Translingual Pedagogy, Rhetorical Listening, and Multimodal Experiences in a First Year Writing Conference that Fosters Intercultural Learning

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Abstract: This article analyzes a U.S. university's biannual student conference that supports intercultural dialogue through student presentations of multimodal products. Housed in the university's First Year Writing Program, the event is informed by a framing in translingual and reflective pedagogy that highlights students' cultures and experiences as sites of inquiry and resources for learning. While writing program faculty originally thought this event would provide students with the opportunity to develop professional skills in speaking and presenting, post-event surveys suggest that the students most appreciated the transnational and even intra-national learning that took place at the conference. Assessing the reasons behind this student response, we discuss our theoretical framing, the conference structure, and our program's shared curricular emphasis on multimodality and cultural inquiry. [5]We end by offering specific pedagogical and administrative strategies transferable to other institutions.

Keywords: translingualism, multimodal, rhetorical listening, intercultural, first-year writing

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Introduction

In the world we live in, more people currently speak English as a second language than as a first language; as Jonathan Hall (2009) puts it: multilingualism is the norm, rather than the exception. In the U.S. particularly, increasing numbers of both U.S. and non-U.S. multilingual students populate college classrooms. In 2015, for example, new international student enrollment in the U.S. increased by 10%, to a record high of almost a million students (Fast Facts, 2016). Catalyzed by porous national borders, the enhanced ease and speed of international travel, and a world refugee crisis, both multilingual and monolingual people are now more mobile, and therefore more likely to encounter others with different cultures and languages. The First Year Writing (FYW) classrooms of many U.S. universities have thus become examples of the "contact zones" that according to Pratt (1991) are "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power" (p. 35).

Examining one such space, this paper explores the transnational dialogues that take place in the context of a U.S. university's program-wide initiative—a First Year Writing conference—that purposefully brings together multilingual and monolingual students of different cultures and nationalities, to share aspects of their languages, cultures, and experiences in multimodal forms. Moreover, what the majority of the participating students most appreciated was the opportunity to have transnational and intra-national conversations with one another.

In retrospect, these participant perspectives are not so surprising, given our program's curricular emphasis on multimodality and cultural inquiry. Indeed, an emphasis on students' cultures (both personal and academic) pervades our curriculum, as do multiple opportunities for students to reflect on their own positionalities in relationship to the cultures around them. In fact, our writing courses highlight students' examination of "culture" with a small "c," as our students are provided with multiple opportunities to reflect on the many local cultures and communities in which they and their classmates are members. Both Ladson-Billings (1995, 2014) and Paris (2012) have argued for pedagogies that are grounded in cultures relevant to U.S. multicultural students; we extend their ideas to encompass transnational students in U.S. classrooms and elsewhere. Our FYW program outcomes state that students are expected to perceive that writing is situated in cultures and communities; that disciplines and communities function as cultures; and that cultures affect and enable communication (Program

Learning Goals, 2015). In turn, one goal for the still evolving outcomes for our bridge writing course WRA:1004 (Preparation for College Writing) is that students experience themselves as expert holders of knowledge of culture and language; this course purposefully draws on the students' languages and cultures as sites of inquiry and resources for learning.

At the conference, we argue, the students' multimodal products help make their cultures and experiences more visible to one another, and across lines of difference. Their subsequent learning is often transnational, as a U.S. student may come to learn of and appreciate an aspect of Chinese or Thai culture; just as a Thai student may learn about a part of U.S. culture; similarly, a Chinese student might become more aware of the diverse cultural practices *within* the U.S.—for example, those tied to skateboarding, hunting, or horse-riding, or to specific ethnic groups such as Mexican Americans who reside in "the valley" of Texas. Conversely, a U.S. student may learn of the rich diversity of cultures and languages *within* China.

Recognizing the conference as supporting this transnational and intra-national learning, we examine the translingual and multimodal pedagogy that informs our curriculum and, thus, the conference, and we analyze the surveys completed by the conference's student-participants as instances of transnational rhetorical listening (Ratcliffe, 2005).. Ultimately, we argue for the translingual affordances of this biannual event.

Theoretical Framing

While students from both of our FYW courses (WRA:101 and WRA:1004) participate in the conference, this event has come to be highly impacted by the presence of students and teachers of WRA:1004 in particular (see Institutional Context below). Thus ,we begin by highlighting the translingual pedagogy that greatly informs the conference and our FYW program more broadly.

