Literature Circles makes it easier for students to discuss a book in a small setting and “explore their own ideas, to expand their understandings through hearing others’ interpretations, and to become critical and inquiring thinkers” (Stoicovy and Quezada 4). Because only a small portion of the class in reading that particular book, it makes it easier for students to discuss and express opinions that might not have been expressed in front of the entire class. In that way, Literature Circles makes learning more meaningful for students.

“Interdisciplinary Learning” is very similar to Culturally Responsive Instruction, where instructors are making the curriculum more relevant to the student. Curriculum is developed taking the students past experiences and knowledge. Thus writing topics are more applicable to the students’ past experiences in high school for example. They can also be connected to cultural experiences the students have gone through. Teachers use these personal topics to get students to think more critically about their personal lives or the world around them. The last component that was discussed is “Instructional
Technology." Instructional Technology is exactly what it sounds like which is to use a technological component in the curriculum.

Using technology can be very motivating for students because they have so much exposure to it outside of the classroom whether it be by using the latest cell phone or downloading videos and songs to their IPOD. Students these days understand technology and they may find doing an assignment that involves technology more enjoyable than one that doesn’t. One example would be using online discussion boards to discuss writing prompts or articles read in class. Students might prefer to write a short message about their thoughts on a piece of writing than actually say them in class. They may be more likely to participate in discussions that way too if they are shy to speak up in class. When using technology, however, teachers need to be aware of access. Not all students have the same access to technology, especially computers. There should be a place where students can go on campus to use the technology necessary to be successful in that class. Besides using technology, another way to increase motivation is by providing students with engaging writing assignments.

In the article “In English Studies and Generation 1.5: Writing Program Administration at the Crossroads” critical discourse analysts argue that instructors should think about how readings and writing assignments can be used in different ways to benefit the students’ interests which can be political, social or cultural (Wurr 18). Thus critical discourse analysts believe that there are various ways to approach a piece of writing or writing prompt. Finding the approach that would best meet the interests of
students would make the assignment more valuable to them. For example, a class of Generation 1.5 students would most likely enjoy reading research about Generation 1.5 students on college campuses.

An article on Generation 1.5 students can not only give students an awareness of students like them but also discuss some cultural or social obstacles Generation 1.5 students may encounter in college. This reading assignment can be accompanied with a writing assignment that is political in nature, such as writing a letter to the dean about the needs of Generation 1.5 students. Thus as critical discourse analysts discuss, one assignment can have many uses in students’ lives. In addition, since the reading discusses issues that are related to them, they would find the article interesting and the writing assignments that accompanies the reading interesting as well. Thus instructors should think about the different ways a text will impact his/her students politically, socially and culturally.

According to Jan Frodesen’s “At What Price Success?: The Academic Writing Development of Generation 1.5 ‘Latecomer,’” she states that Generation 1.5 students have difficulty participating in class discussions; thus instructors should establish opportunities in the classroom for students to practice their academic discourse and feel more at ease participating (205). In a study done by Harklau, she discovered that there was very little interaction between L2 learners and teachers. Students did not interact in class and “tuned out” when the instructors discussed topics that the students did not understand or used language that they were not familiar with (Frodesen 205). Thus
Harklau argues that not only should instructors arrange “meaningful opportunities for interaction within classrooms, schools can help native English-speaking students better understand and appreciate the difficulties of learning... a second language” (Frodesen 205). Frodesen describes a case where a Los Angeles high school class only allowed their students to speak in Spanish for a day.

This helped to show students how difficult it is to not be able to communicate in your native language. Instructors can create similar lessons where students are exposed to second language acquisition theories and practices through class discussions and readings (Frodesen 205). This helps teach students about the difficulties of learning a new language. In addition, it will allow students to have a greater appreciation and compassion for students who are not native speakers.

Research Questions

The topic that I intend to discuss in this thesis is how to effectively meet the writing needs of Generation 1.5 students. Although my study is mainly being conducted on the interviews and writing samples of two students, I believe that there is a wealth of information that instructors can learn from the experiences of two students who are currently dealing with the difficulties and successes of academic writing. In addition to the case studies, the teacher surveys will further provide knowledge on the instruction of Generation 1.5 students.
My research questions are:

**Based on teacher surveys:**

Do basic writing instructors at CSUS know about Generation 1.5 students?

Are instructors aware of teaching practices that will help Generation 1.5 students in their writing classes?

How do basic writing instructors at CSUS know that the teaching practices they use for Generation 1.5 students are effective?

**Based on interview and sample writing:**

What have been the writing strengths and weaknesses of two Generation 1.5 students at CSUS—Lupe Gonzalez and Antonia Zomalov\(^1\)?

**Based on interview only:**

How has the first language of these students impacted their performance in writing classes at CSUS?

\(^1\) Names have been changed to protect anonymity
What do these students believe would best help Generation 1.5 students improve their writing skills?

Main Question:

How can this study help basic writing instructors effectively teach Generation 1.5 students at both CSUS and other colleges and universities?
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The university that the study was conducted at is California State University, Sacramento. The subjects of the case studies are Lupe Gonzalez\(^2\) and Antonia Zomalov\(^3\). These students were in a section of Learning Skills during the Spring 2008 semester. Both students were freshmen at the time of the first interview. The Learning Skills Center provides courses in writing, reading, mathematics, study skills, English as a Second Language, and other services such as tutoring.

Learning Skills 87 is a writing course in the Learning Skills Center and the course title is “Basic Writing Skills for Multilingual Students.” According to the CSUS catalogue, the focus of the class is on writing and reading development. Students learn how to write academic essays and read academic texts. In order to be in this course, the students must have an English Placement Test score of 142-146, have passed Learning Skills 87, or scored a 4 on the English Diagnostic Test.

The first case study participant, Lupe Gonzalez, is 18 years old and lives in Winters, California. Winters is a small rural town about 15 minutes away from the University of California, Davis. When I worked in Winters six years ago, the

\(^2\) Name has been changed to protect anonymity

\(^3\) Name has been changed to protect anonymity
demographics were approximately half Caucasian and half Hispanic. Lupe attended middle school and high school in Winters. She was born in Guadalajara, Mexico and moved to the United States with her family when she was 11 years old. Lupe’s first language is Spanish.

The second case study participant is Antonia Zomalov. She is 19 years old and lives in Sacramento, California. She attended elementary school, middle school, and high school in Sacramento. She was originally born in Abla-Iulia, Romania and came to the United States when she was a child, possibly before the age of 4. Antonia’s first language is Romanian.

Teacher surveys were also distributed to basic writing instructors in both the English department and the Learning Skills department. A total of 8 surveys were received from either English 1 instructors or Learning Skills 87 instructors. The surveys were distributed during the Spring 2008 semester.

The interview was also conducted during the Spring 2008 semester. Lupe was interviewed on campus and Antonia was interviewed at a local coffee shop.

In order to find the participants for my study I did a short 5-7 minute presentation in both English 1 classes and Learning Skills 87 classes. In these presentations I introduced my study and who I was conducting my research on. I explained what the Generation 1.5 meant and I handed out a short survey that would help me determine who the Generation 1.5 students were in the class. The students were asked to write their contact information if they were interested in being a part of the study. I contacted the
students who I felt best met the criteria for a Generation 1.5 student. I did in-depth interviews of four students and then chose the two best interviewees to be a part of the study. I chose the two students whose interviews were the most informative and who had a strong awareness of writing strengths and weaknesses.

The reason I chose to do my study on two students as oppose to a larger sampling is because I felt that it was more important to focus on a couple of students and their experiences. When researchers focus on a couple of students, they really get to know these students because they are able to spend more time asking them questions and getting to know who they are and what their writing problems have been. Thus they get an in-depth knowledge of the two people who will be a part of their study. In addition it makes the interview process more relaxing and personal. In general, I like to get to know people one-on-one because it's more comfortable for me.

If I had conducted research on a large amount at students at CSUS, I wouldn't have been able to get to know the personal lives and experiences of all those students. They would simply be a number in the study, and I probably wouldn't have remembered what the participants looked like and learned what truly made them unique. My small sampling allowed me to get to know these students in ways that a larger sampling would not have been able to. I learned so much more about these students than their writing weaknesses and strengths. And that was the purpose for choosing two people—it allowed me to see them for who they were and not just some statistic. For example I learned that Antonia didn’t know how to drive yet, so she had friends and family drive
her around. I learned that Lupe worked with teachers that I had worked with when I was a student-teacher at Winters High School. If Antonia and Lupe had been two of fifty students, those facts might not have been shared because I would have been too busy focusing on the interview questions, so I could get to the next interviewee, than getting to know the people that were going to be a part of my study.

There are many facts about the participants’ lives that I might not have been able to delve into such as the impact tutors and teachers had on their writing. From Lupe I learned that the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) at CSUS was extremely beneficial to her. According to the CAMP website, CAMP helps students transition from high school to college. Moreover it helps students develop particular skills that will allow them to be successful and then graduate from college (College Assistance Migrant Program). The instructors and tutors at CAMP taught her how to make it in college. Such information is important because it not only helps my study, but it also tells me what programs CSUS has in order to help students like Lupe Gonzalez.

