

A Shift from the Mainstream Class to the Cross-Cultural Option  
for ESL Writing Students

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## Introduction

According to the statistics released by the Institute of International Education (IIE) in 2010, there were 690,923 international students in the U.S., 274,431 of whom were undergraduates. Virtually all undergraduate students in the U.S., including those who speak English as a second language (ESL students), are required to enroll in first-year writing courses, and the majority of those ESL students are placed in mainstream composition classes alongside native English speakers. Although this practice is common, to date, there has not been a great deal of research published into how ESL writing students fare in such mainstream courses *vis-à-vis* their native English-speaking classmates.

As both an English composition instructor and a non-native speaker of English, the first author of this paper became interested in carrying out a study on ESL writing students in mainstream composition classes. He taught English proficiency courses to non-native speakers of English for three years and taught undergraduate composition courses to native and non-native speakers of English for two years. He designed the questionnaire used in this study in part on the basis of the difficulties that he had noticed among his ESL students. The teaching experience of both authors has shown that ESL students' affective, cultural, and linguistic needs are highly instrumental to their success in mainstream composition classes, so the survey used in this study focuses upon those areas. It is our hope that the results of this study can assist university writing program administrators in improving the learning experiences of ESL students.

Inasmuch as the similarities and differences between the composing processes of ESL students and native English speakers often determine pedagogical practices, including ESL student placement options, we shall provide first a brief overview of the relevant scholarship

produced in the realm of L1 and L2 composing processes. Next, we will summarize the placement options typically made available to ESL students in composition classes and review the research that has been published to date on the effectiveness of those alternative placement options. Finally, we will report the findings of a new study undertaken for the purpose of deriving further information that may assist ESL specialists, composition scholars, and writing program directors in deciding about the placement of ESL students in composition classes in U.S. colleges and universities.

### **L1 and L2 Composing Processes**

Over the past 30 years, numerous studies have compared the writing processes of first-language (L1) composition students and second-language (L2) students. In the earlier studies, such as those of Chelala (1981)—as quoted in Krapels (1990)—and of Zamel (1982, 1983), researchers generally reported that the ESL writing students who they had studied adopted writing processes not too different from those used by native speakers. Later studies, however, often reported ESL writing students failing to adopt the writing processes and strategies that are characteristic of successful native English-speaking composition students (e.g., Raimes, 1985; Arndt, 1987). Subsequent researchers of ESL writing, such as Krapels (1990) and Reid (1993), attributed those contradictory findings largely to differences in the research methods used in those studies. In a comprehensive review of the literature up to that point, Silva (1993) reviewed 72 studies that had reported salient differences between L1 and L2 writing in terms of “composing processes, subprocesses (i.e., planning, transcribing, and reviewing), and features of written texts (fluency, accuracy, quality, and structure, i.e., discursal, morphosyntactic, and lexicosemantic)” (657). Silva’s review has proven basic to many subsequent discussions of ESL writing, including the issue of placement options for ESL students in composition classes. Silva

noted, for example, that with respect to the subprocesses of planning, transcribing, and reviewing paper drafts, L2 writers exhibited salient differences in comparison with L1 writers. The L2 writers planned less, spent a great deal of time “figuring out the topic” and “generating material,” and were often unsuccessful in organizing and making use of the generated material. In the actual process of transcribing, that is, of producing written text, L2 writers were “more laborious, less fluent, and less productive” in that they spent a good deal of time consulting a dictionary, had problems with the use of specific vocabulary, made more pauses in their writing, were slower writers, and “produced fewer words of written text” (661-62). Finally, Silva noted, L2 writers re-read and reviewed their texts less than did L1 writers, but they revised them more (668).