Several years ago, after multiple layers of discussion,[6] and responding to the increased numbers of international students in FYW classes, program instructors teaching WRA:1004 instituted what they loosely called a "translingual pedagogy" that intentionally centered students' languages, cultures, and

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[6] This included a program subcommittee that examined the history of WRA:1004 and how other FYW programs worked with multilingual students; a series of discussions with on-campus colleagues from the English Language Center and the Office for International Students and Scholars; a grant-supported two-year faculty community of WRA:1004 instructors who explored and shared with one another their curricular initiatives; and finally, a program-wide committee discussion and revision of the learning outcomes for WRA:1004 that reflected these changes.

experiences as assets, sites of inquiry, and resources for learning.[7] By centering inquiry into students' languages and cultures, the WRA:1004 instructors aligned themselves with numerous teachers and scholars who have responded to increasingly multinational student populations in U.S. classroom contexts by arguing for translanguaging pedagogies (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Garcia & Wei, 2014; Hornberger & Link, 2012) or a translingual/multilingual approach (Canagarajah, 2006a), which Lu and Horner (2013) define as "one that recognizes difference as the norm…a disposition of openness and inquiry toward language and language differences" (p. 585). Building on the work of linguistic scholars like Matsuda (2006), a translingual approach recognizes, in Lu and Horner's (2013) words, a "willingness to explore with students what they care to advance about people, languages and cultures in which they are identified and may identify, and how and why and when to do it" (p. 600). As a student-centered pedagogy, translingualism pays mind to the local: the particularity of student cultures, languages, and experiences. It builds on students' "funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002, p. 623), while also acknowledging the expert translingual and transcultural practices that students already use both in and out of the classroom (Horner, Donahue, & NeCamp, 2011; Matsuda & Silva, 2005; Prieto-Arranz, Juan-Garau, & Jacob, 2013). A translingual approach, then, aligns closely with a curriculum like ours, that encourages students to consciously reflect on their negotiations of the tensions among languages and cultures amid specific writing challenges.

In the WRA:1004 classrooms, translingual pedagogy means highlighting the students' heritage languages, cultures, and experiences as the very subject for individual and class work. WRA:1004 pedagogy resembles Matsuda and Silva's (1999) classic account of a cross-cultural First Year Writing class they designed and then taught, where non-U.S. and U.S. students were encouraged to build "cultural expertise" by engaging in intercultural surveys, interviews, field research, and reflective writings on their growing knowledge of their own and others' cultures and communicative practices. In Matsuda and Silva's classroom as well as in our program, students are encouraged to see one another as cultural experts and resources for their own learning; moreover, this learning is frequently collaborative, as students are often placed in purposefully transnational groups to observe, create, and make cross-cultural portfolios of understanding together. "Intercultural inquiry," writes Flower (2002), "transforms understanding through the collaborative construction of a distinctive body of

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[7] WRA:1004 teachers who participated in the original initiative in translingual pedagogy regularly give workshops for their colleagues (usually, once a term) that discuss various translingual and transnational approaches to teaching the multilingual students who find their way into the mainstream WRA: 101 classes that follow; their pedagogy thus informs classroom teaching across the program, along with the FYW conference.

meaning—which reflects the diversely situated knowledges and the interpretive logics of others" (p. 181). Given the transnational population of WRA:1004, its instructors work to honor the cultural practices and by implication the diversely situated logics of their students.

Suresh Canagarajah (2006b) uses the word "shuttling" to describe how multilinguals in both the university and the workplace experience communication as the ongoing negotiation of meaning, but as Lu and Horner (2013) write, "from a translingual perspective, all writing always involves rewriting and transition, inevitably engaging the labor of re-contextualizing (and renewing) language, language practices, users, conventions, and contexts" (p. 586). In other words, the "renegotiation of meaning" operates in all language acts (Horner, Donahue, & NeCamp, 2011). Further, scholars have extended the "trans-" metaphor to encompass other forms of communication. Canagarajah (2016) puts it this way: "the 'trans' in translingual…also perceives communication as going beyond words and accommodating other semiotic systems (such as sound, visuals, graphics, body, and ecology) in creating meaning" (p. 450). Referencing Canagarajah's (2013) expansion of the "trans-" prefix, Kiernan (2015) asserts that "modality and semiotics are central components of the translingual approach" (p. 304). These teacher-scholars argue against both mono-modality and mono-lingualism—what Block (2014), for one, claims is the lingual bias in language acquisition models that focus solely on grammatical competence. Similarly, Horner, Selfe, and Lockridge (2013) also urge composition teachers and scholars to challenge assumptions of a "monolingual and monomodal norm for composition" (p. 5). By featuring students' multimodal products that examine culture, the FYW conference aligns itself with these critics.

