# Language and Access: World Englishes, Universal Design for Learning, and Writing Pedagogy

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**Abstract:** This article places two pedagogical frameworks into conversation: World Englishes (WE) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). World Englishes examines the use of different varieties of English in their socio-cultural contexts, advocating for understanding varieties based on their own local standards, rather than a constructed hegemonic norm. Universal Design for Learning aims to provide flexible learning environments to enable all students to demonstrate competency in different ways, creating accessible classrooms through multiple modes of representation and means of engagement. In the composition classroom, these two frameworks can be combined to foreground aspects of student identity (language and ability, respectively) and increase pedagogical inclusivity The author illustrates the power of a combined UDL/WE framework through applications across writing pedagogy, including first-year composition and doctoral comprehensive exams.

**Keywords:** Universal Design for Learning, World Englishes, disability, pedagogy, multimodality

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**Introduction: An exigency**

Multilingual students and disabled students represent two of the fastest growing populations in university classrooms. 2.2 million or 11% of undergraduate students self-report having a disability (Walters), a number that's tripled in recent years. While it's difficult to find statistics on the number of college students that are multilingual or that either self-identify or are identified by university metrics as "second language" or "English Language Learners," between 9 and 10 percent of K-12 students are identified as such. 1 million college students, or 5% of total university enrollment, is comprised of international students who hail from a country other than the US. Of the total US population, 63 million—or over 20%—spoke a language other than English at home in 2015. Also worth noting is that in 2014–15, 665,000 L2 students in US K-12 schools were also identified as students with disabilities, comprising 13.8% of the total L2 student population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017)—a critical intersection of these two groups. This data is still limited, however, since it only covers students who "participate in language assistance programs to help ensure that they attain English proficiency and meet the same academic content and achievement standards that all students are expected to meet" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017, p. 1)—thus, untold numbers of multilingual students remain unaccounted for in these figures.

The work of this article does not look specifically at multilingual writers with disabilities, however, but rather it maps the intersections between the pedagogies that facilitate access and opportunity for either/both populations. These statistics paint a picture of the increasingly pluralistic and globalized world that we operate in. There is an increased recognition of the diversity of humanity and the productivity of difference inherent in both disability and multilingual scholar-advocacy. World Englishes (a linguistic framework committed to teaching and studying the use of English in its many global socio-cultural contexts) and Universal Design for Learning (a pedagogical application of disability studies that focuses on learning differences) both respond to this exigency. When applied in first year writing specifically, these two frames can have an especially strong impact because first-year writing (FYW) students are either new to the university, returning after a leave of absence, or have recently taken a developmental English course—so they "must determine how to navigate the university and develop their own academic identities" (Nielsen, p. 3).

This article places the two frameworks into conversation to see how they can map onto each other in practice pedagogically—in the first-year composition course and beyond. Tracing the intersections between these critical pedagogies can make them stronger together than they are alone. Because both WE and UDL foreground different aspects of student identity—language variety and dis/ability, respectively—they can inform and enrich each other, perhaps combining to form a more transformative and inclusive pedagogy than either could function as separately. Their combined strength can

help guide pedagogy across many different composing contexts: from first-year composition, to advanced writing courses, and into graduate pedagogy and beyond. In this way, while this article engages with theories of learning and composing, it is not exclusively theoretical: the combination of WE and UDL can be applied by teachers to their own pedagogy, as well as by administrators to create more equitable and just curricula to support and sustain students' diverse communicative practices in contemporary classrooms (Gonzales & Butler, 2020). Thus, this article will…

- briefly define both WE and UDL, tracing their applications to pedagogy;
- outline key principles that cut across both paradigms, explaining how they can inform each other in the classroom;
- make a case for why both are necessary in the multiliterate (New London Group, 1996), 21st-century academy; and
- outline possibilities for future research and application.

## What is World Englishes (WE)?

World Englishes (WE) is a socio-cultural linguistic framework that adopts a "socially realistic" approach to language: that means that it examines language and its use social and cultural contexts. Developed by socio-linguist Braj B. Kachru in the 1970s, WE divides different English varieties spoken worldwide into three different "concentric circles:" the Inner Circle, which primarily involves L1 speakers of English (the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and Oceania); the Outer Circle, which encompasses nations where English took hold during the colonial period (Nigeria, India, Singapore, etc.); and the Expanding Circle, where English has either only been recently adopted as an additional language, or it has a limited functional range (China, Japan, Russia, etc.) (Kachru, 2006). Different varieties of English serve four different functions, according to Kachru's paradigm—institutional, instrumental, interpersonal, and innovative—which govern the use of language across public and private contexts.

