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**“My work doesn’t need to be perfect as long as the effort is there”:
A Case Study of Multilingual Student Perceptions of Labor-Based
Grading Contracts in the First-Year Writing Classroom**

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“My work doesn’t need to be perfect as long as the effort is there”: A Case Study of
Multilingual Student Perceptions of Labor-Based Grading Contracts in the First-Year
Writing Classroom

By

Allison M. Hosman

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
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In

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“My work doesn’t need to be perfect as long as the effort is there”: A Case Study of
Multilingual Student Perceptions of Labor-Based Grading Contracts in the First-Year
Writing Classroom

by Allison M. Hosman

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student’s
committee.

Examining Committee:

Dr. Sarah Henderson Lee, Chairperson

Dr. Kelly Moreland, Committee Member

Abstract

Recent developments in the fields of both TESOL and Composition indicate a need for conceptualizing and developing assessment practices that support the needs of multilingual writers that are in line with the aims of justice-oriented pedagogies. One such specific pedagogical practice, assessment, has been proposed as an area of pedagogy in which to operationalize approaches that maintain and sustain justice in the multilingual composition classroom. Although contract grading, and more specifically labor-based grading contracts, have been at the center of such recent conversations, few investigations have centered multilingual students, asking how they perceive and understand such an assessment method in the classroom. To meet the challenge of determining how best to develop and operationalize assessment methodologies that support multilingual writers and meet the potentials for justice-oriented pedagogies, this study seeks to explore the following questions regarding student perceptions labor-based grading contracts and their use in multilingual composition: (a) How do multilingual students perceive and understand the use of labor-based grading contracts in a first-year writing classroom, and (b) In what ways might FYW instructors and programs be informed by multilingual students' perceptions of and engagement with labor-based grading? To further examine these questions, participating students' responses were collected over the course of the semester through surveys and written artifacts, analyzed using qualitative content analysis informed by grounded theory, and thematically discussed and organized in the following categories: (1) the personal benefits of using labor-based grading in the composition classroom, (2) perceived fairness as supported by the grading contract, (3)

an improved sense of self-efficacy facilitated by labor-based grading contracts, and (4) student's understood accountability in their own learning and participation in completing classroom related tasks. These themes were temporally examined to both determine how students' perceptions and understandings of labor-based grading contracts changed over time and to identify how these themes changed throughout the semester. Theoretical and empirical frameworks from the fields of Composition and TESOL will be utilized to further integrate both fields and to inform multilingual writing pedagogies. Additionally, such findings are intended to explore potential implications for instructional and institutional decision-making regarding first-year writing classrooms and programs.

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Acknowledgement

The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility, we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (hooks, 1994, p. 207)

Conducting this research and writing thesis was one of the most difficult and the most rewarding experiences of my academic career. While I feel personally accomplished in this endeavor, this work would not have been possible without the love and support of a few wonderful people: some that I've had the pleasure of being related to, while others came into my life while working together as colleagues and critical friends. Not to mention my mentors who have provided me invaluable guidance and thoughtful feedback throughout this process and in my life as a graduate student.

First and foremost, words cannot express my gratitude to Dr. Henderson Lee and Dr. Moreland, who have provided me with invaluable mentorship that I hope to take with me as I step into the unknowns of professional life. Their thoughtful feedback and encouragement with this project allowed me to learn invaluable lessons while writing this thesis. While this process often felt like learning to ride a bike while in the driver's seat, and I am eternally grateful to both of them for showing me just how fast I could pedal with this project.

Secondly, I want to say thank you to the students who participated in this study. Your voices have helped to shape my teaching practice and will continue to inspire my

instruction for years to come. I wish them all the best in their personal and academic lives as they continue into their bright futures, wherever their lives may take them.

Next, I would like to wave a textual hand to my dear friends and colleagues that I've met over the course of my studies at MNSU, who have helped shape me into the student and educator I am today. On that note, I want to single out one such particularly special individual in that group that deserves some exceptional recognition: Mercedes Sempe. Your friendship has been one of the most important and sustaining elements in my life during this time in the MA TESOL program, and I could not have completed this project without your camaraderie, kindness, and companionship. I look forward to see where we'll go from here, and know that I am eternally grateful to be able to call you not only my colleague, but my friend as well.

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Chapter I: Introduction

As the demographics of students attending universities in the United States (US) and enrolling in first-year writing (FYW) classes continue to shift, there have been attempts to address the needs of multilingual writers better and more fully. This shift has continued from previous decades and developed into a much more pronounced phenomenon. This was evident when in 1974, the Conference of College Composition and Communication (CCCC) officially adopted the Student's Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) resolution, codifying in a published statement wherein committee members affirmed that "teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language" (CCCC, 1972). While such a statement has undoubtedly had a symbolic influence on the teaching of composition, especially in emphasizing effective communication and embracing language variation in the writing classroom, such a communication does not recommend specific and actionable pedagogical approaches to cultivating and sustaining such diversity in a first-year writing course.

Since 2001, the CCCC has since published additional resolutions, outlining its positions regarding second-language writing and multilingual writers (CCCC, 2001; 2009; 2014; 2020), writing assessment (CCCC, 2005), and globalization in writing studies pedagogy and research (CCCC, 2017). The SRTOL resolution, among other position statements made by the CCCC, have undoubtedly had a profound impact on the development of curriculums and writing programs across the country since its conception and adoption by the CCCC, its influence on the evolution of the ways in which

instructors and teachers assess and grade students writing, particularly for multilingual students, has lagged behind. While these resolutions have aided in guiding graduate teaching assistants, writing instructors, and writing program administrators alike in developing best practices to meet the needs of multilingual students, there remains a need for developing methods for assessing student writing that can assist in ushering in the translingual reality many within the fields of composition/writing studies and TESOL have advocated for. This is particularly pertinent in that such pedagogical approaches to composition teaching are considered vital avenues for promoting justice within the composition classroom.

Determining best practices for assessing student writing are still in the process of being established. The ways in which various parties (such as instructors and individuals involved in program and post-secondary administration) are involved in assessing student learning is not just simply impacted by society, but rather is a direct reflection of societal values in that things that are not seen as “valuable” are not the aspects of learning that are assessed and vice versa (Huot, 2002; 2003). Rather, as Huot explains, “assessment has been used as an interested social mechanism for reinscribing current power relations and class systems” (2003, p. 7). Knowing that assessment functions to uphold current power relations and class systems, it stands to reason that this notion extends to the function of grading in the composition classroom, as grading is a vital part of assessment.

Problem

Multilingual learners have more diverse linguistic repertoires and educational experiences, along with unique motivations for learning and improving their English proficiency compared to their local and monolingual peers in US higher education.

Meeting the unique needs of multilingual learners necessitates program-, instructional-, and institution-level changes, especially as we shift from a deficit perspective of bilingual/multilingualism in the classroom to recognizing and cultivating the rich linguistic, and in turn, academic potential multilingual learners possess in composition classrooms and beyond as global citizens (Ferris & Eckstein, 2020; Alvarez & Wan, 2019; Shapiro et al., 2016; Troia, Shankland & Wolbers, 2012.; Canagarajah & Jerskey 2009; Canagarajah, 2006; 2011;). As English continues to remain the primary language for economic activity both locally and globally, within this context of a more globalized world, the importance of developing written competence in English for scholars and students also remains of significant importance (Canagarajah & Jerskey, 2009).

The needs of linguistically diverse students (whether they be international students, resident multilingual, or members of generation 1.5) enrolling in first-year writing courses within US post-secondary institutions have been well documented and explored by writing program administrators and scholars in both composition and TESOL (Alvarez, 2018; Brutt-Griffler, 2017; Canagarajah & Jerskey, 2009; Friedrich, 2006; Canagarajah 2003). With the field of L2 writing continues to grow, with research in this area focused on a variety of pedagogical issues; one of which being how instructors set about assessing student writing (Matsuda, Ortmeier-Hooper, & Matsuda, 2009). One specific area of concern regarding assessment and developing best practices to meet the needs of multilingual students in first-year writing courses is determining best practices for grading student writing.

Grades remain a necessary evil and institutional reality in many first-year writing classrooms. As Streifer & Palmer (2020) note, traditional grading has created a multitude of problems that inhibit student learning outcomes, such as dampening students' intrinsic motivations while increasing their extrinsic motivation, negatively affecting students' mental health, and reduce student's interest and desires to continue learning a particular subject, leading them to avoid challenging tasks (Kohn, 2012; Shinske and Tanner, 2014). Issues related to more traditional grading practices and their use in first-year writing courses have been well documented (Smith, 2003; Kohn, 1994; Elbow, 1993; 1996; 1997a; 1997b), with some scholars, such as Elbow (1993), indicating that not only are grades "unreliable", but they are in fact "harmful to the atmosphere of teaching and learning" (p. 189). Moreover, traditional grading practices, whether intentionally or unintentionally by design, have the potential to assist in the creation and upholding of linguistic hierarchies and social injustice in the classroom by inadvertently promoting the "standard" English (whatever that means) and cause extensive anguish for students and instructors alike. Grades, as scholars suggest, makes determinations and judgements regarding students' abilities which, whether they are accurate or not, can also dictate access to various opportunities available to students. For example, grades can play a deciding factor in whether or not students are eligible for scholarships or to remain in the country to study in the case of international students. In light of this reality, alternative grading and assessment methods have been employed to address this issue in a number of educational contexts – particularly in the field of composition over the later half of the century and into the new millennia. The use of contract grading, and, more specifically,

labor-based grading contracts, in composition classrooms are becoming more and more popular with students and teachers alike, particularly during the institutional and instructional changes necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Asao Inoue (2017; 2019; 2020), the primary architect and advocate of labor-based grading contracts in composition classrooms, identified two imperatives that are central to translingual pedagogies and fairness within the writing classroom: directed self-placement and labor-based grading contracts. With the relative novelty of such a grading system used in the composition classroom and, more specifically in a classroom in which all of the students are multilingual, there is understandably a lack of research related to the use of labor-based grading contracts in multilingual first-year writing contexts and, more specifically, how students perceive and understand their use as a means for assessing their growth as writers. In addition, Inoue (2019) notes that multilingual students are direct beneficiaries of a labor-based grading system, yet, perhaps due to the relative novelty of labor-based grading contracts as a specific type of contract grading being utilized in first-year writing classrooms, studies aimed at investigating just how such student populations benefit from such a system in first-year writing are few and far between.

Answering Inoue's call for empirical research on labor-based grading contracts to be undertaken and to fill a gap in the research that centers multilingual students within those investigations, I take up this thesis research as a means to meet the challenge of determining how best to develop and operationalize antiracist assessment approaches and answer the well-established necessity to meet the urgent need for helping to usher in much-needed changes to our academic structures and policies. As this investigation was

undertaken for the fulfillment of the requirements of a master's degree in TESOL, theoretical and empirical frameworks from the fields of Composition and TESOL will be utilized.

To provide some exigence for this study, some relevant statistical information related to the focus of this thesis is offered below to provide a clearer picture as to international student enrollment and economic prospects:

- In a report provided by the Institute of International Education (IIE), approximately 174,090 new international students enrolled in an undergraduate program at a US institution between 2019-2021 (Institute of International Education, 2022).
- While international student enrollment in US post-secondary education institutions has steadily risen for the past twenty years, there has been a sharp decline in the total number of students in the fall semester of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Baer & Martel, 2020).
- Using data compiled from the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of Education, and the IIE Open Doors report, the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA) estimates that international students studying at US post-secondary institutions contributed approximately \$33.8 billion to the US economy during the 2021-2022 academic year. Additionally, international students enrolled in U.S. college and university English language programs nationwide contributed an estimated \$241.9 million dollars to the U.S. economy (NAFSA, 2022).

- In the fall semester of 2021-2022 school year at the location wherein this case study was conducted, of the total 10,035 student enrolled in full-time undergraduate study, 1,021 of that total were international students, hailing from over 50 countries around the world (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2022; Kearney International Center, 2022).

Purpose

To better understand how labor-based grading is currently viewed by multilingual students, this study aims to address the gap that has been indicated as well as determine how much information regarding how students perceive and understand labor-based grading can be used to inform the development of first-year writing curriculums. Asao Inoue recounts his own use of a labor-based grading contract in his classroom, which he explains is “a set of social agreements with the entire class about how final course grades will be determined for everyone” (2019, p. 130). This type of grading contract stands distinctly apart from what fellow writing studies scholars Elbow and Danielewicz (2009) had developed, calling it a “unilateral” grading contract in which students were guaranteed a “B” if they complete a determined level of work for the course but, importantly, are judged by the quality of their writing in order to achieve a grade higher than a B.

Research Questions

This research aims to better understand the use of labor-based grading in FYW classrooms from students’ perspectives by pursuing answers to the following research questions:

1. How do multilingual students perceive and understand the use of labor-based grading contracts in a first-year writing classroom?
2. In what ways might FYW instructors and programs be informed by multilingual students' perceptions of and engagement with labor-based grading?

Significance

This study aims to join the growing pool of research studies and scholarship related to labor-based grading by providing information regarding specifically how multilingual students perceive and understand labor-based grading contracts and their use in the first-year writing classroom. This case study contributes valuable information to indicate how writing instructors and writing program administrators alike can develop best practices and methods for employing labor-based grading contracts in their classrooms. Given that much of the research related to labor-based grading contracts and their use in the composition classroom does not specifically center on multilingual writers, this study aims to help contribute to this growing knowledge base.

Not only does this study help to provide more information regarding the use of labor-based grading contracts in multilingual classrooms, but in addition to that, the findings from examining student's written artifacts will provide more insights to teachers, writing program administrators, curriculum developers, and other invested parties as to the impacts and implications of using labor-based grading contracts as a grading system in multilingual composition classrooms. Moreover, providing more awareness of how students perceive the methods of assessment and grading that they are subjected to in a first-year writing classroom allows such invested parties to make more informed

decisions regarding assessment and grading to meet the needs of the needs of multilingual writers in first-year writing. These impacts and implications related to writing pedagogy will be further discussed in a later chapter of this thesis, Chapter 5 which is intended to aid these invested parties in making these informed decisions so as to more effectively employ labor-based grading contracts in their classroom contexts.

Definition of Key Terms

The central focus of this investigation covers key issues related to first-year writing, multilingual writing, and L2 writing pedagogy. Some key terminology and concepts are provided below to create a clear basis of how these key terms are understood and utilized within the scope of this case study.

Assessment

The wide breadth of methodological techniques and ongoing processes that appraise or estimate and or measure a specific level or magnitude of a specified attribute or collection of attributes of a person through the use of techniques and employment of calculating instruments (Mousavi, 2009). Assessments may be formative or summative. Formative assessments evaluate learners while in the process of developing, or forming, their skills in a specific area while summative assessments measure what a student has learned through instruction by summarizing their learning, usually at the end of a unit of instruction or at the conclusion of a course (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). It has been argued, by the likes of Brown and Abeywickrama (2019) that “for optimal learning to take place, students in the classroom must have the freedom to experiment, to try out their own hypotheses about language without feeling that their overall competence is being judged in terms of those trials and errors” (p. 5).

Grading

A measure of assessment that corresponds to specified units, such as “pass” or “fail”, to indicate achievement within a course. This process is often standardized and determined by institutions, individuals, or other education related invested parties alike.

Contract Grading

A contract negotiated between an instructor and student or students in the classroom in which both the instructor defines what tasks or performance students must achieve or complete to receive a specified grade. The student, then, defines the level as to which they will work by determining what tasks or performance they will achieve or complete by signing the contract and, if they commit to completing the determined tasks and/or achieve a specified performance threshold, the instructor then awards the student with that predetermined grade (Taylor, 1980).

Labor Based Grading

A type of contract grading that determines final course grades not by summarizing the measures of individual assignments, papers, or activities, but rather by the amount, or quantity of work a student completes while taking the course (Inoue, 2019). Rather than a final course grade reflecting the judgements of quality determined by the instructor, students determine how much work, or labor, they are willing to complete in order to achieve a final course grade.

First Year Writing

A core curriculum writing course in many US college and universities that introduces students to key skills that prepare them to write in a variety of academic discourse and contexts. These courses are also known as first-year composition, freshman writing, or freshman composition. These courses may employ a variety of writing-related

pedagogies, which includes (but is not limited to) genre pedagogy, process pedagogy, research pedagogy, and L2 writing pedagogy (Tate, et al, 2014).

Multilingual Writers

Multilingual individuals are people who have the ability to use multiple languages, either separately or simultaneously, and sometimes for different and distinct purposes, with varying competencies in each (McArthur, 1992). For many students in FYW classrooms, English is not their first language (L1). Rather than using terminology to refer to students who may be English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, English language learners (ELLs), second language (L2) writers, and limited English proficiency (LEP) learners, using the term multilingual writers acknowledge that English may be a student's second, third, or nth language (CCCC, 2020). This definition also includes a larger breadth of individuals which may include "international visa holders, refugees, permanent residents, and undocumented immigrants, as well as naturalized and native-born citizens of the United States and Canada" who have "grown up speaking languages other than English at home, in their communities, and in schools" (CCCC, 2020). Because of this, multilingual writers often vary in their literacies from one of their languages to another because they utilize English in varied educational contexts, enabling them to utilize diverse strategies in order to meet the needs of their contexts and situations as well as local and global standards (CCCC, 2020).

Perception

Perception is defined by the SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods as "a mode of apprehending reality and experience through the senses, thus enabling discernment of figure, form, language, behavior, and action" (2008). One's

“way of seeing the world” has the capacity to influence our opinions, our judgments, and our understandings of a person or situation, the underlying meaning of an individual experience, and how one responds to a given situation (Given, 2008).

Motivation

Derived from the Latin verb *movere*, meaning “to move” motivation refers to “what moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, to expend effort and persist in action” (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2021, p. 3). To put it another way, the concept of motivation relates to why people choose to do certain things, how long they continue doing those activities, or how hard they are willing to pursue or work at something (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2021). Because this concept is so complex, the nature of motivation and its relationship within the realm of SLA has focused primarily on particular situations and sensations of motivation as well as how it relates to individual differences (ID).

Investment

Norton Pierce first introduced the concept of investment as an extension of motivation as “a way to capture the complex relationship of language learners to the target language and their desire to speak and use the language in various contexts and social spaces. When and why language learners choose whether or not to use their target language depends on a variety of factors. The notion of investment conceived of the language learner, not as ahistorical or unidimensional, but having a complex social history and multiple desires” (Norton Pierce, 1995, p. 9). This concept helps to eliminate the need for a distinction between learners and the contexts in which develop an additional language. Building upon Krashen’s (1981, 1982) hypothesis that a learner’s affective filter, which is comprised of their self-confidence, their anxieties, and their

motivations, is one of the main causal variables in SLA, Norton Pierce recognizes the role of a learner's social context as inextricably linked to their motivation to learn and use an additional language. Theoretically informed by Bourdieu's notion of "cultural capital", Norton Pierce (1995) suggests that if learners are to invest in learning another language, they are doing so with an understanding that there is an increase in the value of one's own cultural capital that will inevitably allow them to acquire more material and symbolic resources.

Antiracist Pedagogy

Blakeney (2011) defines antiracist pedagogy as a paradigm within Critical Theory to better conceptualize how racism impacts teaching and learning by focusing on praxis. This, in turn, promotes social justice in the classroom. Antiracist pedagogy, Blakeney explains, is a melding of both multicultural education and critical pedagogy, which creates a framework in which to further understand and address issues of race, power, ethnicity, power, and class in the classroom. Antiracist pedagogy, in addition, also aims to further understand how race impacts cultural differences associated with upward social and cultural mobility and opportunity for students by centering on how these inequalities are constructed and actualized (Blakeney, 2011, p. 120). Blakeney's definition continues to determine how Antiracist Pedagogy is distinguished from multicultural education models in that it includes the assimilationist model, the integrationist model, and the cultural pluralism model (Kailin, 2002) both simultaneously include and exclude in their definitions.

Organizational Justice

Greenberg (1987) conceptualizes organizational justice as how employees within an organization regard the behaviors of their superiors. Organizational justice is comprised of four concepts: distributive justice, interactional justice, procedural justice, and informational justice. Recent publications have theoretically and empirically applied concepts of organizational justice to college teaching to determine the fairness of pedagogical practices and the perceptions of such practices due to the nature of the unequal power dynamic between teachers and students, both conceptually and substantially (Rasooli, Zandi & Deluca, 2021; 2019; 2018; Geddes, 2003; Oppenheimer, 1989).

Translanguaging

A theory of language and communication that encompasses the diverse multilingual practices employed by speakers of more than one language to make meaning and effective communication between interlocutors in diverse contexts possible and effectively replaces terminology such as code-switching, code-meshing, and code-mixing (Wei, 2018). Garcia (2009) defines translanguaging as “the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize the communicative potential” (p. 140). This theory provides a theoretical lens in which to better understand how multilingual students (and, in turn, all users of language) utilize different and specific features from an overall linguistic repertoire rather than from autonomous language systems, as was originally thought, to negotiate meaning in multiple contexts (Vogel & Garcia, 2017).

Researcher Positionality

As a first-time writing instructor and graduate teaching assistant tasked with teaching first-year writing to a classroom full of multilingual students, I received instruction in writing pedagogy to support my work. Through this instruction, I was introduced to a labor-based grading contract system as a way to determine final grades for students in the course. All first-time graduate teaching assistants were instructed to utilize this system; in both multilingual and what our institution called “mainstream” composition classrooms. I found it profoundly curious and intriguing that while even though labor-based grading contracts were understood to be relatively novel, there was a noticeable lack of information and data related to how such a grading system can or should be used in a writing classroom in which all of, not just some of, the students are multilingual.

It also surprises me, somewhat, just how much the disciplines of composition and TESOL stand to learn from one another regarding L2 writing pedagogy. While the field of composition recognizes the pedagogical practices for L2 writers in the composition classroom, the mechanisms for how language learners acquire writing skills in another language have been and continue to be thoroughly investigated in TESOL-related studies. In an effort to encourage a cross-pollination of these two discourses, I straddle this disciplinary divide with this study in an effort to further bolster the field of L2 writing as the marriage between these two fields.

As an aspiring TESOL and writing instructor, I am to better understand how my students view both their own learning and my teaching as a way to develop the best pedagogical practices that I can in my work. Because of this, I frequently elicit feedback

from my students regarding aspects of my teaching, ranging from my feedback on their writing, their understanding of course content, the assessment models we use in class, how I grade their work, what activities they enjoy or do not enjoy in class, as well as reflections that are targeted towards students developing their identities as writers more generally. Making use of surveys and various assignments over the course of the semester to collect this information, I then use this data to inform how and what I teach in my FYW classroom.