These two students are a good representation of the Generation 1.5 students at CSUS because they represent two different types of Generation 1.5 students. As I discussed earlier, not all Generation 1.5 student are the same. Some arrive at a younger age than others, but one common factor they do have is that they struggle with their writing. Lupe arrived at the age of eleven and Antonia has been in the United States since she was three or four years old. Antonia’s first language is Romanian and Lupe’s first language is Spanish. Although Romanian is a Latin based language like Spanish, they
are very different from each other. Thus analyzing the writing and language difficulties of two students who have different native languages allows me to see language learning from two angles. Both of these students are typical Generation 1.5 students because they come from homes that continue to speak in their native language. Thus the students are constantly exposed to their native language when they are with relatives. This is common among all Generation 1.5 students. In addition both students were at one point in time in a bilingual program at their middle school or high school. This is also an observation I have made over the years, which is common with many Generation 1.5 students. Overall the use of two participants in this study is equally valuable as the results from a larger sampling of Generation 1.5 students. This study has given me a greater understanding of the writing and language experiences of Generation 1.5 students at CSUS.

Data Collection

Four instruments were used to determine students writing experiences, including their strengths and weaknesses in writing. One instrument was the initial survey given during the basic writing classes. This survey was used to determine who I would chose to interview for my study. The survey asked questions about whether students thought they were Generation 1.5 students based on the criteria I explained to them during my presentation. Students were asked to both write their answers and circle some of their writing problems. They were also asked if they were interested in participating in a study.
If they were, they were to write in their contact information. Once I reviewed all the surveys, I determined that I would contact Lupe and Antonia to interview.

I met these students at different times and locations during the Spring 2008 semester. Antonia was interviewed at a local coffee shop near her home and Lupe was interviewed in front of the Learning Skills Center on the Sacramento State campus. I let the students decide where they wanted to be interviewed. If they did not know where they wanted to be interviewed, I gave a couple of suggestions. The purpose in letting them choose their location was because I wanted them to feel as comfortable as possible during the interview. The interviews lasted up to forty-five minutes. I asked each interviewee questions about their writing experiences. The students’ interviews were recorded with their permission. I used a digital recorder to record these interviews. The recorder had a built-in microphone so no additional microphone was necessary.

The first set of interview questions were specifically about their background. I wanted to learn more about where these students went to school, the languages they spoke, and how they did in their writing classes. Later I asked questions related to writing strengths and weaknesses, writing tutoring, and lessons and writing practices that they would recommend instructors teach. Students were also asked to sign a consent form.

Teacher surveys were also given. I placed surveys in the boxes of teachers who I knew were teaching basic writing classes. The surveys were given to all the English 1 instructors and Learning Skills 86&87 instructors during the Spring 2008 semester at
CSUS. The surveys were placed in the instructors’ boxes. I got a list of the instructors teaching these courses from CSUS class registration page on the MySacState website. Learning Skills 86&87 instructors were asked to place the completed surveys in a particular instructor’s mailbox in the Learning Skills department. The English 1 instructors were also told to place the completed surveys in a particular instructor’s mailbox in the English department. All surveys were collected during the Spring 2008 semester.

In addition to the surveys, I analyzed a sample of their writing from the topic “Pay As You Go.” In this writing prompt, students were asked to argue for or against Ben Estrada’s (a consumer analyst) argument is that students should pay for expenses with their own money, instead of using credit cards or loans. Both students wrote an essay on this topic. In order to be able to compare and contrast their writing, I chose the third draft of their first essay to analyze. Furthermore analyzing the third revision of their first essay for the class helps me see what mistakes they continue to make even after it has been revised several times. By the third essay, students should have really thought about what they wanted to write about and established a comprehensible argument. In addition all of the minor mistakes should have been corrected. Thus analyzing the third essay allows me to see where the students’ writing proficiency is at.
Chapter 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After collecting the data, I examined the surveys, interviews, and essays, I found the results to be quite informative. It broadened my understanding of Generation 1.5 students at Sacramento State. In this section, I’ll start with an analysis of the surveys; then I’ll analyze the interviews with Lupe Gonzalez and Antonia Zomalov, and lastly I’ll explain the results for the writing samples.

Surveys

Research Questions:

1) Do writing instructors know about Generation 1.5 students?

2) Are instructors aware of teaching practices that will help Generation 1.5 students in their writing classes?

3) How do basic writing instructors at CSUS know that the teaching practices they use for Generation 1.5 students are effective?
Instructor Surveys

Background

Based on the 8 surveys received, only one instructor was bilingual. The majority of the instructors believe that it is important to ask their students if they are a multilingual student. They feel comfortable asking this question because it helps with instruction. One instructor said that she did ask; however, their response doesn’t impact their instruction in anyway. The instructors who knew that multilingual students impacted their instruction said that they use a variety of methods to enhance their instruction in order to meet the needs of these students, such as making students aware of the type of mistakes they make in their writing, and guiding and encouraging critical analysis in their writing and reading. One instructor teaches their students about language acquisition, so they are aware of the complexity of learning a new language. For the instructor who does not change his instruction for his multilingual students, he mentioned that he is more lenient in his grading if he does know that a student is multilingual.

Research Question 1: Do writing instructors know about Generation 1.5 students?

In response to research question 1, when asked if they knew about Generation 1.5; in particular, if they knew what the term Generation 1.5 meant, all instructors had some
general knowledge about Generation 1.5 students. For the most part they had similar
definitions for Generation 1.5. Some definitions that were given were fairly accurate are:

- "Second generation kids who are born and raised in households that speak another
  language and are culturally closer to their home culture rather than American."

- "Third Generation English speakers although it may vary. Usually, there is some
  influence from non-English language. They may speak it at home, but they are not
  fluent. This may vary also. In any case, they are not efficient in reading and
  writing English. So some language interference. Culturally, very hip and modern
  American, but some time spent with family’s culture.

- "People born in U.S, born into homes where English development isn’t supported,
  so they end up without enough support for either language."

- "People whose parents were born in another country but moved here before or
  soon after their kids were born. They may not speak English at home but they
  grow up culturally American."
Results for Research Question 2: Are instructors aware of teaching practices that will help Generation 1.5 students in their writing classes?

The answer to this question is hard to answer because all the answers were different and according to the instructor’s perspective and experiences with Generation 1.5 students; however, yes, I would say that all instructors were aware of something that would help their Generation 1.5 students. On the survey, I asked if instructors are aware of any teaching practices that would help their Generation 1.5 students. Their responses varied; they all had different opinions about this question. One instructor said it is important to teach multilingual students about the importance of academic English. In addition the distinction between academic English and the vernacular English used in every day conversations. They tell students that standard written English is important in the job arena, for students will be judged on how well they write. Another instructor said that when a student needs help they refer them to the grammar handbook they use in class. This instructor wishes she/he knew more strategies to help her/his students. On the other hand, some instructors seem to be very knowledgeable about the strategies they implement with their multilingual students. One instructor in particular said that she has realized that her multilingual students are normally not good readers; thus she teaches them how to analyze a text and other skills that will improve their comprehension. She believed that if students learn effective reading strategies, they will gain more confidence in themselves as college students. In addition she believes in teaching students about the
revision process and using writing portfolios as well. This instructor also mentioned that not only Generation 1.5 students need this help but all basic writing students regardless if they are multilingual or not.

Moreover another instructor wrote that she/he believes in teaching about different types of Englishes. In other words that there is not just one form of standard English; she/he believes that this teaches the students in the class to be more tolerant of different forms of standard English. Still another instructor would rather teach “critical framing” and “academic analysis.” The instructor explains this as teaching students how to write an effective introduction that will create a glimpse of the main argument for the entire essay. Lastly only one instructor talked about the teaching of grammar skills. He believes that teaching students about English grammar will help students be more aware of their own grammar issues, including fossilization; this is when learners no longer progress in their language learning (Ellis 29).

Research Question 3: How do basic writing instructors at CSUS know that the teaching practices they use for Generation 1.5 students are effective?

My last question was in regards to knowing how these teaching practices will actually help their Generation 1.5 students. In other words, how do they know that what they are doing is really effective for Generation 1.5 students. The majority of the instructors said that they either read about these strategies in current research on teaching
multilingual students or they said that it was based on their many years of teaching experience. One instructor in particular said: “From reading current bodies and articles about teaching 1.5 students and from evaluating my own students practices using various techniques, including a portfolio and evaluations by students.” Another instructor had a slightly different response to the question, he stated: “Awareness of the value of learning a specific skill helps them understand why they are made to learn it in college. This way they see the benefit to themselves rather than resenting having to take these units.”

**Discussion**

Using background information, such as knowing students’ native language, can benefit the students and the instructors. Based on the literature, the experiences of other teachers, and my own experiences, it does benefit multilingual students to use strategies that would help them learn better. One strategy that was discussed among the surveys was making students aware of the type of mistakes they make in their writing. They did not state specifically what techniques they use in order to make their Generation 1.5 students see this, but I would assume that is through the revision process. One effective way to make students aware of the specific problems they make in their writing is by doing an error analysis. Students can review their papers and identify where their most common mistakes are at. They can use a chart to track down their grammar mistakes for example. For example, they can have columns for the most common writing errors, such as verb agreement, missing prepositions, spelling, fragments, etc. and as the go through
their papers they can mark off the appropriate column. Based on their data, they can narrow in on the most common mistakes they make and then develop a plan to correct these mistakes.

Another idea that came up in the surveys was teaching Generation 1.5 students about the importance of critical analysis. Students are required to analyze not only their own writing but also the writing of other students and various texts. Informing multilingual students about its importance will show them what they need to do in order to be successful in college. The students in these instructors’ classes need to be able to read a text and critically analyze its main argument in order to move onto the next English class and pass the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE). The instructor who teaches her students about language acquisition is teaching them why it can be difficult for a Generation 1.5 or multilingual student to learn English; learning a language is a complex process that not many people understand. Hopefully this will give multilingual students a better understanding about why they make the mistakes they do in their writing and what role their first language plays in their acquisition of a second language.