The studies reviewed by Silva (1993) also identified considerable differences in the textual features of the writing produced by L2 students versus L1 students. The majority of those studies had shown that L2 writers typically produced fewer words in their writing overall, meaning that their writing was less fluent. They also made more errors in their writing, meaning that L2 writing was less accurate than L1 writing. Moreover, L2 writing had a lower level overall of writing quality and was rhetorically less effective; that is, L2 writers “received lower holistic scores” (663). Finally, apropos of L2 writing structure, Silva noted:

At the discourse level, their texts often exhibited distinct patterns of exposition, argumentation, and narration; their responses to two particular types of academic writing tasks—answering essay exam questions and using background reading texts—were different and less effective. Their orientation of readers was deemed less appropriate and acceptable. In terms of lower level linguistic concerns, L2 writers' texts were stylistically distinct and simpler in structure. Their sentences

included more but shorter T units, fewer but longer clauses, more coordination, less subordination, less noun modification, and less passivization. They evidenced distinct patterns in the use of cohesive devices, especially conjunctive (more) and lexical (fewer) ties, and exhibited less lexical control, variety, and sophistication overall. (668)

The findings reviewed and synthesized by Silva (1993) suggest collectively that L1 and L2 writing are different in many aspects. One cannot expect L2 writers to perform as well as L1 writers and to meet standards developed for L1 writers. Thus, Silva argued, different evaluation criteria are required for the writing assessment of NES (native English-speaking) writers versus ESL writers. For those reasons, mainstream composition classes may be “inappropriate, and perhaps counterproductive, for [those students],” as they have special needs; L2 writers should be taught by specialists who have the theoretical and practical preparation to deal with those special needs (670). Finally, Silva argued, “teachers need to provide realistic strategies for planning, transcribing, and reviewing that take into account their L2 students' rhetorical and linguistic resources” (671).

Silva's (1993) survey of the empirical research on ESL composition compiled sufficient evidence to show that there are striking differences between the composing processes of L2 students *vis-à-vis* L1 students and led subsequently to his discussion (Silva, 1994) of placement options for ESL students.

### **Placement Options for ESL Students**

The research findings reviewed above are important because Silva (1994) referred to them in discussing placement options for ESL students. He considered four main placement options available to ESL students with respect to composition classes and identified what he

considered the most promising one. The first option, and indeed the one most commonly in use across the country, was to mainstream ESL writers. Silva considered this option inappropriate, however, because ESL students might be expected to perform tasks they were not able to handle or because their performance might be evaluated injudiciously:

ESL students might inadvertently be held to unrealistic NES standards. They might be expected to have an NES student's familiarity with American culture, history, conventions, and rhetorical patterns. . . . They may be asked to adopt strategies and work under time constraints that do not make sense for L2 writers. In short, mainstreamed ESL writers could be put at a severe disadvantage; their differences might be seen and treated as intellectual deficiencies. This, in turn, could result in resentment, alienation, loss of self confidence, poor grades, and, ultimately, academic failure. (39)

The second option described by Silva (1994) was to place ESL students in basic or developmental writing classes designed primarily for inexperienced NES writers. Silva considered this option problematic because it too could alienate both groups of students: “NES basic writing students could infer that they are viewed as being somehow outside of their own culture, as non-native speakers of their own language. ESL students who are skilled and experienced writers could infer that they are being penalized for being culturally and/or linguistically different, that to be different is to be deficient” (39-40).

The third option was to place ESL students in sections specially designed for them only, another commonly used option. Silva (1994) saw this option as an efficient and effective means for meeting the special needs of ESL writers. However, doing so requires hiring instructors who are trained to deal with the special needs of ESL students, and some educators may believe that

ESL students in such classes will lose an opportunity “to interact with and learn from their NES peers and vice versa” (40).

Finally, the fourth option was a mostly hypothetical cross-cultural composition class that would include roughly equal numbers of ESL and NES students and that would therefore “foster crosscultural understanding, communication, and collaboration” (40). Silva considered the fourth option to be potentially both the most promising and the most challenging:

Assuming the availability of practitioners with a background in designing and teaching courses for ESL and NES writers, this option has the potential to enrich both groups involved, culturally and linguistically, as well as to enhance their writing abilities. . . . While this option might offer the most benefits, it could also be the most challenging to implement. As with the third (exclusively ESL) option, a new program component would need to be created, staffed, and supervised. . . . This option could also give rise to some logistical concerns; for example, how would the enrollment of more or less equal numbers of ESL and NES students in particular classes be accomplished? (40-41)

It is clear that all four options have their advantages and disadvantages, but according to Silva, the fourth option seemed potentially to have broader educational advantages for both groups of students. Interaction among native speakers of English and non-native speakers in a cross-cultural composition class could teach native speakers of English about the rhetorical strategies and cultural contexts of other languages as well as begin to teach the ESL writers the rhetorical textual conventions of American English writers.