World Englishes focuses its gaze on socio-linguistic reality, and because different locations have different varieties of English with different expectations and habits governing their use, this flattens perceived or assumed hierarchies of language "correctness" or "value." Instead of a singular English with bad or imperfect speakers, there are a plurality of English*es* that develop out of specific local contexts. Each context shapes a variety, so each variety should be assessed and evaluated by its own local standards—not a single, hegemonic norm. English is used differently in different locales: English isn't spoken or employed in the same way in the United States as it is in Singapore, so it is judged differently in those locations because of its socio-cultural context there.

Important to note here is that WE encompasses not just formal features of language, like grammar and punctuation, but also functional characteristics: the uses of the language. In many respects, functional characteristics are prioritized, because of the differences in functional range between inner, outer, and expanding circle countries. For example, Aguilar-Sánchez (2005) notes that Costa Rica's primary contact with English is through commerce and tourism. Consequently, Costa Rican locals are most likely to use English when interfacing with tourists, like retirees or holiday visitors, or when reading instructions and communications from the headquarters of multinational companies that employ them through assembling plants in urban areas. Because of this, it is less likely for Costa Ricans to communicate in English for other purposes, such as maintaining relationships with friends and family. In functional terms, English is an international language, used primarily for international communication. It is linked with prestige and performance because of its use in commercial transactions, and its use is judged accordingly.

When incorporated into classroom pedagogy—either in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) or EIL (English as an International Language) classes—a WE paradigm involves a critical re-orientation towards language learning and use. In an article on WE teacher training, Sifakas & Bayyurt (2015) note that "WE-aware teachers act as facilitators, using everyday circumstances as opportunities for raising awareness of how English is used in different communicative settings (p. 481). In the classroom and language contact zones, individuals negotiate meaning between different varieties, employing a range of linguistic codes and strategies to make meaning and accomplish goals.

World Englishes offers a more pragmatic alternative to dominant approaches to language and error, because these dominant approaches "…have failed to understand language as a material social practice, and so have persistently produced strategies at odds with the realities teachers, students, writers, and the public confront daily in their interactions with each other" (Lee, 2014, p. 315). WE acknowledges the material nature of diverse speech communities and their very real effects on our lives. Disability and access are also fundamentally material, so they necessitate examples and analysis of how they come into play in the classroom.

## What is Universal Design (UD)?

The Universal Design (UD) movement was built out of architecture in the 1960s. It involves awareness of human diversity, anticipation of a variety of needs, and an intentional approach to designing an inclusive environment. Also coming out of the disability rights movement, UD started by advocating for barrier-free architecture but eventually expanded to encompass other facets of the "built environment:" buildings, products, technologies, devices, interfaces, etc. In 1997, a team of designers, engineers,

and researchers at North Carolina State University developed the seven principles of universal design:

- Equitable use: individuals with diverse abilities can all use the design
- Flexibility in use: the design accommodates a wide range of individual abilities and preferences
- Simple and intuitive use: the design is easy to understand for a variety of users across experiences, previous knowledge, language skills, and current concentration levels
- Perceptible information: necessary information is communicated effectively to the user in a variety of forms
- Tolerance for error: there is minimal risk to using the design, because there are few hazards or unintended consequences for accidental or unintended actions
- Low physical effort: the design can be used efficiently and comfortably with minimal fatigue
- Size and space for approach and use: appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility (National Disability Authority, 2014)

It took longer for disability studies to reach education—perhaps because it was easier to create practices and policies for designing *artifacts* than for designing *social systems* like the classroom. In the 1990s, stemming from UD, Harvard researchers developed Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

## What is Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?

UDL emerges from disability studies, and specifically aims to provide flexible learning environments that "give all individuals equal opportunities to learn" (CAST, 2011a). Grounded in theory about different learning styles, UDL helps vary classroom content to reach students who learn in different ways (aurally, visually, experientially, kinesthetically, etc.) and, in higher-level classrooms like those at the postsecondary level, it is also linked to developing meta-awareness of learning styles. In this way, UDL can help students determine how they best learn.