I was quite pleased to learn that all of the instructors surveyed knew the definition for Generation 1.5. They all had slightly different definitions, but they had the general idea of what it meant to be a Generation 1.5 student. They understood what their Generation 1.5 students might be experiencing in both their writing and in their home life. For the most part the instructors are aware that these students are not only being
linguistically influenced by the language of their native country and the U.S, but they also see how they are caught between two cultural worlds.

Two instructors agreed that Generation 1.5 students are closer to their home culture than the American culture. I would disagree because I have found that Generation 1.5 students are very much immersed and connected into the American culture. In many cases, there is this division between the home culture and their American culture. The American culture is definitely more a part of their lives because they grew up in the U.S; thus they are highly influenced by the American culture.

The majority of instructors have tried different ways to help their Generation 1.5 students. One important idea presented was teaching students the difference between academic English and street English. I believe this is important because coming into college they might not understand the difference between the language used in an academic essay and/or classroom discussion and the language used in everyday conversations with friends and family. I agree with the instructor who said that knowing academic English will help them professionally. They will be judged on their speech and writing skills when they compete against other college graduates for job positions. Another response was teaching students how to read a text critically. Critical thinking can be a difficult skill to learn for any freshman entering college, but it would be especially difficult for someone whose first language isn’t English. Students will need to learn how to read a text critically for many disciplines such as history and the social sciences. They need to be able to decipher the main argument and the key points in
various texts. Thus this skill will help them be successful in any college class. Revision was another strategy used by instructors who teach Generation 1.5 students. The revision process helps students understand what their mistakes are and how they prevent themselves from continuing to make those mistakes in future writing.

The instructors knew that these strategies were effective because they’ve had many years of experience teaching Generation 1.5 students. One instructor in particular has had 14 years of experience. The least experienced teacher has taught for two semesters. Thus the range of experience did vary. Another instructor said that they’ve read articles that have supported her teaching practices. They have proven to be effective.

Interviews

Research Questions:

1) What have been the writing strengths and weaknesses of two Generation 1.5 students at CSUS---Lupe Gonzalez and Antonia Zomalov?

2) How has the first language of these students impacted their performance in writing classes at CSUS?

3) What do these students believe would best help Generation 1.5 students improve their writing skills?
Interview: Lupe Gonzalez

Background

Native Language

Lupe Gonzalez arrived in the United States at the age of eleven. When asked about her language abilities in Spanish and English, she said that she feels equally comfortable writing and speaking in both English and Spanish; however, she said that when she speaks English she code-switches from English to Spanish during a conversation; in particular if she is speaking with friends. Her reading skills in Spanish are pretty low; she said she reads a lot slower in Spanish than English. She chooses to speak a certain language with a certain group of people. For example she speaks English when she is at school and she speaks Spanish with her friends and family at home. When asked if she prefers one language over the other, she said that she did not.

Education in Mexico

Although we didn’t go into great detail about her education in Mexico, we did discuss some issues that were related to her having such a hard time understanding English grammar, in particular verb tense and sentence structure. According to Lupe, her
education took place in a small town called Jesus Maria. Lupe explains that students from first, second, and third were in one classroom and fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students were in another classroom; thus there were only two classes. Lupe states that when she left Mexico she had not finished learning Spanish grammar; she explains, “Once they brought me here I didn’t quite know...knew...everything like Spanish verb tense, past tense, just like the basic stuff.” This is not the only time during our conversation that she mentioned not completely learning all Spanish. Later when asked about Spanish past tense and Spanish grammar, she stated “I don’t remember them teaching me about grammar.”

Education in the United States

Lupe enrolled in the bilingual program when she arrived in the U.S and started middle school. She continued to be in the bilingual program until her freshman year of high school. She said that she struggled to comprehend the readings during her freshman year, but the following year she did much better. While in the bilingual program, she received extra support in English by participating in the High Point program. High Point is a reading program designed to help students who are far below their reading level. High Point has three levels in which students are introduced to academic vocabulary and writing concepts.
In terms of her writing classes at Sacramento State, last semester she took Learning Skills 86, which focuses on developing writing skills, such as organization and clarity and Learning Skills 6A; this course helps multilingual students develop oral language skills. This semester she is taking Learning Skills 87, a class that teaches students how to construct a coherent essay, in particular how to revise writing and Learning Skills 5, a class that focuses on reading and vocabulary development (Sacramento State Learning Skills Center). Based on her grade on her midterm, she needs to continue working on her writing skills. She received a 3+ on her writing midterm and a passing grade is a 4. When asked whether her high school English classes helped her with her writing, she said that it helped her somewhat. She feels that the writing required in college is more challenging in that she is expected to be more specific and add many more details to her paragraphs; in particular her introductory paragraph. She states, “right now the midterms there mostly about okay whether you agree or disagree with the issue, so you have to introduce the article or prompt and give the person’s arguments and then state your thesis—you agree with the person or not”. In addition she said that she receives special services including tutoring through the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) because she is a migrant student.

Results for Research Question 1: What have been the writing strengths and weaknesses of two Generation 1.5 students at CSUS---Lupe Gonzalez and Antonia Zomalov?
In response to the first research question, according to the interview, Lupe believes that analysis is one of her biggest weaknesses. She needs to explain her ideas within the body paragraphs and provide more support. In addition, she states that grammar is an issue for her; in particular she has problems with verb tense. Although Lupe stated that she had quality ideas in her essays, she does have a hard time expressing those ideas. When asked why she can’t express her ideas on paper she said, “I can’t find the words.” When asked what she enjoyed about writing, she said that she liked the idea of being able to express her opinion.

Furthermore, as a writing strength, Lupe states that the organization of her ideas is something she is good at and also she does well with her introductory paragraphs. She believes she does well on her introductory paragraphs because she finishes them the earliest, and she hasn’t received any negative comments about her introduction. She also adds that she has strong and valid ideas. When asked what she dislikes about writing, she said that it takes her too long to write an essay.

Results for Research Question 2: How has the first language of these students impacted their performance in writing classes at CSUS?

In response to research question two, Lupe’s first language has impacted her writing performance. For example, Lupe says that being able to think of the ideas she writes in her essays in Spanish first helps her organize her idea in English. Using her
native language helps her write her essays, "I think about the ideas in Spanish and from that I get to create like different stuff like I move into English sometimes. I first think about my ideas in Spanish and then from that I go to English." Even though thinking in Spanish assists her with her writing, she also adds that when she does think in Spanish it takes her more time to finish or write an essay. When asked if she wishes she was able to think in English instead of Spanish, she expressed that she would but at this time she can't imagine that happening. I asked if an instructor would be able to help her think in English instead of Spanish and she said that it was something she had to do on her own. She said she needs to push herself to generate ideas in English; her professor can't help her with that.

Lupe also added that having Spanish as her first language has helped her in many ways; for example she uses her first language to help her understand writing prompts and articles given in class. She annotates in Spanish to help her understand the meaning of words, phrases, or sentences. She then looks at the notes that she has written in the margins to help her formulate ideas for her essays.

Results for Research Question 3: What do these students believe would best help Generation 1.5 students improve their writing skills?

In response to research question number three, I asked Lupe what instructors can do in order to help students like her, who are Generation 1.5, improve their writing skills.
Lupe had many ideas about this topic; she was very eager to tell me what instructors can do to make her a better writer. She explains, “like maybe going more in depth what is expect in the body paragraphs and what they meant by ,um, good analyzing. What do they mean by good analyzing.” I asked her to explain to me what she meant by “good analyzing.” She said she wants professors to give more details about how to analyze something. She wants to be shown what an essay with “good analysis” looks like. She learns best from seeing samples of other student essays. Then she can compare and contrast her writing to the sample writing.

She also expressed that she would like to see writing instructors teach more grammar rules in particular sentence structure. She wants to learn how to correct fragments and run-ons and also to prevent from writing them in her essays. Learning where to break sentences apart and where to add a comma correctly are some ways instructors can help her. Something that Lupe said that especially caught my interest is when she said that instructors need to be aware that not all students will understand the argument of a particular article, the overall message of the article, or even the use of English idiomatic terms and vocabulary. She adds, “things that seem obvious to them may not be obvious to us.” She encourages instructors to ask students what they don’t understand, whether it be vocabulary or content, so that instructors are aware of what their students need more help with. I asked Lupe if she can explain when something was obvious to the instructor but not so obvious to her or other students. She states that she used voting terminology incorrectly, which she wasn’t aware of until the professor
corrected her, “Well, yeah, voter turnouts I thought voter turn outs you didn’t use that to like define like the results of the voting..the votes and then I went with him and he said that you don’t say voting turnouts you say voting turn out.” Here Lupe explains that she used “voter turnout” incorrectly because she made in plural when she first used it.

Thus if professors can make American terminology or idiomatic expressions more clear, it will help her understand the meaning of articles and the author’s overall argument. She later explains that when they joke around in class she often doesn’t understand the meaning of the joke; she elaborates: “common sense stuff like sometimes I don’t get it.” Other examples she gives that are related to her every day life in American culture is when peers write LOL after emails. When she first encountered this abbreviation, she wondered what it meant for quite a while. Another example is the word “emo.” She also felt confused when that word was used to describe certain groups of people. She later found out that it meant emotional. These words, as well as other words, that may be used in the classroom can be confusing and results in her not understanding the meaning of what is said.
Additional Information from the Interview:

The Impact of Tutors and Instructors on Writing

Lupe discusses the benefit of receiving tutoring from CAMP tutors and her instructors. This extra assistance has improved her writing skills. When asked how the CAMP tutors helped her, she said that they look over her essays and help her with any grammar problems. Lupe explains that her instructors have helped her change her writing from high school writing to college writing. She states what she has learned from her instructors, “like how to bring ideas…yeah, to the intros. How we are expected to do the intros here and like on the body paragraph how to do them.” Thus Lupe has learned from her instructors how to write an introductory paragraph. As mentioned before the introductions she wrote in high school were a lot different than the ones she needs to write in college, for now her introductions must be more elaborate. She also adds that her instructors have also helped her with grammar and sentence structure problems.