### **The Effectiveness of Different Placement Practices**

To date, only a few studies have actually examined the effectiveness of the different placement options for ESL students in composition classes described by Silva (1994). In one such study, Harklau (1994) contrasted the effectiveness of two placement options, mainstream classes versus dedicated ESL classes at a high school in northern California. She found that the mainstream classes did provide those students with “authentic input” and “rich and plentiful linguistic interactions”—classroom characteristics that are generally considered important to developing ESL skills (Omaggio Hadley, 2001)—but that they also failed to create many opportunities for “extended interaction,” other characteristics that are also considered important to second- language development. She also observed that those L2 learners did not receive sufficient feedback or instruction on the target language, which left them to depend on their sometimes faulty intuitions about English grammar and usage. In any event, while the mainstream classes observed by Harklau did provide opportunities for ESL students to interact with native English speakers, she found that “closer examination revealed that newcomers to U.S. society were seldom able to take advantage of such opportunities and perceived a barrier between themselves and U.S.-born peers” (266-267).

In contrast to the mainstream writing classes, Harklau (1994) described the ESL-only classes as providing “productive use of both spoken and written language,” “explicit feedback on their [the ESL students’] linguistic production,” and “opportunities for counseling and peer social interaction.” Nonetheless, Harklau noted, “Students stigmatized ESL as easy and remedial because instruction not only addressed their need for academic language that would facilitate transition to mainstream instruction but also instructed them on the language used in everyday life and interaction” (267). Accordingly, she concluded that each placement option had its own advantages and disadvantages.

Braine (1996) reported his findings of a year-long study done at a medium-sized university in which he sought to determine whether ESL students in first-year writing courses preferred mainstream classes or classes specially designed for ESL students and how their overall performance and their withdrawal rates might differ in the two types of courses. Braine's data, which was collected through the distribution of questionnaires, indicated that those ESL students preferred to be placed in an ESL section rather than a mainstream class when given the option because they felt more "comfortable" in the ESL sections and had more confidence in their ability to ask questions and to participate in class discussions. They also felt that their teachers paid more attention to them in the ESL sections and seemed more "understanding" and "caring." Regarding ESL students' overall performance in ESL sections versus mainstream classes, Braine reported that the students in the first-year ESL-only composition classes had a better passing rate overall on the written test than did the ESL students in mainstream classes. In contrast, the ESL students enrolled in mainstream classes had the lowest overall passing rate for all three groups of students compared, those in ESL-only sections, NES in mainstream sections, and ESL students in mainstream sections. The ESL students who completed the mainstream classes, however, had a slightly lower course failure rate, i.e. 42.2%, in comparison with students in ESL classes (50%). This difference, nevertheless, could have been due, in part, to the fact that the withdrawal rate of ESL students from mainstream classes "was almost 5 times the withdrawal rate of students from ESL classes and three times the rate for NES students" (91-99). In interviewing 22 ESL students who had withdrawn from the mainstream classes, Braine reported that seventeen of them had said that they did not "feel comfortable" in the mainstream classes and that they were "afraid to ask questions or speak out in class" because they were

embarrassed by their ability to speak English. Many also reported that they did not find their teachers supportive or helpful and that their NES classmates were impatient with them (98).

Braine's study demonstrated the success of ESL-only writing sections over placing ESL students in mainstream writing classes. As Silva's (1993) review had shown, ESL students have special writing-instruction needs that the curricula, materials, and instructors in mainstream writing courses are not particularly well prepared to address. Silva (1994), however, had suggested another, hypothetical possibility, cross-cultural composition courses—courses designed to include more or less equal numbers of ESL and NES students. Prior to 1999, no studies had sought to compare the possible effectiveness of such cross-cultural composition classes.