Arguments for the integration of multimodality into First Year Writing, especially in the interest of supporting rhetorical awareness and developing genre and meta-awareness are longstanding (Alexander & Rhodes, 2014; Sheppard, 2009; Shipka, 2011; Takayoshi & Selfe, 2007; Van Kooten, 2016; Wysocki, 2004; Yancey, 2004). Gonzales (2015) intentionally links translingualism, multimodality, and genre studies, while Ceraso (2014) urges that we be more attentive to multimodal, embodied listening practices in our writing pedagogies (p. 103). In our case, we assert the value of multimodality in communication across and of difference; in this, we recognize as Hafner (2015) does, that "a pen-and-paper writing assignment does not afford the same range of voices as...multimodal compositions" (p. 504). Adopting "multimodal acts of meaning making, or texts that combine various modes and forms," McGinnis (2007) reminds us, "afford[s] youth more varied ways to express themselves, their knowledge, and their learning" (p. 572). Indeed, a number of scholars have cited as the affordances of multimodality for multilingual students, as it can give

them the opportunity to be successful in one area when they might be less so in others (e.g., the production of alphabetic texts in English; see Van Rensburg, 2007; Warschauer & Cook, 1999). Ghiso and Low (2013) suggest that their immigrant students' multimodal products often work to challenge dominant narratives of assimilation and meritocracy, by including "stories that may be missing from grand narratives" (p. 33).

Moreover, as our analysis of the FYW conference suggests, multimodality can benefit both the composer *and* the audience. Multimodality, broadly defined, supports communication across difference in languages and cultures. As Canagarajah (2016) reminds us, "[p]eople [in the communicative process] use all the resources at their disposal…such as objects, gestures, and the body, for meaning-making" (p. 450). At the FYW conference, we argue, multiple strategies of communication and understanding shape both the student presentations and the ensuing conversations about their work. Highlighting what Horner, Selfe, and Lockridge (2013) claim is the "important role played by those reading/listening to/viewing/touching what is 'produced' in making meaning" (p. 14), we focus on what the FYW surveys reveal about the affordances of multimodal transnational communication for both presenter *and* listener—a negotiation of meaning that can be further enhanced when discussion circulates around the sharing of what Pahl and Roswell (2010) call "artifactual literacies": objects that convey deep meanings for families and communities (p. 11). Pahl and Roswell argue that calling upon students' knowledge of the meaning of such artifacts (their cultural resonances, their links to space and place, their evocation of personal and community stories) can deepen student learning and enhance literacy development. In terms of the FYW conference and the classes from which they derive, the students' sharing of multimodal works and cultural artifacts assists in making their cultures and experiences more available to one another, often across national lines. The conference structure creates a space for the students to practice "rhetorical listening" as Ratcliffe (2005) defines it: a "trope for interpretive invention" and "code for cross-cultural conduct" (p. 1) that "ties the personal (a personal claim)…to the political (a cultural logic) without totally collapsing differences between the two" (p. 32). At the conference, "rhetorical listening" positions students to hear and to respect the "cultural logic" embedded in the presentations of other students who may come from distinctly different cultures and nations.

Thus, we argue for a fruitful convergence of translingualism and multimodality at our FYW conference, where student audience members are invited to comment on the extent to which multimodal presentations make visible cultures, cultural practices, and rhetorical strategies that might not always be evident in more formal academic environments. Incorporating multimodal

projects and cultural artifacts into the conference allows students, both U.S. and non-U.S., to *see* and *hear* one another's perspectives, experiences, cultures, and even languages. The multimodal, embodied, and artifact-based presentations of the conference's student-participants help surface and make their experiences and cultures visible to others across lines of difference.[8] Such visibility exemplifies Pahl and Roswell's (2010) artifactual framework for literacy education: one that leverages the incorporation of tactile and auditory objects that are connected to students' home experiences as platform and catalyst for their learning.

At the same time, we argue that ensuing conference conversations with each panel's presenters (along with other post-conference mechanisms) give students the opportunity to reflect on their encounters with others; for instance, they are asked to consider what the presentations share and where they diverge, what is familiar and what is strange. In so doing, we align ourselves with other teacher-scholars who stress the importance of reflection as a tool for learning and deeper understanding, (Dewey, 1933; Eyler, Giles & Schmiede, 1996; Kolb, 1984; Schon, 1983). As Ash and Clayton put it (2009), "Learning…does not happen maximally through experience alone but rather as a result of thinking about—reflecting on—it" (p. 26). While many of these writers discuss reflection in terms of either community service or professional/job-related experiences (e.g. for teachers and physicians), we apply it to the experience of the FYW conference, as we believe that the reflection that students do there deepens their learning. If multimodality helps make student cultures more visible to one another, post-presentation discussions serve as a form of reflection that encourage the students to articulate their learning to one another.

Institutional Context

Our First Year Writing courses are housed at a large U.S. university, where one in every 13 students is international. Most of these international students are from China, but also, and increasingly, they are from other Asian countries, along with Africa, the Middle East, and South America (Statistical Report, 2016). Over 7000 undergraduate students take the required First Year Writing course WRA:101 (Writing and Inquiry) every year; of this number, roughly 800 have also taken WRA:1004 (Preparation for College Writing), which precedes it. In the bridge writing course, roughly 80% of the students are non-U.S., and the rest are mainly first-generation domestic. Over time, WRA:1004 students have come to

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[8] For a discussion of how multimodality worked to forward transnational understanding in a community project, through non-U.S. students' introduction of cultural artifacts and neighborhood maps to local (U.S.) school children, see Meier (2015).

constitute as much as one-fourth of all students participating in the FYW conference, whereas in actual population, WRA:1004 students make up only about one-tenth of our overall FYW student population. As we will show, the integration of these WRA:1004 students into the conference greatly impacts the intercultural learning that happens there.