Being a Good Writer

When I asked Lupe what she thought a good writer was, she said the following: having a good introduction, thesis is supported, body paragraphs have a clear topic sentence, topic sentences should be explained, have good examples, and analyze those
examples. Lupe thought it was important to be a good writer because people should understand the points the writer is trying to make in her writing. Being a good writer is also important for the future when she graduates from college. I asked her what types of writing she does outside of the university and she said she does simple writing such as texting, taking orders, filling out applications, and leaving notes to relatives at home.

Interview: Antonia Zomalov

Background

Native Language

Antonia’s native language is Romanian. She only speaks Romanian to her relatives. She started learning English before the age of four years old. Antonia has a minimal knowledge of how to write Romanian. When asked if she could write an essay in Romanian, she quickly answered no, but she added that she could write a note to her mom in Romanian easily. She also stated that she has little knowledge of how to read in Romanian. She believes that she is highly competent in the areas understanding or the comprehension of Romanian and speaking Romanian.

Education in the United States
Antonia was in the bilingual program at Martin Luther King Junior High School. When asked if she was also in the bilingual program in elementary school, she said no because there wasn’t a bilingual program from what she could remember. She said that she had been asked if she wanted to be a part of the bilingual program in junior high school because the school discovered that she was bilingual. She then agreed to be in ESL because she thought it might be cool and she would be able to get more assistance with English grammar since she had problems with writing grammatically correct sentences. Later on she felt that she didn’t belong in an ESL program because the classes were too slow and they mainly focused on speaking techniques and she felt that she already knew how to speak English fluently. She also added that she didn’t like being separated from the rest of the student population so this motivated her to do anything she could to get out of the bilingual program.

When asked if the writing in high school prepared her for the writing in college, she said in some cases yes. She felt that her English classes during her freshman, sophomore and junior year were easy classes and she did not attend those classes very often because she didn’t care. However during her senior year she became more serious with school and took an AP English class. She thinks that the AP English class helped the most to prepare for the writing at Sacramento State. As she remembers the writing she did in her AP English class while in high school she states:

We had to do an essay like they teach you how to do now at Sac State, like you know how they score you because most of my other classes when
I was a freshman, sophomore, and junior in high school they didn’t really do anything... I took on the AP classes because I thought it was going to help me get into college and that’s what I wanted too. I wanted to get into college.

She also stated that while in her junior year in high school she thought that an essay was supposed to be five paragraphs and her analysis wasn’t very good either. She states “I didn’t know how to . I always put the solution and then the problem. And I didn’t know how to do a body paragraph. I didn’t know how to really do an introduction, really anything.” During her senior year, she learned a lot more about writing. While at Sacramento State, she took Learning Skills 86 during her first semester and Learning Skills 15. She said that Learning Skills 15 helped her improve her English. It helped her remember writing techniques that she had forgotten. She stated that LS 15 taught her writing skills that she had either forgotten or was not taught, such as grammar, vocabulary, and how to write an essay. She adds that her average grade so far has been a B.

Results for Research Question 1: What have been the writing strengths and weaknesses of two Generation 1.5 students at CSUS---Lupe Gonzalez and Antonia Zomalov?

In response to question 1, based on the interview, some of Antonia’s writing weaknesses are her verb tenses. She said that because her main focus is to get her points across she doesn’t edit her writing for grammar mistakes. Besides verb tenses, fragments
are also a problem for her, as well as repetition and not explaining ideas more thoroughly
in her essays. Even though Antonia has good ideas to present in her essays, she states that
she often has a hard time writing those ideas grammatically correct in her essays. She
states, “I have good ideas, but I can’t write them all down in a proper sentence.” She also
mentioned that when she first entered Sacramento State she had problems with her
introduction. Her main problem was that she discussed too many topics in her
introduction and did not state the main argument of her essay. She felt that the learning
skills classes she has taken so far has helped her with this. She thought she had this
problem because she never learned how to write introductions when she was in high
school.

On the other hand, she said that some of her strengths are her understanding of the
writing prompt. She always clearly addresses the requirements of the prompt. She said
she also has a lot of good ideas. Antonia’s enjoyment of writing can also be seen as a
strength. She explains:

I love writing. I don’t know why I just...I love writing. I love poetry,
but I think what I like most about writing is that you get to express
your thoughts on paper or how you feel about a certain situation.

Antonia mentioned that what she least liked about writing was having to “make it
proper.” She explains that when she writes an essay she has to follow a particular format
that is both grammatically and structurely correct.
Results for Research Question 2: How has the first language of these students impacted their performance in writing classes at CSUS?

In response to question two, during the interview I asked Antonia if being bilingual has helped her as a writer, she stated that she thought it did because she sees things from “two different perspectives.” She further explains, “I can bring my own experience and my own personality and my own culture…and add a little more diversity to it.” She believed that being Romanian helps her have a cultural understanding when issues are presented in class or in her readings. She’s able to implement her own culture into the scheme of things.

On the other hand, Antonio also believed that being bilingual has influenced her writing in a negative way. She explains, “Yeah, because I’m like Romanian. In the Romanian language it’s Latin based so you talk backwards. A lot of the words, a lot of the time in my writing, I talk backwards and that doesn’t really help.” Antonia explains this practice by saying a sentence in Romanian. The exact translation of that sentence in English is to the house I’m going. In English you would say I am going to your house. She adds, “So in writing at times I just forget and I write how I think and that’s how it usually comes out in my writing.” Antonia also mentioned that her fragments might be related to being bilingual because to her the sentence sounds correct even though it is grammatically incorrect. When asked if the reason why she had problems with fragments is because the punctuation in a sentence is different in Romanian than English, she said
she didn’t think that was true. Antonia added that knowing both English and Romanian are strengths because she can teach her parents about English by comparing and contrasting the two languages.

**Results for Research Question 3: What do these students believe would best help Generation 1.5 students improve their writing skills?**

In response to question three about helping Generation 1.5 students write better. I asked what assignments help her learn better. She said essay prompts and timed essays. Having the timed essays in-class, helped her manage her time accordingly. She feels that these essays will help her with the WPE. In addition, she stated that when the instructor does short lessons on grammatical issues, such as where to place a comma, how to make sentences parallel, where the verbs are in a sentence, and possessives. Furthermore Antonia believes that writing annotations on the articles that are given to the class have helped her comprehend the articles. Developing this technique, has helped her build confidence in understanding a larger text. Annotations have helped her understand the main message of the article. Because she is able to annotate and understand an article, she feels more comfortable reading and understanding an entire book, for she knows that annotations will help her with analysis and comprehension.

Antonia believes that there are many activities/lessons that instructors can do to help their Generation 1.5 students. Many of the grammatical issues she mentioned earlier
are not only techniques that she benefitted from, but she also thinks all Generation 1.5 students need this assistance. She felt it was really important for Generation 1.5 students to know the parts of speech. Antonia explains, "yeah, you have to know what an adverb is and a verb is and you have to know how to put them together." She also believes that they should learn about count and non-count nouns because not all students understand that some words can not be used as plurals. Antonia also added that group activities, like group discussions are beneficial. Antonia explained,

Having a little group discussion and read the articles before the day and then coming to class and then having read the articles, being in a group discussion, and discussing it. Because it gets their own idea out there, their own opinions. It helps you see other people’s—what their opinions are and if they’re different—diversity.

Antonia also believed that peer response is important because other students will know that they are not the only ones who are struggling with writing. When I asked if professor comments were helpful, she said only if you understand the comments. Some professors write comments that students can’t understand or they write too many comments. Antonia added about her instructor, “he gives me feedback and it does help because it’s my weaknesses and he pointed them out for me. The more..more..frequently I get pointed out my weaknesses, the more..more I can get better at that and improve. As long as there’s consistent practice.” According to Antonia, another thing that helps Generation 1.5 students is student-teacher conferences. She felt that the conferences her instructor
held were very helpful because they were structured. For example, Antonia’s professor had her photocopy a page from her midterm. Then she made the corrections her professor had recommended. He also had her photocopy a page that had the most errors on it and then correct those errors with a different color ink. During the conference, they also discussed those errors and the corrections. In addition they discussed how she can still improve her writing.

Additional Information from the Interview:

The Impact of Tutors and Instructors on Writing

Antonia’s tutors have had a big impact on her writing. When asked how they have helped her, she stated they helped her with her writing problems, such as how to correct grammar mistakes, how to write a body paragraph, conclusion, and how to write supporting details. She stated that one unrealistic strategy that the writing tutors taught her in order to accurately provide support for her essay, she should read it to someone or pretend she is explaining her argument to someone. She didn’t find this to be helpful. Another thing that her tutors have helped her with is analysis. When I asked her why she thought she still had problems with analysis, she said that she thinks she’s just not there yet. Antonia believes that she just needs to practice more, since she didn’t get that practice in high school it will need to take place in college.
Antonia also added that she thinks that her instructors have helped her with her writing immensely. Her AP English teacher in high school helped her by pointing out those small flaws in her writing. She also taught her about the parts of speech, which she didn't know before. She also believed that her current instructor has helped her by providing constructive and honest feedback on her writing. Antonia had the same professor for both Learning Skills 15 and Learning Skills 87. She said that this was very beneficial because having the same instructor allows the instructor to really learn what her writing strengths and weaknesses are. She further explains:

I chose to do it that way because it would be better because I know how his grading system is and how he is. And I don't really want to change because I'd rather just keep improving instead of just stopping and learning different ones or different ways of learning English and having to do it again, so I just chose the same one.