Related to this end is my desire to create more just and equitable classrooms for all students. I intentionally focus on determining aspects of justice of my decisions as an instructor. Not only am I thinking about what I hope my students will learn about writing but I want to make sure that as a native speaker and authority figure in the classroom that I am making an intentional effort to eliminate instances of injustice where I can – even knowing full well that this, like writing, is an ongoing process.

Knowing that, like me, my students had most likely never heard of or used labor-based grading contracts in their classrooms before, I was curious to investigate how my students felt about such a system and what that information might tell me, as their instructor, about how I can improve my grading contract for the next group of students I was tasked with teaching. Over the course of the spring semester of 2022, I employed various surveys and writing assignments targeted toward receiving feedback from my own students about their thoughts related to the use of labor-based grading contracts being used in their classrooms.

Overview of Thesis Organization

This thesis is composed of six chapters. First, I will provide an examination of the literature that will contribute the necessary background on the topics related to and at the center of this research study in Chapter 2. These topics include empirical, pedagogical, and theoretical frameworks such as investment and translanguaging, that helped to guide this current study as well as a brief history of contract grading. In Chapter 3, the methodological framework for this study is provided. Information related to the research design, setting, data collection, and limitations of this research study will also be discussed in this chapter. The findings of this study are provided in Chapter 4, which includes a discussion of the research results as they pertain to the presented research questions and related literature. The final chapter, Chapter 5, shifts in focus to primarily discuss the pedagogical implications of this research as well as suggestions for further research in this area.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

As indicated in the introduction, instructors and institutions alike continue to endeavor in meeting the needs of assessing multilingual writers in first-year writing classrooms. As such, invested parties continue to develop best practices in meeting these needs, and multiple pedagogies have been employed to best meet those needs. There persists a growing desire within the related fields of composition and multilingual writing to develop assessment methods, especially in determining final grades, that align with more social justice-oriented pedagogies and reflect a students' writing development within the course more accurately (Britton & Leonard, 2020; Inoue, 2017; Dlaska & Krekeler, 2013; Elbow, 1997). Both critical and translanguaging pedagogies are rooted in approaches to composition teaching that seek to create more socially just classrooms. Yet, many advocates for and pedagogues of said pedagogies primarily focus on what is included in instruction rather than how aspects of instruction put into practice, or operationalize, the theorized goal of advancing and improving justice in the classroom. Assessments, as a vital element of instruction and a key communicative tool between instructor and student, have been explored as one such instructional area that needs further examination in developing best practices for instruction. In addition, assessments have been explored as a vital aspect of instruction that has been shown to impact students' motivations to participate in activities targeted at supporting their learning growth.

Grading contracts, and labor-based grading contracts, have been introduced and utilized in a variety of instructional contexts and have been endorsed by students and

instructors alike as a means to improve justice in the classroom and to make these communications and judgement decisions clear. While scholars and researchers in the field of composition have undertaken a number of investigations to support these claims, research investigating the implementation of labor-based grading contracts in contexts in which the majority of the student population in question are multilingual are few and far between. This thesis endeavors to better understand how multilingual students perceive and understand labor-based grading as a method to, in turn, determine how such information regarding this assessment methodology can inform instructors and institutions attempting to engage with best practices and to promote justice in the classroom.

In this chapter, topics related to multilingual writing, including assessment, non-traditional grading methods, and salient pedagogies in relevant literature will be examined. To be more specific, literature related to the theoretical underpinnings of labor-based grading and its connection to critical and translanguaging pedagogies will foreground the history of alternative assessment methodologies and their utilization in the FYW classroom. Additionally, relevant studies will offer methodological connections to the case study described in this thesis. Given that such an assessment methodology is relatively novel and knowing that literature related to using grading contracts in contexts similar to what is described in this study continue to be published, multiple related research studies from contexts which are unlike that which is explored in this study will be examined.

Theoretical Background

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theories stipulate that social interaction plays a pivotal role learning, viewing the acquisition of knowledge, whether it be cultural, linguistic, or otherwise, occurring through processes of negotiation, collaboration, and social interaction (Lantof, 2000; Wertsch, 1985). Moreover, sociocultural theories offer a framework in which to better understand how various motivational aspects of learning intermingle with cognitive development, such as self-efficacy, self-regulation, and identity. More succinctly put, one cannot understand an individual's development without reference to their situated contexts because one's mental processes originate within social processes and interactions. Within the field of composition studies, sociocultural theory argues that writing is not just a means of communication but is rather viewed as a mode of social action in the way that all writing, in some way, is the product of interpersonal contact through feedback and utilization of source material (MacArthur, Graham, & Fitzgerald, 2008, p. 58). Writing research possesses a deep connection with sociocultural theories in that sociocultural-related theories represent the dominant research paradigm because the process and products of writing relying heavily on the similar processes of feedback and collaboration; both of which are inherently social processes (Shrestha, 2020). Similarly, just as with research in writing, sociocultural theory has had a profound and lasting impact on understandings of language acquisition in the field of TESOL, and, by extension, multilingual writing. The processes of collaboration, negotiation, and social interaction are particularly relevant for those who are in the process of acquiring while actively communicating in a second, third, or nth language in that Vygotskian learning

theories allow those in the field a way of examining the socially situated mediational techniques educators and other stakeholders undertake to facilitate language learning. Keeping in mind the socially-situated realities of both language learning and writing, many scholars and instructors in the fields of both composition and TESOL have utilized the lens that sociocultural theory provides to better understand how linguistic and composition skills are acquired in classroom contexts.

Motivation and Investment

As explained in the previous section, the concept of motivation relates to the reasons why individuals decide or choose to engage in action (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2021). Scholars and educators involved in both composition and TESOL have used various investigative approaches to further understand various components of students' motivations to learn, as such a concept defies simplistic definitions due to its complex nature. Deeper understandings of varied components of motivation in the writing classroom, such as perceived self-efficacy in completing a writing task (Troia, Shankland & Wolbers, 2012; Pajares, 2003) and affective factors impacting students' writing development have been suggested as providing deeper insights into how students' writing motivation could relate to college success indicators (Ling et al. 2021). However, this limited example of literature related to motivation in writing within composition classrooms rarely incorporate the unique issues related to the presence of multilingual students in an English medium writing classroom as integral or as a part of their investigations. Rather, such investigations examine motivations in writing for students

more generally without a specific focus of students' cultural background or multi-linguistic knowledge (Henry, 2017).

Such a shift in orientation towards investigating students' motivations, particularly for multilingual students, more in terms of identity construction and social participation have been called for by scholars such as Canagarajah (2006) due to a need for, as he says, for the construct to "take account of the contextual forces influencing motivation" (pg. 14), namely sociocultural factors that are found within classroom contexts. The varied components of motivation have been investigated by the field of TESOL, but there appears to be a greater emphasis on varied types of motivations and factors therein, not just the varied nature of the construct itself. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as Ng and Ng (2015) write are key factors for learning in that learners, instructors, and parents all "play a pivotal role in the learning and teaching environment" (p. 24). To combat decreasing motivations to learn, one proposed action relies on involving students in their learning goals by using strategies of "assessment for learning" because it aids in students becoming more connected to and to be more aware of their learning (Ng & Ng, 2015). To that end, Ng and Ng (2015) suggest that in their roles as motivators for student learning in language acquisition contexts, teachers have a significant influence in affecting learner's attitudes and shaping the culture of the classroom as a whole. The concept of motivation, which has been generally understood within the fields of TESOL and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as an individual's desire to learn, helps to explain potential shortcomings (or triumphs) to be a successful learner and user of an additional language.

However, the concept of motivation (which is usually coupled with the concept of individual difference in the field of SLA) does not go far enough to fully encapsulate the varied, multiple, and often influx identities second language learners hold and how those identities impact their language learning. Additionally, language learning is not simply about the learning of a new language system – one is also acquiring the sociocultural practices that are situated within dynamics of power (Norton & Toohey, 2011). This is to say that language learners, and by extension, multilingual writers, are not one-dimensional entities – they are multitudinous and multifaceted individuals who are capable of exhibiting various competencies in a variety of skillsets. It is to that end that investment and not motivation is the construct of focus that will be examined here. Investment was defined by Norton Pierce (1995) as “a way to capture the complex relationship of language learners to the target language and their sometimes-ambivalent desire to speak it. The notion of investment conceives the language learner, not as ahistorical and unidimensional, but as having a complex social history and multiple desires” (p. 25, 1995). Investment, rather than motivation, as explained by Norton (1995), provides a lens in which researchers, scholars, and educators can examine the power dynamics at play in different language learning contexts by centering the historically and socially constructed relationship between the language learner and the target language group.

Translanguaging

The concept of translanguaging can trace its origins back to bilingual education in Wales from the 1980s, in which instructors began to construct cross-curricular strategies

to promote “systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson” (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 643). The concept of translanguaging has gained increased recognition and influence in recent years as various pedagogical and theoretical propositions have emerged from within the fields associated with bilingual and multilingual education. Translanguaging has been defined by Garcia (2009) as the “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds” (p. 45). This definition has been expanded to incorporate not only the strategies learners employ to communicate in multiple languages or utilize a shared conceptual realm between languages, but has grown into a reconceptualization of language and the teaching of language. Translanguaging, according to Vogel and Garcia (2017), is a strategy teachers can use by making use of students’ multilingual linguistic repertoires. However, there remains a variety of questions related to the central aims, use, and outcomes of translanguaging pedagogies (Poza, 2017).

This definition has been expanded and further developed into a theory of practical language use by Wei (2018), who wrote that “translanguaging offers a practical theory of language that sees the latter as a multilingual, multisemiotic, multisensory, and multimodal resources that human beings use for thinking and for communicating thought” (p. 26). Thus, implied within discussions of translanguaging is the consideration of language that is at odds with how language learning and use has been previously conceptualized within the field of TESOL in that language use and language acquisition are viewed in translanguaging as an ongoing process versus a product (Becker, 1988). The concept of translanguaging has often been used to understand and describe the oral

interactions and plural language use in written texts used multilingual students, but research into translanguaging has yet to further investigate the pedagogic potential of such a conceptualization of language in the classroom (Conteh, 2018).

Organizational Justice and Fairness

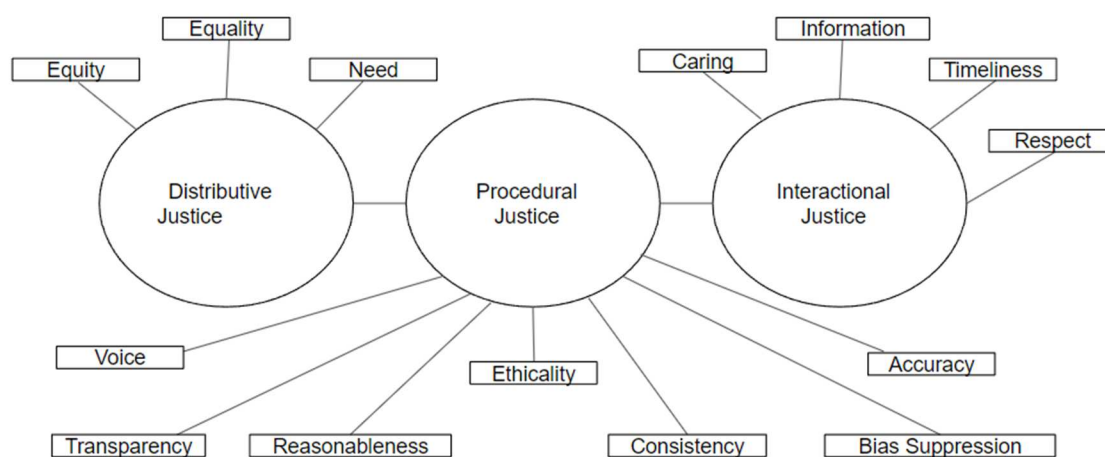
Organizational justice was initially conceptualized by Greenberg (1987) as a means for conceptualizing interactions between employees and employers within an organization impact behavior. This conceptualization helps to interpret how and why the actions of those with higher social status in positions of authority are seen as fair and/or just by those they are tasked with managing. This concept is further organized into four subcategories: distributive justice, interactional justice, procedural justice, and informational justice. Both fairness and justice have been, as identified by Rasooli, Zandi, and DeLuca (2021) a significant areas of focus in education in that education has been promoted as a means to establish fairness, justice and equality for diverse societies. Similarly, they identified that academic institutions can be places in which students are platformed into learning more about justice, fairness, and good citizenship, and that teachers, in their roles as facilitators of students' learning, are vital actors in the prioritization of justice in the classroom and beyond. In an earlier article, Rasooli, Zandi, & DeLuca (2019) argued that much of the current conceptualizations in scholarship focusing on fairness in classroom assessment do not make distinctions between fairness and justice and assert that these two concepts are not interchangeable but related.

Justice in organizational justice theory phenomenologically describes justice as a socially constructed and subjective act that is determined as just because someone deems

it so and thus, responds appropriately (Folger & Cropanzano 1998). Fairness theory is a model by Folger and Cropanzano (2002) which presumes that the primary concern of social justice is the assignment of blame, in that when individuals identify that they have been treated unfairly, they are “holding someone accountable for an action (or inaction) that threatens another person’s material or psychological well-being” (p. 3). How one is determined to be worthy of blame determines the process of accountability, which is, as Folger and Cropanzano (2002) identified as fundamental to promoting and sustaining justice. This sentiment is echoed by Reeves (2011), who wrote that “the principle of fairness demands that the definition of success be clear” (p. xiv). Students’ perceived injustices in the classroom may result from classroom management practices undertaken by teachers, as identified by Geddes (2003). Offering conceptual proposed approaches that aims to support the reevaluation of the gap between instructors and their students when it comes to the accuracy of grading students’ work, Geddes (2003) suggests that organizational justice can provide valuable insight in determining how classroom justice can be ensured and how such practices can promote students’ perceptions of justice in the grades they receive. Inquiring as to the nature of fairness within the theoretical framework of organizational justices provides “an appropriate platform to conceptualize classroom assessment fairness as a socio-cultural issue” (p. 591) and that research inquiring into students’ perception of fairness would provide insights into their cognitive and effective learning as well as their motivations to participate in that learning (Rasooli, Zandi, & DeLuca, 2019). Additionally, Rasooli, Zandi & DeLuca offer a visualization explaining the dimensions of fairness in classroom assessment that is relevant to this

study and has been reconceptualized by the researcher. This reconceptualization of Rasooli, Zandi, and DeLuca's (2019) work is intended to provide descriptions of various principles of justice as they pertain to classroom assessment and to visualize the relationships between the various tenants of organizational justice.

Table 1.1 – Organizational Justice Principles of Classroom Assessment



Justice Principle	Description
Equity	Congruence between students' contributions and their outcomes
Equality	Classrooms outcomes distributed equally
Need	Students' needs considered when outcomes are distributed
Voice	Students have voice to appeal classroom procedures to their teacher
Transparency	Classroom procedures enacted by teacher with transparency
Reasonableness	Classroom procedures enacted reasonably by the teacher
Ethicality	Classroom procedures support and are held to ethical standards
Consistency	Classroom procedures applied consistently

Bias Suppression	Classroom procedures lack bias due to students' cultural background, gender, or socioeconomic status, among others
Accuracy	Classroom procedures applied accurately and based on adequate data
Caring	Kindness shown to students by teacher with sensitivity
Information	Feedback provided logically, thoughtfully, adequately, and truthfully
Timeliness	Feedback communicated by the teacher in a timely manner
Respect	Students' outcomes communicated by teacher with respect

(adapted from Rasooli, Zandi, & DeLuca, 2019)

It ought to be noted, however, that investigations into fairness, social justice, and organizational justice theory in the respective fields of composition studies and multilingual writing studies are relatively nonexistent – particularly when examining the interrelationships between pedagogical practices, assessment methodologies, and grading practices as a means to support or hinder justice in the multilingual writing classroom through an organizational justice lens. It ought to be said that most research investigating organizational justice are found primarily in business related fields and scholarship. However, given the business-like nature of grading contracts, it seems particularly apt to connect the ways in which such a method of assessment can be examined as specified theory of justice to better understand the promise of grading contracts and, more specifically, labor-based grading contracts as a means of promoting justice through fairness in the writing classroom. This understanding is particularly important, since it has been suggested that labor-based grading contracts specifically are a means of promoting justice in the classroom for multilingual students. This is particularly notable, as scholars from both fields continue to promote and advocate for more social justice-

oriented pedagogies to writing instruction for multilingual and non-multilingual students, but have yet to fully conceptualize both how that justice is determined and maintained within spaces, like classrooms, in which there exists an unequal power dynamic such as what exists between instructors and students. More specially, what role such pedagogical practices, like assessment and grading, play in determining how students perceive both their own learning and how fair the practices they are subjected to are understood and perceived by those who are subjected to such practices on a programmatic and individual classroom level, such as what is under investigation in this study. Relevant pedagogies to this investigation are examined in the following section.

Pedagogical Background

Composition Pedagogy

Nystrand et al. (1993) write that the field of composition studies arose as a discipline in the 1970s as a way to further investigate the ways in which researchers and scholars in the field examine the issues related to “the problem of meaning in discourse” and “the work of an international writing research community becoming institutionalized in the form of new journals and graduate programs” (p. 267). They argue that the ways in which composition studies has been developed must be understood within the larger histories that affect literary and linguistic studies. This definition is further expanded upon by Heinker & Vandenberg (2015) who write that the field of composition studies focuses especially upon the systems and institutions involved in writing at the college level within the United States. Many of these institutional communities within US contexts fits within the umbrella of “first-year writing”. The teaching of what Horner

(1996) terms as “basic writing” holds a unique and particular niche within the field of composition studies, going further to add that

the success of Basic Writing in legitimizing the institutional place of basic writing courses and students cannot be separated from the ways in which it works within the framework of public discourse in higher education and Open Admissions, particularly its silence about the concrete material, political, institutional, social historical realities confronting basic writing teachers, students, and courses (p. 200).

Historically, multilingual writing has been situated solely within the field of second language studies, placing the responsibility of advancing pedagogical knowledge of multilingual writing researchers. Yet, as Matsuda (2013; 2006) noted, these assumptions in the broader view of history suggest that there are significant limitations to this worldview. It is to that end that multilingual writing studies (also referred to as L2 or multilingual writing) has developed an interdisciplinary relationship between second-language studies and the field of composition, which allowed further exploration into pedagogical advancements in the teaching of writing more generally. To that end, multilingual writing instructors must continue to contribute to and draw upon knowledge that have the capacity to influence instruction (Matsuda, 2006). As findings are continually shared between second language and composition studies fields, the complex and multidisciplinary nature of multilingual writing research and teaching can assist in the advancement not only of second language learning pedagogies, but also composition classrooms more generally.

Santos (2000) write that within the field of education, instructional alignment (or the degree to which outcomes, processes and assessments for classroom instruction correspond to one another) represents a central component of instructional design. To meet the needs of multilingual students, instructional designers, writing program administrators, and instructors must be consistent in their search for best practices for assessing student writing. Matsuda & Hammill (2014) note that “second language writing pedagogy is ubiquitous” in that it is not “site-specific” like other pedagogies, because “it happens wherever second language (L2) writers are, including basic writing courses, first-year writing courses, advanced composition courses, professional writing courses, writing centers, and courses across the disciplines. Nor is it optional” (p. 266). It is thus appropriate to consider instances of contract grading assessment models from multiple contexts as applicable to multilingual writing contexts. The field of multilingual writing, now an established subset and interdisciplinary link between the fields of TESOL and composition, is directly concerned with the needs, contexts, and situations in which students who write in a second or additional language. This shift away to a multilingual orientation in TESOL allows for more equitable approaches and social justice orientations to research in the field and advancement and development of relevant theories to the teaching of multilingual students, particularly in writing instruction (Cevatiuc, 2018; 2022).

Given that writing and language learning are, by their very natures, socially situated and facilitated acts, and provided that increased racial, cultural, and language diversity continues to increase due to widespread immigration, the fields of TESOL, multilingual

writing, and composition continue to endeavor to provide research-based and theoretically aligned pedagogical recommendations for FYW instructors to give rise to more equitable and socially just classrooms for all learners, regardless of linguistic background. Writing and language educators alike have been called upon to take a critical approach in developing curriculum and assessment methods that acknowledges the political nature of writing and language study by various researchers and scholars (Johnson & Randolph, 2015; 2017; Osborn, 2006; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Severino, 1993). In an effort to develop more socially just and equitable classrooms, various pedagogies and approaches have been implemented, two of which are relevant to this present study will be discussed below.

Critical Pedagogy

This study is directly concerned with further investigating the pedagogic realities of translanguaging related pedagogies (and critical pedagogies by extension) in the multilingual writing classroom and how such a frame contextualizes assessment methods such as contract grading, and thus a discussion and examination of literature related to and concerning translanguaging and critical theories, practices, and pedagogies, are warranted here. Given the relationship between critical and translanguaging theories and pedagogies, a discussion of critical pedagogies will precede a review of translanguaging theories and pedagogies related to this study.

Critical pedagogy was most notably introduced by Brazilian literacy educator and curriculum developer Paulo Freire (1970; 1973; 1994) as an approach to apply concepts of critical theory within the field of education. A succinct definition of critical pedagogy

comes from Giroux (2007), who wrote that critical pedagogy is not only concerned with providing students novel ways to think critically and to act with authority as individuals in the classroom but more specifically with providing students the expertise necessary for them to grow in their capacity to question various disparaging power structures in society by empowering them to take responsibility for intervening in situations in which these disparities create inequality in our daily lives. Such a definition of critical pedagogy suggests, then, that students act as agents with more shared power and authority in the classroom by taking a more shared responsibility for their own learning alongside their instructors (Thomson-Bunn, 2014). Freire warned that in order to move past the present forms of oppressive social orders, educators must shift their pedagogical practices to usher in more just classroom spaces, which directly impacts all aspects of curriculum. Transitioning away from the traditional “banking-model” of education in which students are conceptualized as receivers of knowledge provided by their perspective repositories (their instructors), critical pedagogical practices directly impact curriculum development in that the role of the student is as an active, critical subject and thus, the students take more responsibility for their own learning in the classroom (Shor, 1980).