Instead of offering individual accommodations for specific disabilities (i.e., providing extra time on tests for students with ADD, or changing an audio essay assignment into a print-based one for a deaf student), UDL seeks to radically change pedagogy to make the classroom accessible for all learners. Rather than placing the onus on the student to report a disability to the instructor, UDL addresses access at its root to accommodate wider ranges of users beyond a single impairment. Teachers using UDL flexible strategies that allow students to learn, demonstrate competency, and become

interested in learning in different ways (Nielsen, 2013). These strategies emerge from three core guidelines:

- Provide multiple means of representation. This deals primarily with way that the teacher provides and presents content to students. This involves presenting information in multiple formats, especially ones that allow for adjustability by the user (for example, through changing text size or volume). Instructors should guide information processing through the design of their curriculum and the information that they provide to learners.

- Provide multiple means of action and expression. This deals primarily with the way that students access the content provided to them, as well as how they express and communicate ideas. Students should have multiple options for navigating and responding to course content (like being able to read a PDF with their eyes or have it read aloud to them by a screen reader), and be able to compose using multiple media and solve problems using a variety of strategies (e.g., text, illustration, video, creating physical artifacts, images, presentations, etc.).

- Provide multiple means of engagement. This deals primarily with learners' higher-level goals and purposes, and how teachers facilitate their development. While administrators set the learning objectives for particular programs and courses, students can still exercise autonomy over how that objective will be reached. Creating authentic learning experiences that connect with students' interests, as well as co-constructing expectations for work (like rubrics or codes of conduct) can help contribute to this. Feedback is critical to this guideline: not just from the instructor, but also from the student's peers and themselves. Providing opportunities for self-assessment and reflection are also key to develop meta-awareness of students' learning.

UDL has been incorporated into federal statutes, education legislation, and policy, so it's been quite successful—but it could still be enriched by additional pedagogical theories, particularly WE.


**What links WE & UDL?**

Several theoretical and pedagogical strands link the World Englishes and Universal Design for Learning frameworks. Both methods highlight the importance of multiple modes of representation in order to transform classrooms (and, indeed, the world) into more inclusive spaces. Four key concepts are present across both WE and UDL, making them an ideal combination for the composition classroom: 1) methodological pluralism, 2) resisting monolithic standardization, 3) rejecting the deficit model, and 4) dismantling identity binaries through critical re-orientation.

1. Recognizing a plurality of methods that function in context.

While UDL focuses on access and technology, at times it does so to the detriment of cultural knowledge and linguistic diversity. While the UDL guideline for "multiple means of representation" does touch on language—primarily through "providing linguistic alternatives" for students to learn from, as well as providing translation tools—it fails to acknowledge the rich resources that multilingual students can draw from. These resources include varieties of English from outside of the "Inner Circle" (such as Indian English, Mexican English or Spanglish, Chinese English, etc.) as well as languages beyond English. UDL also functions on a binary "either English or other language" logic: it does not account for the presence of different varieties of English in students' repertoires, or for the fact that they will likely have to navigate different English speech fellowships in their careers and communities.

Both paradigms incorporate flexible strategies, but a key difference here is that UDL teaches multiple modes at once, while WE does not. Typically, instructors teaching from a WE framework don't teach students how to write or speak in multiple Englishes, because that's not the point. This is because WE is a stance, not a curriculum. It's not about teaching multiple forms of English—like an American English and a Chinese English and a Nigerian English—in the classroom, it's about teaching students the paradigm so they can identify their own and others' varieties, as well as develop communicative strategies for navigating cross-cultural contexts in their lives. Instructors working from a WE perspective recognize that neither they nor their students can be expected to hold expertise in *all* Englishes—so instead of seeking to gain competency or fluency, they raise awareness and encourage flexibility and negotiation across varieties.

To facilitate the development of these strategies, additional points of entry into a multimedia assignment—that is, multiple different options for representing one's self and one's language variety—could help increase intelligibility or interpretability for a WE or multilingual writer student. These options could take many forms: a script or storyboard, a story web or outline, or a worksheet to get students started with invention and composing. Multiple points of entry to understand the content could help aid understanding, just like gesture and additional explanation can help in a spoken communication situation. In print communication, information design helps to inform meaning through structuring and supplementing the text presented.