In 1999, Matsuda reported a study of an experimental writing class which suggested that cross-cultural composition classes might be more effective in addressing the educational needs of both ESL students and native speakers of English. Purdue University had offered such a course to 20 first-year management students, 12 of whom were non-native speakers of English and eight of whom were native speakers of English. The course included many different writing projects and activities, such as weekly journals, which provided students “a way of reflecting on thought and experiences related to cross-cultural communication.” The students also used their journals as a way of “communicating insights—gained through in-class or out-of-class cross-cultural interactions and experiences—to the instructor and their classmates,” and they “allowed students to record their reactions to certain issues for later reflection and development in one of their writing projects” (250-51).

Due to the fact that neither the native-speakers nor the non-native speakers of English were particularly aware of the importance of cultural differences for cross-cultural

communication and understanding, the instructors used the first few weeks of the course to focus on sharpening the students' knowledge of other cultures through a series of "cultural profile" activities. Some of those activities required students to interview one another in order to become more aware of the different cultural practices represented within the class membership, and other activities sent intercultural teams of students out across campus on various field-observation tasks. The final project culminated with a "cross-cultural portfolio," which was comprised of a cover letter, revisions of two of the writing projects, all versions of all writing projects (as well as written feedback from the instructor and classmates), all journal entries, and a "reflective commentary" (251-53).

Matsuda (1999) examined the portfolios and especially the reflective commentaries in order to try to determine the overall effectiveness of the class. He concluded that in general by the end of the term the students were satisfied with their cross-cultural experience in the course even though some of them had expressed concerns about it at the beginning of the semester. Most of the students started to feel more comfortable as the semester went by. Students reported becoming more confident about expressing their thoughts in class and to their NES peers; additionally, both groups of students asserted that the class fostered cross-cultural awareness and feelings and that they were on the way to becoming more effective cross-cultural communicators (253-55).

Apparently, the experimental course had succeeded in increasing the self-confidence of the international students and had promoted international understanding among all students in the class, both of which outcomes indicated that a cross-cultural composition class might be the most promising placement option of those described in Silva (1994). More university-wide research projects are needed before generalizations can be made. Nonetheless, such projects are inherently

difficult to carry out. Offering cross-cultural composition classes is heavily dependent upon the availability of faculty members who are experienced in dealing with the needs of both ESL students and native English speakers simultaneously. Unfortunately, in many institutions in the U.S., such faculty members are not only not available, but a great many first-year writing courses are taught by instructors or graduate teaching assistants who have no experience in handling ESL issues.

Despite the difficulty of offering cross-cultural composition courses, a handful of subsequent studies have confirmed, sometimes tangentially, the effectiveness reported by Matsuda (1999). Smoke (2001), for example, reported the generally positive course evaluations by students in a composition course designed as a mainstream, non-remedial college writing course that comprised 18 ESL students and seven native speakers of English (summarized in McNenny and Fitzgerald 199-202). Ibrahim and Penfield (2005) examined the educational outcomes of a first-year composition class made up of 15 ESL students and 10 native English speakers. The students were required to write journals, do in-class writing assignments, and write the following three papers: (1) “a rhetorical analysis paper, in which students analyze the rhetorical strategies used in a published text,” (2) “an argumentation-research paper, in which students develop a stance regarding a certain issue and support it by research,” and (3) “a reflective paper, in which students reflect on their social/educational experiences” (218). The results of the study showed that through the students’ peer-reviewing of one another’s writing, “mixed” composition classes could lead to “mutual understanding” among ESL students and native speakers of English. The international students in the course also reported feeling satisfied with the grammar feedback that they got, and the researchers concluded that the interactions resulted in better “idea development,” and that “mixed” composition classes could “serve as a

springboard for ESL students to adapt to their new setting and to be initiated into the new discourse.” Overall, Ibrahim and Penfield argued that the conclusion asserted by some scholars that it is difficult to meet the linguistic needs of ESL students in a “mixed” composition class simply is “mistaken” (224).