Vossoughi and Gutierrez (2016) note, however, that most research investigating pedagogical forms concerned with analyzing the relationship between schooling and societal structures maintain focuses on what is being taught instead the ways in which social and institutional structures impact learning. With the understanding that critical pedagogy is concerned with understanding and dismantling injustice in the classroom and given that research concerned with investigating critical pedagogical strategies in the

classroom focus on how students are materially instructed, there is a need to determine how instructors develop, as Vossolughi and Guitierrez (2016) call, “the organizations of learning” (p. 143). However, critical pedagogy and discussions of its implementation in the classroom rarely discuss how such practices can shape assessment methodologies and grading procedures (Reynolds & Trehan, 2000) outside of the recognition that recognizing the flaws in traditional assessment methods as antithetical to the aims of critical pedagogy (Boud, 1986) and how such a pedagogy may impact assessments and grading methods to support authenticity in learning (Serrano et al., 2017). Understandings of critical pedagogy are relevant to this present investigation in that the design and inspiration for grading contracts are directly linked to the social justice aims of critical pedagogy and translanguaging pedagogy.

Translanguaging Pedagogy

Translanguaging pedagogy has often been connected to critical pedagogy in that it has been considered as a means of combining the educational and social justice agendas associated with critical pedagogy into practice for multilingual learners. Along with critical pedagogy, translanguaging pedagogy has been proposed by scholars as both a transformative pedagogy and a political act in that it acknowledges multilingual students’ shared cognitive linguistic and cultural knowledge (Gort & Sembiante, 2015; Martin-Beltran, 2014; Sayer, 2013), provides an avenue for multilingual students to develop and explore their identities through their language use (Canagarajah, 2011; Flores & Garcia, 2013, Sayer, 2013), and promotes social justice and educational equity by challenging the hegemony of English (Garcia & Wei, 2014; Garcia, 2009). This positioning of language

also allows for an alignment with vital principles of social justice in that it affords all learners, regardless of their proficiency in a language, access to educational equity – or at least, it attempts to do so (Lee, 2016). While associated fields of applied linguistics, like TESOL, have described and discussed concerns related to translanguaging, particularly in terms of determining best practices for promoting linguistic diversity and justice in the classroom, Lee (2016) and Matsuda (2014) notes that translanguaging had yet to come into prominence in composition-related scholarship prior to Horner et al.'s “Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach” in 2011. Since that time, scholars of multilingual writing have continued to investigate aspects of translanguaging in the writing classroom as institutions and instructors alike endeavor to develop language and content competency building strategies for multilingual students in a variety of contexts (Rafi & Morgan, 2021; Kiramba, 2016; Canagarajah, 2011a; 2011b).

While the pedagogical potentials of translanguaging in the language classroom have been discussed in literature (Wei, 2018; Lopez, et al. 2017) as well as its connections to critical pedagogy, investigations regarding how translanguaging orientations in writing instruction impact assessment methods are comparatively few and far between. Most discussions regarding translanguaging for writing assessments from these sources errs towards the theoretical and conceptual, rather than empirical investigations to determine the efficacy and outcomes of such practices. Scholars such as Inoue (2017) posits translanguaging approaches to teaching writing necessitate the development of “fairer assessment ecologies” (p. 130). This connection between the operationalization of “fair assessment ecologies” and bringing to fruition the social justice objectives of translanguaging

approaches to the teaching of writing was further echoed by Lee (2016) who noted, “if a social justice agenda for writing assessment is about creating opportunity structures and positive consequences for all students, then classroom grading is an obvious place to focus our efforts” (p. 175). It is to that end that this study is situated. By investigating this assessment methodology, specifically the grading system used in the classroom, not only is it the hope that such information can help to inform instructors and institutions as to how such an assessment is perceived and understood by students but to also provide indications as to how such a method can inform pedagogical choices – specifically those pedagogical choices that are deeply entwined with efforts to develop and sustain socially just spaces. To that end, a review of assessment and grading related scholarship the fields of composition and TESOL as they pertain to this study will follow to ground this connection between assessment, grading, and pedagogy.

Assessment and Grading

Assessment has been used as a tool to improve student learning outcomes and as a method employed by institutions for collecting necessary data to inform decision-making (Dorime-Williams, 2018). To which, there are considered to be two types of assessment relevant to this current investigation and educational practice: formative and summative assessment. Summative assessments are summations of what a student has learned through instruction usually at the conclusion of a given course while formative assessments evaluate learners while they are still in the process of developing their skills and knowledge within a specific subject area (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). The ways in which educators as well as other invested parties (curriculum developers, course

designers, etc.) teach and operationalize assessment methods continue to evolve, as the tools and task they develop are investigated for their efficacy as a means to determine best practice. This is particularly important as the marketisation of higher education continues to intensify as such trends continue to create difficulties for developing learner-centered assessments (Serrano et al., 2018). Additionally, students often assign blame to their instructors for a lower than desirable grade rather than themselves, shifting (sometimes accurately) accountability away from themselves (Lilly, Wipawayangkool, & Pass, 2022).

In addition to framing assessment as a tool to improve student learning and as inextricably linked to and a major influence on students' learning itself, assessment has also been noted as playing 'a subtle, complex, and enormously important role in students' experiences of learning' (Maclellan, 2001, p. 308). McArthur (2015) conceptualizes assessment for social justice as referring to the justice of assessment within higher education contexts and the role that assessment plays in supporting various forms of learning that promote a deeper understanding of social justice within society more generally. To that end, McArthur suggests that "those who...are committed to greater social justice within and through higher education need to pay much greater heed to the role assessment has to play in achieving such goals" (p. 968). The role that assessment and grading play in various instructional contexts may vary depending on the course material, pedagogical approaches, instructional aims of a given course. Given that the case study described in this thesis walks in the two related fields of composition and

TESOL, reviews of scholarship related to both fields will allow for descriptive examinations of relevant insights from both interrelated, but still different, disciplines.

Assessment and Grading in Composition

As explained by authors of a Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) position statement revised in 2022 on writing assessment,

writing assessment can be used for a variety of purposes, both inside the classroom and outside: supporting student learning, assigning a grade, placing students in appropriate courses, allowing them to exit a course or sequence of courses, certifying proficiency, and evaluating programs. Given the high-stakes nature of many of these assessment purposes, it is crucial that assessment practices be guided by sound principles that are fair and just and specific to the people for whom and the context and purposes for which they are designed” (Introduction, “Assessment”).

Six foundational principles outlined by the CCCC provide guidance for those involved in the formation of writing assessment on ethical formations, two of which that are relevant to this research: 3.) Assessment practices should be solidly grounded in the latest research on learning, literacies, language, writing, equitable pedagogy, and ethical assessment. 6.)

Writing and writing assessment are labor-intensive practices. Labor conditions and outcomes must be designed and implemented in pursuit of both the short-term and long-term health and welfare of all participants (CCCC, 2022). Perhaps even more important and relevant to this study is the conclusion of the CCCC’s (2022) statement on assessment, which closes with, “there is no perfect assessment measure, and best practices in all assessment contexts involve reflections by stakeholders on the

effectiveness and ethics of all assessment practices” (Conclusion). Such reflections from students, who are not only stakeholders but subjected to assessment, were sought and under investigation in this case study to assist tangentially in determining how such efforts maintain or hinder higher pursuits of educational ethics and efficacy through pedagogical practice.

This reality is particularly evident in FYW classrooms, as has been noted by Smith (2005), Kohn (1994), Huot (2002; 2003), and Elbow (1993; 1998). Not only have grades been determined as “unreliable” but they have also, as Elbow (1993) writes, “harmful to the atmosphere of teaching and learning” (p. 189). Grades, as Huot (2003) adds, are only one of the many evaluations instructors provide to their students to measure and judge their learning and can often carry a substantially greater weight than other types of assessment in that they are more codified and formal in the eyes of various invested parties including the students themselves. This is due to the fact that grades are “a totalizing evaluative mechanism” (Huot, 2003, p.6) and even determining value-judgments on the individuals involved. It has been suggested by Elbow (1998) that it would help students to be aware of what criteria they would be evaluated on in determining their final course grades for student transcripts. However, transcripts, as he adds, would “be much more useful if they represented a different deployment of energy and ambition” if said transcripts reflected grades which are based on the criteria of a given course and a student’s performance in achieving that criteria (Elbow, 1998, p. 182)

Many alternatives to traditional assessments and grading methods in writing classrooms have been suggested and examined by scholars in the field of composition

and, more specifically in FYW such as growth-biased assessment (Nelson, 1997), portfolio-based assessment (Lam & Lee, 2010; Desmet et al., 2008; Jones, 1997), and various types of “ungrading” (Inoue, 2019; Elbow, 2009). This last category of “ungrading” is where grading models like the grading contract at the center of this study reside in the sphere of assessment and grading methodologies for composition. To that end, writing instructors have endeavored to develop alternative methods for grading student writing, particularly in keeping within the frames of more justice-oriented pedagogies like critical and translanguaging pedagogies. Such a system has implications for multilingual writers as well, as Inoue (2017; 2019) identified, but few investigations have been undertaken in this area of study. These relevant studies, both with similar contexts as to what is being explored in this study as well as in related first-year writing contexts will be discussed later on in this review.

Assessment and Grading in Multilingual Composition

Various ethical, logistical, and programmatic issues related to multilingual writing assessment have been explored by scholars in field from a variety of contexts (Lee, 2016; Poe & Zhang-Wu, 2020; Tardy & Whittig, 2017;). Lee (2016) writes that a student-centered approach to multilingual writing assessment in which students are directly involved in the monitoring of their progress refocuses assessment as a learning rather than, as tends to occur in multilingual writing contexts, on the summative functions and formative potential of assessment. Tardy & Whitig (2017) write that within the past 20 years of scholarship on assessment of multilingual student writers has revealed “tensions and ethical questions” as to how instructors can and should assess multilingual students’

writing. Poe and Zhang-Wu (2020) noted that while scholars in the field of writing studies have continued to embrace research related to multilingualism in the classroom, scholars in the field have yet to develop programmatic assessment methodologies that are directly related to that scholarship. This small selection of scholarship from scholars outside of composition related to assessment in multilingual writing do not provide a clear indication as to how grading, a significant part of assessment, impacts multilingual student's perceptions of their own learning and their motivations to take part in that learning. Additionally, while ethical questions related to the assessment of multilingual students, such as those raised by Tardy and Whitig (2017) have indicated that the need to fairly evaluate such students is imperative in assessment processes, descriptions and frameworks and the inclusion of grading within those methods are absent from their discussions.

Matsuda (2006) indicated that the ways in which multilingual composition teachers assess their students' writing has more to do with their pedagogical choices than their assignment or syllabus designs overall, raising the question as to the ways in which multilingual writers' experiences and expressions can impact and shape assessment standards and practices. The hope being, Matsuda (2006) writes, is that exploring such questions related to assessing multilingual students' writing "will lead to more equitable and enriched pedagogy, not only for second-language students, but for all students" (p. 323).

Despite the number of published discussions as to the need to develop methods of assessing and, by extension, grading multilingual student writers' writing, there remains

few descriptions and investigations as to how such a reframing of assessment can be executed or operationalized in designated multilingual composition classrooms on a programmatic and individual level. Additionally, while alternatives to grading multilingual compositions have mirrored suggestions by scholars in the field of composition with portfolio-assessment (Lam, 2017) or self- and peer-assessments (Meihami & Razmjoo, 2016), few (if any) such suggestions have explicitly followed an “ungrading” model in their positioning. There have been calls within the field, however, to develop assessment methodologies that support the justice aims of critical and tranlingual approaches to multilingual composition and emphasize the “assessment as learning” model (Lee, 2016). Given the limited use of alternative grading methods in such contexts, specifically grading contracts, such as what is to be explored in this case study, historical and relevant examples from various fields will offer a methodological “terra firma” as to how such a grading contract (such as what that which is at the center of this study) came to fruition.

Grading Contracts

To better understand what contract grading is and how it pertains to assessing student writing, definitions of contract grading and a history of grading contracts use in a variety of disciplines (including composition) are discussed below. Given the relative novelty of utilizing contract grading in the composition classroom, a historical overview of grading contract usage and their use will be explored to provide a historical background as to labor-based grading contracts, as a type of contract grading, came to fruition and how the contract used at the center of this study reflects earlier efforts to develop contract grading practices aimed at promoting socially just classrooms. Although

the origins of contract grading in the North America go back to the early 20th century, the current era of contract grading utilization can trace its foundations in the 1970s. A typical definition in these early years of the modern contract grading era was offered by Harvey (1972), who defined contract grading as:

...a business-like arrangement whereby the instructor defines the performance required for each grade, the students defines the performance level to which he will work, and signs a contract in which the instructor is committed to awarding the predetermined grade if the student attains the appropriate performance level (p. 42).

Hassencahl (1979) offered a grading system based on contracts that was developed over six years, noting that most educators to their knowledge who were using contract grading in their classroom commented on the need for “refinements and situational adjustments” need to be made at the instructor’s discretion “to improve the functioning of contract grading” but agrees with colleagues in saying “that it is a viable alternative to our traditional systems of grading” (p. 33). Even more notably, Hassencahl (1979) wrote that most research at the time of publication looking into contract grading usage in the classroom had not been conclusive, writing that “there has been no consistency in the coupling of grading contracts and criterion-referenced grading” (p. 32).

This centering of student responsibility in the learning process by utilizing learning contracts increased even more meaningfully throughout the 1970s and 1980s in a variety of disciplines, although most of these contracts were highly individualized with students personally negotiating with their course instructor to fulfil course requirements (Avakian,

1974; Barlow, 1974; Berte, 1975; Wald, 1978; Worby, 1977). Taylor (1980) indicated that while the use of grading contracts in both secondary and higher education contexts experienced widespread adoption in various local and global contexts, the field of composition's adoption of contract grading remained, at that time, was notably lagging behind other disciplines in adopting such grading policies and practices. When grading contracts were used during this era in composition courses, numerical or letter grades were typically given to individual students after larger assessments in the context of one-on-one conferences, either before or after the students begin their work (Knapp, 1976; Leahy, 1980). Birdsall (1979) offers a now often cited report in the realm of contract grading on how detailed checklists that outline what work students could do to achieve a particular grade could be deployed in the composition classroom provides an applicable template for grading contracts. However, the desire for many writing instructors who employed such assessment practices for their students to focus less on their final grades in the course by utilizing more of their energy, time, and labor in developing and revising their writing still remained a challenge. Even more notably, most articles during this time do not align their grading contract with larger efforts to circumvent existing power structures between the instructor and the student, although the practice of conferencing individually with students to determine course grades and involving them in the assessment process seem to be targeted in undertaking that task. It was not until Farber (1990) that there was an explicit connection between the promotion of contract grading as one employable method and liberatory tool that instructors could utilize to dismantle hierarchical structures that still, to this day, afflict college composition classrooms.

Scholarly arguments specifically geared towards composition instructors to “step-outside” of traditional grading practices increased with scholars like Peter Elbow in 1993, in which he outlined the ways in which composition instructors can utilize grading contracts in the writing classroom by discussing the ways in which instructors evaluate student writing. Evaluation, Elbow (1993) writes, is a means for looking critically at students’ written work “in order to make distinctions as to the quality of different features or dimensions” (p. 191). This view of evaluation is closely aligned with the assertion that contract grading is related to criterion-referenced assessment in that students are only assessed on their mastery of a particular goal as determined by the instructor and/or institution, in that “evaluation,” Elbow writes, “implies the recognition of different criteria or dimensions – and by implication different contexts and audiences for the same performance. Evaluation requires going beyond a first response that may be nothing but a kind of ranking...and instead looking carefully enough at the performance” (p. 188). Elbow (1993) ends by asking composition instructors to rank and grade as infrequently as possible, instead advocating for evaluative measures of assessing student writing as they are fundamentally a “more careful, more discriminating, fairer mode of assessment” (p. 205).

Grading contracts, in multiple forms, continued to gain prominence in the field of composition overtime, particularly as a means to engage with critical pedagogy. Responding to Danielewicz and Elbow’s 2009 essay in *College Composition and Communication*, Shor (2009), one of the leading scholars of critical pedagogy in the United States, compares his contract to determine distinct differences between the two

contracts and the ways in which their contract enacts critical pedagogy practice in their composition classroom. His article also further expands in this article on the findings published in an earlier book, *When Students Have Power* (1996), in which Shor writes about the various experimentations with power-sharing in the classroom and experiences with contract grading, illustrating how power relations in the classroom must be negotiated if meaningful learning is to take place. Shor's contract differs from other contracts in that he uses an A-F scale to grade the quality of student writing and that the grading contract as a whole is fully negotiated with students. Shor's contract grades on performance minimums for each letter grade, assigning differing amounts of work (or labor) students must complete in their writing fully (as determined by which grade students indicated that they were working towards achieving) and grants grades based on students achieving qualitative minimums and the quality of their writing. If writing that students submit is considered unsuccessful in meeting either the qualitative or quality minimums, students are encouraged to rewrite and revise their work based on the feedback and tutoring offered to them.

In recent years, one of the most prominent proponents and scholars of a specific subset of grading contracts (known as labor-base grading contracts) has been Asao B. Inoue (2014, 2017, 2019) who has written extensively on methods for socially just writing assessment as well as connecting assessment practices with translingual pedagogies. Ideally for Inoue, a writing course would be designed in such a way to “cultivate a more critical, democratic community” that “shares responsibility and negotiates most of the work (as well as the terms by which that work is done) with

students” (p. 71). “Students”, he continues, “come to our classrooms with various Englishes and who may have a wide variety of literacy competencies that may not match those that the academy promotes” (p. 71). Rather than determining these students as “underprepared” or “lacking”, Inoue instead advocates for the academy to broaden the boundaries of what Englishes are acceptable and appropriate in academic spaces, further operationalizing students’ right to their own languages. Inoue focuses instead on the concept of “labor” to recognize and describe the efforts students undertake in the composition classroom more accurately. At its core, labor, is cognitively demanding, not just an action undertaken and paid by the hour – which is often the dominant reward mechanic for labor in U.S. culture (Inoue, 2014). Labor, Inoue writes, entails tasks that are often “painful” and “uncomfortable”, yet result in students feeling the benefit of “a job well done, in feelings of accomplishment, in satisfaction, success, pride, and growth” (p. 74). In his book, “Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom”, Inoue writes that the hybrid contract introduced by Danielewicz and Elbow (2009), which he used in his composition classrooms, was still an unfair assessment method for many minority populations of students, including multilingual students because of their “Englishes” were distant or different from those dominant academic discourses which are commonly promoted and reified in academia. Because of this fact, many students in classrooms using such a hybrid contract were ultimately unable to attain “an excellent or superior judgement in dominant discourse because their literacy practices are just different – they didn’t grow up in White, middle-class households – and ten or fifteen weeks of instruction is just not enough time to

change these linguistic realities” (p. 61). Inoue notes that the core of many debates regarding grading contracts relate to the judgements instructors make that produce grades on a students’ written work and/or writing performance. He writes that there are two philosophical assumptions regarding assessing writing students that relate to this question of judging student writing, stating these two competing ideas:

Learning to write or improving students’ writing requires teachers to *judge writing quality*, thus course grades should be calculated by those judgments of quality. To be a fair assessment ecology, consistent judgments of quality are central.

versus

Learning to write or improving students’ writing requires students *to produce a certain quantity of writing*, thus course grades should be calculated by the quantity of writing a student produces. To be a fair assessment ecology, consistent judgments of quantity are central (Inoue, 2019, p. 66, emphasis added)

Rather than utilizing quality assessments, like that which Danielewicz and Elbow suggested, Inoue instead suggests that the quantity orientation is more equitable to students with minority identities in white academic spaces. However, the quality of student writing is still at the center of the feedback students receive from their instructor, it has no weight in determining the final course grade. Inoue (2019) also makes an important distinction between learning contracts and grading contracts, writing that while

learning contracts make agreements between teachers and students about the learning process as a whole, grading contracts, instead, make agreements related to grades. This dichotomy, however, is a tricky one, knowing that when students “produce a certain quantity of writing”, their writing improves, specifically in writing for different audiences. While Inoue (2019), the most vocal champion and developer of labor-based grading contracts (as well as the architect of the labor-based grading contract that inspired the one at the center of this research study), did specifically mention multilingual students as beneficiaries of labor-based grading contract use in the composition classroom, there was little to no information as to the specific identity of these multilingual students. As with racial identities, linguistic identities are, as previously noted, multifaceted and constantly in-flux. The linguistic needs and use of multilingual international students are different than those who are Native-born and are forced into a “white racial habitus” (Inoue, 2019) in their writing. Labor-based grading, as Inoue (2019) describes, promotes social justice through assessment in the writing classroom by allowing students to develop as writers because they have more opportunities to try without fear of repercussion or a lower grade due to the fact that linguistic ability is not the primary focus of assessment. This shift is facilitated through allowing for failure in the writing classroom in that rather than focusing the grading process on the perceived quality of their writing by their instructor – which is nearly always a subjective judgement rather than a more objective decision.

By mentioning multilingual students while not providing specific information as to how and why multilingual students benefit from labor-based grading contracts other

than as a means to suppress white language supremacy and a means for promoting justice in the writing classroom indicates that studies such as what is described in this thesis be undertaken to determine through empirical methods if such a grading method benefits multilingual students as described and as a means for promoting social justice in the writing classroom. In addition, there is a lack of evidence of how students in multilingual writing classrooms perceive labor-based grading contracts and what their attitudes toward such a system can do to inform instructional practices in the composition classroom. There have been, fortunately, some studies into the utilization of grading contracts in writing classrooms in which most or all of the students were identified as multilingual, but the breadth of investigation into this area of study is still relatively sparse. However, as Matsuda & Hammill (2014) note, the pervasiveness of multilingual writers is both an “undeniable reality” in U.S. higher education contexts and that “writing courses are multilingual by default” (p. 266). It is for this reason that studies investigating the use of grading contracts in the composition classroom, regardless of student population, will be examined here as a way to examine how grading contracts have been used and studied in previous studies. Given the lack of multiple examples from TESOL-related scholarship that is focused on contexts within the US similar to that which is explored in this case study, relevant studies from other contexts will be explored here.

