

A HISTORY OF WRITING INSTRUCTION FOR JAMAICAN UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS: A CASE FOR MOVING BEYOND THE RHETORIC OF
TRANSPARENT DISCIPLINARITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES,
MONA

by

Vivette Milson-Whyte

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN RHETORIC, COMPOSITION, AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2008

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Vivette Milson-Whyte entitled "A History of Writing Instruction for Jamaican University Students: A Case for Moving beyond the Rhetoric of Transparent Disciplinarity at The University of the West Indies, Mona" and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Rhetoric, Composition, and the Teaching of English.

Thomas P. Miller

Date: 9 April 2008

Anne-Marie Hall

Date: 9 April 2008

Geta LeSeur

Date: 9 April 2008

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Dissertation Director: Thomas P. Miller

Date: 9 April 2008

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Several organizations and individuals contributed to the completion of this dissertation, and I wish to express my profound gratitude to them:

- the J. William Fulbright Scholarship Board for offering me a Fulbright-LASPAU grant to finance the first two years of my doctoral program in the US.
- the cultural affairs representatives in the Office of Public Affairs at the American Embassy in Jamaica for coordinating the competition for these grants, arranging travel to the US, and providing other forms of support.
- the program advisors/assistants in the LASPAU office in Massachusetts and representatives in International Student Programs and Services at The University of Arizona for assisting with the transition to Tucson and assuring smooth progress in various ways throughout the duration of my studies.
- my home institution, The University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona, for awarding me leave and a grant to assist with completing doctoral studies.
- the Registrar at Mona for permission to use the campus as a site for my study.
- personnel in the archives, Documentation Centre, main library, and Registry Records at Mona for assisting me in locating and/or reproducing research materials.
- the Department of Language, Linguistics & Philosophy, UWI, Mona: heads, past and present, for encouragement in ways they may be unaware of; members of the departmental office; and lecturers and instructors, past and present, who graciously participated in the study and/or encouraged my endeavors.
- the Housing Office, UWI, Mona for helping with locating accommodation while I was completing research on the campus during Summer 2007.
- Jerid Francom for setting up my questionnaires, and the other members of The University of Arizona's College of Humanities (COH) laboratories for providing an on campus space to work and graciously providing technological support.
- the English Department at The University of Arizona for offering various scholarships and informal subsidies for completing graduate studies.
- the faculty in Rhetoric, Composition, and the Teaching of English (RCTE) for their encouragement and collaborative approach to writing and learning.
- Alison Miller, the RCTE program administrator, for her terrific support.
- my stellar dissertation committee members whom I cannot thank enough for their encouragement and dedication to reading and offering feedback on my drafts.
- *mis comadres* and others whom I have come to call friends in RCTE for helping me to make the transition to Tucson and survive in a "different" space.
- Living Water Ministries for being my spiritual oasis during the sojourn.
- my family – biological, foster, in-laws, and church – and friends, outside of Arizona, who provided support in countless ways.
- my husband for his unfailing love and encouragement, and for being a witness to the trials and triumphs of the process.

May my Forever Friend – my source of inspiration – bless you all!

DEDICATION

for

Mr. King

Eric (David) King

stalwart of Mona's writing program

champion record keeper

who informed but allowed me to interpret

and

in memory of

my mother

Violet Isabel Benjamin

whose language habits

and questionable insistence that I "study" and "speak properly"

saved me from linguistic orphanhood.

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GLOSSARY

An *External Examiner* vets examination questions and checks final results, grading, and so on in a specific course. This person is usually in another institution (overseas).

A *Moderator* is responsible for selection and on-going training of instructors, coordinating the production of teaching materials, supervising and standardizing the marking of coursework and examinations, revising existing courses, and developing and introducing new ones. A *University/Chief Moderator* has responsibility for a course on all of the university's campuses. A *Campus Moderator* oversees a course on a specific campus. Other terms such as *Convenor* and *Coordinator* are also used.

The *Senate* is the university's central policy-making body.

A *tutor* is a faculty member or postgraduate student who conducts a tutorial (seminar), usually following a large group lecture.

The *University Academic Committee* (institution-wide) and the *Academic Board* (on a campus) have specific responsibilities for decisions related to teaching.