Antonio believed that her current instructor, because he has known her writing for two semesters, is more aware of what she needs to improve on. Antonia added, “he'd probably help more than someone trying to find out who you are.”

Being a Good Writer

Antonia’s definition for a good writer is someone who can “communicate to his readers and what he is trying to say and be concise.” I asked Antonia’s to elaborate on her idea of a “good paper” and she said that a good paper would have ideas that are well-
developed and the essay would be organized. She added that a good writer would be able to have a strong introduction in his/her essays and be able to analyze his/her ideas thoroughly. When I asked if being a good writer is important, Antonia said that it is important because students need to learn how to express themselves once they enter the work force. She believes that students need to be able to communicate through their writing in order to ask for things or get recognition from colleagues. When asked what types of writing she does outside of class, Antonia stated that she enjoys writing and reading poetry and doing her own annotations in the books she reads for pleasure. Lastly, she said that she likes writing short diary entries to remember what she did on particular days.

Discussion

The information regarding Lupe's education in Mexico sheds some light on her current problems in writing English. Research has shown that students who are proficient in their first language are able to learn a second language a lot easier because they know the complete structure of the first language and are able to then apply it to the learning of a second language. Lupe said that she has problems with verb tenses. My conclusion is that she has this problem because she didn't learn Spanish tenses when she was in school in Mexico. Furthermore she didn't learn about Spanish grammar while in Mexico and I believe that this impacted her ability to learn English grammar.
In terms of her education in middle school, it appears to me that being in the bilingual program helped her advance in English and got her ready for high school English. Even though she said she struggled to understand some texts, she was still receiving bilingual support while in high school. She obviously improved her English in high school so the extra support helped with English acquisition. The CAMP program is another detail that caught my attention, for I have heard how beneficial this program has been to migrant students. Lupe learned the necessary requirements to be successful at Sacramento State and also received extra tutoring on her English.

Lupe is very knowledgeable about what her writing strengths and weaknesses are. She knows that she can organize her ideas in an essay and write good introductions. She also knows that she needs to work on analysis and providing more support in her essays. Since this is only her first year, I would say that Lupe will gradually improve her writing. Sometimes writing can be frustrating for Generation 1.5 students because they need to improve in many areas, but with time, practice, and constant analysis and correction of their errors, they will improve. When I first started college, I wasn’t the best writer myself, but I learned what my mistakes were and I learned how to correct them. I see that Lupe too is taking the necessary steps to improve her writing, such as understanding her weaknesses and seeking extra assistance.

In addition Lupe sees many benefits in knowing Spanish because she first thinks in Spanish to come up with ideas for her essays. It is very natural for Generation 1.5 students to use their first language to help them understand ideas presented in their
second language. Sometimes Lupe sees this as a weakness because she wishes she was able to come up with ideas for her essays in English. She uses her first language to help her understand words that are difficult and/or passages in the readings that she doesn’t understand. This is very beneficial for students whose first language isn’t English. They use their first language in conjunction with their second language; however, not all Generation 1.5 students are proficient in their native language, thus if students are not proficient in their first language it probably wouldn’t help them to use their first language. Moreover they may not have the skills to be able to use their first language to help them understand academic language that is in English.

In regards to the question about what would best help Generation 1.5 students, Lupe basically thought that Generation 1.5 students need to know what a strong college essay looks like. For example they need to know what analysis is and what it looks like in an essay. She feels that instructors need to clearly explain what is means to write a paper that has a good analysis. How does a student write analysis? And how would that student be able to distinguish between weak analysis and strong analysis? One way that instructors can do this is by showing sample essays. Sample essays help students see what their writing should resemble. Many instructors are concerned that students might copy the sample essay, but in reality it is just showing students what good writing looks like. In addition if students know that one of their peers wrote the essay, they will feel that writing an A paper is possible. I do think that instructors need to tell students that they are not expected to write exactly the way the student did in the sample writing, for
everyone has their own style of writing. Instructors can also provide examples of poor writing and then compare and contrast the weak writing with the strong writing.

One point that Lupe made that particularly caught my interest was when she said that instructors need to make sure not to assume that students know certain vocabulary/expressions or be able to do other skills required of them in their writing classes. Lupe explained that she is often confused by terms used in the readings. Thus it is important for instructors to go over every aspect of the readings and carefully explain the requirement of the writing prompts. If this is not done ahead of time, students might not get the message of articles and write about something completely different. When I asked questions about the impact of tutors/instructors, she explained how important the CAMP tutors have been and also her instructors. Lupe knows the importance of being a good writer and knows that it will help her in the future when she is done with college. The additional information from the interview is important because it gave me more information about why CAMP played a big role in Lupe’s life and her success in college. In addition it showed me that Lupe has learned from her instructors and tutors what is means to be a good writer and this is a goal that she has as a Sacramento State student.

The responses for Antonia’s Zomalov’s interview were different because she has grown up in the United States. Antonia has gone to school in the United States, but she speaks Romanian at home with relatives and family friends. Antonia agreed to be a part of the bilingual program because she needed extra assistance with English grammar. While analyzing the data for Antonia Zomalov, I noticed that writing grammatically
correct sentences has been a problem for Antonia since she was in middle school and continues to be while in college. I wonder if it has anything to do with her poor attendance during her sophomore and junior year at Grant High; perhaps this problem would have been corrected while in high school.

Antonia talked a lot about the writing experiences she had when she was in high school. Her advanced placement English class has prepared her for college writing. She felt that her AP class taught her how to construct an essay into body paragraphs. Before her AP class, she had not learned how to do this. It is surprising to know that Antonia was not taught how to do this earlier in her school life. I teach my students how to write an essay and they are in the seventh grade. It is no wonder why Antonia was placed in a remedial English class in college since her only exposure to essay writing was in her senior year. Like Lupe, Antonia has also had problems with writing grammatically correct sentences and, unlike Lupe, she had a hard time writing introductions. Antonia believes that her problems with writing grammatically correct sentences stems from her knowledge of Romanian. I found it very interesting when Antonia explained that she writes sentences in English the way she writes sentences in Romanian. She explained that in Romanian one writes backwards and as a result she tries to do the same thing when she writes in English. For example she explained that in Romanian you start your sentence with the object and end with the verb, whereas in English it is the opposite. In English the subject of the sentence is first and the verb is after the subject, which is then followed by the object.
On the other hand, Antonia doesn’t only see her native language as a negative when it comes to writing in English, she also sees that her unique perspective, because she is Romanian, separates her from the average American student. During discussions for example, she is able to use her experiences as a non-native English speaker and as a Romanian woman, to teach other students in her class about her experiences and different perspectives. Antonia’s ability to see her native language and culture as an asset is very important. I think it would be very easy for immigrant students to want to forget about their native language and culture and immerse themselves into the American culture. However, Antonia is proud of her heritage and she wants others to learn about her culture and language as well. Many students feel shame or embarrassment for not being born in the United States because it makes them different from others. Antonia embraces this difference because she knows that her culture and language is part of who she is, which makes her special. Another possibility is because she is still considered to be Caucasian in the United States. A person such as Lupe, who is Mexican, or someone who is Asian, for example may have different experiences because they are not white. Non-white students may have experienced racism because of their race and may therefore feel that they do not belong in this country. Thus their attitude about their culture and language may be less positive.

When I asked Antonia what assignments/lessons would help Generation 1.5 students, she had many suggestions. She was eager to help her fellow Generation 1.5 peers. A couple of ideas that I thought were particularly important was when she
described that instructors should be teaching their students about count and non-count nouns. I can see how this can be tricky for many students because it may not be obvious to some students whether a noun is plural or not. Distinguishing count nouns from non-count nouns is something that you learn over time. You learn that a noun is non-count from hearing it used. I wouldn’t say “furnitures” because I’ve never heard it used that way. But if a person hasn’t spent that much time in the United States, he/she may not have learned that. Another important idea she had for instructors was teacher feedback and conferences with the instructor. Antonia saw this as valuable because she was able to get one-on-one attention from her instructor. Antonia especially liked how the instructor made the conferences very efficient.

The instructor and Antonia discussed her writing weaknesses and how to correct her writing errors. One detail from the interview that she mentioned was that she found it to be especially beneficial to have the same instructor twice. She liked the idea that the instructor already knew what her writing weaknesses were the first day of class. I think this made a lot of sense because if she had been with another instructor, who she did not know, he would be spending a lot of time getting to know her writing. Taking the same instructor twice, made it easier for her and helped her have a greater improvement in her writing.
The writing samples that Lupe gave me are her first and second essays from her current class Learning Skills 87 during the Spring 2008 school year at Sacramento State. The essay that I will be analyzing is the third version of her essay on the topic “Pay As You Go.”

The Prompt

The first essay was on the topic “Pay as You Go.” The writing prompt shows a short article by Ben Estrada, a consumer counselor, who argues that many students are going into debt because of student loans and unnecessary expenditures. Ben Estrada argues that students should learn how to pay for purchases with their own money instead of borrowing money through loans or using credit cards. He believes students should
have limited access to credit in order to prevent them from spending money they don’t have. The prompt asks that students write about the following:

Explain Estrada’s position and discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with his arguments and conclusion. Support your opinion regarding Estrada’s arguments, providing reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.