Relevant Studies

Given that there have been few investigations into the use of contract grading in multilingual writing classrooms and more specifically how students perceive and understand such a method of assessment, a number of studies regarding the

implementation and student's perceptions of contract grading from the related research field of composition studies will be examined in this section. Since this study also uses the framework of organizational justice to better understand multilingual students' perceptions of labor-based grading contracts as a means to determine how such insights can aid course designers and instructors invested in implementing socially justice pedagogies in their multilingual writing classrooms, a few studies related to such an area of study will also be examined. These studies' methodologies, contexts, foci, and findings will be examined and compared to the research discussed in this thesis as a way of determining the necessity of the research discussed in this thesis.

Organizational justice theory has been used as a framework to conceptualize fairness in classroom environments by Rasooli, Zandi, and DeLuca (2019). A related study was conducted by the same team in 2021 in which they conducted a meta-analysis of 96 prior research studies into justice and fairness in educational contexts using either organizational or social psychological theories of justice to validate their findings, conceptualize, and measure justice in the classroom. In these publications, the authors noted that not only is further research investigating student perceptions of justice and fairness warranted, but that the theoretical frameworks utilized to investigate justice and fairness in classroom contexts ought to be reexamined to further reflect the contextual complexity of teaching, learning, interpersonal interactions in classrooms as opposed to organizations, and assessment. Rasooli, Zandi, and DeLuca's (2021) discussions of their findings from the factor analysis of prior studies indicate, as they noted, "the need to rethink the conceptions and dimensionality of fairness or justice construct in classrooms

to reflect teachers' and students' perspectives more adequately" (p. 10) in educational research. To that end, Rasooli, Zandi, and DeLuca (2021) endorsed future research in this area to be more straightforwardly directed at exploring students, particularly students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds and other less investigated participants to better generate a theory of fairness and justice in classrooms that is more localized rather than adopting a theory from other domains. Since such a reconceptualization of fairness and justice classroom contexts that transcends the work-place applications of organizational justice has yet to come to fruition, it is in this view that organizational justice continues to provide a valuable theoretical framework in which to investigate student perceptions of assessment methodologies using a justice-oriented approach.

Several quantitative studies have utilized organizational justice as a framework of interpreting student perceptions of fairness in the classroom across a variety of contexts (various assessment methodologies, such as instructor grading student work (Burger, 2017), peer-to-peer evaluation (Hannay, 2014; Oppenheimer, 1989), instructor feedback (Chory & Paulsel, 2007) and as well as instructor responses to teaching evaluations (Lilly, Wipawayangkool, & Pass, 2022). Empirical investigations into determining how fairness in the classroom is perceived by students, like Oppenheimer's (1989) study, have continued to use qualitative measures. Burger's (2017) study aimed at determining what context-bound conditions, like assessment methodologies, allowed for the emergence of fairness-related responses from students interdepartmentally, discovering that respondents indicated that instructors using more formative assessments in their classrooms were determined to be more fair in their grading procedures by their students.

This is contrasted by Hannay's (2014) investigation, which prioritized determining how the peer evaluation process within a localized classroom context and indicates the need for instructors to state the parameters for outcome allocation (a vital aspect of organizational justice) clearly. These findings were mirrored in Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2007) who investigated students' negative affects towards their instructors in their grading processes, finding that when students perceived their grade was reflective of a fair evaluation, was more important than their beliefs of whether they were fairly assessed to determine their civility and compliance. While studies utilized research methodologies unlike those utilized in this study in that the researchers did not use students' written reflective artifacts and open-ended questionnaires to further investigate students' perceptions of a non-traditional method of assessing their work in the classroom, these investigations indicate that how grades are determined in a given course has an overwhelming capacity to determine how students interact with aspects of their respective courses. Although this framework of organizational justice has yet to be utilized to understand and interpret student's perceptions of labor-based grading in a multilingual composition classroom, this study is an effort to respond to Rasooli, Zandi, and Deluca's (2021) call to investigate such a context. This study is also unlike those previously mentioned in that it similarly seeks to determine if such an assessment methodology supports the tenants of social justice-oriented pedagogies like translanguaging and critical pedagogies.

Prior to 2010, many composition scholars utilized primarily pedagogical theories and anecdotes to argue in favor of the use of grading contracts in composition

classrooms, usually championing the positive aspects of implementation rather than using empirical methodologies to determine whether or not grading contracts fulfil their, at times idealistic, goals rather than explicitly employing empirical methodologies to investigate their implementation and use in composition classrooms. More recent studies have aimed at discovering students' experiences with grading contracts so that the contract itself could be more reliably measured by invested parties and replicated in various contexts (Litterio, 2016; Potts, 2010; Villanueva, 2014). In addition, multiple studies have been conducted to investigate the role of assessment methodologies in student's perceptions of their learning (Crossman, 2007; Struyven, Dochy, & Janssens, 2002) Student perceptions about assessment, as Struyven, Dochy, and Janseens (2002) argue, can have a marked influence on how a student approaches their own learning. To that end, alternative assessments, compared to more traditional assessment methods, were found to be perceived by students considerably more "fair" in an English context. However, few have investigated multilingual student's perceptions of assessment methods like labor-based grading in an identified multilingual classroom. In examining these studies, particular attention will be paid in this review to discuss similarities and differences between the grading contracts at the center of their investigations. This is done in an effort to establish similarities between the grading contracts involved in prior investigations and the one utilized in this study.

Litterio (2016) conducted a case study in a technical writing classroom of 20 student-participants as the teacher-researcher to further examine how students would collaborate together to generate criteria related to their quality of writing. While student-

participants in the study perceived more overall involvement in the grading process through the use of contract grading, participants preferred more “expert” crafted criteria, a more traditional approach to grading, rather than participating in crafting the criteria for grading themselves. Potts (2010) developed a study to determine whether an alternative grading system, like contract grading, would yield the same final grades as more traditional grading methods and whether grades from an alternative grading system would be accepted by the students subjected to the method. Potts noted that student writing seemed too complex to assign a singular letter grade or numerical value. Rather than employing individualized contracts, as was common in years past in the composition classroom, Potts adopted what they called a “blanket” contract, in which “the instructor sets out the tasks that a student must complete in order to receive each letter grade, and the student complies according to the grade he or she wishes to receive” (p. 31). Student writing was either accepted if it met the minimum requirements of the assignment criteria or, in the case where student writing failed to meet those criteria, they were instructed to revise their writing. If students fulfilled the minimum requirements and criteria for all the major assignments, completed their day-to-day assignments at a 70 percent or above, and received a C or above on the final exam, a C in the class was guaranteed. Much like the grading contract at the center of this study, and knowing that many students are unsatisfied with a C grade in composition, Potts writes that “the students decide which grade will satisfy them” (p. 33), putting the onus on the student to determine how much work and effort they wanted to put into the course to determine their final grade, a letter grade that satisfied the institutional necessity of determining final grade point averages at

the end of the semester. Tracking nine classes totaling 188 students over five semesters, including classes such as College Composition I and II, Creative Writing I and II, American Literature I, and an Online Composition II, in addition to the Accept/Revise framework, a traditional letter grade was recorded for each of the major assignments in the previously mentioned courses. By the end of each of the semester over the course of the study, letter grades for major writing assignments and percentages reflecting daily work completed were averaged to determine final letter grades for each student to compare with the final grade determined by the grading contract. Potts compiled survey data to assess student attitudes towards and perceptions of contract grading, also examining students' written comments in order to further develop instructional methodologies that will further facilitate student acceptance of contract grading use in the classroom. Of the 188 students surveyed, only 30 students' final grades using the contract were different from those that were awarded using a traditional holistic grading system. As for the students' reported attitudes towards and perceptions of contract grading, of the 120 total student respondents, 82 (68.3%) of the participants reported that they liked this method of determining grades in the composition classroom, while 25 (20.8%) reported "hating" the system, even though all of the 25 of the students who reported hating this method of grading were classified as A or B+ level students. As with much of the studies into grading contract use in the composition classroom, the context in which Pott's conducted their study was fairly dissimilar to that which is explored in this study as it was undertaken in a community college rather than a four-year university.

Reflections and reports on the implementation of contract grading in multilingual contexts were found to be primarily in EFL (English as a Foreign Language), community college, and adult education contexts. While not directly related to the context in which this research project was conducted, the findings are still relevant in that they relate to contract grading implementation in classroom with multilingual writers and provide a methodological connection to the study described in this report. Sidhu et al. (2011) reported on grading contract use in a 15-week “Strategy Development Program” EFL class at an urban upper secondary girls’ school in Malaysia. Klotz & Whithaus (2021) reported on the utilization of labor-based grading contracts in a community college composition classroom for basic writers in California, responding to a call from the California Community College (CCC) system’s Chancellor for closing achievement and funding gaps explicitly focused on racial/ethnic minorities, veterans, foster youth, disabled students, and economically disadvantaged students and as a means to achieve more intentional anti-racist praxis pedagogy. Blackstock & Exton (2014) provided suggestions for using a combination of contract grading and portfolio assessment for an introductory composition class for nontraditional students who fit into the profile of basic writers at Utah State University after using the system for three years.

Issues in using contract grading have been identified in prior studies, such as resistance to grading contracts. Such insight is offered by Spidell & Thelin (2006), which focuses on interpreting and analyzing student responses regarding the use of a grading contract in their classroom. Spidell & Thelin (2006) collected data as teacher-researchers to center students’ voices and input as to the effectiveness of the contract system,

focusing on its capacity for fairness, clarity, and its relevance to the goals of the course and students' educational backgrounds. Through the use of anonymously submitted feedback (while also allowing students to identify themselves in their feedback if they so wished) at the end of the semester regarding different aspects of the course, which included the grading contracts, Spidell & Thelin compiled students' comments to construct interview questions for their investigation. Of the three sections (n=74) studied, 38 students commented on the grading contract through their feedback. After developing the interview questions, Spidell and Thelin sought out twelve students who had commented on the use of grading contracts in their mid-semester course evaluation to interview. Over the course of their study, Spidell & Thelin discovered patterns in the data revealing considerable resistance to grading contracts. The reasons behind such resistance were explored. Villanueva (2014) reported that there was some resistance to the grading contract, finding that students still desired to utilize a traditional point system. This is similar to what Spinell and Thelin (2006) discovered, in that many students still long for more traditional point system methods of grading both because it is what many students have been accustomed to and that it allows them to identify their academic standing over the course of the class. To that end, Villanueva (2014) suggest that the intricacies of the grading contract must be communicated to students by engaging in ongoing discussions throughout the semester. Issues of power and perceptions of grading more generally, therefore, often come into play when it comes to encountering resistance to grading contracts and asking students to "let go" of traditional grading mentalities was not enough to change the ecology of the writing classroom, with many students reporting that

they felt that the contract by its very nature made the course more difficult than it needed to be (Spindell & Thelin, 2006).

Along with resistance to grading contracts posing issues for instructors invested in implementing such an assessment practice in their writing classrooms, so too has there been explorations into investigating how students perceive grading contracts as fair. In a narrative of one summer bridge student, who later became a writing fellow, and her instructor, Reardon and Guardado-Menjivar (2020) highlight how, at least for some, perceived contract grading as unfair initially and posed challenges to students subjected to such a grading method in a summer bridge program. Although some of the issues highlighted were not different from those explored in other studies, such as how students enrolling in a voluntary summer program desired grade as a means to motivate them to participate and that without them, there was no reward outside of earning a college credit. This reflective narrative between student and teacher further illustrates, as the writers state, the importance of conversations between students and teachers on assessment because if, as the authors write, “if one of the goals of contract grading is increased fairness or equity across student populations, it makes sense to consult with students on their perceptions of fairness” (Reardon & Guardado-Menjivar, 2020 p. 4). This sentiment has been echoed by other scholars (Malette & Hawks, 2020) and from students’ experiences with grading contracts (Lucas, 2021). As was previously noted, however, investigations into how students perceive grading contracts, specifically multilingual students in the composition classroom, remain sparse in the field of multilingual composition.

One of the latest investigations into grading contracts that is relevant to this study comes from Sims (2021), who reported in her thesis on the use of labor-based grading contracts in an online first-year writing class for L2/multilingual writers. While Sims' writing focuses primarily on the perceptions of and attitudes towards labor-based grading practices from the perspective of the instructor, Sims aptly notes that as an instructor of first year writing for L2/multilingual students, one not only needs to develop a pedagogical approaches that are informed by composition studies but also those found in the TESOL field as well. Sims writes that there is a need to further investigate the use of labor-based grading contracts in multilingual writing contracts in that there are still questions within the field of how social justice can be achieved and critical pedagogies can be incorporated into multilingual spaces – such as the context at the center of this investigation. The disagreement between teaching the dominant forms of English and the desire to realize translingual approaches to teaching writing in multilingual contexts, this push and pull between pragmatic and idealistic viewpoints of how one ought to teach, leads instructors such as myself to further investigate how to engage with best practice when it comes to writing assessment – clear data and feedback on how instructors teach. However, investigations such as what is reported by Sims and the many that have been examined in this literature review lack the perspective of those to whom we are tasked with teaching. Such perspectives from students are crucial in keeping with aims of critical pedagogy and contract grading methods, as was explored in these relevant studies, in that such an act restructures the unequal power dynamic between teachers and students and takes a more student-centered approaches to teaching.

Conclusion

The vast majority of the scholarship related to translanguaging in multilingual writing pedagogy either emphasizes the strategies students and teachers undertake individually to support the development of their proficiency in their target language or discusses the theoretical potential of such an approach to teaching multilingual students for promote social justice in the writing classroom. Such studies have lacked discussions and direct investigations related to the development of assessment and, by extension, grading strategies of multilingual writing. Additionally, there is a gap in translanguaging related research into how translanguaging as a critical practice and approach to language use in the writing classroom conceptually shapes which assessment and grading methods are used. How students who are subjected to such practices perceive those methods can help to determine whether or not such methods are achieving the goal of establishing and promoting justice in the writing classroom from a pedagogical perspective.

Grading contracts, as a grading method, have been lauded as a means of sharing and redistributing power, authority, and negotiating classroom dynamics by critical pedagogues and composition teachers alike in that they help to communicate instructors' expectations for the work expected of students while opening the door to negotiations between students and instructors regarding their coursework and how it will be assessed (Shor, 2009; Danielewicz & Elbow; 2009; Spidell & Thelin, 2006). However, investigations into how students perceive that power redistribution through the use of grading contracts in the composition classroom, specifically a FYW classroom in which the students in question are all non-native English speakers and international students,

have yet to be undertaken. To answer Inoue (2017) and Lee's (2016) call to determine how translanguaging pedagogies promote and sustain social justice in the writing classroom and can be operationalized in assessment through a method of grading such as a labor-based grading contract, this study aims to shed light on how such a grading method in a multilingual writing classroom is perceived by students. This information, in turn, will hopefully help support the programmatic and pedagogical decisions made by stakeholders, namely instructors and institutions, in developing best practices in assessment to meeting the goals of translanguaging pedagogy in multilingual spaces. An explanation as to how such responses from students were gathered, described, and discussed to inform such practices will follow in the succeeding chapter.

Chapter III: Methodology

This research project endeavors to investigate student perspectives of labor-based grading practices in multilingual composition classrooms to aid course designers and instructors of first-year composition courses to prepare and more effectively incorporate labor-based grading contracts in their classrooms. An additional aim of this inquiry is to provide further understandings of how assessment practices can impact diverse student populations by examining student's perceptions of such practices and meet the need for more socially just assessment within translanguage and composition pedagogies. The intention in examining students' perceptions of assessment practices is so that invested parties (course designers, instructors, writing program administrators, etc.) can make more informed decisions regarding the utilization of grading contracts in the writing classroom. This exploratory case study and subsequent qualitative content analysis seeks to aid in the generation of ideas or potential avenues for further study regarding the utilization of labor-based grading contracts in multilingual composition classrooms. Additionally, these findings are intended to inform decision-making and programmatic choices made by instructors and institutions endeavoring to utilize more justice-oriented pedagogical approaches in their composition classrooms.

There are two research questions guiding this investigation, which are:

1. How do multilingual students perceive and understand the use of labor-based grading contracts in a first-year writing classroom?
2. In what ways might FYW instructors and programs be informed by multilingual students' perceptions of and engagement with labor-based grading?

This section describes the methodological approach undertaken by the researcher to investigate these questions within their own multilingual composition classroom as well as contextual information, and a description of data analysis procedures.

Research Design

Case studies are comprised of an intensive phenomenological investigation of the background, current status, and environmental interactions of a given social unit that is under investigation (Brown & Rogers, 2014). By investigating a chosen phenomenon, people's conscious experience of their lived experience can be examined more closely as a means to interpret said experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The purpose and research focus of case study research is "an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program, or system in a 'real life' context" (Simons 2009, p. 21). More specifically, methodologies such as case studies provide insights as to how students understand and perceive aspects of their learning in that they allow for participants to share responses and perspectives in their own voices.

As both a political and epistemological point of view, a case study was deemed and appropriate and significant means to investigate these questions as conducting research in such a manner recognizes the import of co-constructing perceived experiences of reality through understandings created within the field by shifting who controls knowledge away from the researcher alone (Simons, 2009). This is particularly important in connecting with critical approaches to teaching, as with translanguaging and critical pedagogies in that it is of vital importance to understand what is happening in students' minds regarding

teaching practices to make informed pedagogical decisions that instructors subject their students to. This is done by viewing students as socially constructed beings who are irremovable from the social, historical, economic, philosophical, and political context of the classroom and as a means to redistribute power between teachers and students (Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg, 2011).

In fields associated with applied linguistics and education, such as multilingual composition, cases of interest are most often comprised of populations of language learners in classroom contexts and examines issues of interest such as attitudes, motivation, and identities (Thomas, 2016; Duff, 2008). Given the benefits of this methodology, an exploratory case study was deemed an appropriate means to investigate the questions under investigation in this thesis because the scope of this study centers participants' perceptions and experiences of labor-based grading contracts being used in their FYW classroom to inform how instructors and institutions can implement such a grading system in similar contexts.

Setting

This study was conducted in the spring semester of 2022 within the researcher's own classroom of a first-year writing course (ENG-101) specified for multilingual writers at a Midwestern state university in the United States. First-year writing (known locally as ENG-101: Foundations of Writing and Rhetoric) fulfills Part A of Goal Area 1 in the General Education program at the university which aims to equip enrolled students with the skills and capabilities that are essential for college-aged adults to engage with communication and understanding by exploring "how writing works across disciplines,

modalities, and literacies”. Students taking ENG-101 “approach writing as a subject of study by investigating how writing works across a variety of contexts”.

Students attending the university, regardless of major, are required to take ENG-101 or demonstrate equivalent experience with academic writing by meeting or exceeding the exemption criteria as determined by the university. University policy stipulates that “international students who do not have English as their first language can enroll in ENG-101 with a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL iBT) score of 69 or above (internet-based-iBT) or 523 or above (paper-based-PBT), or an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 6 or above” (English Composition Placement, 2019). In addition to the TOEFL iBT and PBT, international students with a Pearson’s Test of English (PTE) score of 55 or a Duolingo score of 105 can also be placed in ENG-101 upon admission. In the event that incoming international students score below such scores, they would then be instructed to “take both the Accuplacer ESL Reading Test and the Accuplacer WritePlacer” (English Composition Placement, 2019). International students who score in the Accuplacer ESL Reading and Accuplacer WritePlacer above 110 and 5 respectively are instructed to take ENG-101, while those who score below that threshold are instructed to enroll in ENG-100 and pass the course with a grade above a “C”. Rationale for these placement policies for international and domestic students at the university where study was conducted is “to improve students’ success in college writing by assessing their readiness for composition by providing them with further preparation when necessary” (English Composition Placement, 2019).

As a process-based composition course, ENG-101 students are instructed to present and submit multiple drafts of formal writing projects throughout the semester while receiving feedback on subsequent drafts from both their instructor, the researcher, and their peers in the course to inform their revisions and eventual submissions of said projects. All attending students, regardless of whether they are speakers of multiple languages or are native speakers of English, are instructed to take ENG-101 within their first two semesters of attending the university in which this study was conducted. This course is intended to provide students with a deeper understanding of how writing works through application and experience writing in varied genres and for multiple audiences and meets “Goal Area 1” of the general education graduation requirements for undergraduate students (Graduation Requirements, Minnesota State University, Mankato). The primary learning objectives for students taking the course are as follows:

1. Increasing genre awareness, rhetorical knowledge, and use of multimodalities,
2. Exploring language variation and multiliteracies by context,
3. Developing information literacy through primary and secondary research,
4. Reflecting on the writing process and labor, and
5. Collaborating to create and revise texts

Reflection and labor are both cited as key elements of the course objectives of ENG-101.

As noted in the previous section, many scholars in the field of composition have identified reflection as a key component of both grading contracts and critical pedagogy.

Inoue (2019) identified that reflection, as the last step in a larger process of students’

metacognition of writing tasks, focuses students' attention to the labor of learning that has occurred.

Given that one of the learning objectives for students taking ENG-101 asks students to "reflect on the writing process and labor", students' reflection of their labor and perceptions of the labor-based grading system used in the course were identified and selected as the subject of inquiry for this study. While this study is not designed to determine whether or not student met with the course objectives outlined by the university of ENG-101, they did help to guide the processes the researcher employed to investigate how multilingual students in the FYW classroom perceive the use of grading contracts.

Grading Contract

Participants were presented with the labor-based grading contract (Appendix F) at the beginning of the semester. This contract was developed by the program administrators and developers of the first year writing course, Foundations of Writing and Rhetoric. This contract was disseminated among other first year writing graduate teaching instructors, including the researcher of this study, as an example of what we as instructors of Foundations of Writing and Rhetoric (herein, ENG-101 were instructed to utilize in our own classrooms as a way to assess and grade students in the writing classroom. The document begins with a brief definition of labor-based grading contracts, referencing that the specific grading format explained within the document was first introduced by Asao B. Inoue. The explanation continues with information as to why a labor-based grading contract was being implemented in the FY Composition classroom,

providing the perspective that the utilization of conventional grading policies and practices can often lead students to focus more on acquiring a certain grade than about their own learning or to worry more about pleasing a teacher (or fooling one) than putting in the labor of what they actually want to learn (this is text from my grading contract). Rather than being graded on the quality of their writing, participants were informed that they would instead receive feedback on their formal writing projects that would allow participants to have “a sense of the effort” of what was expected of them throughout the semester. The first page of the contract ends with a personal note reading “I hope that this grading system will allow you the freedom and flexibility to take risks in your projects while also providing time for you to re-envision and revise those drafts into more usable, sophisticated, and polished projects – without the frustration and worry often associated with assigning letter grades to formal writing projects”. The terms and conditions of the grading contract can be found on page 2 of the contract (Appendix F).