Curricular Framing

The FYW conference is shaped by curricular moves that permeate both WRA:101 (the mainstream First Year Writing course) and WRA:1004 (the bridge course), as both courses focus on students' cultures, multimodality, and reflection.

In WRA:101, students complete a total of five projects, three of which potentially inform the conference. In the second project in the assignment sequence, the Cultural Artifact Narrative, students are asked to examine an artifact, what it means, and how it is used by both themselves and others. Although writing program instructors teach this project differently, the project as a whole tends to involve such qualities as keen observation, personal story and the stories of others, ethnography, and other forms of research into cultural attitudes and practices. The Cultural Artifact Narrative is designed to engage students in the idea/reality that culture is embodied locally, as a constellation of complex, overlapping, and intertwining connections that are ultimately interpersonal, social, and relational. The project also aligns well with key learning goals in our curriculum that center around the importance of rhetorical understanding to the writing process: underscoring how writing occurs within, is influenced by, and in turn influences communities and cultures.

Another project, often the fourth in the WRA:101 series, has students remixing into multimodal form one of their prior three projects (most often written as alphabetic text). Finally, building on numerous smaller reflective assignments and activities, WRA:101's fifth project has the students reflect on the learning and writing they have done throughout the term. The FYW conference dovetails well with this project progression, as there, students are able to share and reflect on the Remix projects they have made in our courses, many of which derive from their Cultural Artifact Narrative project.

In turn, WRA:1004 is greatly informed by a translingual pedagogy that purposefully places students' languages and cultures as assets, sites of inquiry, and resources for learning. Since the focus is on the students' own languages and cultures, course projects are intentionally designed to create multiple opportunities for the students to learn from one another, and then to reflect on that learning both in writing and in class discussion. Thus, they become

ethnographers (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2012) examining their own and each other's cultures, as well as the cultures of the university more broadly. They may make infographics that tell stories of culture shock and transition to the university; they may interview and write about one another's home cultures as part of class assignments; they may participate in a Translation Narrative Project as described in Kiernan, Meier and Wang's (2016) recent study—whereby they translate a "culture story" from their home language into standard English, and then analyze and reflect on their process of translation.

At the conference, the students share the videos, websites, and posters they have produced in class. "Culture" is embodied multimodally, as students share images and videos that represent their home traditions and practices. But it is not just through symbolic representation (i.e., video or poster) that our students share their cultures; sometimes, they go further to *embody* a specific cultural practice or costume. For example, a Mexican-American student paints her face and wears a traditional costume, as she does her presentation on her cultural tradition of Day of the Dead; another student demonstrates a breakdance move that he learned as a member of the school club; still others hand out treats related to the Chinese New Year. Finally, our program's emphasis on reflective pedagogy finds its way into the conference as well, as there, students are asked to discuss the processes and choices they made in creating their project.

Conference Structure

At the conference itself, students either present their work in small panels (3-4 presentations per hour), or in a hallway poster session. The audience consists of other students (both presenters and non-presenters); the faculty member who serves as moderator; and occasionally, visiting guests (e.g., library staff, English Language Center instructors, and, in spring, high school teachers and their students). Some instructors incorporate the conference into their course from the start of the term; others offer extra credit for participation.

The conference began more than six years ago as a small event occurring right at the semester's end; the first iteration involved three teachers and their students (from five classes total), with roughly 125 students. Now, this event occurs each semester, and each iteration involves over 20 instructors and 600 students; approximately 1 in every 9 of our 3500 FYW students participates in this event per term.

The first reason for this remarkable growth is faculty involvement. If reflection informs the students' experiences of the conference, so too does it inform decisions made by the instructors who plan, adapt, and implement this event. Each semester, a committee of six or more faculty meets regularly—at

least once a month, and then more frequently as the conference date draws near—and again after the event. Carefully structured, each successive conference is built on formative assessment and reflection on how well the preceding conference went.

In many instances, changes have made the conference more student-friendly. Conference panels now intentionally integrate students from different classes, instructors, and writing levels, as the conference planners learned over time that when panels consisted of students all from the same instructor, the ensuing panels were less interesting to the students, and provided less opportunity for learning. Also, the faculty planning committee came to see that mixing up the two writing levels of students empowered the WRA:1004 students, and ensured that international students were spread throughout the event.