Common terms with different meanings in the Jamaican and American academic traditions:

<u>Jamaican</u>	<u>American</u>
Course	Class
Department	Department
Faculty	College
faculty	professor
instructor	lecturer
Lecturer (general term))	Professor
Lecturer (rank)	Assistant Professor
Postgraduate	Graduate
Professor (an accomplished academic in a field)	Professor (of a subject)
Senior Lecturer	Associate Professor

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I trace academics' attitudes to writing and its instruction through the six-decade history of The University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona, in Jamaica. I establish that while the institution's general writing courses facilitate students' initiation into the academy, these courses reflect assumptions about writing and learning that need to be reassessed to yield versatile writers and disassociate the courses and writing from the alarmist rhetoric that often emerges in the media and in academe. In Jamaica, critics of university students' writing often promote what Mike Rose calls the "myth of transience" and perpetuate the "the rhetoric of transparent disciplinary." According to the myth of transience, if writing is taught correctly at pre-university levels, students will not need writing instruction in the academy. The concept that I call "the rhetoric of transparent disciplinary" is defined in the work of David Russell, who examines the view that writing is a single, mechanical, generalizable skill that is learned once and for all. Advocates of this view consider writing as a transparent recording of reality or completed thought that can be taught separate from disciplinary knowledge. Based on my analysis of archival materials and data gathered from questionnaires and interviews with past and current writing specialists, this view has been evident at the UWI, Mona, since the institution's earliest years. Academics there have perpetuated a certain tacit assumption that writing is a natural process. By recalling the country's history of education, I demonstrate how this assumption parallels colonial administrators' determination that Jamaican Creole speakers should naturally learn English to advance in

society. I argue that if the university wants to widen participation while maintaining excellence, then academics should foster knowledge production (rather than only reproduction) by acknowledging the extent to which disciplines are rhetorically constructed through writing. If writing specialists and other content faculty draw on rhetoric's attention to audience, situation, and purpose, they can foster learning by helping students see how writing contributes to knowledge-making inside the academy and beyond. This study contributes to international discussions about how students learn to write and use writing in higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Without a knowledge of history and traditions, we risk running in circles while seeking new paths. Without knowing the traditions, there is no way of knowing which traditions to hold dear and which to discard.

Victor Villanueva 75

It would be hard to think of an ability more desired than the ability to write.

Mike Rose 342

In writing are the roots, in writing are the foundations of eloquence; by writing resources are stored up, as it were, in a sacred repository, whence they may be drawn forth for sudden emergencies or as circumstances require.

Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria X.iii.2

Jamaica shares with the US a relaxation of requirements for commencing higher education in the 1960s to 1970s. In the US, Open Admissions meant increased access to universities for students considered less prepared in writing than their predecessors, and *basic* writing courses were introduced for many of those non-traditional students. In Jamaica, certain examination requirements remained in place, but a residential requirement was removed to enable students to register for part-time and/or evening programs at The University of the West Indies (UWI). At the same time that part-time students were being allowed to pursue an undergraduate degree at UWI in the 1960s, administrators introduced survey courses, one of which was an *applied* language course called “Use of English.” Removal of the residential requirement at UWI also led to increasing numbers of new admits who were first-generation university students from Creole-speaking (rather than English-speaking) backgrounds. As in the US and in other countries where critics have commented on any development in language/writing instruction, especially if it is associated with students considered less prepared than

others, in Jamaica, many academics and public figures have over the last half-century (and more) criticized the Use of English course, other courses in writing instruction, and – naturally – student writing in the university. Specifically, in the first few years of the new millennium, commentators invoked writing in discussions about the purpose of higher education in Jamaica, but this reference was often in relation to problems in writing (see Chevannes; Holding and Burke; Robotham).

As a product of the Jamaican education system, a member of the UWI writing faculty, and a graduate student in a US rhetoric and composition program, I have been intrigued by the similarities that I have observed in the Jamaican and US contexts regarding complaints about student writing in the academy. Critics' complaints about student writing often reflect a crisis because critics tend to emphasize quantifiable errors related to grammar and mechanics (National Council; Rose). In Jamaica, these critics' disparaging comments about student writing at the tertiary [postsecondary] level (see, for example, Chevannes; Stone; Wignall) often serve to obscure issues deserving to be addressed regarding students' writing development. By emphasizing errors in student writing, especially those quantifiable errors related to grammar and mechanics, these critics have effectively elicited a feeling of crisis in student writing without conscientiously addressing the historical dimension of the problem, including the traditional emphasis on summative rather than formative writing, attitudes to writing and its instruction, and responsibility for writing development throughout the education system in Jamaica. What has emerged then is a tradition of acrimonious references to student writing and the belief that writing problems belong elsewhere and will disappear

from the academy as soon as individuals in pre-university settings make appropriate changes.