In summary, we see that the earlier studies of ESL student placement options did not yield consistent results. On the one hand, Braine (1993) concluded that special ESL classes were a more appropriate placement option (3), while on the other hand Ibrahim and Penfield (2005) recommended a “mixed” composition class in lieu of special ESL sections because the former could lead to better “mutual understanding.” The cross-cultural composition class described in Matsuda (1999), however, appeared to accommodate the needs of both ESL students and native speakers of English: the students made favorable comments and made significant progress throughout the progression of the class. The positive outcome of Matsuda’s study encourages other U.S. institutions to experiment with a cross-cultural option, but undertaking such experiments represents a significant allocation of resources and efforts at a time when virtually all institutions are seriously strapped financially. The work reported by Matsuda (1999), by Smoke (2001), and by Ibrahim and Penfield (2005) all suggest that it may well be possible to improve the quality of the composition instruction to ESL students without diluting further our resources for mainstream composition courses because such cross-cultural composition courses actually could improve the educational experience and outcome for both groups of students. Notwithstanding, for the moment, an important additional piece of information contributing to such programmatic decisions would appear to be more information on the attitudes of ESL learners themselves toward mainstream composition classes and possible cross-cultural writing courses.

Perhaps one of the most important considerations in determining placement options is to first identify the educational needs of one's ESL students. As the scholarship on ESL composition has shown repeatedly, the composing processes of ESL learners differ significantly from those of native English speakers. Consequently, the two groups have different needs in composition classes. In order to try to identify further what some of those special needs might be and to determine how well ESL students feel that those needs are being met in their current mainstream writing courses, we distributed a questionnaire to 30 ESL students in different mainstream composition classes at a medium-sized public university in the northwestern United States. The questionnaire (see the appendix) included certain questions not previously addressed in such studies in an effort to try to identify more about their learning experiences, preferences, and current concerns, and attempted to address the following questions:

1. How comfortable do ESL learners feel when doing pair work with native and non-native English speakers, when asking their instructors questions, and when commenting upon their peers' essays during peer-review sessions?
2. How well do ESL learners understand their instructors when they teach in class? How well do the instructors understand and answer their ESL students' questions?
3. Do ESL learners feel isolated or intimidated in the presence of native English speakers such that it makes them ask fewer questions? Do the instructors pay enough attention to ESL learners?
4. Do ESL learners themselves prefer to be in classes in which all or most of the other students are native English speakers, or do they prefer to be placed in a class in which all of the other students are non-native English speakers just like them? How would they feel

about being placed in a class in which the number of non-native English speakers was about the same as the number of native speakers of English?

5. Do ESL learners prefer to have an English composition instructor who is familiar with their culture?
6. What are the most important problems/concerns of ESL learners in a mainstream composition class?

Our main goal for the questionnaire was to gather information that could help writing program administrators know their ESL students better, to improve the learning experiences of those students, and to seek to treat them better ethically. To paraphrase Silva (1997), treating the ESL students better ethically meant showing them the respect they are due by (a) understanding how they are different from their NES counterparts and from each other and by (b) trying to accommodate these differences (362).

### **Methods, Materials, and Participants**

With the approval of the Institutional Review Board, a 20-question questionnaire was distributed to 30 undergraduate ESL students who were either currently enrolled in or who had just recently completed an undergraduate composition course in a mainstream class at a medium-sized public university in the northwestern United States. All participation was anonymous and completely voluntary. The questionnaire consisted of 19 Likert-scale questions that reflected the research questions given above and one open-ended question (the questionnaire and the results for the 19 Likert-scale questions are shown in the appendix).

### **Summary of the Results**

The overall results of the survey showed that the great majority of the participants expressed a generally favorable opinion of their experience in the mainstream writing courses.

They felt that their instructors did understand them and that they paid attention to them, that their opinions were valued in class discussions, and that their classes had enriched their understanding of American culture. The great majority of the ESL students felt completely comfortable working in small groups with American students and asking their instructors questions during class.

Conversely, more than half of the respondents (53%) expressed concern over their sense of isolation in their writing classes, which, they indicated, had caused them to ask fewer questions in class. Almost 14% of the participants observed that their instructors seemed to focus on the majority—i.e., American—population of students in class to the detriment of the ESL students, and almost 17% of the respondents felt that their instructors could not explain points of English grammar and usage to them adequately. A significant number of the participants were also concerned about affective issues, cultural differences, and linguistic difficulties.