Participants

The students who elected to participate in this study were from Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, Columbia, and Switzerland respectively. Of the seven students who consented to participate in this study, five were first-year students (FY), while there was one sophomore and one junior at the university based on the credits they had completed prior to taking the course. This information is subsequently summarized and displayed in the table below. The names of the participants in this study have been changed to protect the identities of the students, and thus pseudonyms will be used in kind.

Table 2.1

Participant	Year in School	Home Country	Gender	Languages Spoken
Asa	Junior	Egypt	M	Arabic English
Brighton	Freshman	Bangladesh	M	Bangala Hindi English
Crispin	Freshman	Bangladesh	M	Bengali English
Darius	Sophomore	Columbia	M	Spanish French English
Erika	Freshman	Ethiopia	F	Amharic English
Flores	Freshman	Switzerland	M	German English
George	Freshman	Bangladesh	M	Bangala English

Although ENG-101 is a FYW course locally, it is not uncommon for students to enroll in ENG-101 in their second year of university, as noted above. As this class was in the spring semester of the academic year, students who participated in this study had been attending the university for at least one semester before taking ENG-101. All students in the classroom in question were presented with a consent form to participate in this study at the beginning of the semester and halfway through the semester and were collected by a third party so as to protect participants identities from the teacher/researcher. The participants names were revealed to the researcher once final grade had been submitted at the end of the semester.

Data Collection

To further investigate the research questions described earlier in this section, participant's written reflections included in selected weekly journal assignment and responses to open-ended question surveys were distributed among the participants and collected. Using qualitative measures for data collection, these written reflections in the form of survey responses were collected at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester to develop a case study. Students participating in the survey, along with their peers, completed assignments in which they were asked to reflect on the implementation of labor-based grading contracts in the classroom. They were also instructed, along with their peers, to submit their thoughts regarding labor-based grading in the form of two open-question surveys. Both the survey data and the response data were analyzed to identify how students perceived the use of labor-based grading in their first-year writing classroom.

Surveys

Students in the class, including the participants, were asked to complete an initial questionnaire as a way of "signing" the contract at the beginning of the course to indicate which grade they were laboring to achieve. Students were asked, in this questionnaire, reflective questions for them to share their feelings, thoughts, and comments about the use of labor-based grading in the class. The first question of the survey inquired as to how students felt about labor-based grading contracts being used in ENG-101 and followed up with an open response area where they could share their thoughts about labor-based grading contracts. Following these two initial questions, students were prompted to indicate which grade they were hoping to achieve in the course and what

informed their choice. Students were finally asked if they had any additional thoughts or comments regarding labor-based grading at the end of the survey. A copy of this survey can be found in the appendix (Appendix B).

At the end of the semester, students were asked to complete a final questionnaire in which they could offer their comments on the usage of labor-based grading contracts in their classroom as part of their exit from the class. Students instructed to quantify how they felt about labor-based grading being used in the class on a 5-point Likert scale, share their thoughts about labor-based grading contracts being used in the class at the end of the semester in an open-ended response question, identify what grade they thought they'd achieve in the course and explain their response to the question, and share any additional thoughts or comments regarding labor-based grading at the end of the questionnaire. A copy of this second questionnaire can be found in the appendix (Appendix E) for reference.

Journal Artifacts

All students were asked to keep a reading and writing journal (RWJ) throughout the semester in which they wrote notes on weekly readings and respond to reflective questions related to writing, the writing process, revision, feedback, and grading. For this study, two reading and writing journal prompt documents included questions that prompted students to share their reflections and perceptions of labor-based grading used in the course. Students, including the participants in this study, completed two assignment in which they were asked to reflect on their understandings and perceptions of the labor-based contract in weeks 3 and 10 of the course in the form of a journal entry

in which they were responding to predetermined prompts. These journal prompt documents utilized to elicit responses can be viewed in the appendix (Appendix C; Appendix D).

Description of Data Analysis

A qualitative content analysis framework was employed to interpret the content of the textual data that was analyzed in this study. The process of performing qualitative content analysis in this study was deeply informed by grounded theory approaches to qualitative research, in that the themes were inductively identified and informed by the theoretical and pedagogical literature presented in the earlier review. In order to develop a potential guiding theory regarding the use of labor-based grading contracts that is informed by student perceptions of said assessment method, the researcher employed qualitative content analysis to determine themes present in the data. This was done to establish what understandings can be gained to inform pedagogical practice and policy related to the teaching of multilingual composition for instructors and institutions, particularly those who employ critical and/or translanguaging related pedagogies in their decision making.

To that end, the researcher employed critical frameworks informed by social theory, such as motivation theory, organizational justice theory, and translanguaging theory, to further contextualize participants' responses to better investigate how and why students responded in such a way to the surveys and artifacts used in this investigation as data. However, to maintain the validity and reliability when possible in the data analysis process, specific themes were not predetermined by the researcher and were rather

derived from the data itself. Doing so allowed for a deeper connection to data analysis informed by grounded theory in that text segments provided by the participants were carefully examined, hand-coded, and compared. Preliminary data analysis preceded much of the examination of literature so as to protect the validity of the themes identified by the researcher, allowing such themes to emerge from the data itself. The framework of organizational justice became an adequate means of interpreting and understanding participants' responses because not only is increasing justice in the classroom an aim for critical approaches to teaching, but such teaching approaches do not conceptualize justice (and subsequently, fairness) in the same way.

This explicit inclusion of not only the entire response but the segmented text and keywords included in said responses allows for less abstraction from the larger context of this research: the course itself, the classroom in which this study was conducted, and the researcher's position as the participant's instructor of FYW. As Gibson and Brown argue (2009), "the context in which people speak are fundamental to the meaning which they are creating. By removing that context from the analysis, researchers remove the resources that would enable them to understand why the speakers said what they did" (p. 189). To that end, a mixture of key-word-in-context (KWIC) approach and segmentation of larger selections of text were utilized for the discussion of the data in this study to reference the earlier described findings in the following chapter. . As Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) suggest, "boundaries of a given segment should allow the thematic features of the segment to be clearly discerned when it is lifted from the larger context" (p. 52). Given that by the nature of these responses were relatively short, entire responses

were provided as text segments. The responses were hand-coded in a traditional text analysis fashion (again, informed by a grounded theory approach) to further involve the researcher in the meaning making process of interpreting the data utilized in this study – especially given the researcher’s position and relationship to the participants. Themes were primarily identified in the repetitions of concepts found in the data presented in keywords, segmentation, and whole responses and include academic and developmental personal benefit, perceived fairness supported by the grading contract, an improved sense of self-efficacy facilitated by labor-based grading contracts, and personal and instructional accountability and participation in completing classroom related tasks.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

As noted by Merriam (2002), qualitative research is focused on further understanding how meaning is socially constructed by and between people interacting out in the world by interpreting individuals’ experiences at a particular point in time and context using a specified analytical framework. This study is intended to aid those who wish to use grading contracts in their own classrooms, inform course designers in developing assessment models for writing classrooms, by investigating students’ understandings and perceptions of contract grading methods in a multilingual writing classroom. This is done to better understand multilingual writer’s perceptions of assessment methodologies, more specifically labor-based grading contracts, to provide insights as to how such an assessment method can be utilized by instructors and institutions determined to utilize best practice in FYW instruction. There are potentials for trustworthiness of the results and the discussions of data described in qualitative

studies to be challenged. The findings described here will also be further explained and explored here. Such issues related to participants in the study, issues with the ways in which data is collected, and the ways in which the data was subsequently analyzed present potential limitations. Several choices were made by the researcher to address these issues. While the study described in this paper was not undertaken to make general assumptions about how contract grading, there were several steps taken to ensure that the findings in this study could be considered trustworthy and informative for those invested in such discussions which will be described in the following paragraphs.

For example, one such step involved the thoughtful design of the surveys and journal prompts. These questions developed to illicit responses from students were open-ended and targeted in asking for students to share their perceptions and attitudes related to labor-based grading contracts in the multilingual classrooms. As these were integrated within tasks and assignments that were relevant to the course and were administered to all students in the class in equal measure, all students, including the participants, had equal means to reflect on their experiences with the grading contract for the instructor-researcher to use to inform their teaching approach. Such practices are aligned with critical pedagogical approaches and allowed for all students, regardless of their participation, to participate in this process.

The teacher-researcher also took intentional measures to attempt to eliminate bias as both the collector of the data utilized in this study and the instructor for the student participants in this study. Such bias, while difficult to fully avoid, was impeded by two important actions taken by the teacher-researcher: the intentional lack of knowledge of

the participants until the final grades were submitted at the end of the semester and the inclusion of a positionality statement in the introductory section of this thesis. The teacher-researcher's rationale and personal positioning has been offered to provide further information as to the teacher-researchers subjectivity and role in this study to clearly state why such an investigation was undertaken. As for the lack of knowledge of the participants, an associate other than the principal investigators in this study was employed to restrict any access or information as to who had elected to participate in the classroom since their researcher-instructor conducted this study. The researcher distributed consent forms that were collected by a third party and were not shared with the researcher until after final grades had been submitted for the semester. Participants enrolled themselves in the study, providing a random sample of students from the class. Of the 20 possible participants who could have consented to participate in this study, seven provided their consent. Materials and artifacts used in this study were a part of the coursework, so all students were subjected to the same amount of work as the participants. Both varied (in that each student is an individual with their own perspectives, needs, attitudes, and motivations) and unified (in that all students were in the same class with the same instructor) provide a wide range of perspectives from an appropriately diverse sample, which according to Gagnon (2010) is vital for upholding internal and external validity in case study research. Descriptions of the participants have been offered in this section to support this claim.

Due to the relative novelty of the subject matter of this research, there are few examples that provide an established means for investigating student perceptions of

labor-based grading in the composition classroom. Studies related to contract grading and student perceptions of assessment methods, as explored in the previous section, were found primarily from the field of composition rather than from the field of TESOL save for one recent investigation reported by Sims (2021). Very few studies have been conducted in the field of TESOL investigating student perceptions of grading methods in the writing classroom.

This is significant in that how students perceive, feel about, and understand the ways in which we as instructors grade their writing is fundamental to critical approaches to teaching. It is for this reason that this study is informed by a variety of approaches and employs the very same critical analyses introduced by others in the fields of both composition and TESOL. However, the concept of fairness, which had not been discussed at length within the aforementioned fields, was considered a significant data point by the researcher. After the initial coding procedures identified “fairness” as a significant point in the data due to the number of responses including “fairness” provided by the participants, the researcher was able to examine such responses through the existing framework of organizational justice after the initial data analysis. This was due to the fact that discussions of fairness within composition and TESOL literature fail to cite how fairness is conceptualized and interrelated with the concept of justice that are pertinent to this study of. This was considered particularly significant, as TESOL and composition related scholarship continually cite justice as a the goals of pedagogical approaches such as critical and translanguaging pedagogy without providing an adequate framework in which to better understand this concept as well as how this concept is

understood by students through their experiences with grading methods. It is for this reason that organizational justice was determined by the researcher as a way to better deductively understand the responses offered by participants to both connect the findings of this study to scholarship found in the fields of composition and TESOL as well as to provide an indication as to how these findings can inform institutional and instructional practices moving forward.

While the exact findings of this study cannot be directly applied to other populations and contexts, the intention of this study is to provide potential threads for further investigations and possible applications for information gleaned from this investigation to inform pedagogical and institutional practices. These potential threads could inform local institutional and instructional decision-making for similar contexts as well as providing further information as to how such an assessment method can be utilized in other contexts. Additional information related to the implementation of grading contracts in multilingual composition contexts has been indicated as warranted in the review of literature. The trustworthiness of this study is maintained by the fact that the data utilized in this investigation was provided by participants in their own words, increasing the confidence in the personal truth found within the findings – especially given that the context was shared among participants and the researcher themselves.

The design of this research went through an internal review process through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to determine whether the proposed methodologies met appropriate criteria of validity. This approval can be viewed on page (Appendix A). The research process described within the internal review documentation was followed

precisely and faithfully by the researcher. This study was undertaken to provide further information to those in the field who are endeavoring to create a more equitable and just classroom through shifting assessment methodologies by considering multiple variables and implications related to their use – especially for multilingual students. Knowing that students, whether they had chosen to participate in this study, would be receiving the same instruction, there was little risk to participants that they may have experienced or encountered over the course of the study that did not go beyond what they may have already been experiencing in their academic lives.

Conclusion

The methodological framework and analytical procedures for this case study were provided in this chapter. Additionally, contextual information and information regarding the participants in this case were offered. To better frame this research study within the context of research conducted in the social sciences, explanations as to the trustworthiness of the data and the ethical considerations employed by the researcher at every point in the research process were described in this section. The following section will include descriptions of the findings and discussions of the data. Considering that the locus of this study is centered around the use of a specific grading method, labor-based grading contracts, and student's perceptions and understandings of said grading method, a temporal exploration of the data is presented to display and discuss shifts in how participant's perception's changed over time.

Chapter IV: Results, Findings, and Discussion

Introduction to Section

This study aims to further explore two questions related to the use of labor-based grading contracts as a grading method for a L2/multilingual writing course within a university context. By better understanding how students themselves understand and perceive labor-based grading practices, it is my hope that instructional designers and instructors can start to develop a framework of best practices for implementing such a grading system in their own L2/multilingual writing classrooms as well as composition classrooms more generally. In order to demonstrate how student's perceptions developed and changed over time, a longitudinal view of the data will be presented.

This chapter contains reports of the findings from seven participants through surveys and written artifacts related to their understandings and perceptions of labor-based grading contracts used in their ENG-101 class. These findings are further examined and discussed as they relate to the following research questions:

1. How do multilingual students at a US university in a FYW course perceive and understand the use of labor-based grading?
2. In what ways might multilingual student perceptions of and engagement with labor-based grading practices inform instructional design and assessment of FYW?

The findings of this study are later discussed in this chapter as they relate to both the research questions and larger themes that emerged from an analysis of the qualitative data utilized in this research study. In examining the results of this study, I identified these larger themes within the content of the responses as directly relating to aspects of

translanguaging pedagogy. As this study, in large part, helps to inform translanguaging pedagogy and translanguaging assessment, these themes will be discussed with aspects of social justice through translanguaging in mind. These themes as described in the prior chapter, and put more briefly, personal benefit, fairness, self-efficacy, and accountability.

Findings Pertaining to Research Question 1

In this section, the findings present in the data and of the data analysis as they pertain to the first research question are presented. Responses as to how students understand and perceive the use of labor-based grading contracts in an multilingual composition class are examined. To better determine the perceptions and understandings related to labor-based grading contracts held by the participants, their responses to reflective questions in an all-class assignments collected for this study and their responses to open-ended questions in an all-class questionnaire will be described and analyzed. Given that these responses were gathered over the course of the semester, data will be presented longitudinally to demonstrate how students' perceptions and understandings of labor-based grading developed or changed over time.

At the beginning of the semester, students were presented with their first questionnaire, in which they indicated which grades they wished to achieve in ENG-101 and shared their first impressions of the use of the grading contract in ENG-101 after having it presented to them in Week 2. All students' responses were collected but only the responses from the participants who consented to be a part of this research study are analyzed. From there, two related questions were posed in the form of journal entries in weeks 3 and 10 of the semester in which students reflected on the use of labor-based

grading contracts used in ENG-101. Finally, students were asked to complete a final questionnaire in week 14 of the course, which included questions related to their perceptions and understanding of the use of a labor-based grading contract. As has been explained previously, while all students in the class completed these tasks, only the responses offered by the consenting participants will be discussed in this study.

From the data collected in this study, the participants indicated that they felt positively regarding the use of labor-based grading contracts. More specifically, participants specifically cited how labor-based grading benefitted them in supporting their learning process as well as indicating that their effort in the class was the primary determinant for their final grade. However, participants also indicated the downsides of labor-based grading in their responses. These downsides, as with the positives about labor-based grading that the participants indicated, are also helpful to instructors and curriculum designers of FYW.

Survey 1 (Weeks 1-2):

When prompted to provide responses as to how they felt about the use of labor-based grading in the class, participants responded overwhelmingly positively, with all seven participants indicating positive perceptions, with only one participant indicating they felt neutral regarding their use, while the remaining participants felt either somewhat positively or positively. Participants' responses at the beginning of the semester, while positive, also spoke to their hesitation and curiosity regarding labor-based grading contracts initially. Similarly, Darius wrote that "I am curious how the class will work with this method since I have never used it". Flores, in the same questionnaire, when

asked what informed their grade choice, they stated “A good GPA”. This response was similar to the other participants, in that three of the seven consenting participants specifically cited either letter grades (“Trying for an A” = Brighton) or their GPA (“I don’t have any other choices. I have to get A because to increase my GPA as I can” = Asa) informing their choice for an “A” grade for the class. Sharing their final thoughts in the questionnaire regarding their thoughts about labor-based grading being used in their class, either stated that they had no further thoughts regarding their use (“No, I don’t have any thoughts regarding labor-based grading”; Crispin) or they indicated their curiosity (“It’s the first time I’m experiencing such a grading system and I’m curious”; Flores) and understanding of labor-based gradings’ aims for assessment (“...I think it’s good and helpful which means it’s critical for the improvement of our skills”; Asa). Two participants cited their ambition as informing their choice of grade for ENG-101. Participants’ thoughts at the beginning of the semester regarding the use of labor-based grading in the classroom, in addition to being positive, indicate that they clearly understand the aims of the labor-based grading contract indicated by Asao Inoue, in that participants specifically pointed to the fact that the system itself was part of their overall learning environment in the writing classroom, noting that “...we are here to develop our writing I think it helps to work for our grades” (Erika, Survey 1). From the responses students offered, students not only perceived labor-based grading contracts in a positive light, but they noted that the system overall benefitted them as students and more specifically as international students.

Week 3 RWJ

By week 3 of the semester, students shared their thoughts and reflections regarding labor-based grading contracts in their Reading and Writing Journal. All students were prompted to share their thoughts, but only those who consented to being a part of this study will be examined. Just as with the earlier questionnaire, participants indicated some light uncertainty, but primarily indicated that they fully understood the primary aims of the grading contract and discussed aspects of labor-based grading that they saw beneficial to them.

Brighton: Labor based grading system means the number system of overall grading. In this grading system there are no individual numbering for assignments, exams, or activities. This grading system depends on the effort of a student the more a student does the more a student gets. This grading system is really good for the students who work for it but bad for the students who want to pass only the examinations. Every subject should impose this grading because this system depends on a student's effort and how a student tries to understand the subject.

Crispin: I think grading contracts are valuable because they offer the opportunity to be experimental and exploratory in their writing. My thoughts about this the labor-based grading contract me and my instructor had sign that will help me avoid the uses of grades and numbers on assignments. My final course letter grade

will be determined by the work I put into completing assignments and participating in the learning process. The quality of writing will be addressed regularly. This will create opportunities for receiving and providing feedback that will help us all evolve and grow as thinkers and writers. And also this will allow freedom to take risks and really work hard. This can show us our weaknesses, and misunderstandings, and provide opportunities to grow and change.

Flores: It is my first time experiencing labor-based grading. I'm not exactly sure how this will be but I hope that I succeed in this class. I do like how the grading system is structured. That grading is based on effort and not necessarily on the quality of our work.

These selected responses indicate that not only did they have a fuller understanding of what labor-based grading contracts are as the semester progressed and how they were utilized in the class but they also began to see how such a system would be beneficial to them as students. This was further reiterated by one participant stating that using labor-based grading contracts would allow them the “freedom to take risks and really work hard” (Crispin).

Week 10 RWJ

Later on in the semester, in Week 10, students were asked again to share their thoughts regarding the use of labor-based grading contracts. All seven consenting participants responded to the prompt. Their responses, again, were fairly positive and indicated that they not only understood the language associated with labor-based grading

(although novel) but that they stated how the system itself benefited them in specific ways. For example, George wrote, “I think labor-based grading contracts is a good way to show all students about their grading system and it will help them to understand what types of things they have to do if they are shooting for a good grade and also they understand what types of other activities they have to do if they want A grade. Overall, I think, labor-based grading contracts is very important for every student in our English 101 class” (Week 10). In this example, this participant was able to identify the specific ways in which labor-based grading was operationalized in the classroom and identified how students such as themselves could interact with it, citing more specifically the how the assignments in the course and their associated marks were communicated to students. Like George, Crispin responded that “...I think a labor based grading system is beneficial for us because we can know how much we have to study and what we have to do for this class”. In addition to responding positively to the use of labor-based grading contracts in the classroom, students began to identify the downsides to using labor-based grading contracts in their responses. Two participants identified downsides to using labor-based grading contracts in their responses, stating:

Asa: It’s very good and helpful especially the grading way. But the requirements are too much.

Flores: This is my first time working with labor-based grading and it is definitely different. I think the main difference for me is that I don’t actually know my current grade which I’m’ not used to. I like this concept of grading, it gives me

the feeling that my work doesn't have to be perfect as long as the effort is there. I think the only downside to it is that it's easier for students to lay back and not take their work seriously as they are not seeing how good or bad their progress is.

These two selected responses further illustrate that while they still see labor-based grading contracts as a personally beneficial grading system to them, by Week 10 of the semester, students started to identify the ways in which labor-based grading contracts are not only different than traditional grading methods but either cited their negative feelings towards the number of assignments required for associated grades or a lack of understanding as to what students' current grades were having an impact on how engaged students were in the class.

Survey 2 (Week 14):

The responses participants provided to the final question of the final survey of the course and of this study differed from the responses they provided at the beginning of the semester and in previous responses in a few key ways. Six of the seven participants indicated in this survey that they felt either somewhat positively or positively compared to 87% at the beginning of the semester, with 66.67% indicating that they felt positively about the use of labor-based grading contracts in the class. One participant (Asa) in this study did not fill out the survey. When asked to share their thoughts regarding labor-based grading contracts at the end of the semester, participant's responses varied from what they had shared at the beginning and middle of the semester, but in less significant ways with this specific question on the survey (question 2) compared to later on in the

survey. While participants further indicated their positive feelings regarding labor-based grading contracts when asked to share their thoughts about their use in the class,

Participants not only continued to cite effort as an important factor in how they perceive and understand grading contracts, just as the grading contract itself states how grades are determined, but they also referenced their own personal workloads and assignments as well as their need for a higher grade informing why they indicated that they hoped to achieve an A in the course. When they were asked to explain why they indicated a specific letter grade (in which all participants who completed the survey indicated “A”) they thought they had achieved in the course, all participants either specifically cited meeting the requirements for the “A” grade by completing the appropriate number of assignments or they discussed their effort to achieve the grade to achieve in their response. For example, below are the responses provided by Participants G, E, B, and D.