Strengths and Weaknesses in Content

Based on the instructor’s comments for Lupe’s third draft on the Pay As You Go essay, the instructor noted that Lupe had a strong introduction and thesis; however, the body paragraphs were underdeveloped and need more specific support. Some of the comments the instructor wrote on the margins were that she needed a paragraph explaining her position about student loans. Also she made unnecessary explanations or invalid arguments such as stating that all students can receive grants to pay for college and explaining what a grant was. The instructor believed that she was focusing on a topic that she was not presented correctly. The instructor argued that not all students receive grants and it is not important for her to elaborate on this issue because there are other points she can make instead. In another body paragraph, the instructor noted her strong points and how she needed to elaborate on those arguments.
For example, Lupe mentioned that students should consider living at home to save money. The instructor pointed out that this was a big part of her argument, so it needed to be developed further. In her third body paragraph, Lupe made the argument that many students are not thinking about the consequences of making purchases on credit cards. According to the instructor, even though this may be a valid point, she has not provided enough evidence to support her argument. The instructor also mentioned that Lupe’s writing is repetitive. In her fourth body paragraph, Lupe makes the argument that carrying credit cards is too tempting for students because they are liable to use them. She believes that young adults are irresponsible spenders. The instructor does not see either the logic or importance of this argument and therefore writes a big question mark on the paragraph. Lupe’s final statement about students and credit cards is considered to be invalid by her instructor. Lupe argues that companies should be looking at the students’ backgrounds before giving them a credit card. The instructor’s response is: “They don’t?” for he knows that credit card companies do look at the student’s financial background before giving them a credit card.

Strengths and Weaknesses in Grammar and Conventions

Based on Lupe Gonzalez’s instructor’s comments her main problems are using the wrong words in a sentence, using the incorrect verb and word formation, as well as
writing run-on sentences and having missing commas in sentences. The following are sentences from Lupe's essay:

Error 1: Using the Wrong Word Choice

1. *Young adults are on an age that they want to purchase anything that they like.*

Here instead of saying young adults are at an age she states that they “are on an age.” Therefore confusing the preposition that is used to describe that age is a factor on their behavior. In addition she writes “that they want to purchase” instead of “in which they want to purchase.” This is an error that happens often.

Error 2: Incorrect Verb Formation

1. *College administrators for the past years have raise tuitions.*

The verb “raise” should be changed to “raised,” the past participle. This is a recurring error.

Error 3: Incorrect Word Formation

1. *Instead students have the option of relying on federal grants; it is likely to pay year tuition.*
Here Lupe does not use the correct form of year for the sentence. "Year" tuition should be "yearly" tuition. This is also a reoccurring error.

Error 4: Missing Commas and Run-ons

1. The federal grant I received covers my tuition and with my savings from my job I pay for the rest of my expenses every month.

The instructor notes that there should be a comma after tuition and after job. In addition he writes that a run-on sentence is created when "every month I get pay about $600" is attached to the remainder of the sentence without the proper punctuation. Here "every month I get pay about $600" can be its own sentence. This is a frequent error.

Writing Sample: Antonia Zomalov

The writing samples that Antonia gave me are her first and second essays from her current class Learning Skills 87 during the Spring 2008 school year at Sacramento State. The essay that I will be analyzing is the third version of her essay on the topic "Pay As You Go."

The Prompt
The prompt is the same as Lupe Gonzalez’s “Pay As You Go.”

Strengths and Weaknesses in Writing Content

According to the instructor’s comments, Antonia’s body paragraphs need more organization. In addition, he noted that she needed clearer topic sentences and also needed to write more about the possible solutions or options students have to prevent them from going into debt. She appears to have presented all the problems, but not the resolutions. The instructor believes that the content of the introduction is good. The thesis can be improved by being more specific about the limits students should have on using credit cards or loans. Antonia appears to make strong points at the beginning of her paragraphs, but the remainder of the ideas presented in her body paragraphs did not support her topic sentences. There are several notes on the margins that state that certain details in the first body paragraph are off topic.

Although many of these ideas are strong, they do not coincide with the purpose of the paragraph nor do they follow the instructions of the writing prompt. Other comments are that she repeats certain information, which is not necessary. In the second body paragraph, Antonia again only explains the problems students have with budgeting but does not offer a detailed solution. The instructor adds that the problems students have with money is only required to be explained in one paragraph and the other paragraphs should be giving possible solutions to this problem. Once again Antonia’s topic
sentences appear to make strong statements about spending, however, the details in the paragraph do not support her topic sentence.

In fact it appears that the paragraph loses direction. In this paragraph the instructor also writes that some information is repetitive or irrelevant and therefore unnecessary. The notes on the margins of the third body paragraph state that certain arguments are not explained clearly and they need to be further elaborated for significance and purpose. The instructor believes that one detail in particular is an overstatement and exaggeration. The detail the instructor believes is an exaggeration is when she states that if students had bad credit ratings they would not be able to find a place to live and would therefore be homeless.

Strengths and Weaknesses in Grammar and Conventions

Based on Antonia Zomalov’s instructor’s comments the main grammatical problems appear to be word formation, verb formation, punctuation in particular missing commas, using the wrong word in a sentence, and simply having unclear sentences. The following are sentences from Antonia’s writing:

Error 1: Incorrect Word Formation
1. I also feel that many other people do not budget also because I have asked around, and I received the same answer, that many people do not budget, which does end up hurting them.

Incorrect word formation is a reoccurring error. Here the instructor noted that the use of budget in the first part of the sentence had the incorrect word formation. Although there are no suggestions to correct this mistake, a possible solution would be to say other people do not have a budget or they do not budget their expenses.

Error 2: Incorrect Verb Formation

1. If she would have gotten only one credit card then maybe she would not be in such a debt crisis but like many other who are susceptible to those companies she ended up having major debt to pay off.

According to the instructor, there are two verb formation problems. One occurs with “would have gotten,” and the other one is the use of “be” in the first part of the sentence. The instructor does not offer any suggestions on how to correct those mistakes, but in my opinion “would have gotten” can be changed to “had gotten,” and “be” can be changed to “would not have been.” This error is reoccurring.
Error 3: Using the Wrong Word Choice

The main word that was used incorrectly as the instructor pointed out was “because.”

1. Often people, like Sam, are thinking carelessly because they do not plan ahead.

In this case the word “for” is the more appropriate word in this sentence. The word because is a signal for a cause and effect relationship in a sentence, which is not the case in these sentences. This is a frequent error.

Error 4: Missing Punctuation

1. When someone has filed for bankruptcy they can not buy anything because companies need to be assured that you have some type of credibility and when you file you lose all of it.

The instructor noted that there was missing punctuation marks after bankruptcy, credibility and after file. The appropriate punctuation mark would have been commas. This is a reoccurring error.

Error 5: Unclear Sentences
There are many places where the instructor has written questions marks or the word "huh?" beside a sentence. My understanding is that the professor did not understand the logic of the sentence because it was unclear or unfocused. Here is an example:

1. *Just like the stigma for not wearing certain clothes that is common among people, they do it so they could fit in. It could also have to do with a competition element because some people just find it to be natural to compete to have the better side of things.*

Unclear sentences are a frequent error in her writing. The part that was noted as being unclear was the final part of the sentence, which I have underlined. The instructor wrote a question mark beside the sentence, in the margin he wrote unclear, and also crossed it out on the paper. Although I understand the idea that she is trying to communicate, the way that she wrote the sentence does not clearly show her argument and comes across as vague and rather cliché.

Discussion

Lupe and Antonia have many similar grammatical errors such as using the wrong word, verb tense, and word formation. Another writing weakness is in conventions. They both have missing punctuation---for both Lupe and Antonia commas was a problem.
They often left out important commas when punctuating dependent clauses which then lead to run-on sentences or unclear sentences, as is the case for Antonia. For Antonia there were many instances where the instructor simply did not understand what she was trying to say. The instances that the professor did understand what she was saying, he didn’t comprehend the purpose or relevance of the statement in the essay. It appears that Antonia is the one who has the most unclear sentences.

For the most part, I understood what she was trying to communicate but the way that she wrote her ideas didn’t make sense. In my opinion it seemed like she had many ideas is one sentence. This made it unclear to distinguish what she was trying to communicate to the reader. Because certain sentences were unclear, it made her entire argument weak. In the underlined example she wrote “better side of things” when in reality I think she was trying to say that some people like to have expensive clothes and electronics because it makes them feel important, and they want to fit in with the rest of society. Some of the problems that Antonia has with punctuation has to do with not punctuating complex sentences correctly. She forgets to separate the dependent clause from the independent clause.

From the tutoring experience I’ve had and my own experience with other student’s writing, this is a common mistake for many students. Many students struggle to hear where a comma would be placed in a complex sentence. For the example that had the wrong word formation, it appears that Antonia uses budget as a verb instead of a noun, and when she uses it as a verb it is used incorrectly. As I read Antonia’s writing, I
wondered why she still had many problems writing coherent sentences and punctuating sentence correctly since she has been in the United States since she was a child. However my question was answered when I reviewed Antonia’s interview and when I reviewed literature about Generation 1.5 students.

For many Generation 1.5 students one wouldn’t have expected them to continue to have these problems since they’ve been in American schools for most of their lives. Antonia explained this phenomenon when she explained the interference she received from her first language. In addition because Antonia was never instructed in her native language she had difficulty learning all the grammatical rules in English---this I learned from Lupe’s interview. Both Antonia and Lupe received very little to no instruction in their first language which is one of the reasons, according to the research, why they continue to have problems writing grammatically correct sentences.

According to the instructor, Antonia’s main problems with the content of her writing are organization and staying on topic. Antonia makes strong statements in her topic sentences, but they are not supported by the details in her body paragraphs. It’s great when students know how to write good topic sentences, but if they can’t support those topic sentences in the remainder of the essay then it doesn’t matter how strong the topic sentence are. In addition Antonia needs to provide more elaboration when she makes statements. She needs to convince readers that her argument is accurate and relevant to the readers. I think that these problems with content are correctable with time.
With the proper feedback and by looking at strong sample essays, she will learn how to provide more support and organization in her essays.