Orna & Stevens (1993) make the case that information design is a necessary component of teaching human language and communication. They attest that "design is an integral part of communicating" (p. 29) and has been since the age of clay tablets, illuminating the fact that communication is not solely about *language*, but also about images, arrangement, artifacts, and technology. Developing an understanding of information design is critical because of the "multi-dimensionality" (or, as composition scholars might say, "multimodality"—see Lutkewitte, 2014; NCTE, 2005; Palmeri, 2012)

of new media, as well as the critical role that technology plays in the transformation of knowledge into communication and action.

Similarly, researchers have acknowledged that multimedia projects and other assignments that allow for forms of pluralistic action and expression can help aid students from outer and expanding circle communities in embracing their multiple identities. Providing students with the option to practice and perform code-meshing in a video or digital story, for example, provides them with multiple points of entry to mobilize and apply their linguistic skills. WE and UDL affirm pluralism by…

2. Dislodging the notion of a standard.

Historically, Inner-Circle nations—or countries that claim English as a "native" language—have been seen as providing the norms for English. World Englishes recognizes the legitimacy of varieties beyond those of the UK, US, Canada, and Oceania, demonstrating that each English speech fellowship encompasses distinct uses of the language, a literary tradition, and socio-cultural milieu. By decentralizing Inner Circle nations, WE pedagogy rejects a "separate but equal" approach to language instruction. The concentric circles model of language that Kachru (2006) proposed is a fundamentally non-hierarchical one that recognizes the value of each variety of English as practiced in its socio-linguistic context.

Similarly, UDL's foundational principle of *accessibility* decenters the notion of a singular standard for learning or practicing concepts. A classroom operating on a UDL framework offers multiple points of access into an idea or assignment. Students in a science course focused on natural disasters, for example, might participate in experiments that demonstrate the effects of volcanic eruptions and pyroclastic flows, as well as watching a National Geographic video volcanic history, and completing an online module that teaches the different volcanic types. Experiential, visual, and verbal/technological learners are all reached—instead of learners feeling disengaged and alienated by a solely lecture-based course, and made to feel like they are bad students or somehow less intelligent. In this way, both WE and UDL are…

3. Working against a deficit model.

Because there is no one perfect English or one perfect way to learn, difference moves from a barrier to engagement to an asset in the WE/UDL classroom. This shifts our view of difference: "not as an obstacle to communication, but as a site of rhetorical work" (Bommarito & Cooney, 2016, p. 41). WE's focus on the content conveyed by different varieties of English, rather than perceived grammatical or usage errors, shifts the measuring stick away from a barometer of nativity or Inner-Circle-ness and toward metrics focused on intercultural communicative competence. The goal here is not mutual intelligibility across all varieties, but rather success in a specific situated context.

This connects well with one of UDL's engagement goals, which focuses on "increasing mastery-oriented feedback." Instead of guiding learners towards "a fixed notion of performance or compliance" (CAST, 2011b), teachers adopting UDL pedagogy should assess their assignments based on flexible frameworks that account for learners' variability. This variability could include different learning styles such as spatial rather than textual thinking, or disabilities such as auditory or visual impairments, decreased motor coordination, and mood disorders like depression and anxiety.

The idea here is that, instead of retrofitting the classroom to accommodate a learner who has low vision or ADHD, we redesign it using multiple approaches to fit the needs of diverse learners (Yergeau et al., 2013). Universal Design for Learning surpasses individual accommodations by radically transforming learning, comprehensively changing the curricula and pedagogies to include the widest range of students possible, both disabled and nondisabled. Redesigning the system responds to the fact "the problems disabled people face are the result of social oppression and exclusion, not their individual deficits… impairments such as the inability to walk or see are not disabilities by themselves but become a disability in an unaccommodating society" (Shakespeare, 2006).

The foundation that grounds all of these connections is the practice of re-orientation.

4. <u>Involving critical re-orientation that recognizes context and dismantles binaries.</u>

Ability and disability are *constructs* that are inextricably intertwined (Walters, p. 436), just like foreignness/citizenship or native/non-native speaker or monolingual/multilingual writer are. You can't have one without the other, and the two are defined oppositionally in Western culture: you're either able-bodied or you're not. You're either a native speaker or you're not. These are binary systems: one of the constructs is normate and the opposite is othered, and thus devalued.