Second, in response to instructor input, the conference has now expanded from its original structure—of panels consisting of 4-5 student presenters—to include posters and other multi-modal; these are placed up and down the hallway where conference registration occurs. Because they are in the hallway, everyone who comes to register for the conference tends to engage with the posters; instead of sequestering the posters in a designated room (as happened one year); the hallway makes the posters more visible. More recently, we purposefully designed the use of this poster space so that once their registration was complete, poster students from one side of the hallway were designated as "presenters," while the other half became "observers" who went across the hall to talk with the "presenters" about the latter's work. About 20 minutes later, roles are reversed, so that the presenters become observers, and the observers, presenters. This structure gives each poster participant the opportunity to be both "presenter" and "observer," and it provides a valuable audience for each of the poster presenters. Meanwhile, faculty who volunteer to sit at the registration table are also instructed to visit as many poster presenters as possible. About 1/6 of all presentations, then, now occur in the "poster hallway," rather than in panels of 4-5 presentations each.

Third, as the faculty planning committee found itself increasingly supportive of projects that expanded traditional notions of "writing," both poster and panel sessions tend to include now a greater variety of presentations—including demonstrations (e.g., of break dancing or skateboarding), mini-teaching sessions (students "teaching" some aspect of what they had learned over the term), spoken word poems and songs, jigsaw puzzles, and once, most miraculously, a mini-planetarium, hand-constructed by its student creators out of wire and fabric. Some students also now include distinctly interactive presentations—for instance, asking observers to write messages of welcome or support on post-its, or to place their home town names on a "university tree."

Thus, the conference has become singularly student-centered, and more so than it was at the start. For example, even though students now submit proposals (see Appendix 4), no student is ever turned away (the proposal form allows the planning committee to give students their preferred times). The initial keynote by the program director has been dropped (considered too "top-down), and instead, conference planners lean into fostering student-to-student conversations. Teacher-moderators are coached in how to engage students in dialogue during the panels (Appendix 5). In place of a one-page listing of instructor names "and their students," the program is now several pages long, and includes both the project titles and the students' names; only faculty who serve as panel moderators or sit at the registration tables are listed. The event occurs all in one building, which builds momentum, and thanks to program support, food is served in the form of snacks and mini-sandwiches. The point is that none of these changes would have been possible without the ongoing input of FYW faculty and students to the conference itself.

Survey Data

Throughout the fall 2015 conference, surveys were given to both audience members and panel presenters. For the purpose of this article, the surveys discussed here came *only* from the students who presented at the conference itself. We anticipated that many of the results would comment on professionalization or the quality of presentation methods; instead, students primarily commented on listening, cultural perspective, and understanding.

While the survey itself was longer, our article highlights two short answer sections that are most relevant (see Appendix 6 for full survey sample):
1.   What did you learn from this session?
2.   What did you like most about this session?

In addition to the short answer questions highlighted here, we also asked students to identify whether they were international or domestic students in order to understand how the conference experience might vary for each.

As per grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Geisler, 2004), we used a recursive process to analyze the survey responses. Unlike other studies, which often triangulate coding categories by analyzing their relationship to specific theoretical frameworks or a given hypothesis, our process was primarily inductive, as our categories arose from reading and then re-reading the surveys, looking for the repetition of keywords and themes. Our process went as follows:

1. After collecting the surveys, our conference committee of three faculty, one graduate student, and one undergraduate researcher read them looking for themes both conceptually and in word choice.

2. We independently and inductively generated initial categories, then shared our results. Each time we disagreed on an interpretation of a given survey, we discussed that item, and refined our categories until there was group consensus.
3. We repeated steps one and two until we could all agree on the categories, and the types of student responses that went into each group. In other words, the process was iterative and collaborative with the entries being confirmed by multiple coders.
4. Over time, we identified major themes, and then coded the surveys again according to the primary themes exemplified by each survey response.

As we processed the surveys, we also decided not to distinguish between the responses to the "learn" and the "like" questions, because we could discern *no* clear pattern of difference in the responses to these two questions.[9]

The three themes that emerged from our analysis are Listening, Cultural Understanding, and Multimodal/Professionalization. They are described as follows:

Listening. Respondents talk about what they gained as an audience member and the impact of what they heard on their thinking or understanding.

Cultural Understanding. Respondents discuss new realizations and understandings about different cultures, often using the word "culture" itself in the answer.

Multimodal/Professionalization. Respondents talk about growth in multimodal/presentational skills, either in terms of what they themselves learned from presenting, or what they observed from watching others present.

Below is a table with examples of student quotes from each of these categories. These quotes are included as a demonstration of the word choice and qualities of each category.

Examples of Survey Quotes from Themed Categories		
Listening	Cultural Understanding	Multimodality/ Professionalization

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[9] Note that some of the respondents often had more than one theme represented on their survey: for example, a student that talked about enjoying learning about other cultures could have also talked about how the conference provided them with an opportunity to develop multimodal skills.

"I got to see the thoughts of other students."	"I learned about different cultures and how what someone may look like or act like isn't who they are on the inside."	"The videos offer a good way to present ideas."
"Listening to others' stories"	"Learned about different cultures and how they see the world a different way."	"How to use i-movie and how to download the video from the website"
"It gives me a chance to watch how different students from different countries to show their ideas for one assignment which is interesting."	"Many people have different backgrounds, showing through projects. Even in a group of 11 people presenting, there is a global level of diversity."	"I learned a lot about how people made these videos and the challenges."