George: The choice of my previous question is A grade and I am following all the requirements for the A grade which is in the labor-based grading contract. On the other hand this grad[e] A is very important to me if I want to get a good score in this spring final semester because I have to balance my grades for each class.

Darius: I've really put tons of effort in this class with all of my extra and regular assignments when I usually know the answer to the questions the teacher is asking in class but I let other people answer because that is selfish. I have put a ton of

hours into my writing and reading process, a lot of non sleeping nights, and missed 1 or 2 parties because I stayed in my dorm doing my assignments.

Brighton: I have chosen A because I have completed the optional assignments and I don't have any due and also we have done good in team work.

Erika: I wasn't working that hard in the class and I didn't understand that I had to make a lot of effort I just treated it like my other classes but after I learned that I needed to show my efforts I tried to manage getting back on track so in this class I am hoping to achieve an A.

Their responses at the end of the semester, as presented above, display more reflective patterns in which the participants connect their labor, their effort, their experience in the class, and their need to achieve a higher grade by the end of the semester are much more explicit. While not entirely tied to perception, students' understandings of grading contracts by this point in the semester seem to have gone beyond recitations of the language included in the grading contract and into recognitions of what a grading contract actually means for them - holding them to a particular standard in which they must complete the appropriate number of assignments in order to achieve the grade that they want. Interestingly, Asa, who indicated that they thought the requirements were too much, did not respond to one of the reading and writing journals used in this study and did not respond to the final survey either.

Findings Pertaining to Research Question 2:

From the data collected in this study, the participants indicated that they felt positively regarding the use of labor-based grading contracts. More specifically, participants specifically cited how labor-based grading benefitted them in supporting their learning process as well as indicating that their effort in the class was the primary determinant for their final grade. As has been explained in the earlier review of literature, affective factors are some of the most important aspects of both writing instruction and second language acquisition. Knowing how large a role grading plays in how students both see themselves as learners and as writers, the relationship between students' affective realities and how they perceive how they are being assessed in their learning is a significant factor in determining how to develop methods and materials that can further facilitate learning as opposed to hindering a students' progress and positive affect.

At the beginning of the semester, participants responded with curiosity regarding the use of labor-based grading contracts being used in the classroom. While this curiosity is notable, their thoughts and feelings had shifted from curiosity to either embracing the system and internalizing what using such a grading system meant for them as learners (completing a specified number of assignments to achieve the grade they desired) or indicating that their behavior had changed both in and out of class because of the grading contract. The number and nature of assignments, it appears from the data, plays a key role in how students perceive how labor-based grading benefits or hindered the learning and lives of the participants in this study.

All participant over the course of this study specifically pointed to their efforts in laboring in their writing development as a key factor in how they understood and felt

about the grading contract being used in the class, either indicating clearly that their efforts would be what determined their final grades or that they perceived themselves as putting forth the appropriate amount of effort in order to be awarded the grade that they had determined for themselves at the beginning of the semester.

Participants also indicated the downsides of labor-based grading in their responses. The downsides identified by the participants were either related to students lack of awareness related to their current standing in the course affecting their engagement with class related labor (Flores, Week 10), the amount of work asked for of students who are hoping to achieve a higher grade in the course being perceived as too much by students (Asa, Week 10; Erika, Survey 2). It should be noted, however, that the grading contract at the center of this study does clearly state the number of assignments students are instructed to complete and writing projects they are tasked with producing throughout the semester. The quantity of assignments is, as the grading contract states, linked to a letter grade by the end of the semester but it is up to both the instructor and the student to clearly communicate expectations and goals.

There is no one unilateral grading system, labor-based or otherwise, that satisfies all invested parties at all times. Though this study had a smaller sample size, participants, over the course of one semester, maintained positive attitudes and perceptions regarding labor-based grading being used in their FYW classroom while also connecting the way in which labor-based grading facilitated both their learning and their growth as writers. However, a selected number of responses that have been included above indicate that there are specific implications for instructors who choose to use labor-based grading

contracts in their multilingual writing classrooms in that their use in such a context necessitates communicating clear expectations of the labor being asked of students in the class and that those expectations for class-related labor ought to be reasonable in the eyes of the students. This theoretical positioning of how the participants viewed labor-based grading by interpreting their responses is informed by motivation theory, organizational theory, and translanguaging. Additional discussion of the pedagogical implications of using labor-based grading contracts, for both second language writing pedagogy and translanguaging pedagogy, will be discussed in the following section.

Discussion

In this section, findings from this study are further explained and discussed in detail according to the themes present in the data. The themes identified in the content of the participant's responses are examined within the context of their connections to prior research in this area as well as theoretical approaches to multilingual writing instruction. These discussions will primarily pertain to instructors, program administrators, and other parties privy to and invested in multilingual FYW in that these themes both connect to the first research question of this study in order to inform the pedagogical decisions that invested parties can make in an informed manner. More specifically, this section will focus on the themes identified in the data collected for this study: 1) personal benefit, 2) fairness, 3) self-efficacy, and 4) accountability.

Personal Benefit

Perceiving something as beneficial to one's individual writing growth allows for a higher level of motivation to participate in the course. Whereas individual writing growth

is dependent in large part on the labor one is willing to exert in the composition process, that individual writing growth is also dependent on the feedback from readers, peers, and instructors alike (writing is a social and rhetorical activity, writing needs readers, etc.). In order for pedagogical choices, including assessment, to be deemed as beneficial to their subjects (the students), the subject's perception of that benefit is vital to the overall success of the pedagogical choice.

Perceiving the method of assessment as beneficial relates conceptually to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, in that to be intrinsically motivated, one must see their actions to labor as personally beneficial (for one's own sake) and to be extrinsically motivated, one must see their actions as beneficial for achieving externally determined goals and rewards (for the sake of others) (Ng & Ng, 2015). The result of this study illustrate that not only were the participants extrinsically motivated, but they clearly displayed intrinsic motivation as part of labor-based grading contracts in the way that their use was perceived as facilitating their personal writing growth and their perceived benefit of achieving a grade as a reward. However, it is unclear from the results of this study whether or not labor-based grading methods for assessment in a multilingual writing course was integral to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors for continuing to learn English. Within the scope of this study participants indicating that the use of a labor-based grading contract in their FYW classroom was beneficial to them for their overall writing development in that it helped to facilitate their learning by allowing them to focus on their growth as writers without focusing on whether they would meet my

expectations as both a native speaker and an individual with more power in the dynamic as their instructor.

Fairness

Multiple participants over the course of the semester conveyed both their understanding of labor-based grading contracts aims of fairness as well as their own perceptions of that fairness within the context of the course within the resulting data. Perceiving an assessment method as fair versus unfair could have implications for having a clearer understanding of the motivational factors multilingual students exhibit in the writing classroom in that if students view the way they are being judged or assessed as unfair, it is unlikely that they would be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to continue their work within the course. This fairness, as explained by the participants in this study, was supported by the clearer expectations of the work they were asked to complete in the course that they were provided at the beginning of the semester. If they were desiring of a particular grade, they had all the information they need as far as the number of assignments that were expected of them to complete in order to achieve the grade they desired. This fairness that the participants in this study referenced directly connects to the central aims of labor-based grading contracts in that Inoue, the architect of this grading method, aspired to create a method of assessing student writing that was fairer to those who have historically been left out of both higher education and are thus “institutionally vulnerable” (Inoue, 2019, p. 74”). The concept of fairness and perceptions of fairness specified by the participants in this case study also correspond to the larger framework of organizational justice in that organizational justice is determined by individuals’

perceptions of fairness within a context wherein there is an unequal power dynamic between individuals such as teacher to student. The perceived fairness, and by extension, justice, of labor-based grading contracts connect to the central aims of translanguaging pedagogy in that in order for multilinguals to perceive that they are being fairly assessed within a classroom in which their instructor is a native speaker of the target language, such as myself, they must also perceive their efforts to produce the target language and language variation as fairly assessed.

By communicating clear expectations for assignments and behavior through assessment, it's clearer to the students what they are asked to do and when their work doesn't meet expectations, they have the opportunity to improve their work under the guidance of their instructor. As explored in the literature, grading contracts determine grades by quantifying the effort and participation in the labor of the course, regardless of whether these contracts were communicated as "labor-based" or otherwise, by determining a set amount of assignments (labor) that student agree to complete to achieve a particular grade. Inoue (2019) writes that "labor is the engine that runs all learning" (pp. 77) and to that end, that engine is fueled by the effort and participation students are willing to expend to achieve the grade they desire by the end of the course. By communicating clearly a set expectations of the labor being asked of them, participants in this study noted that they appreciated that it was their effort in the class that determined their course grade rather than their adherence to a set linguistic habitus.

Knowing that one of the central aims of labor-based grading contracts is to inject social justice in the writing classroom, we can examine how student's perceptions of

fairness within an organizational justice framework. Organizational justice is comprised of four categories: interactional, informational, procedural, and distributive. In order for students to see an assessment method as fair, the rules and decision-making processes to determine outcomes must be justified. The presence of the “grading table” at the end of the grading contract fulfills that role in that it allows for the instructor to clearly communicate the work that is expected of students in order to achieve the grade they desire by the end of the semester (APPENDIX A). Owing to the fact the students within the same classroom have access to instructional resources (my teaching) even though they may have had varying experiences with explicit writing instruction in the past, the curriculum itself is designed to support all students in increasing their knowledge of writing while providing them with opportunities to practice their writing equally. All students are assigned the same formal writing assignments and, if they so choose, have the option to elect to work towards and “A” grade and the associated assignments to achieve that grade equally. This equal distribution of resources determines the presence and measure of distributive justice within an organizational unit, in this case the writing classroom. By providing equitable conditions and “opportunities to grow and change” (Crispin, Week 3) within the classroom ecology using a labor-based grading contract, their efforts in languaging would be more meaningfully and thoughtfully assessed from a compassionate place rather than a place of judgement and a predetermined linguistic standard in which to adhere to (Inoue, 2017). This respect for the labor to grow and change and by extension, faith in the students themselves, is, as Inoue writes “at the heart of translingual approaches to language” (p. 130) and interactional justice. Since all

students were introduced the grading contract equally, had continued access to the grading contract, and had it referenced to them in class multiple times over the course of the semester, students were provided clear explanations related to the information as to the outcomes of their labor within the course and how that effort corresponds to a course grade at the end of the semester.

Self-efficacy

Two participants at the beginning of the semester wrote that “ambition” (Darius, Survey 1) and an effort to “always aim for the best” (Erika, Survey 1) informed the grade that they chose to labor in achieving in the course. In that, they were determined to “try to do [my] best” through “101% effort” (Darius, Survey 1). The participants in this study were determined to “do hard work” (Crispin, Survey 1) to achieve the grades that they wanted. Effort is a critical part of labor-based grading contracts and was cited by multiple participants over the course of this study to be understood as an integral element for determining the grade they would achieve by the end of the semester. This was particularly apparent in Brighton and F’s response in Week 3 when they wrote “This grading system depends on the effort of a student; the more a student does the more a student gets”¹ (Brighton, Week 3) and “[That] grading is based on effort and not necessarily on the quality of our work” (Flores, Week 3). Not only did both participants clearly understand that their grades would be determined by the work that they put into the course but they also clearly understood the essence of the grading contract they were presented with: that I wouldn’t be examining the quality of their writing and that it was

¹ Semicolon added.

their efforts that would determine their grade in the class. In asking students to determine what grade they were hoping to achieve at the beginning of the course, they were communicating their thoughts on their capacity to do what was necessary to achieve their intended goal of the grade they chose. By the end of the course, they understood that their effort that they had decided for themselves at the beginning of the semester and throughout the course was in accordance with the grade they thought they had earned rather than a grade that was simply determined by their instructor's judgement of their learning.

By the end of the semester, participants wrote that they had earned the grade that they had chosen based on their effort, writing that "I am following all the requirements of getting A grade" (George, Survey 2), or "I have submitted all the assignment and project on time and I attend every class" (Crispin, Survey 2). Their efforts and perceptions of that effort to participate in the labor of the course was what determined their grade and knowledge of the grade that they would receive – even when their writing needed improvement or failed to meet the requirements. Instead of punishment with a lower grade, students were freer to put their effort into trying to do well, even when they failed.

This connection between effort and failure was present in a number of responses. For example, Crispin wrote that the "grading contract are valuable because they offer the opportunity to be experimental and exploratory in their writing" because they "will allow freedom to take risks and really work hard. This can show us our weaknesses, misunderstandings, and provide opportunities to grow and change" (Crispin, Week 3). Rather than seeing failure to the detriment of their writing, they saw that failure as

beneficial for their overall goal of achieving the grade they wanted through their effort and their growth as writers. Flores echoed this sentiment when they wrote “I like this concept of grading, it gives me the feeling that my work doesn’t have to be perfect as long as the effort is there” (Flores, Week 10).

Failure is vital to one’s writing development (French, 2018; Inoue, 2014; Bohney, 2018) and subsequently, their language development (Ferris, 2011). When one encounters failure, sometimes understood as error, in writing, it can be the result of a number of reasons. However, one must first know where their gaps are in order to address those gaps in their learning. In order for those gaps to be visible, one must feel like they have the appropriate feedback and support to fail. In order to be supported in that failure and the addressing of that failure by that failure, students must first feel that they have the freedom to take that risk. Determining who has the freedom to take risks and, at times fail, is directly related to what mechanisms are present in the classroom (like assessments) to allow for failure without reproach or reprimand (like a failing grade). If failure, as has been established, is central to both writing development and language learning, grading contracts allow for that failure while providing feedback for improvement from multiple parties. Believing that it is one’s best interest to at least try (and even fail) requires a belief that within the ecology of the class and in their own self-efficacy, their failure is not a personal failure but rather a developmental necessity.

Part of the equation that makes up effort or participation in the classroom is failure of behavior, not always failure of content knowledge or linguistic knowledge (Inoue, 2014) like not submitting work on time or handing in incomplete work. The

grading contract accounts for this by specifying not only the quantity of work being agreed to for the student to complete for the grade they are aiming to achieve in the class but also what behavior related to the classroom ecology is acceptable in order to achieve that goal. The grading contract, while encouraging students to take risks, accounts for these failures of behavior by communicating clear expectations as to what work is or isn't acceptable that is not based on the quality of their writing but their attempts to achieve a goal. In order to feel as if that goal is achievable, one must first believe that they are capable of achieving it.

Beyond the possible errors to be made in behavior to adhere to the contract, multilingual students in varying stages of linguistic development are bound to make an error and a variety of errors as they continue striving to meet the rhetorical, situational, social, and linguistic needs of wherever they may find themselves in their writing (Canagarajah, 2011a). Other errors, such as errors related to students' knowledge of the content they are writing about are assessed through feedback and opportunities to revise through using a grading contract. From a translanguaging perspective, errors are a necessary part of writing development and, subsequently, language development (Canagarajah, 2011a; Ferris, 2004). Because translanguaging is a process of communication rather than a simply the ways in which individuals switch between linguistic codes, labor-based grading allows for error and instead allows instructors to “adopt a practice-based orientation to developmental stages in translanguaging” (Canagarajah, 2011a, p. 9). It is then necessary to “adopt rhetorical considerations in assessing the effectiveness of translanguaging” (Canagarajah, 2011a, p.9) because what

works linguistically in one context may not work in another; and within the art of making meaning, one must use the paintbrush of language to meet the audience's demands.

Believing in one's abilities enough to recognize the necessity of error and transcendence from that error into experience allows for an increased sense of interactional justice as well. Knowing one's current writing and linguistic ability is the product of prior experience, knowledge, and teaching, there are bound to be issues with writing within a new context for multilingual writers. The contract clearly states that rather than being judged on one's linguistic past, one will instead be assessed in how they negotiate their current understandings into new knowledge through the feedback they receive from their audience with dignity and respect. Perceiving one's own goals for learning and developing as a multilingual writer inextricably linked with the making of the occasional error as students negotiate their language to meet the linguistic and rhetorical needs of whatever situation they are in takes belief in oneself to see this process as necessary in order to achieve their goal.

Accountability

Internalization of the expectations and the accountability associated with those expectations was not immediate. For example, Asa indicated that the "requirements were too much" (Week 10 RWJ) for the "A" grade while Erika wrote that they weren't "working hard in the class" and that they "didn't understand" that they had to expend "effort" because they treated this course as they would any other classes when they wrote "I just treated it [the labor of the course] like all of my other classes" but once they realized that they needed to expend more effort (labor), they "learned that I [they] needed

to show my efforts” they then “tried to manage getting back on track” (Erika, Survey 2). Darius in the same survey, meanwhile, indicated that they had worked tirelessly to complete the work associated with their personally chosen grade in the course, writing “I have put a lot of hours into my writing and reading process, a lot of non sleeping nights, and missed 1 or 2 parties because I stayed in dorm doing assignment” (Survey 2).

While the participants did indicate a stronger sense of accountability by the end than they did at the beginning of the semester, there was also resistance to that accountability. Even though majority of the participants internalized the requirements over the course of the semester, a few selected responses from Asa, Darius, and Erika indicate that regardless of the fact that clear expectations and accountability measures were provided to them, they still resisted those measures of personal accountability as well as instructor accountability at the beginning and end of the course. While the majority of the participants in this case study indicated that they perceived labor-based grading contracts as a beneficial and fair tool to determine grades in their FYW classroom, at least one of participants also indicated a negative or unfavorable view towards the use of labor-based grading contracts – even within a response indicating their positive perception of grading contracts. This resistance to labor-based grading contracts in their response related directly to their perception that “the requirements are too much”, even though they also indicated that the method was “good and helpful” (Asa, Week 10 RWJ). This participant indicated that the “requirements are too much” (Asa) and yet did not submit half of their work that is serving as the artifacts at the center of this study. The work of the course was clearly laid out for this Asa and determined that they wanted the

“A” grade by semester’s end clearly indicated an inaccurate measure of the accountability the participant “signed up for” at the beginning of the semester. However, it ought to be noted that this Asalso indicated in their responses (however limited they may be as far as the number of artifacts under investigation in this study) that they “don’t have any other choices” (Asa, Survey 1) for their letter grade and that they “have to get an A” (Asa, Survey 1) because it will increase their GPA. Even then, this returns to the inaccurate measure of accountability. The student indicated that they wanted an A, they recognized they needed an A in order to achieve their goal, yet determined that the labor (requirements) being asked of them was too much to achieve that goal. This participant, while they clearly indicated that the labor-based grading contracts used in the course were “critical for the improvement of our skills” (Asa, Survey 1) in the FYW classroom, it was not until later on in the semester by Week 10 that they determined that the “requirements were too much”. The participant had set an expectation for themselves that they had perceived as too difficult than what they had originally assumed.

The responses from participants in the previous section demonstrate that student’s resistance to the use of grading contracts is related to measures of accountability that are present in the grading contract. Resistance to grading contracts has been documented by a number of studies, regardless of the level of performance the students in question exhibited in their respective contexts (Spidell & Thelin, 2006; Litterio, 2016). The lack of considerable resistance to grading contracts exhibited in this study is notable, as it demonstrates that the participants in this study, for the most part, viewed labor-based grading contracts as an assessment system that was beneficial to them as multilingual

students. While the participants in this study overwhelmingly favored the use of labor-based grading contracts, there were a few responses that demonstrate either potential resistance or full-fledged resistance to their use in their FYW classroom. As Flores indicated when they shared that one of the potential “downsides” of using labor-based grading contracts is that “it’s easier for students to lay back and not take their work seriously as they are not seeing how good or bad their progress is” (Flores, Week 10). This perception could potentially be a result of students’ habituation to a point system of evaluation, as discovered by Spindell & Theliln (2005). In their study, all participants, regardless of performance level in the class, experience at least some resistance to the grading contract in part because of their desire for grades as evaluations of their progress in the class. This helps to demonstrate the need for extensive communication between the author of the grading contract (the instructor) and the student who are using the contract about their progress in the course. However, it ought to be noted that with the presence of the “grading table” at the end of the contract (Appendix F), students were provided with the means to determine their grade in the course, given that I as their instructor had entered in their marks for each assignment within an appropriate timeframe. Students were thus accountable to measure their own progress in the course but still desired continued communication as to their grade status as they progressed through their ENG-101 assignments over the semester.

How an individual sees a process as fair and just connects directly to the sense of accountability, in that accountability allow individuals to decide how another social entity, including themselves, is responsible or accountable for their actions or injustices.

An individual's determination of fairness depends on "who is to blame" when they encounter perceived unfair treatment within an organizational structure like a classroom (Folger & Corpanzo, 2002). In many theories of justice, accountability plays an important but often implicit role in determining the consequences of perceived injustice, either implicitly or explicitly. Going further, authority figures or those with more social power, a teacher in the classroom for example, make attempts to avoid potential retaliation by providing explanations to avoid blame (Bies, 1987). By making expectations fair and clear in communicating that the students themselves are responsible for the amount of labor they put into the course while continuing to communicate those expectations over the course of the semester, both the student themselves and their instructor are accountable for the end of semester grade outcome.

Students' perceptions of fairness, personal benefit, self-efficacy, and accountability can be used to inform pedagogical decisions for instructors and writing program administrators alike. This advice is also applicable to FYW classrooms more generally, in that, as Matsuda and Hammill (2014) suggest, second language writing (and, by extension, multilingual writing) pedagogies are employed whenever a student who uses more than one language to communicate is present in a writing classroom, regardless of level, are present. This points to the ubiquitousness of multilingual writers and thus, employing strategies to support multilingual writers is important "nor is it optional" (Matsuda & Hammill, 2014, p. 266). However there are important considerations such as invested parties ought to take into account that are informed by the results of this study. Below are recommendations and considerations for parties invested in FYW who are

interested in utilizing a labor-based grading contract in their multilingual classroom that are informed by the second research question in this study. Further explorations into the targeted pedagogical implications related to this thesis' findings can be found in the subsequent chapter.

It's difficult to quantify the labor participants were exerting but it's clear that from the data, the labor was perceived as too much by at least one of the participants of this study. While this one participant is an outlier among the larger group of participants in their perceptions of the labor-based grading contract used in the course, in order for the labor-based grading contract to be successful, instructors need to determine how much labor they are asking their students to undertake in the number of assignments, conferences, and other related instructional tasks and strive to develop assessment ecologies that support all students. Instructors, then, must develop tasks that are supportive to students achieving their goal of the final grade they are working to achieve and what we, as instructors, want to teach them over the semester.