In actuality the situation is much more complicated than that: who is a "normal" English speaker anyway, and whose body is totally able at all times and in all situations? World Englishes reveals a cline of intelligibility and bilingualism (Kachru, 1976; Smith, 1992) that demonstrates that the ability to understand a person's spoken language exists on a spectrum. Some people are fully fluent, while some people can only get by in particular situations or domains. As a native English speaker with four years of high school language education, I can use Spanish to order a meal at a restaurant in Cozumel, but I can't use it to trade stocks on the international market or explain to my friend's Mexican grandma how to use Twitter. Language intelligibility is situated and contingent, because it depends on socio-cultural location: where are you using the language and with whom? This ability changes as we learn and gain additional linguistic and communicative resources as well.

Similarly, dis/ability isn't a fixed state, but rather a role that people pass in and out of. The football player in my business writing class is incredibly able-bodied—he can perform athletic feats that I couldn't even dream of!—but when he tears his ACL at practice, he suddenly assumes a role of dis/ability that prevents him from climbing the stairs to our classroom, approaching the white board to write notes, or using his full body to gesture and move when he presents his research with his project team. His project teammate might have a disability that's invisible to me: she has a chronic illness that flares up when she's stressed out during exam weeks that keeps her away from class, or she's color blind and can't read designed documents that don't have ample contrast between the text and the background. Ability is context-dependent, just as English varieties are.

When we interrogate these ideas pedagogically, it becomes clear that classroom practice needs to be adapted to provide opportunities to practice multiple varieties of English and linguistic codes, as well as multiple forms of action and expression. The following scene illustrates one of the many opportunities for UDL and WE intervention.

**WE and UDL are connected by the notion of pluralistic modes of meaning-making: here's how**

To show the benefits of applying a Universal Design for Learning framework, authors have illustrated the differences between a conservative "heritage" model of schooling, which focuses on language and text-centered practices and only permits a limited range of performance, and more accessible options that reach a variety of learning styles. Zoss, Holbrook & Moore (2014) demonstrate these differences through a scene of a child giving a speech written on a sheet of paper to a classroom of desks "arranged in careful rows" (p. 49), showing the dominant image of literacy as a ranking and sorting tool, limited in scope to a very narrow set of resources and articulations. To provide my own illustration of the advantages and opportunities (for both students and faculty) provided by adopting a dual World Englishes/Universal Design for Learning approach, I turn to another experience common in higher education: doctoral exams.

Graduate doctoral exams go by many names (comprehensive exams or "comps," qualifying exams or "quals," preliminary exams or "prelims," etc.) and come in many forms (timed tests over a period of hours or days, portfolio papers submitted for publication, an oral examination or colloquy in front of a committee, etc.)—but regardless of their nomenclature, all are intended to serve as a touchstone for graduate students in a particular field or discipline. Graduate exams, as Loughead (1997) notes, serve a number of purposes, including…

1. screening and evaluating the knowledge and abilities of students;

2.  providing opportunity for performing an understanding of the discipline, as well as integration of knowledge across the field;
3.  facilitating problem-solving within "professional environments;" and
4.  "providing a rite of passage so that students will feel they have earned their degree" (p. 141).

These purposes may often be implicit, however—and because the purposes are not clearly articulated by graduate programs or directors, confusion, dissatisfaction, and controversy surrounding doctoral exams is widespread. Across disciplines, both the faculty administering these exams and graduate students taking them articulate uncertainty about the purpose of these exams, as well as their reliability and validity in assessing knowledge of the field (Loughead, 1997; Ponder, Beatty & Foxx, 2004; Wood, 2015). If we do not know why we are administering comprehensive exams, or whether they actually prove a candidate's understanding of the field or their ability to produce quality scholarship, then what is their function? When examining them through a UDL/WE lens, it becomes clear that the exam process and product serves to divide students among lines of ability and perceived English proficiency according to a narrow, inner-circle standard.

My own preliminary exams, which I took in the summer of 2018, included a 24-hour major field exam covering five core areas in the discipline of rhetoric and composition (each area with its own 750–1200 word response) and a 7-day concentration exam focusing on my specialty area (a 15-page essay). This work totaled about 12,000 words of writing over the course of a week—a rite of passage, indeed. The 24-hour exam in particular was a strenuous experience: synthesizing a large amount of literature to write across many subject areas takes an immense amount of time and energy. Students in my cohort also experienced carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms or repetitive strain injuries in their hands and wrists from writing and typing for extended periods of time. Though doctoral students in my department can take their exam home, some elect to write in their campus offices in order to minimize distractions, and many do not sleep during the exam period. As a high-stakes evaluative moment, comprehensive exams can bring on psychological conditions or exacerbate existing mental illness, causing depression, panic attacks, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, and possibly suicidal ideation.