After identifying the three key themes, we totaled the number of responses that fell into each. Below is a table demonstrating our totals for each category. More than half of the students who completed the survey indicated that listening to others was one of the key things they liked about the sessions. We include here the difference between the international and domestic response because of the nature of the feedback we received being pointed towards listening and cultural understanding.

Student Responses (based on 253 student presenters taking the survey) - percent of students			
	Listening	Culture	Multimodal/ Professionalization
International	51 (20%)	44 (17%)	42 (16%)
Domestic	79 (31%)	49 (19%)	35 (13%)
Unidentified	13 (5%)	8 (3%)	7 (2%)
Total	143 (56%)	101 (39%)	84 (33%)

It is noteworthy that in the cultural understanding category, there is no significant difference between the experience of international and domestic students. Both

learned from each other. In the listening category, however, domestic students had a higher percentage who noted that listening was important. This suggests the value of the conference for U.S. students who saw themselves as gaining a deeper understanding of their non-US. peers. Perhaps, too, international students engaged in transnational listening on a daily basis simply by being immersed in a new (U.S.) culture, so they did not note the listening as profoundly as the domestic students. The differences may also suggest that the conference has particular value for U.S. students who see themselves as gaining a deeper understanding of their non-U.S. peers.

Survey Analysis: Translingual Pedagogy, Rhetorical Listening, and Multimodal Experience

While we originally conceived the conference as providing our students with the opportunity to develop professional skills in speaking to another audience, we were surprised by the extent to which survey respondents frequently commented on *listening to others' work* and the *cultural understandings* they thereby gained. In other words, more than half of the surveyed students seemed to appreciate the opportunity to *be* an audience for others, rather than to *have* an audience for their own ideas.

Rhetorical Listening

"Listening" as we define it was not only hearing what was being said by the students on a surface level—though we did have some of those responses—but also listening and reflecting on a deeper level, often commenting on gaining a deeper cultural understanding; thus, often the listening and cultural understanding categories coincided in the same student survey response. The survey data listed prior demonstrates that domestic students noted listening as a dominant theme more often than international students. This sort of listening engages a level of reflection and even application of new knowledge. It demonstrates a shift in perspectives and assumptions. Listening is important because it signals a move towards a cross-cultural understanding, an understanding that works towards not simply understanding the "other," but also understanding our own complicity with cultural norms and even injustice. Krista Ratcliffe in her book *Rhetorical Listening* (2005) reverses the concept of "understanding" to "standing under," which means "letting discourses wash over, through, and around us and then letting them lie there to inform our politics and ethics" (p. 28). Through listening to presentations, students were immersed in different discourses, which then began to inform their beliefs about university and

society cultural norms. The word "different" came up repeatedly throughout the survey results, both as nouns and as adjectives. Students noted: "I learned the different cultures between China and America"; and "Learned about different cultures and how they see the world a different way." This is just a sampling of the use of the word "different" and its prevalence; in these particular contexts, the word is used positively.

We found that difference seemed to intrigue these student listeners. Tania Dreher (2009) notes that "Listening across difference represents a subtle shift from seeking better understanding of an 'other' to listening for better understanding of relationships and complicities, issues and the workings of privilege" (p. 451). We can see relationship building in the students noting shared projects alongside discovering the differences in approach, story, and experience. Some students engaged in understanding more broadly as one student noted, "It gave me a chance to watch how different students from different countries show their ideas for one assignment which is interesting." The shared assignment allows students to note how different cultures might interpret and execute that assignment. These differences were seen as assets and "interesting." Noticing how different cultures might approach an assignment is valuable, but even more important are students noting the *individual* differentiations within those cultures. One student noted that even within a small group of international presenters, each showed something different, "Many people have different backgrounds, showing through projects. Even in a group of 11 presenting, there is a global level of diversity." Another student went one step further and noted the personal within each project, "I loved seeing others view on different aspects of culture and seeing the personal touch that people put on their presentations." Noting the personal touches demonstrates a recognition that it is not simply culture or difference that drives the uniqueness of a project, but also a student's personality and style.

The fact that these presentations were based in a common curriculum and the program's shared learning outcomes also allows students to note difference across similarities. It creates a common bond of a shared work together. One particular student noted the shared struggles of creating the project as a relationship or tie between the respondent and other students with the use of "we" in the second sentence: "Despite having many difficulties in the process of making those videos and poems, the work paid off. Also, that racism is something that exists in the world and we have to help eradicate that." In this student's comment, we can see the move towards the respondent's personal responsibility in eradicating "racism." Another student noted that the idea of culture shock applied not only to domestic students in leaving home, but to international students: "culture shock can be a problem with both domestic and

international students." Such responses were not atypical.