The questionnaire yielded some interesting information regarding the participants' attitudes toward the three different placement options described above: ESL-only sections, mainstream sections, and cross-cultural sections. Only 40% of those respondents expressed a preference for the ESL-only sections. Given the two options commonly available to ESL students, 53% of them preferred mainstream courses over ESL-only. However, given the cross-cultural option, fully 81% indicated a strong preference for that option if it were made available. Finally, last but not least, 76% of the respondents stated a preference for a composition instructor who was at least familiar with the ESL student's culture.

The final question of the survey was an open-ended question that gave participants an opportunity to explain some of their current concerns regarding mainstream composition classes. A small, but still significant, number of ESL learners claimed to have difficulty understanding

their instructors and/or their native English-speaking classmates. Some respondents also expressed concerns over cultural differences, while others noted that they were fearful of asking questions in the presence of native English speakers and had problems editing their essays and understanding various points of English grammar.

Of particular interest, beyond the expected difficulties with language, a number of students expressed a more general concern about their teachers' and classmates' insensitivity to differences in cultural understanding, commenting that both teachers and classmates would talk about cultural topics without providing sufficient explanation for the non-native speakers of English. Indeed, a number of students felt slighted in that their instructors focused almost entirely on the cultural views of the majority—American—culture. A few other students noted that the instructor's lack of familiarity with their non-American cultures also affected the communication of ideas, thereby complicating the essay-writing process for the ESL students.

### **Conclusions**

In this study, given an option between ESL-only sections of courses in college composition and mainstream courses, only 40% of the respondents preferred the ESL-only option while 53.33% preferred the mainstream option. When a third option for cross-cultural writing classes was added, however, 81% of the respondents stated a strong preference for the cross-cultural option. These results differ from those reported in Braine (1996), in which students considered the ESL-only option to be the most attractive. However, Braine's study did not specifically suggest the third option, a cross-cultural course.

This study has confirmed several weaknesses of the mainstream option. One is a general disregard for some of the affective needs of ESL learners, in other words, factors dealing with such things as emotional reactions and motivations of learners. Another weakness of the

mainstream option confirmed by the results reported here is the effect of the unfamiliarity of instructors and/or native English-speaking classmates with the cultures of the ESL learners. At present, most undergraduate mainstream composition classes in the U.S. are taught by teaching assistants and/or instructors who do not possess the linguistic and cultural knowledge of the language of their ESL students.

The participants' concerns are important because college essay-writing in the U.S. typically requires extensive knowledge of American culture and standards of argument. Thus, the lack of familiarity of instructors with their students' cultures, or with cross-cultural communication in general, could cause problems in understanding their students' attempts to fulfill the expectations for writing assignments. Moreover, some of the activities that ESL students participate in class (e.g., peer review) also call for acquaintance with American culture and relatively high levels of communicative competence in English. Not only can ESL students' lack of knowledge about American culture adversely affect their overall performance and grades in a writing course, but in the eyes of some of the NES classmates it might also hinder the overall progress of the writing course. For instance, an instructor might have to spend a great deal of time explaining an issue—quite obvious to a native English speaker—to a non-native English speaker who suffers from difficulty in listening comprehension or from unfamiliarity with American culture. The other classmates who are native English speakers might not learn anything from the question asked and may resent the fact that the class time is being spent on explaining concepts that are entirely new to only one or two ESL learners.

In summary, notwithstanding the fact that mainstream classes at the university have shown some advantages for ESL students, they have also failed to deal with some of the needs of the ESL students successfully.

## **Recommendations**

The present study measured the effectiveness of the mainstream option at one university from the perspective of ESL students and evaluated their interest in a possible cross-cultural option. Although the mainstream option had some advantages, a number of ESL students expressed concern over affective issues, cultural differences, and linguistic difficulties in class—a clear indication that the mainstream composition classes at that university were not entirely successful.

Fully 81% of the participants in this study stated a strong interest in and a preference for the cross-cultural option if it were available. In a cross-cultural class taught by an instructor who is prepared to address the needs of both ESL students and native speakers of English, ESL learners might feel less dominated by their native English-speaking counterparts. Their affective needs will be better accommodated, and given the equal number of native English speakers and ESL students in a cross-cultural class, both native and non-native English speakers will have the opportunity to become acquainted with and discuss the different aspects of their cultures during peer review, or other pair-work activities. Thus, both native and non-native English speakers could profit from the cross-cultural option.