Faculty do warn graduate students of the potential negative impacts that the exam process can have on mental health, and encourage their advisees to seek accommodations through a consultation with the campus disability resource center if their advisees need them—and many do, requesting extra time to complete their papers. If we approach the exam experience from a UDL perspective that encourages "changing the design of the environment" (CAST, 2011a) to make learning more accessible, a question emerges: instead of requiring an exam experience that is known to pose barriers to graduate students, why not design a new one that minimizes the need for self-disclosure and accommodation?

UDL also foregrounds and affirms multiple means of engagement and expression (CAST, 2011b): students should be able to employ multiple modalities to demonstrate mastery of subject material. This is a principle that resonates well with WE's recognition of the variety of Englishes available to communicators. Doctoral exams permit a very limited performance by students that draws upon a very particular range of linguistic and semiotic resources: scholarly texts, typically written in a prestige dialect of English, synthesized into a linear, typewritten response that adheres to essay conventions (12 point font, one-inch margins, double-spacing, etc.). Assumptions about the appropriate linguistic features of a doctoral exam are often implicit—while word and page limits are clearly articulated, the type of English (or, indeed, if an exam need be completed entirely in English at all!) remains uncertain. It's not unreasonable to assert that the unspoken expectation is that these essays should mirror the conventions of journal articles in the field—that is, that they follow conventions the Inner Circle dialects of "Standard Edited" American or British English. These implicit requirements continue to perpetuate the perception that an appropriate "standard" exists for scholarly communication—and that that standard emerges from predominantly white, Euro-American (WEA) norms. As Estrem & Lucas (2003) note in their analysis and critique of doctoral exams within rhetoric and composition, "Tensions of power and control are sidelined or approached through the language of appropriateness rather than performing to community standards" (p. 412).

I do not intend to rebuke my university or department, here. My program is not the only one to require timed preliminary exams. Many other programs require doctoral students complete their exams in 24 hours or less, and some do not allow students to take their exams home—instead requiring them to complete their writing on site. My intention here is not to criticize my specific graduate program, but instead to use my individual experience (as well as the experiences of others in my cohort) as a launching pad to interrogate the "zone of ambiguity" surrounding doctoral examinations in order to engage in disciplinary *and* institutional critique (Porter et al., 2000).

The timed doctoral exam that takes place over a few hours or days is a remnant of a conservative, heritage-model of schooling. It's focused on language- and text-centered practices and only permits a limited range of performance. It only allows one form of knowledge expression—written word in a "standard" performance variety of English, encoded in a linear, alphabetic, print-based essay—and does not permit additional aids such as images, visual rhetoric beyond standard essay format, data displays, gesture, voice, body movement, or language beyond Inner Circle Englishes. For decades if not centuries, primacy has been granted to these narrow discursive performances.

"Standard edited American English," and the socio-cultural norms that accompany it, function as another mode of expression, another semiotic resource, another performance that we grant primacy to in the classroom—across all levels (K-12, postsecondary, and lifelong learning). Pimentel & Wilson (2016) provide one example of

the narrow range of performances permitted by Inner-Circle Euro-American English in their chapter of *Decolonizing Rhetoric and Composition*. Pimentel & Wilson identify the chasm between individualistic Euro-American culture and more collectivistic Latinx culture as a vestige of colonialism and an obstacle that hinders the success of Latinx and Chicanx students in first-year writing. Rather than seeking to assimilate these students to dominant cultural norms, "…we need to encourage brown people to become successful on their own terms…" (Pimentel & Wilson, 2016, p. 133) through the incorporation of their cultural practices, both in the classroom and in the metrics by which we measure their success. In her chapter in the same collection, Candace Zepeda (2016) asserts that "…by drawing on the diverse linguistic and cultural resources of students' home spaces, educators can develop classroom spaces and assignments that are shaped by personal and collective experiences" (p. 148). These funds of home knowledge include local varieties of English, the inclusion of which not only affirms the cultural values of many different students (even beyond those from Latinx or Chicanx backgrounds), but also creates opportunity for cross-cultural dialogue and learning.