Multimodal Affordances

Looking back, we also surmise that the distinctly multimodal design of the projects affords students the opportunities to engage in a number of forms of embodied sharing and learning—from 5-10 minute videos to poster board presentations to live performances. Seconding both Hafner (2015) and McGinnis (2007), these multimodal products gave our multilingual students the opportunity to express themselves and aspects of their cultures in non-alphabetic texts. Indeed, *because* of its multimodal emphasis, the conference emerged as a space that was both opportunistic and potentially disruptive, as it created a space where non-U.S. students, presumably "deficient" in standard English, could succeed in front of a receptive audience.

Just as important, the incorporation of multimodal representations of culture helps make the students' stories, experiences, and cultures more available to one another. On the surveys, students commented: "After I watched the other three groups work, I'm so astonished by the videos from others. And I can learn a lot about other cultures through these," and "I learned how many different artifacts can join and connect cultures by remixing video styles." The learning expressed through such survey responses frequently went beyond just seeing a group of videos, and learning more about the specifics of the making of multimodal projects. As one student put it, "I got to *see* the thoughts of other students" [emphasis added]. Another wrote: "It [the conference] gives me a chance to *watch* different students from different countries to *show* their ideas" [emphases added]. Along with the stories that students told of their project-making, the embodiment of cultures in multimodal form helps make "cultures" present, visible, and available across lines of difference—with the result being a form of transnational communication that otherwise might not have taken place.

Conclusion and Takeaways

We believe that by highlighting students' experiences and cultures, the FYW conference creates a unique opportunity for our students' transnational learning. At the same time, the program's emphasis on students' languages, cultures, and experiences as valued resources for learning and as sites of inquiry helps students recognize the complexity of experiences *within* and *across* cultures and languages. Student learning emerges from the program's integration of the conference and its alignment with a reflective pedagogy that supports student learning across classes, languages, and cultures; also, in stressing conversation

rather than just the presentation of final products, the conference creates a key space for rhetorical listening. Reflecting our program's emphasis on communication as requiring multiple resources and methods (multimodal, artifactual, embodied), the conference also helps make students' cultures and experiences visible to one another. Thus, the notion of writing as culturally situated is made explicit here, as students express, see, hear, and learn of one another's cultures *through* the conference mechanism.

Given the relative success of our First Year Writing conference in offering students a space to have conversations about, and listen to, aspects of one another's cultures, languages and experiences, vis-à-vis their sharing and discussion of multimodal projects, we offer some strategies for faculty interested in planning a similar event.

Recommendation One: Build from your own program

Our First Year conference distinctly reflects our writing program's emphasis on writing as multimodal, embodied, and culturally situated. The conference allows our students to *see* and *experience* many of our program's key learning goals. In designing your own event, work to integrate your program's own learning outcomes and curriculum.

Recommendation Two: Emphasize the learning

Emphasizing student learning and reflective conversation rather than just the presentation of final products encourages students to tell stories about their rhetorical choices and their shared processes, which in turn helps foster common ground. It provides a space for students to analyze and articulate what is familiar and strange about the experiences and cultures of other students.

Recommendation Three: Integrate the event into FYW classes

We integrate this event into our writing classes in multiple ways, such as having students "rehearse" their presentations as the event draws closer, and peer review one another's evolving presentations. The result is more polished presentations, and less anxious students. Then after the conference, we create in-class opportunities for students to reflect on and articulate their conference experiences, which extends their learning.

Recommendation Four: integrate across classes, languages, and cultures

In our case, the embedding of so many international students, especially from WRA:1004, helped create a positive transnational learning experience, without necessarily singling these students out as being in a bridge writing class. Transnational learning occurred not only from the students producing and sharing their projects, but from post-panel discussions that followed the presentations.

Recommendation Five: Involve Faculty

Program faculty at our institution are involved in all stages of in the planning and execution of the event. This involvement ensures faculty buy-in, the pedagogical exchanges of ideas, and fosters a supportive environment for students. Within specific conference panels, for example, faculty not only encourage specific students who express nervousness about presenting, but also create a positive atmosphere for questions, answers, and transnational, transnational conversations.

Recommendation Six: Use Formative Assessment

To tailor the event as needed, and as related to specific programmatic agendas and shifts, we recommend the ongoing use of formative assessment (e.g., surveys, interviews with conference student-participants, feedback from professors and visitors, post-event meetings with the faculty planning team, etc.). The process is one of ongoing learning and revision. We see the conference itself as a site of inquiry and resource for our own learning, as we continue to adjust and redesign this event, in accordance with what each new iteration teaches us.

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Appendix 1
Exercise on "culture metaphors"

This exercise takes the opposite approach, offering some common **metaphors of culture** that may be useful to students in their thinking and writing. Cheryl generally puts each image up on a screen, one by one, and invites responses.