From reading both Antonia’s and Lupe’s essays on Pay As You Go, I noticed that even though Antonia has many writing weaknesses, she appeared to be knowledgeable about the topic. Lupe, on the other hand, didn’t have as many good ideas as Antonia—it almost seemed like she was unfamiliar with the topic, but made a good effort to try to explain her main argument. According to the instructor’s comments, it appears that Lupe’s essay is the stronger essay because it is more organized and provides slightly more support than Antonia’s essay. Not that Lupe’s essay has all the support needed to explain her thesis, for the instructor did note that there were many times when she needed to elaborate on ideas.

I think what makes Lupe’s essay better is that it started strong---she had a strong introduction and clear thesis. The instructor did not comment on her organization, but he did comment on her underdeveloped paragraphs. Furthermore Lupe often makes comments that are not valid or accurate, such as that credit card companies are not checking students’ backgrounds before giving them a credit card. I think that she might have meant personal backgrounds---for example whether they have shown to be a responsible person ---rather than their financial status. However this is just my assumption and because she did not elaborate on this, the instructor does not understand this argument.
Another possibility is that Lupe might not have that much knowledge about the topic so that’s why she is making wrong statements. She made a comment about another essay she had written during the interview. She said that she wrote an essay on voting rights that she didn’t do too well on because she didn’t understand the voting process to begin with. In cases like these, the instructor needs to make sure that his/her students understand the topic they are writing about. In addition students need to be proactive about their own learning. If students don’t understand something, then they need to go to the instructor’s office hours and ask as many questions as possible.

In terms of the grammatical problems that Lupe has, she has the same type of problems as Antonia but her errors are different. For example she uses the wrong word with certain common terms such as “we are at an age.” I think that Lupe might have heard this term before but she didn’t remember all the words correctly that’s why she said “we are on an age.” Another reoccurring problem was her verb tenses; she forgot to use the past tense of “raise”—raised and she used the wrong word formation--- “year” instead of yearly in the sample sentence I wrote above. One problem that both Lupe and Antonia share is the inability to write a comma in the correct place. Lupe’s inability to write a comma in the correct place results in run-on-sentences.

Both Lupe and Antonia have the same amount of grammatical errors in their writing, but the way they make those errors are slightly different. In my opinion, Antonia’s main grammatical weakness in her writing is her unclear sentences. The unclear sentences normally have the potential to be good sentences if they are written
differently. In other words, she has good observations and ideas, but like she mentioned in the interview, she has a hard time writing those ideas on paper. I’m sure if she was able to sit down with a tutor or her instructor and talk her ideas out with someone before writing the essay, she might be able to write more coherent sentences. Another strategy is for a tutor to help her write those complex ideas she is trying to communicate.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The main question that I have for this study is:

How can this study help basic writing instructors effectively teach Generation 1.5 students at both CSUS and other colleges and universities?

This study will help instructors effectively teach Generation 1.5 students because it will give them a more in-depth look at the difficulties that Generation 1.5 students have with their writing. The reason I decided to do a case study on two Generation 1.5 students is for instructors and students to see the writing experiences of students who are currently enrolled in a basic writing class. By focusing on two students, I was able to delve deep into these students’ writing lives and understand their writing history and therefore show instructors what it is like to be one of the Generation 1.5 students in their classes. I asked these students all the necessary information an instructor will need to know in order to help Generation 1.5 students, such as writing experiences in high school, L1 interference, perception about writing, writing strengths and weaknesses, as well as lessons/activities that can be used to help Generation 1.5 students.

To sum up, those lessons/activities that were suggested by Antonia and Lupe to be effective were structured writing conferences, small group discussion about the readings,
grammar lessons that will help with writing, explanations of important key terms and expression from the readings. Also the use of sample essays in class to show strong arguments, analysis, and organization. Furthermore the use of annotations has been especially beneficial in order to understand the main argument of a text and the supporting details. In my opinion, teaching Generation 1.5 students how to annotate is especially beneficial because they learn about analysis and the structure of a good argument. It is my experience that students are not normally taught how to annotate until they get to college. I think one big reason is because in high school students are not allowed to write on the book. They are taught this since elementary school and it is hard for them to break out of this frame of mind.

Moreover this study will help instructors develop their own curriculum that I would consider to be good teaching practices. Lessons/activities used for Generation 1.5 students can be used for all students. It’s important for all instructors to take into consideration the needs of all their students and not assume that they have already learned a particular skill in high school. This study shows instructors the difficulties Generation 1.5 students can have with their writing and how their native language plays a role in their second language. As demonstrated by Lupe and Antonia, a student’s native language cannot only be seen as a weakness, but also a strength. Knowing this can help instructors encourage their students to use their first language with annotation, for example, to help them understand the author’s message. It will help instructors to ask their students how their first language is inhibiting them from writing a coherent
sentence. From this study instructors also learn that the writing mistakes that Generation 1.5 students aren’t simply random, but there is a reason why they make particular mistakes and it has to do with either the lack of education they received in their native language or L1 interference. There is in fact a connection between what they learned in their first language and how much or how quickly they are able to learn in their second language.

This study is also intended to help high school instructors who are currently teaching Generation 1.5 students. Perhaps high school students can identify the Generation 1.5 students in their classes and begin to give them extra assistance with their writing. They can even use any of the strategies/lessons mentioned above. Perhaps if Generation 1.5 students are identified earlier, before they enter college, they will be able to correct some of their writing weaknesses and possibly receive higher scores on placement tests.

Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations of this study are that it was conducted on two students as oppose to a larger sampling of Generation 1.5 students. Because I conducted the research on two people, I was only able to get the perspectives of two Generation 1.5 students. Possibly if I had interviewed more students I would get more ideas on how to teach
Generation 1.5 students and learn a particular characteristic I didn't know about Generation 1.5 students.

Another limitation is with the teacher surveys that were given to instructors. Even though I put many surveys in the instructor's boxes, about 20 to 30, I only got 8 back. Thus I was only able to get the opinions of a small part of the instructors who teach Generation 1.5 students. Perhaps if I had had other surveys returned, I would have gotten a better understanding of Sac State basic writing instructor's perspectives on Generation 1.5 students. They might have been able to offer more instructional suggestions, for example. I might have had instructors who had a wide range of experiences with Generation 1.5 students. In addition the surveys were passed out to both learning skills instructors and basic writing instructors. The learning skills department helps students with study skills, math and language skills. The students in the learning skills classes did not pass placement tests and need extra assistance with learning the language and math skills. The basic writing class is part of the English Department. The basic writing program is for students who had a low score on the placement test.

Perhaps I would have gotten different opinions of Generation 1.5 students if I had only decided to survey one particular department. Learning skills instructors are normally more aware of Generation 1.5 students because they have many ESL students in their classes.

Moreover another limitation of the study is the data taken from the sample essays. The essays I used were the third version of the essay thus the student had the opportunity
to revise their writing before I analyzed it. My reason for choosing the third version of
the Pay as You Go essay is because both students had the same essay for me to analyze.
Furthermore I felt that the errors that were found on the third version were the problem
areas the students continue to have even after revising it twice. Thus this is a better
indication of their writing strengths and weaknesses. In addition the errors that I
commented on were based on the feedback the instructor had given the student on the
essay and not my own corrections.

Significance for Instructors and Generation 1.5 Students

One reason I decided to do this research is because I wanted to help students that
can easily be forgotten in our universities. Generation 1.5 students are in every university
in California. Although I do not have statistics to support this opinion, it is a statement
that many professors and researchers already know. Over the course of this study, I’ve
learned more about Generation 1.5 students than the average person. My study is to
benefit both students and teachers. It is my expectation that Generation 1.5 students will
read this study and be able to identify with the students profiled in this study or know
someone who is Generation 1.5 but never knew it. Why is it important to know if a
person is Generation 1.5? There are many students in universities all over California that
are wondering why they have the writing problems they have. They’ve taken AP courses
in high school, have successfully completed the bilingual program, and they speak
English as perfect as any freshman in college would. Many Generation 1.5 students don’t know that their writing is an issue until they take the writing placement test at the beginning of the year. And once they get their first writing assignment back, it really sinks in how much work their writing needs. This can be very devastating to a freshman entering college---it can make them doubt whether they belong in college at all.

This study shows those students that they are not alone. Being a Generation 1.5 student doesn’t make you any less intelligent than non Generation 1.5 student. It’s important that Generation 1.5 students get as much assistance on their writing as possible. If that means that they have to spend every other day at the writing center, then they will need to put in that extra effort in order to improve their writing. The important thing is that Generation 1.5 students learn their writing strengths and weaknesses; then gradually learn how to correct their problems and celebrate what they do correctly. It may be very frustrating for Generation 1.5 students because they will most likely not correct the majority of their writing problems until they graduate from college. I say majority because I don’t think any piece of writing is flawless—there’s always room for improvement.

I predict that my research can help those instructors who are currently teaching basic writing classes and those who will be in the future. Understanding the shortcomings of these writers as well as their strengths can help with the development of effective teaching strategies for these students. Moreover multilingual students should have the same opportunities as monolingual students to learn academic discourse. By
academic discourse, I mean understanding the main argument of a text, also being able to analyze a text for purpose, audience, and rhetorical patterns. In addition academic discourse involves students being able to write their own arguments and interpretations based on the reading.

This research is important to the field of composition because it looks at a growing population of students within the university. These students are entering the university without the proper writing proficiency and are either placed in ESL classes or more likely in basic writing classes. Generation 1.5 students are the future, meaning they will be entering the work force after they graduate college, but before that we want to make sure that they can be successful in academia.