By granting primacy to a specific representational system—be it Inner Circle English, or linear, print-based alphabetic compositions—"we risk missing or undervaluing the meaning-making and learning potentials associated with the uptake and transformation of still other representational systems and technologies" (Shipka, 2011, p. 11). The standard edited American English textual essay represents only a small sliver of graduate students' potential options as composers, communicators, and critical-cultural thinkers.

We draw on many different resources, not just words or text, when attempting to make meaning out of situations—both in the classroom and outside of it. Why limit the resources available to graduate students when they are representing their knowledge of the discipline, or limit the resources available to undergraduate students when they create assignments for our classes? Both WE and UDL frameworks diversify the ways to demonstrate knowledge. The more channels that students and writers can select from when composing, the more resources that they have at their disposal for being successful communicators (Selfe & Takayoshi, 2007). A cognitively or linguistically pluralistic approach also facilitates the development of understanding *collectively,* as a process of negotiation, which demonstrates the value of social interactions among people as they develop understandings. Meaning is negotiated collectively, "building upon the strengths and supporting the needs of each individual as the group [or pair] strives to communicate understandings through a variety of expressive modes" (Zoss, Holbrook & Moore, 2014, p. 52). These paradigms engage the whole class in co-constructing meaning, rather than requiring rote memorization and recitation on the part of a single student.

**Conclusions**

Higher education news has, intermittently throughout the past decade or so, proclaimed the death of the learning styles theory, citing research that demonstrates that so-called "visual learners" don't really learn better with visual instruction, and "aural learners" don't learn better with spoken instruction (Dodgson, 2018—citing Massa & Mayer, 2006). Naysayers might claim that these new findings invalidate UDL as an approach as well, because of UDL's focus on individualized approaches to learning that are tailored to students' cognitive needs. Even if the idea of "learning styles" is entirely debunked—that we find that students don't necessarily absorb, retain, and synthesize information best in different individualized ways—the fact of the matter still remains that "the world functions in a semiotically rich way" (Zoss, Holbrook, & Moore, 2014, p. 51). We still engage in a cognitively pluralistic and media-rich world, so the practice of UDL still holds benefit for learners and future professionals. On a similar note, we will continue to engage in an increasingly linguistically diverse world as globalization and the proliferation of digital media create more contact zones between different varieties of English, cementing the importance of a World Englishes framework as well. The more linguistic and expressive options that we can provide for students to practice in our classrooms, the better equipped they will be to navigate a variety of communicative situations in their professional, personal, and civic lives.

Even if learning styles are weakly supported at best by the educational research literature, providing students with multiple ways to complete an assignment and demonstrate mastery of concepts still benefits them in direct and visible ways. Constructing a rich and complex rhetorical situation (Bitzer, 1968) provides students with an opportunity to move away from "mutt genres" (Wardle, 2009) that fail to mirror "real-world" communicative scenarios. Instead of requiring, say, a formal five-to-seven page research paper on a social issue to a vaguely defined audience, asking students to identify an audience to reach on that issue and then compose a researched assignment in a genre that best corresponds with that audience's needs and expectations constructs a more definite purpose and direction for their writing. In so doing, not only are students able to select a mode of communication that best suits their own individual abilities and discourse community(ies)—they also are better prepared for addressing wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1984) that they approach outside of the composition classroom. This practice of integrating World Englishes and Universal Design for Learning in the classroom helps students practice creating determinate ends around indeterminate communication situations (Cushman, 2014). Students claim and exert agency not when writing responses to ready-made issues with clear solutions, but rather when combining and recombining the rich resources at their disposal to seek answers to their own questions, in their own ways. In this way, all learners benefit from the application of UDL and WE principles. We have twin goals as teachers: first, as postsecondary educators, to help prepare students for their future careers; and second, as liberal arts practitioners, to facilitate the development an understanding of the human experience and encourage

lifelong learning. Universal Design for Learning enables students to better understand how they learn and, and to each find inroads into composing to answer their own questions and accomplish their own goals and purposes. World Englishes enable students to better understand the contexts and values of global speakers of English, fostering goodwill and innovation. Both remove barriers from participation for otherwise vulnerable or marginalized learners. Creating a more accessible world—a world that more people can access, with all its attendant privileges (such as physical resources, economic capital, and authoritative knowledge)—involves shifting learning, systems of representation, languages, and technology

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