Metaphors for culture. Some people say that culture is like:
-- an onion;
-- lenses for eyeglasses;
-- the water a fish swims in;
-- an iceberg;
-- a web.
Why might they say this?
Which metaphor resonates best for you?

Appendix 2
Universal, Cultural or Personal?

Culture is but one category or dimension of human behavior, and it is therefore important to see it in relation to the other two dimensions: the universal and the personal. The three can be distinguished as follows:
- universal refers to ways in which all people in all groups are the same;
- cultural refers to what a particular group of people have in common with each other and how they are different from every other group;
- personal describes the ways in which each one of us is different from everyone else, including those in our group.

These are two important points for you to remember:
- Because of universal behavior, not everything about people in a new culture is going to be different; some of what you already know about human behavior is going to apply in your host country.
- Because of personal behavior, not everything you learn about your host culture is going to apply in equal measure, or at all, to every *individual* in that culture.

This next exercise contains a list of behaviors. In the underlined space preceding each of them, put a "U" if you think the behavior is universal, "C" if it is cultural, or "P" if it is personal.	
1.	Sleeping with a bedroom window open.
2.	Running from a dangerous animal.
3.	Considering snakes to be "evil."
4.	Men opening doors for women.
5.	Respecting older people.
6.	Liking spicy food.
7.	Preferring playing soccer to reading a book.
8.	Eating regularly.
9.	Eating with knife, fork, and spoon.
10.	Being wary of strangers

Appendix 3

Field notes

Students go outside and stay in one place for 15 minutes, observing and taking notes. Then they write responses to three reflection questions, "What surprised me? What intrigued me?" (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2012, p. 87) What shocked me?" -- questions that provide points of interest and tension that could focus further research. They will practice this process when they visit a campus or local organization to analyze its culture for Assignment 2.

Field notes
Date:
Time: _____ to _____
Place:

Objective observations:　　　　　　　　　　　　**Your thoughts:**
(What did you see, hear, smell, touch…?　　　　　What did you
think/wonder?)
1.
2.
3.

Appendix 4
Submission form for students to participate in the conference

Please submit e-forms to Joyce Meier, meierjo@msu.edu; given recent e-mail attachment glitches, please send these from non-MSU e-mail accounts, or cut-and-paste into regular e-mail content.   Paper copies go in Meier's faculty mailbox in Bessey.

Title of Presentation/Project:
_____

Name of Presenter(s):
_____
_____
_____

Contact info (phone, e-mail; lead person):_____
_____

Your MSU majors:
_____

Your WRA instructor:
_____

Estimated length (in minutes—preferably no more than 15):
_____

Form (PowerPoint, video, poster, etc.):
_____
(Please record videos, etc., on flash drives—and save as MP4 as a back-up)
Brief description (2 sentences):

Preferred time slot (in order of preference), & put a NA (Not Available) during any time slot that you cannot present.
___4-4:45 pm
___5-5:45 pm
___6-5:45 pm
___7-7:45 pm

TIPS

·   Since this conference celebrates and shares stories about your college writing with other audiences, make your presentation lively and interesting.

·   Emphasize how you went about making your project rather than just talk about the subject itself.

·   Attend at least one other presentation during the conference day. Watch other presenters and ask them questions, so that you are a thoughtful audience for others, just as they are for you.

Appendix 5
Instructions for teachers who serve as moderators at the conference

For moderators, your job is to

- bring a laptop and/or dongle, to help facilitate the tech part

- get presenters started in a timely way, and keep the presentations within a reasonable time frame (15 mins. max).

- introduce student presenters (by name + title of presentation)

- Support and affirm the presentations, especially because they will be nervous (i.e., "What an interesting idea! "I appreciate how you arranged your ideas, how they led us to think ___.")

- Invite questions (i.e., 1-2 after each presentation, and especially at the end). Ask questions or make observations yourself, that help the presenters think more deeply about their presentation. Make observations / questions that help presenters think about their work in relationship to one another (for instance, the different lenses presenters use to investigate cultures, etc.). Note: it's nice to have a question or two after each presentation, as well as at the end of all the panels' presentations.

- Some suggestions for questions:

    What did you learn from making this?
    If you could do it all over again, what would you change?
    What was the biggest challenge of this project?

What are you most proud of?

Where did you get the idea?

If this was once the subject of a paper you wrote for a FYW class, what changed when you made it into another form for the conference?

How might you use the skills you developed in the process of making this forward into the future?

● Have participants fill out a short survey that will be in the presentation rooms and/or at the registration table on the third floor.

Appendix 6
Survey given to students attending the conference

Session Title & Time/Room: _____

1.   You are a….(please circle):

   a.   Freshman   Sophomore   Junior   Senior

   b.   International student   OR   domestic student

   c.   Presenter   Audience & present both   Audience member

2.   What did you learn from this session?

3.   What did you like most about this session?

4.   Is there anything you would change about this session or the conference as a whole? If so, what?