This success entails that they learn the academic discourse of the university; however, in order for them not to feel alienated from the university, they should understand that their first language and their linguistic experiences are also valuable to the university. How will they learn all of this? Ultimately I feel they will learn this from the pedagogical choices their instructors make. If instructors and tutors understand the writing difficulties that Generation 1.5 students have and then learn some strategies that they can use to modify their instruction, they will be able to minimize the writing proficiency gap these students enter the university with. I believe that my thesis will provide instructors with these effective strategies, which can be implemented in various writing assignments.
Suggestions for Future Research

One possibility for future research is studying the perspectives and experiences of a larger sampling of Generation 1.5 students. Perhaps if a larger group of Generation 1.5 students is analyzed there will be different conclusions.

Another suggestion is researching the correlation between high school writing experiences for Generation 1.5 students and their performance in college writing classes. For example, analyzing the most effective strategies Generation 1.5 students can learn in high school that will help them excel in writing classes and writing tests at the university. I would like to see a study that gives high school instructors and even middle school instructors more awareness of how to help Generation 1.5 students in their classes. Perhaps if they get the assistance earlier in their educational lives, they will do better in college. It's important for teachers to feel empowered and have the right information about their students.

Another possibility is to interview instructors who teach Generation 1.5 students. They may have more information to share about Generation 1.5 students during an in-depth interview with them. The survey I gave basic writing instructors was relatively short and I made it this way so that I would actually get responses back. I feared that if I had a long survey, instructors wouldn't do it because it would take too long to complete. On the other hand, for the purposes of my research the information I got back from the surveys was very informational and just the right information needed for my study.
APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. What is your age?
2. What city and state were you born in?
3. What is your first language?
4. Are you the first person in your family to go to college?
5. Do you have any close relatives that have received a degree?
6. Does your family support your decision to go to college?
7. Do you speak another language besides English? Who do you speak this language to?
8. What language do you feel most comfortable speaking, reading, writing? Why?
9. What middle school and high school did you go to?
10. When did you learn English?
11. When were you exited from the bilingual program? In other words when (grade level) were you reclassified?
12. What writing classes have you taken at Sac State?
13. What has been your average grade in these classes (A, B, C, D average)?
14. Do you think that the writing you did in high school prepared you for college writing?
15. Based on the feedback that you have been given from your professors, what are some of your writing weaknesses? How about your strengths?

16. What do you most like about writing? What do you dislike about writing?

17. Do you think that being bilingual/multilingual has helped you as a writer or has it made writing more difficult?

18. Do you understand the writing assignments your professors give you? In other words is it challenging/difficult to understand the writing prompts and what you are expected to do?

19. What was your most challenging writing assignment?

20. Think about the problems that you have with writing. Do you think that any of those problems are related to being bilingual/multilingual? Be specific (grammar, prewriting, revision, etc).

21. How about your writing strengths? Do any of those have to do with being bilingual/multilingual?

22. Do you go or have you gone to the writing center or another department for tutoring in writing?

23. Do you think that your professors or the tutors have helped you improve your writing? How so?

24. What is your definition for a “good” writer?

25. Do you think that knowing how to be a “good” writer is important?
26. What types of writing do you do outside of the university requirements (meaning writing that is not for a class)?

27. What would you recommend for instructors to teach Generation 1.5 students in order to improve their writing skills?

*The order and wording of my questions may be changed during the interview. In addition other questions may be added as I conduct the interviews.*
Dear English Instructor:

Attached is a survey for anyone who has taught or is teaching English 1.

You are asked to participate in research which will be conducted by Gloria Whited, a graduate student in the English department at California State University, Sacramento.

The survey you are about to do will be used to determine how much instructors at Sacramento State know about their multilingual students, in particular Generation 1.5 students. In addition, I would like to know if instructors are using specific strategies or lessons.

The surveys are anonymous, so do not write your name on it. When you are done with the survey, please place it in Cathy Gabor’s box in the mail room. Please note that you are not required to do this survey.

Completing this survey indicates a willingness to participate in this part of the research.

Thank you for your time. Gloria Whited

4 Letters addressed to LS 86/87 instructors were asked to place survey in Sean Liu’s box.
APPENDIX C
Instructor Survey

* This survey is Anonymous, so please do not write your name on it.*

1. Age ____

2. Years or Semesters Teaching Writing _____ yrs. or _____ smstrs.

3. Years or Semesters Teaching Basic Writing _____ yrs or _____ smstrs.

4. Besides Sac State, what other colleges have you taught writing at?

__________________________________________________________

5. Are you multilingual/bilingual? Circle One: Yes No

6. Do you know if you have multilingual students in your class?

   Circle One: Yes No Not Sure

7. Would you feel comfortable asking your students if they are a multilingual students?

   Explain your answer ________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

8. Does knowing if your students are multilingual impact your teaching practices/instruction? Please explain.

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

5 One survey was given that was slightly different. The difference did not impact data results.
9. Do you know what Generation 1.5 means? Circle One: Yes  No

10. If you know what Generation 1.5 means, please provide your own definition

11. Do you know of any teaching practices that can help Generation 1.5 students improve their writing?

12. How do you know that these teaching practices will help your Generation 1.5 students?
APPENDIX D

Student Survey Letter

Dear Student:

You are asked to participate in research which will be conducted by Gloria Whited, a graduate student in the English department at California State University, Sacramento.

The survey you are about to do will be used to determine possible candidates for my research. I am looking for two or more case study participants. This research will help me understand the writing needs of Generation 1.5 students. In addition, the participants will receive feedback on their writing from me.

Based on the information provided in the survey, I may ask you to participate in an interview(s). The interview(s) will help me determine who will be my case study participants. The interviews will include questions that are related to experiences with language and writing. You will also be asked questions about your writing strengths and weaknesses. If you would like to participate in my study, make sure to provide your contact information on the last question of the survey.

Completing this survey indicates a willingness to participate in this part of the research.

Thank you for your time.

Gloria Whited
APPENDIX E

Student Survey

1. Would you identify yourself as a Generation 1.5 student? Why?

2. Were you born in another country? If you were, when did you first arrive here?

3. Were you born in another country, and mainly educated in the U.S?

4. Was English the first language you learned to speak? If not, what language did you first learn to speak?

5. Circle the following writing difficulties you have. You may choose as many as you want. If your writing problem is not mentioned below, complete the “other” section.

   Fragments                    Organization of Ideas

   Run-ons                     Starting an Essay/Generating Ideas
6. Are you interested in participating in a research study for Generation 1.5 students?

If yes, please provide your contact information (email and/or phone number).
APPENDIX F

Research Participant Consent Form

You are asked to participate in research which will be conducted by Gloria Whited, a graduate student in the English department at California State University, Sacramento. This research will help me understand the writing needs of Generation 1.5 students.

You will be asked to have several interviews with me. The interviews will last 45 minutes to 1 hour and they will take place on different days. I estimate that your participation in this study will require 4-5 hours of your time, possibly longer. The interviews will include questions that are related to experiences with language and writing. You will also be asked questions about your writing strengths and weaknesses. In addition, I will ask about your performance in writing classes. Furthermore you will be asked to show me writing assignments done in other classes and I may possibly have a writing assignment for you to do as well. Information will be recorded, if allowed, and this information will be kept safe. After transcription, the information will be destroyed.

Some of the questions I will ask you may be personal. You are not required to answer questions that you feel are too personal. Furthermore during the course of this study, if you would like to talk to a counselor about any topics related to what we discuss
in the interviews, you may contact the Student Health Center’s Psychological Services Center at (916) 278-6416.

Some benefits that you may acquire from participating in this research are insight into how you use languages and what your writing strengths and weaknesses are. You will also gain more information on how to improve your own writing for future classes. I expect that the results of this study will benefit students who consider themselves to be Generation 1.5 as well as the instructors who teach them.

You will not receive a compensation for being a part of this study. Your participation is voluntary.

If you have any questions about this study, you can contact me at gwhited@galt.k12.ca.us. You can also contact my advisor, Cathy Gabor, at cagabor@csus.edu.

Remember you can skip any question during interviews and can opt out at any time. Your signature below shows that you understand the research assignment and that you agree to be a participant in it.
Signature of Participant  Date

Can our interviews be recorded? Circle one:  Yes  No
APPENDIX G

Writing Prompt

Pay as You Go

It’s just too easy for young people to go into debt these days. They take out a $3000 student loan and then spend it on a top-of-the-line laptop, or they pull out their plastic cards and charge it, never thinking about how and when they are going to pay it all back. I am a consumer counselor, and I support government legislation that would severely limit the amount of credit given to full-time college students. For one thing, young people under the age of 21 are not responsible enough to borrow money wisely. They rack up debt for frivolous purchases like the new PlayStation 3 for $600 or designer shoes and consequences. If students have limited access to credit cards or loans until they graduate from college, everything with cash, and I had to earn that money the hard way, something kids today haven’t learned to do. Letting young people pile up debt put a huge burden on them and on their parents. When the young adult can’t pay his bills because he blew all his money on food and entertainment, either his parents pay or he’s on his way to a bad credit rating. And when kids grow up and file bankruptcy, society pays. If we teach young adults to pay as they go and limit their access to credit, it will help to stop the epidemic of debt in this country.
Ben Estrada

Consumer Counselor

Explain Estrada’s position and discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with his arguments and conclusion. Support your opinion regarding Estrada’s arguments, providing reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.
WORK CITED


Glasmire, Larry (California State University, Sacramento). Telephone Interview. 1 May 2007.


Ko, Vivian (California State University, Los Angeles). Telephone Interview. 16 May 2007.