The desire or need for a specific grade can be both a motivator and a hinderance. For some, it's a result of perhaps biting off more than one can chew and deciding that the "requirements are too much" (Asa, Week 3). This same participant in this study, Asa's response stating that "I have to get an A [because] to increase my GPA" indicates that while they are striving for a particular grade, the grade that they are striving for or motivated by may feel either too difficult to achieve or out of reach with the way the grading contract is constructed. While negotiation is part of the grading contract, there

are no specified structures within the contract that state whether than negotiation is warranted – negotiation is not mentioned.

Conclusion

Grades are still important both institutionally and to the students themselves with the fact that grades are what determine admission into programs, eligibility for scholarships, and potentially jobs both before and after graduation from a university or college. If they want to get into the program, they have to undertake labor to get there (George, Survey 2: “This grade A is very important to me if I want to get a good score in this spring semester because I have to balance my grades for each class[es]”). Keeping the final grade as part of the labor-based grading contract meets both the goals of the students who use such grades for future endeavors and the institutional needs for determining grade point averages and student success.

Even as a form of ungrading, the continued presence of grades is pragmatic in that it provided a familiar extrinsic motivator for the participants in this study. This is, however, dependent on whether or not the grades are determined fairly, and perceived as fair, just, and beneficial to the student’s personally, given the varied and diverse contexts and cultural expectations around grades expressed by the participants in this study and perhaps elsewhere. Grades can hold students accountable to complete the work that they had agreed to complete and negotiate when issues arise. However, this contract was not drafted with the students nor did they have exposure to such a system prior to being in ENG-101. Their curiosity was good, but the power dynamic remained unequal in that I developed the grading contract and asked students to sign it in order to participate in the

course (the grading contract was not optional – as is institutional policy for first-time graduate teaching assistants of ENG-101). One could posit that when students perceive an assessment method as beneficial, their interactions are different than if they see it as not beneficial to them in terms of fairness and in achieving their own goals to which they hold themselves and the instructor accountable in supporting learning; the student, laboring and developing their writing skill and the instructor providing feedback at multiple points over multiple drafts.

Fairness and equity are two intentional goals of translanguaging pedagogy and in order to create more just FYW classrooms, the institutional and/or instructor choices in determining an appropriate method of assessment should also be fair and equitable or at least working towards that goal to meet that pedagogical goal. When students perceive something as fair, it is likely that they will be more willing to engage with the course content (as explored in the literature and the participant's responses in this study).

Instructing students to determine what grade they are working towards helps to develop self-efficacy skills in that students determine their own achievable goal that is supported through instruction and feedback from peers and their instructor on their writing. Along with the act of establishing their intended “grade goal” at the beginning of the semester, they are, in effect, holding themselves accountable. This combination of accountability and self-efficacy aids in supporting students' autonomy in that they themselves are responsible for completing assignments completely and on time.

Most of what the field of SLA understands regarding a language learners' motivations has a strong monolingual bias (Henry, 2017). Intrinsic and extrinsic

motivations are important factors for students at every stage of their learning and education (Ng & Ng, 2015). Having a deeper understanding of what motivates students particularly when it comes to grades informs instructors to make intentional decisions as to how they structure their curriculum for transfer into different contexts (and, by extension, languages in the case of multilingual students). The multilingual turn in SLA has initiated a subsequent multilingual turn in the fields of TESOL, Multilingual Writing, and Composition, is in part due to the fact that as demographics shift over time, multilingual English classrooms will continue to see a plurality of discourses and practices. Writing classrooms stand to benefit by incorporating translanguaging pedagogy in an effort to develop more just and equitable spaces for multilingual writers by using labor-based grading contracts. This is possible because this method centers participation and effort over judgement by those who have more social power in the writing classrooms (instructors) as students continue to develop the necessary skills to meet the linguistic and rhetorical needs of the situation in which they find themselves composing in and for (Cervatiuc, 2018). This unequal dynamic is further leveled (but not eliminated) with the presence of clear expectations being communicated to students through the contract and whether or not they deem those decisions as fair will determine how they interact with those tasks.

The participants in this study indicated that they perceived labor-based grading contracts as a “fair” assessment method for their multilingual writing classroom. Inoue argues that fairer assessments in the writing classroom are a necessary requirement for translingual approaches to the teaching of writing, namely labor-based grading contracts.

Such an assessment system, Inoue states, has the potential to support translingual pedagogies by encouraging the most effective conditions for implementation through the intentional use of an assessment that does not seek to eliminate error but rather explain it through feedback. In order for translingual pedagogies to be effective in the writing classroom, all language performances, no matter how varied, must be honored, acknowledged, and valued meaningfully in tangible ways that students are aware of and have stake in supporting within the classroom (Inoue, 2017). Therefore, the ranking and or grading of student writing is then antithetical to the goals of translanguaging pedagogy in that the process in which judgements are made stipulate a particular comparative standard in which learners are attempting to adhere to rather than work towards. Assessment, then, should allow invested parties, namely students and their instructors in the writing classroom, to focus primarily on the labor and effort of language learning as means for improvement rather than focusing on the language what is produced. Moreover, by focusing on the language/languageing by providing feedback rather than graded judgements, the power relations between instructors and students are transformed and instead allows parties to focus on efforts of making meaning and developing various facets of their multitudinous and continually shifting identities as writers (Wei, 2018; Garcia, 2009, Creese & Blackledge, 2015). This idea is present in Darius's response in Week 3, when they stated that using labor-based grading contracts in the classroom allows for more emphasis on "prioritizing knowledge" because doing so "is much more important than receiving a grade" (Darius, Week 3). Labor-based grading contracts, then, are designed to create more optimal conditions for fairness that are more difficult (if not

impossible) to achieve with traditional grading. Knowing that the participants in this study determined the labor-based grading contract that they were subjected to at the hands of myself, their instructor, as a “fair” way for them to be assessed in their work connects to this notion directly, in that as international students who are multilingual, the participants in this study were able to focus more on their language/languageing in their FYW classroom because they were allowed the “freedom to take risks and work hard” (Crispin, Week 3). Further explorations into the impact of these findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter V: Conclusions

As the field of research regarding the use of labor-based grading contracts in contexts like multilingual composition classrooms continues to expand, this study was conducted to better understand how students who are subjected to such a grading method understand and perceive their use so as to provide valuable information to instructors and institutions who intend to use such an assessment method in varied local contexts. The case study presented in this thesis uses qualitative content analysis to investigate participants' responses regarding their perceptions and understandings of labor-based grading contracts to inform institutional and instructional decisions regarding FYW. The data that was collected to be part of this study from written journal artifacts and responses to surveys over the course of the semester, were analyzed to identify emerging and relevant themes. The subsequent coding and thematic analysis informed by a grounded theory approach revealed the following themes: the personal benefits of using labor-based grading in the composition classroom, perceived fairness as supported by the grading contract, a improved self-efficacy facilitated by labor-based grading contracts, and student's understood accountability in their own learning and participation in completing classroom related tasks. These themes were temporally examined to both determine how students' perceptions and understandings of labor-based grading contracts changed over time as well as to identify how these themes persisted or changed throughout the semester. This organization in presenting the findings of this study are intended to provide valuable information to institutions and instructors intending to implement labor-based grading in their FYW classrooms due to the fact that examining such information over time to determine how student responses shifted is in line with

critical approaches to composition pedagogies. This is, in part, due to the fact that critical approaches to pedagogy rely on dialogic relationships between instructors and students to glean information as to how the course content and, in the case of a study such as this, the method of assessment can be shifted or evolved to better fit the needs of the students in the classroom. There are a number of pedagogical implications that could be informed by the data collected and discussed in this case study, which will be described in this section, followed by the limitations.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings gleaned from his study indicate several pedagogically relevant subjects related to the use of labor-based grading contracts in multilingual composition classrooms. As instructors and institutions continue to hopefully strive to utilize best practices to serve the needs of linguistically diverse students, especially international students (for which the US higher education system relies on for economic support) the findings of this study are intended to aid in a much larger conversation regarding how assessment methods, as a vital component of pedagogy, are perceived by the students who experience such assessment methods first hand. Provided that labor-based grading is a relatively novel grading method in assessing student writing, regardless of linguistic background, and knowing that contract grading methods, specifically labor-based grading, is intended to support multilingual students, such a method should be employed within critical pedagogies like translanguaging pedagogy because the aims of such an approach to FYW instruction is to allow for diverse written products from students.

Overall, the responses offered by participants used in this case study were relatively positive regarding how they perceived and understood labor-based grading contracts in that they saw such a system benefitting them as students because such a system is fairer to them than other methods of grading that they had experienced before taking ENG-101. Although initial responses described uncertainty in participating within a grading system that was unfamiliar to them, participants identified how such a system seemed fairer to them as students in that their grades were determined not solely on the quality of their work but rather the effort (labor) they employed to complete their coursework. This finding suggests that instructors intending to use labor-based grading contracts in their FYW classrooms ought to be intentional as to how their contracts are developed and implemented in their courses in that the contract should thoughtfully correspond to the labor students are asked to undertake as part of the course. Put more simply, the contract should act as a learning tool in keeping with the assessment as learning model. Within such a model, the contract itself could serve as a co-created tool that makes the act of grading more visible to students. By making contract reviews and negotiations part of the course between an instructor and their students and the contract they create together a tool for both the students and their instructor as a tool for determining grades, so should such processes and actions be a part of the course itself – fully embracing the assessment as learning model. Participants in this study indicated that while they were unfamiliar with labor-based grading at the beginning of the semester, how their understandings of such a method of assessing their writing changed and developed over time indicates that continued revisitation of the grading contract

throughout their time in the classroom could support an increase in their perceptions of how such a method could benefit them as developing writers. This could imply that instructors utilizing labor-based grading in their FYW classroom should make substantial efforts in continuing to both revisit and restructure the grading contract along with their students to increase their understandings and perceptions of both the content and how that instruction benefits them by holding them accountable for their work. Continuing to gauge how students understand and perceive the method of assessment to which they are gaining familiarity with over the course of the semester through the use of surveys and reflective activities could continue to benefit both instructors understanding of their own grading contracts and institutions utilizing such a method programmatically, but there is also the potential for in-class work to be integrated within this process. For example, integrating revisitations and renegotiations of the grading contract within in-class discussion, instructional tasks, and as they continue to work on larger projects could, perhaps, impact students perceptions and understandings of labor-based grading.

Given that the participants in this study displayed both uncertainty and curiosity regarding such an assessment method as labor-based grading could indicate that taking time to review and re-review and, when appropriate, renegotiate the contract with students throughout the course could support a greater understanding of this method of assessment outright. Unfamiliarity with labor-based grading could present obstacles for instructors and students alike, which also indicates that clear and concise instructional support for instructors, like continued professional education, could benefit those who are intending to use such an assessment method in their classrooms to do so with higher

efficacy. From an institutional standpoint, this would require adequate financial and personnel to invest in alternative methods of grading that may be at odds with traditional standards.

In addition to being an aim of critical approaches to teaching, increasing justice in the classroom was of key importance to the primary architect of labor-based grading contracts, Asao Inoue. Many of the responses examined in this study identified fairness (which has been described as inextricably related to justice) as vital component of labor-based grading, and that such a grading method could support their development as writers. This was also indicated in responses in which participants shared that they felt more confident in making mistakes and taking risks in their writing without the fear of a lower grade. This linkage of fairness with writing development could indicate the need for further exploration in this area from a variety of theoretical and disciplinary standpoint. As composition and second language learning pedagogies indicate, making mistakes plays a vital role in improving both writing and language skills. To that end, scholars such as Canagarajah (2011a; 2011b) have indicated that mistakes in composition made by multilingual students may not be a reflection of lack of linguistic knowledge but rather an indication of a student's pragmatic growth as they continue to grow in their competency to use English in their writing as language learners differently within various rhetorical contexts – contexts in which a FYW class's coursework and instructional aims intended to support them in. Feedback from the instructor and peers, which are integrated into the labor-based grading contract used in this case study as well as others described in the review of the literature, support students in growing their metacognitive awareness in

writing by considering varied rhetorical choices in their writing (Canagarajah, 2011b). Providing students more opportunities to continue to try their hand at expressing themselves in another language in their writing to determine how such choices are informed by their audiences and contexts among other rhetorically bound elements of writing must be supported through the methods of assessment used in the classroom – which labor-based grading accounts for and supports.

In the discussion of the themes identified in this case study, particularly related to student's perceptions of fairness, the framework of organizational justice was employed to further examine and interpret student's responses. While organizational justice is a useful tool to understand student perceptions of fairness, the concept overall was developed to understand fairness primarily within workplace contexts. Considering that the social dynamics of the classroom, while related to workplace dynamics, are unique to educational contexts, it would be worth developing a conceptual framework of justice that is specific to classroom contexts. Doing so would provide instructors and institutions alike a more clearly defined framework in examining how fairness, and by extension, justice, is perceived by students in the classroom to inform assessment methodologies that are a vital part of pedagogy. Moreover, although the organizational justice framework was not developed or intended to be applied to considering social dynamics in classroom contexts, such a framework has been shown to be a supportive means for determining how the numerous interactions between instructors and students could all be improved upon to support more just classrooms. Using the multitudinous framework of organizational justice as a tool for providing deeper understandings of a teacher's role in

promoting justice in their own classroom through added training and professional development could prove useful over time. However, the issue still stands in that organizational justice, although it has been applied to classroom dynamics, cannot fully capture, account for, or describe the interactions between an instructor and their students – regardless of how such dynamics resemble those between a manager and their employees. Instead, this indicates that the development of a framework for conceptualizing justice in the classroom could benefit instructors and institutions in determining how their curricular acts impact students in various ways and to make decisions that are more closely aligned with various efforts to improve the lives of students from more diverse backgrounds. To that end, if the choice to employ justice-oriented pedagogies like critical and translanguaging pedagogies within the multilingual composition classroom is made to address that need, such a framework could help to improve their implementation.

If translanguaging pedagogy is, in essence, an effort to develop and support more socially just classrooms for multilingual writers, the assessment methodologies utilized by instructors taking such a pedagogical approach must also follow a framework that conceptualizes and integrates justice for the students who participate in such systems. While assessments may be seen as just and equitable in the eyes of the instructors who use them, the efforts to create more socially just classroom will be nullified if the student subjects who are subjected to such practices do not see such practices as fair or beneficial to them. Positioning assessment as fair and supportive of their learning allows for students to exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation to continue their work within a

given course context because they view the feedback they receive from their peers and from their instructor for the sake of their development as writers. The continued presence of a final grade in order to meet the institutional need to calculate GPAs, acceptance for scholarships, etc. as well as this study's participants indication that the participants continued to desire a final grade by semester's end reveal that students are still extrinsically motivated by a final grade as a reward for their labor in the course. Such a finding indicates that grades still play a critical role in motivating students to participate in the labor of the writing course because they are, at least partially, motivated by the grade they are hoping to achieve by the end of the course. The discussion of such a finding as included in this thesis suggest two potential threads of recommendations: the continued use of grades in the composition classroom alongside labor-based grading contracts and/or increased teacher training and support for continued discussion regarding grades and their power (as both a motivator and a hinderance to learning) within the classroom. Both of these threads would entail deliberate institutional and instructional support provided by writing program administration to their FYW instructors through continued training to prepare such instructors to sustain such conversations with and among their student. Similarly, the continued use of labor-based grading contracts in the composition classroom requires direct investiture from the institution and program administration into such an assessment practice. While grades are, as mentioned previously, a necessary evil and integral part of assessing and interacting with students, perhaps the ways in which those grades could continue to be used for the purpose of making various educational and personal decisions could be informed by the work the

student completed to achieve their desired grade rather than a reflection of the pressures and nebulous choices at the hands of their instructors.

Limitations

While the results from this study are significant in that the responses used in this thesis provide a clearer picture as to how multilingual students perceive and understand labor-based grading in their FYW classroom as well as providing illuminating information as to how such information can help to inform instructional and institutional practices, there remain several limitations that ought to be discussed. By discussing the limitations that are present in this study, this will help to illustrate suggestions for further research related to labor-based grading in multilingual composition classroom contexts and beyond. Additionally, considering this noticeable gap that was discovered by undertaking this project, a suggestion for a theoretical framework that is relevant to the subject matter of this study will also be offered.

A number of potential limitations in this study relate to overall design of this study from both a conceptual and methodological standpoint. For one, the primary data collected for this study came from assignments and open-ended surveys over the course of the semester that allowed for student responses to be collected over sixteen weeks. Knowing that students are not always present for class or that they had the liberty to not complete some of their reading and writing journal assignments over the course of the semester given how the grading contract was constructed, the number of data points from each of the participants was somewhat unequal. This may have been due to the design of the grading contract itself or from the choice to utilize student work in this study. While

the participant's responses still proved fruitful as a means to better understand how they perceived and understood labor-based grading, more data points would offer a clearer picture as to how those perceptions and understandings change and evolve over time and support a clearer picture as to how such information could potentially aid instructors and institutions who intend to employ labor-based grading model in their multilingual composition classrooms.

This case study only used artifacts taken from the classroom to develop a picture of how the participants perceived and understood grading contracts. Utilizing an additional data set in various modalities could have offered additional valuable information that would correspond to a more elaborate examination into the first research question. Additionally, while the second research question is aimed at potential suggestions as to how this information could be utilized by instructors and institutions intending on utilizing labor-based grading contracts in their FYW classrooms, these suggestions are only based in the interpretations of the participants' responses that were discussed the researcher. Collecting additional data using varied modalities could have better supported the suggestions made in the discussion of the data so that the information gleaned from the findings of this study could have provided additional and vital information as to how such information could be utilized by invested parties.

Additionally, expanding the study to include multiple sections of the same course to widen the pool of participants to include more students and their instructors would also allow for further investigation into how multilingual students perceive and understand the use of labor-based grading in their composition classroom. Doing so would increase the

wealth of responses as well as provide additional insights into how such responses could be utilized to inform instructional and institutional decisions regarding FYW curriculum and assessment. By widening the participant pool to instructors as well as students, future investigations could determine how such an assessment method was implemented, perceived, and understood by the instructors using labor-based grading contracts. An extension of this suggested further investigation into collecting both student and instructor responses could also include further comparison between labor-based grading contracts. While this case study utilized the same labor-based grading contract presented to first year graduate teaching assistants, there is the potential for variation between contracts which could lead to different outcomes in responses and provide a greater abundance of data.

Although this was touched upon in the researcher positionally statement offered in an earlier chapter in this thesis, the fact of the matter is that the researcher's position as the participant's FYW instructor in this study could have impacted the participants' responses. While inquires into how students perceive and understand how they are being taught and assessed are valuable and a crucial part of critical pedagogies, the question remains as to whether or not the participants in this study would have offered more negative responses if the researcher inquiring into their thoughts about labor-based grading. The power differential could have had a substantial impact on participants' responses, so there is potential for similar studies to be conducted by a researcher that is comparatively unfamiliar with the instructor in the classroom under investigation.

The employment of organizational justice as a framework to interpret students' responses proved fruitful in that the various aspects of organizational justice allowed for a deeper interpretation of participants' responses – especially how they pertained to the aims of social justice embedded within critical approaches to composition pedagogy. While this framework has been used in classrooms contexts to contextualize and understand relationships between instructors and students when it comes to assessment, as explained in the literature, the relatively small stock of examples as to how such a framework relates to various classrooms contexts could hinder the trustworthiness of the findings from this study. While social justice conceptually guides pedagogies like translanguaging pedagogy, how justice is understood and developed within classrooms contexts using a relevant justice framework other than organizational justice could have supported a deeper and more nuanced discussion of the responses participants provided as data in this case study.

Suggestions for Further Research

In light of the findings discussed in this thesis, threads of potential future research projects related to assessment, motivation, language learning, and fairness begin to emerge. While this exploration into suggested research is not intended to be exhaustive by any means, these ideas are presented in the hope that scholars and researchers in fields involved with FYW and multilingual composition could incorporate such ideas into the development and design of future projects. Such suggestions are primarily targeted towards the field of TESOL, but, as discussed in this thesis, when it comes to multilingual writers, their growing presence in US higher educational contexts outside of

separated instruction in writing indicates that such information could be valuable for FYW writing instructors more generally.

Most generally, this study was conducted by a FYW instructor investigating their own student's perceptions of labor-based grading. Conducting research that both widens the participant pool and involves researchers that are not the teacher responsible for their writing instruction would allow for findings from such a study to not only have a higher threshold of validity, but also provide comparisons between courses. In instances where labor-based grading contracts are unique to their local classroom contexts, such contracts could be compared to determine how these changes impact students in a number of constructive ways. While this study does help to provide information as to how multilingual students in the writing classroom understand and perceive labor-based grading, more information is needed from potential participants to paint a clearer picture as to how such information could be utilized by institutions and instructors. Going further, employing a variety of methodological approaches to the data collection and analysis could provide additional information as to how students express their perceptions of labor-based grading in different ways.

Research related to writing assessment in the field of TESOL rarely discusses how grading, which I have explained as an inextricable part of assessment, impacts student's learning in a FYW classroom, are few in number compared to similar studies conducted in the field of composition more generally. More research investigating how grading systems impact multilingual students' learning in the composition classroom could focus on a number of pedagogically relevant constructs pertinent to both the fields of TESOL

and composition alike, such as how grading methodologies impact students' motivation to continue to use English in their writing. While motivations, orientations and attitudes towards language learning have long been discussed in the field (Dornyei and Ushioda, 2009; Dornyei, 1990; 2003), few investigations have been undertaken to determine how assessment methods, specifically methods of grading, can impact students' motivation to learn that are specific to language learners. Going further, investigating how assessment methodologies impact students' motivation could help to further illuminate how grading play a role, if any, for students as they continue to learn and use English as additional language. Examining not only motivation, but also investment in learning English and how the methods of grading, like labor-based grading, impact that investment could aid in understanding how students identify with English in their writing and using English in other multilingual contexts both in and outside US higher education. The field of TESOL, which has a wide range of scholarship relating to motivation in language learning, should undertake investigations into how grading practices impact students' motivations to continue learning and investing in their chosen target language community. Similarly, research in the field of composition could further investigate student's motivations as well as those motivations pertain to assessment decisions. For example, many studies have been conducted investigating students' motivations in the composition classroom (Ling et al., 2021; Pajares, 2003) but few have examined the ways in which alternative grading practices like contract grading impact students' writing motivation. Such studies could help to improve the effectiveness of contract grading methods like labor-based grading to support student retention and writing development.