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## Appendix: The Questionnaire and Results

### Section 1:

1. When I work in pairs with other native English speakers in class, I feel very comfortable, and I learn much better:

**Strongly Agree: 40% Agree: 53.33% Disagree: 3.33% Strongly Disagree: 3.33%**

2. I feel very comfortable when I ask my instructor questions in the presence of other native English speakers:

**Strongly Agree: 20.68% Agree: 58.62% Disagree: 20.68% Strongly Disagree: 0%**

3. I can understand my instructor completely when he/she teaches in class:

**Strongly Agree: 33.33% Agree: 56.66% Disagree: 6.66% Strongly Disagree: 3.33%**

4. When I work in pairs with other non-native English speakers in class, I feel very comfortable, and I learn much better:

**Strongly Agree: 48.27% Agree: 37.93% Disagree: 10.34% Strongly Disagree: 3.44%**

5. I feel that the learning environment in my class is very friendly:

**Strongly Agree: 26.66% Agree: 66.66% Disagree: 6.66% Strongly Disagree: 0%**

6. My instructor understands and answers my questions completely:

**Strongly Agree: 40% Agree: 46.66% Disagree: 13.33% Strongly Disagree: 0%**

7. It is easy for me to comment upon the essays of other native English speakers in class during peer-review sessions:

**Strongly Agree: 43.33% Agree: 46.66% Disagree: 6.66% Strongly Disagree: 3.33%**

8. It is easy for me to comment upon the essays of other non-native English speakers in class during peer-review sessions:

**Strongly Agree: 26.66% Agree: 63.33% Disagree: 10% Strongly Disagree: 0%**

9. When I write grammatically incorrect sentences in my essays, my instructor is able to explain the rules of English grammar to me in a way that helps me understand the rules of grammar completely:

**Strongly Agree: 46.66% Agree: 36.66% Disagree: 10% Strongly Disagree: 6.66%**

10. I feel that I am isolated in the presence of so many other native English speakers in class in a way that makes me ask fewer questions:

**Strongly Agree: 10% Agree: 43.33% Disagree: 23.33% Strongly Disagree: 23.33%**

11. In class, I prefer sitting in the front row, rather than sitting in the other rows:

**Strongly Agree: 23.33% Agree: 33.33% Disagree: 33.33% Strongly Disagree: 10%**

12. In general, the activities done in class are very useful to me:

**Strongly Agree: 36.66% Agree: 50% Disagree: 13.33% Strongly Disagree: 0%**

13. I feel that my instructor pays enough attention to me in class in the presence of other native English speakers:

**Strongly Agree: 20.68% Agree: 65.51% Disagree: 13.79% Strongly Disagree: 0%**

14. I feel that my opinions are valued in class discussions:

**Strongly Agree: 26.66% Agree: 63.33% Disagree: 10% Strongly Disagree: 0%**

15. I prefer to be in a class where all of my other classmates are non-native speakers of English:

**Strongly Agree: 10% Agree: 30% Disagree: 33.33% Strongly Disagree: 26.66%**

16. I prefer to be in a class where all of my other classmates are native speakers of English:

**Strongly Agree: 13.33% Agree: 40% Disagree: 40% Strongly Disagree: 6.66%**

17. As a non-native speaker of English, who has studied composition along with native speakers of English, I believe that my class has promoted cultural understanding:

**Strongly Agree: 20% Agree: 70% Disagree: 3.33% Strongly Disagree: 6.66%**

18. I prefer to be in a class where the number of non-native English speakers is the same as the number of native English speakers:

**Strongly Agree: 19.04% Agree: 61.90% Disagree: 14.28% Strongly Disagree: 4.76%**

19. I prefer to have a composition instructor who is familiar with my culture:

**Strongly Agree: 33.33% Agree: 42.85% Disagree: 23.80% Strongly Disagree: 0%**

## **Section 2:**

As a non-native speaker of English, what are your most important problems in a mainstream composition class (in which native English speakers and non-native English speakers study composition at the same time)? Please explain.