Similarly, while self-efficacy and accountability were identified in this study as key themes present in the data utilized in this case study and are both elements of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation identified by scholars such as Ng and Ng (2015) and organizational justice as noted by Folger and Cropanzano (2002), it is unclear as to how self-efficacy and accountability are related to the measurements of motivation to participate in a system like labor-based grading. It has been discussed in this thesis how important exploring student perceptions of assessment practices are in keeping with the pedagogical aims of critical and translanguaging approaches to teaching FYW and how the designing assessment methods like grading contracts can help to meet those aims. How student perceptions and understandings of such an assessment practice impact their motivations to actively participate in classroom activities through a self-efficacy and accountability lens is one such area of future research worth exploring.

As indicated in this thesis, assessment plays a vital role in pedagogy in that it allows for instructors to ascertain how the content they are teaching is perceived, understood and utilized by their students. Investigations into how instructors perceive and understand grading methods, specifically labor-based grading, supporting their translational and critical pedagogical approaches in teaching multilingual composition classroom could help to further develop a clearer roadmap as to how such pedagogies could be employed. Additionally, investigating how instructors develop and employ labor-based grading in their local contexts by comparing teacher developed grading contracts could help to inform how labor-based grading can be further developed in meeting the needs of individual instructors and institutions alike.

Conclusion

Conversations regarding grading practices continue to paint a dissenting portrait as to how such practices can negatively affect students and instructors alike, implying that such practices ought to shift in order to meet the students' needs. While alternative grading methods, like labor-based grading contracts, have been suggested as potential remedies in alleviating student and instructor anguish in determining final grades for student work, such practices have yet to be substantially utilized within contexts in which the majority or totality of the student population in question are multilingual and international students. As the usage of labor-based grading continues to gain traction and notoriety in composition classrooms across the country along with an increased number of international students choosing to pursue an undergraduate degree in the United States for the various socio-economic reasons referred to within this thesis, there must be continued investigations into the use and implementation of such assessment methodologies in composition classrooms where multilingual students reside. Although labor-based grading contracts have been endorsed as a means of taking some of the anguish out of the practice of grading and as a way of further supporting the pedagogical aims of critical pedagogies to promote justice in the classroom, more investigations are warranted to support such a claim and to determine how such practices could potentially benefit students, instructors, and institutions alike who are involved in FYW courses and programs. Doing so would be to the benefit of not only the students such parties are tasked with instructing but also possibly for the financial health of post-secondary institutions that continue to rely on international student admissions for revenue and notoriety.

Correspondingly, if the English language is to continue to hold prestige in educational contexts in and outside of the United States, and as there continues to be calls within the field of TESOL to reckon with the postcolonial and unjust realities of English language use and instruction across the globe, discussions aimed at advancing, supporting and sustaining justice in the classroom through pedagogical application should expand past determining appropriate content that can support such goals. Rather, these conversations should also include focused and intentional inquiries that support the development of best practices for promoting justice through assessment methodologies, like grading contracts, in composition classrooms. As described in this thesis, evaluating how students understand and perceive the methods of grading to which they are subjected to in the multilingual composition classroom, is a vital and necessary component in promoting and sustaining justice in the classroom within justice-oriented pedagogies. These important pedagogical choices regarding FYW instruction ought to be directly informed and influenced by the students directly involved in and subjected to such practices to further incorporate and encourage critical approaches to teaching and learning.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Consent Form

Introduction

My name is Allison (Al) Hosman. I am a graduate teaching assistant in the English Department at Minnesota State University, Mankato, and your current ENG-101-51 instructor. As a student in this class, you are invited to participate in a research study titled “Student Perspectives of Labor-Based Grading Methods in First-Year Multilingual Composition Classrooms”. I am conducting this research alongside Dr. Sarah Henderson Lee. This project aims to better understand student perspectives of labor-based grading practices in first-year multilingual composition classrooms at MNSU.

Description of the Study

Over the course of the study (and semester), all students will be instructed to complete surveys and write reflections regarding labor-based grading. By signing this consent form, if you choose to participate, you are granting permission of access to this information to the researcher – your instructor – to use in this study.

Your Participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time before the results of the study have been approved for publication or presentation. Consent forms will be collected by a fellow faculty member and TA mentor, Dr. Kelly Moreland, and kept in a locked file cabinet in her office (AH 201N) until the end of the semester. Because I am in the role of both instructor and researcher, I will not have access to the consent forms until all final grades have been posted. At no time during the semester will I know whether or not you decided to participate in this study. All in-class writings will be kept in a locked file cabinet or on a password protected computer. Individual student writings will only be accessible for the instructor and the corresponding student. In dissemination of this research, pseudonyms will be used to ensure confidentiality of participants. All consent forms and collected data will be retained for a minimum of three years before being destroyed, as per federal regulations. **Your decision to participate in said research study will not affect your academic standing or relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and you may refuse to participate without penalty.** If you have additional questions regarding participants’ rights and research-related injuries, please feel free to contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board at +1 (507)-389-1242.

Confidentiality

The records of your surveys, writing samples, and other associated data will be kept strictly confidential. All collected data will not be used besides the research purpose outlined above.

As this study is to be conducted by your instructor, know that participation in this study will have no effect on your overall grade or standing in this course. Participation in this study is voluntary and does not have the potential to improve or degrade your standing in this class. If you feel uncomfortable at any time over the course of the study, you may withdraw. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. There are no direct benefits to participating in this study for you as a student other than improving the implementation of labor-based grading assessment models in academic writing courses in the future.

The risks of participating in the above-mentioned research study are no more than what is experienced in daily life in a classroom setting. This consent form will be stored securely for 3 years and will be destroyed after this period has ended. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato IT Solutions Center (507-389-6654) and speak to the Information Security

Manager. If you wish to obtain a copy of this consent form for your records, please contact the faculty PI, Dr. Sarah Henderson Lee (sarah.henderson-lee@mnsu.edu).

Participant Consent

My signature below confirms that I, _____ have read the above information regarding the aforementioned research study, that I am above the age of 18 years old, and that I consent to the researcher's use of my writing in this research study

Signature: _____

Date:

MSU IRBNet ID#: 913084

Date of MSU IRB Approval: 1/31/22

Appendix B: Survey 1

Labor-Based Grading Survey

Once you have read the grading contract, complete the following survey.

Below you can find a link to the contract we discussed in class as well as further information about labor-based grading in general.

The full contract is available here: [\(LINK\)](#)

Information about labor-based grading: [\(LINK\)](#)

* Required

1. Name *

2. Email *

3. How do you feel about labor-based grading being used in this class? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Negative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Positive

4. What are your thoughts about labor-based grading contracts being used in this class? *

5. What grade are you hoping to achieve in this class?

Mark only one oval.

- A
 B
 C
 D

6. What informed your choice? *

7. If you chose an "A" grade, what mini-writing project would you like to do? *

Mark only one oval.

- Option 1: Letter to a Literary Sponsor
 Option 2: Analysis of a Mini-Documentary
 Option 3: Annotated Bibliography
 Option 4: Discourse Community Presentation
 Option 5: Letter to a Future Composition Student

8. Do you have any other thoughts regarding labor-based grading? *

9. Instructor Name *

10. Comments

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Google Forms

Appendix C: Week 3 Journal

ENG 101: Composition | Reading & Writing Journal

Week Three Prompts

Required Reading

- Young, “Should Writers Use They Own English?” (PDF on D2L)
- Hinton, “So You’ve Got a Writing Assignment” (PDF on D2L)
- Gagich’s “An Introduction to and Strategies for Multimodal Composing” (PDF on D2L)
- Project #1: Literacy Narrative Project description (on D2L)
- One sample Project #1 (D2L)
- Grading Contract (on D2L)

Remember: Please respond to BOTH prompts. Aim for at least 200 words of your own written text between the two prompts.

Prompt 2.1: Reading Notes

As you complete this week’s assigned readings, take notes. Like always, your notes (and all of your RWJ entries) can be in whatever format works best for you. The goal is to record the knowledge you’re gaining from the reading so you can a) retain it and b) go back and find it later when you need it.

Prompt 2.2: Pre-reflecting on Project 1

After you’ve read the Project 1 assignment on D2L, answer as many of the bulleted questions below as you can. Don’t worry if you can’t answer them all right now. The goal is to start thinking about what you want to compose for your Project 1—it’s totally fine and expected if your ideas change over time.

- What are your thoughts regarding the labor-based grading contract your instructor had you sign?
- What prompt(s) from the Project 1 assignment appeal to you the most and why?
- Knowing that you cannot write a traditional essay for this project, what do you think you might want to make? What draws you to that genre(s)/mode(s)?
- Knowing that your audience for Project 1 is most likely your instructor, your classmates, and most importantly yourself, what steps do you need to take to consider your audience as you’re composing this project?
- What challenges do you anticipate facing as you think about composing your first writing project?
- What do you expect to learn from composing this project? What are you looking forward to?

Appendix D: Week 10 Journal
ENG 101: Composition | Reading & Writing Journal
Week 10 Prompts

Required Reading

- Witte, “Research Starts with Answers” (pp. 226–230 in [Bad Ideas About Writing](#))
- Driscoll (2011) “Introduction to Primary Research” (PDF on D2L)
- Project 3 assignment description (D2L)
- (optional) Melzer (2020) “Understanding Discourse Communities”

Prompt 10.1: Reading Notes

As you complete this week’s assigned readings, take notes. Like always, your notes (and all of your RWJ entries) can be in whatever format works best for you. The goal is to record the knowledge you’re gaining from the reading so you can a) retain it and b) go back and find it later when you need it. **This week, I think it will be particularly helpful to reflect on how Witte’s idea about research might be contradictory to what you’ve previously learned.**

Prompt 10.2: Pre-flecting on Project 3

After you’ve read the Project 3 assignment on D2L and complete your Topic & Planning activity with your group, answer as many of the bulleted questions below as you can. Don’t worry if you can’t answer them all right now. The goal is to start thinking about your project—it’s totally fine and expected if your ideas change over time.

- What Discourse community and preliminary research question did you decide on for Project 3?
- What strikes you as most interesting about the topic and question your group identified for Project 3? What are you hoping to learn more about as you work on this project?
- Who do you see as your primary audience for Project 3? Try to be as specific as possible.
- Given the audience you identified, what do you see as the purpose for your Discourse Community Presentation and Case Study? In other words, what do you want your audience to learn, do, think, or feel in response to your projects?
- What challenges do you anticipate facing as you think about composing your presentation and case study?
- What do you expect to learn from composing this project? What are you looking forward to?
- Now that we are more than halfway through the semester, what are your thoughts about the labor-based grading contracts we use in this class?

Appendix E: Survey 2

Labor-Based Grading Survey 2

Prof. Al is conducting a survey about labor-based grading and would like your feedback. This to better understand how students-feel about the use of labor-based grading practices in their composition classrooms at MNSU.

Below you can find a link to the contract we discussed in class earlier in the semester as well as further information about labor-based grading in general.

The full contract is available here: [\(LINK\)](#)

Information about labor-based grading: [\(LINK\)](#)

* Required

1. Name *

2. Email *

3. How do you feel about labor-based grading being used in this class? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Negative Positive

4. What are your thoughts about labor-based grading contracts being used in this class now at the end of the semester? *

5. What grade do you think you'll achieve in this course?

Mark only one oval.

A

B

C

D

6. Please explain your choice for the previous question. *

7. Do you have any other thoughts regarding labor-based grading? *

8. Comments

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Appendix F: Grading Contract

Student Name: _____

ENG 101 Grading Contract

Prof. AI | Spring '22

What is a labor-based grading contract?

A grading contract is an agreement between teacher and students on how grades will be earned in class. Instructors across the country have been using grading contracts for many years, and they can take any number of forms. In this class we're using a grading format introduced by Asao B. Inoue called labor-based grading contracts. **Our contract stipulates that grades in this class are based on labor and effort, not on the quality of your writing.**

Why are we using a labor-based grading contract in this class?

Grades, in the form of letters and numbers assigned to specific writing projects, do not improve learning. Using conventional grading of projects and other work often leads students to think more about acquiring a certain grade than about their writing or learning; to worry more about pleasing a teacher or fooling one than figuring out what they really want to learn, or how they want to communicate something to someone for some purpose. In fact, grades often get in the way of learning, if that's what we're here for. An "A" doesn't build a good bridge for an engineer, nor does it help a reporter write a good story, or an urban planner make good decisions for her city. Conventional grading may cause you to be reluctant to take risks with your writing or ideas; try new things and fail—and importantly—learn from that failure. Sometimes grades even lead to the feeling that you are working against your teacher, or that you cannot make a mistake, or that you have to hide a part of yourself from your teacher and peers.

How does the grading contract work?

Instead of being graded on your writing, you will receive **feedback** for each of the formal writing projects, not to be calculated into your grade point average, but so you have a sense of the effort you put into your writing throughout the semester. I have set up this class so you can achieve the learning goals by learning from structured assignments that enhance your critical and creative thinking, and by receiving plenty of informal and formal feedback on your in-progress work. Feedback often comes in the form of informal in-class discussions about your assignments and individual or group conferences. For instance, when I and/or your peers offer critiques of your draft projects, we assume that you will implement those revision suggestions into your drafts. When you don't, you should have a very good reason in relation to the purpose of the text for not doing so. Otherwise, when I am reviewing your revised and polished drafts, I should be able to

see your progress from the time it was workshopped as well as from informal, in-class feedback or conferences.

*I hope that this grading system will allow you the freedom and flexibility to **take risks** in your projects while also providing time for you to re-envision and revise those drafts into more usable, sophisticated, and polished projects—without the frustration and worry often associated with assigning letter grades to formal writing projects.*

Grading Contract Terms & Conditions

As the course instructor and administrator of our grading contract, I will formulate final course grades based on labor and effort: your willingness to take on new tasks, perhaps tasks outside of your comfort zone, and to try, even when it takes several attempts to come to a writing project you are proud of. **Grades in this course are based 100% on effort. To do well, you will need to understand and perform writing as process, engage fully in the course, and put forth your best effort each day.**

Everyone in this class starts with a B. How you participate and the effort you put forth changes that grade higher or lower. So, I invite you to think about your own personal goals for this class, your goals as a writer, and what you hope to learn. If those goals include earning an “A” at the end of the term, at the end of this contract you will find a table with the effort required to earn that grade.

“B” Grades

You are guaranteed to earn a course grade of “B” if you meet all of the following conditions:

1. **All Writing Projects and Assignments** need to meet the following conditions:
 - **Complete and On-Time.** You agree to turn in on-time and in the manner, format, and location requested all projects, informal writing, in class activities, and assignments that meet our agreed-upon expectations.
 - **Revised.** When the job is to revise your thinking and work, including incorporating feedback from your instructor or peer response, you will reshape, extend, complicate, or clarify ideas. This isn’t just correcting or

touching up. Revisions should respond to feedback and consider it seriously in order to be complete.

- **Copy Edited.** For polished projects, your work should be well copy-edited—that is, you should spend time and effort looking at spelling and grammar. It’s fine to get help with copy editing. (Copy editing only applies to polished drafts.)

2. **Late Work.** You agree to turn in properly and on time all the work and assignments expected of you. This means you’ll follow the instructions and guidelines for each assignment. During the semester you may, however, turn in a few informal writing assignments late without penalty. To earn a final grade of “B,” you may accumulate no more than 4 late informal assignments. (See the table on the last page of this contract.) **Late work is defined as any informal assignment that is turned in AFTER the due date/time without prior notice.** This policy does not apply to formal writing projects. **All formal writing projects are expected to be turned in on-time.**
3. **Missing/Incomplete Work.** If you turn work in **AFTER the 48 hours** stipulated in #2 above **or if I have no record of you doing work or turning it in,** it is considered missing. Missing the work that is crucial to your development is unacceptable, so accumulating much missing work will keep you from meeting our contract expectations. To earn a final grade of “B,” you may accumulate no more than 2 missing informal assignments. This policy does not apply to formal writing projects. **All formal writing projects must be turned in in order to pass the course.**
4. **Sharing, Collaboration, and Accountability.** You agree to work cooperatively and collegially with your peers during group activities, class discussions, and peer response sessions. You also agree to take collaborative responsibility for your work in the class, including attendance and participation. Check in with each other often and reach out to your peers when you need help understanding something about the class or when you need to miss a day. Be accountable to each other in addition to yourself and me.

“A” Grades

As you can see, the “B” grade depends primarily on *behavior* and *effort*. Grades of “A,” however, require more *effort outside of class*. In order to earn an “A,” you must complete the conditions for the “B” grade above, *and*:

A.1 Additional Peer Response Partnerships (out of class)

For each formal writing project in class, we will spend one class session working in groups to read and respond to each other's work. You will likely have the opportunity to receive feedback on your writing from at least two peers during each of these class sessions. In order to earn an "A" at the end of the semester, you must participate in one additional peer response partnership for *each* of the four major writing projects in class -**the *Literacy Narrative*, the *Rhetorical Analysis*, a *Field Research Project*, and a *Final ePortfolio* (which will also include your own *Writing Reflection* piece)**. This additional peer response should be conducted outside of class time. Because peer response is a partner effort, you will need to pair up with another person in order to complete this requirement. I recommend trading drafts with a peer in our class, but if you know of someone in another class you'd like to work with, you may. For a successful peer response you must trade drafts with your partner, read each other's drafts in full, respond critically and thoughtfully to the draft (using the "track changes" function in Microsoft Word or the equivalent in another program), and share the evidence of your peer response with me. This evidence must include the comments you wrote on your partner's draft and the comments your partner wrote on your draft. **You may complete this additional peer response at any point in the drafting process of each project, however each additional peer response must be turned in to me *prior* to the deadline for the polished draft.**

A.2 Mini Writing Project

Choose ONE of the following mini writing projects to complete during the semester. Each project aligns with one unit in class—therefore, the mini writing project is due at the end of that unit. Due dates are listed with each project below. Your mini writing project should be 600–900 words (2–3 double-spaced pages).

- Option 1: **Letter to a Literacy Sponsor**

Final Draft Due: Feb. 22

During Unit I we'll read an article by Deborah Brandt titled "Sponsors of Literacy," and you'll think, talk, and write about people who have been influential to your literacy education. For this mini writing project, you'll compose a letter addressed to one of your literacy sponsors. It can be anyone you deem influential to your literacy education—a family member, friend, teacher, coach, etc. Tell the person why you view them as an influential person in your literacy education—what they did to help you learn about reading and writing. Some guiding questions: What, specifically, do you remember learning from them? Why does this stick out in your memory? What does this experience mean for you now, as a student in ENG 101? Keep your focus on literacy, specifically, even if the

person has helped you grow in other areas too. You do not have to send your letter to the sponsor, but you're most welcome to send it if you want to.

- **Option 2: Analysis of a Mini-Documentary**

Final Draft Due: Feb. 24

The second formal writing project in this class, and this mini-project, are assigned to Unit II. For this project, you will analyze a mini-documentary from a pre-selected list and discuss at least three elements of your choice to better understand the mini-documentary's rhetorical situation; whether that is analyzing the subject matter, how the subject matter is presented, the purpose of the documentary, or its rhetorical appeals. This project is intended to support your own Rhetorical Analysis project in Unit II.

- **Option 3: Annotated Bibliography**

Final Draft Due: Mar. 29

In Unit III, you will be tasked with completing a field research project. In an effort to prepare you for how to assess source material, this annotated bibliography assignment aims to improve your skills in summarizing source material and assessing how a source supports your research. If you wish for this writing project to be multimodal, you are welcome to do so.

- **Option 4: Letter to a Future Composition Student**

Final Draft Due: Apr. 12

By this point in the semester, you've completed the majority of the work required in ENG 101 and you've been introduced to several new concepts about writing. You've almost finished composing your own theory of writing, based on what you've learned. For this mini writing project, you'll take that knowledge and turn it into a meaningful (and honest) recommendation for a future ENG 101 student. Some guiding questions: What can the student expect to learn in this class? What advice do you have? Perhaps, what do you wish you'd known coming in to this class?

Summary of Effort Required for Final Letter Grades

Final Course Grade	Effort Required
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2 or fewer late reading and writing journal entries ● 1 or fewer missing/incomplete informal writing assignments ● 0 late/missing/incomplete formal assignments ● All of the “B” grade requirements above, plus A.1, A.2, and A.3
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 3 or fewer late reading and writing journal entries ● 2 or fewer missing/incomplete informal assignments ● 0 late/missing/incomplete formal assignments ● All of the “B” grade requirements above
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 4 or fewer late reading and writing journal entries ● 3 or fewer missing/incomplete informal assignments ● 1 late formal assignments ● 0 missing/incomplete formal assignments
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5 or more late reading and writing journal entries ● 4 or more missing/incomplete informal assignments ● 2 or more late formal assignments ● 1 or more missing/incomplete formal assignments
F	Attendance – Stopped attending class sessions/turning in work

Notes:

*Students must earn a final grade of “C” or higher in order to pass ENG 101. A grade of “C-” or below will require that the student retake the course.

*Like any negotiation, this contract contains gray areas. If you believe you have earned a higher grade than I’ve reported, please talk to me—we might be able to find middle ground in the form of +/- grades. I am always happy to talk about your work in the course, and I want us to work together toward your success.

On the next page, please indicate your anticipated grade in the course, then sign in agreement with the contract.

Anticipated Grade: _____

If the anticipated grade is “A,” indicate a preference for your Mini Writing Project by circling one of the following assignments:

Option 1: **Letter to a Literacy Sponsor**

Option 2: **Analysis of a Mini-Documentary**

Option 3: **Annotated Bibliography**

Option 4: **Letter to a Future Composition Student**

I (student) agree to the terms of the above Grading Contract. I understand that the anticipated grade indicated above represents the effort I intend to complete, and that at the end of the course I will earn the grade that best represents the effort I have completed according to this contract. I will contact **Prof. Al** if I have questions about my grade moving forward.

I, **Prof. Al**, agree to provide you with formative feedback on your formal writing projects, including multiple drafts. I agree to provide you with additional feedback and/or clarification if you ask for it. I also agree to keep a thorough record of your effort in the D2L gradebook, where you can check your progress at any time.

Signed:

Student

Instructor