I argue that these attitudes suggest critics' ignorance of the complexity of writing, for they ultimately promote what literacy educator Mike Rose defines as the "myth of transience," and perpetuate what I call "the rhetoric of transparent disciplinarity." I explain these concepts in Chapter 1, but suffice it to say here that, according to the myth of transience, if better teaching is done at lower educational levels, problems in student writing in the university will disappear (Rose 355-56). The concept that I call "the rhetoric of transparent disciplinarity" is defined in the work of writing researcher David Russell, who examines the view that writing is a single, mechanical, generalizable skill that is learned once and for all. It is also alluded to, though not called that term, in the work of various UK writing researchers who critique the workings of "the discourse of transparency" in higher education (see Jones, Turner and Street; Lea and Street; Lillis; and Lillis and Turner). In this "rhetoric," writing is viewed as a transparent recording of reality or completed thought that can be taught separate from disciplinary knowledge. Accompanying this view are those that writing within disciplines is neutral, hardly influenced by persuasion; any instruction in writing at the tertiary level has as its aim remediation; the academy is a single discourse community; and the focus of higher education ought to be excellence rather than equity (Russell, *Writing* 9-10).

Recalling the country's history of education, with English as the medium of instruction for a Creole-speaking population, I argue that the rhetoric of transparent disciplinarity is consistent with early English language policies that colonial

administrators implemented in Jamaica, beginning in the 1800s. Based on my analysis of archival materials and data gathered from questionnaires and interviews with past and current writing specialists, I establish that administrators and faculty at the UWI, Mona, have largely propagated this rhetoric. In other words, academics at Mona have not consistently articulated their knowledge of disciplinary writing strategies. They have, instead, perpetuated a certain tacit assumption about writing being a natural process. This assumption parallels colonial administrators' determination that Jamaican Creole speakers should naturally learn English to advance in society. I argue that, like the early English language policies, this rhetoric needs to be challenged to a greater degree than is being done with recent writing courses and a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) initiative. Even though these recent developments indicate academics' new and more realistic understandings of writing, such developments suggest that writing specialists and "content" faculty have not gone far enough in transforming writing instruction to realize fully its potential and place in higher education. More specifically, I contend that past and current thinking about writing, in its emphasis on English Language and on writing based on "an assumed instinct" (Strickland, qtd. in Education Department, "Report ... 1898" 401), fails to develop a transformative model of academic writing and its instruction that takes as its aim the development of students in disciplinary writing. I argue that if the university wants to widen participation, and if academics understand or acknowledge the extent to which disciplinary writing constitutes rhetoric and if they make that rhetoric visible, then instruction in writing will be understood as developmental and necessary in the different disciplines of the plural discourse

community that the university is. Such instruction will provide equal opportunities for neophytes to succeed in disciplines without lowering standards therein.

Ultimately, explicit attention to writing strategies will open up disciplinary and cultural codes for analysis, so students may learn to critically reflect on such codes, develop practical understanding of them, and become engaged in knowledge production (rather than reproduction only). Additionally, such attention will shift the emphasis in discussions of and instruction in writing from formalist to rhetorical concerns, demonstrate the interconnectedness of writing and learning in disciplines and outside the academy, ground instruction in the social context and in responsiveness to increasingly diverse student populations, and help critics understand how writing really works. I, therefore, propose that writing specialists and other content faculty consider a different attitude to writing in the academy – one that departs from conventional yet largely inaccurate models of writing and that may influence attitudes at other educational levels and elsewhere in the society. I argue for making rhetoric more visible in the disciplines and writing more valuable in realizing quantity and quality in Jamaican higher education. To that end, I propose ways in which academics can adopt a progressive rhetoric of writing to contribute to personal, institutional, and national development.

My Research and the UWI

To encourage a genuine examination of the nature of writing and the ways in which it reflects learning and can improve learning in Jamaican higher education, after I secured approval from The University of Arizona's Human Subjects Protection Program,

I conducted a largely archival study at The University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona, in Jamaica.¹ Beginning in December 2006, I examined hundreds of documents that included course syllabuses and proposals, examination questions, course and institutional reports, minutes of meetings, and conference papers. Most of the over 140 primary documents that I cite are available in the UWI, Mona, archives. Some were preserved by former lecturers, and others were available in the Department of Language, Linguistics & Philosophy or in the institution's main library. To achieve triangulation in the study, I asked past and current writing specialists to complete an on-line questionnaire on a secure server, and I conducted follow-up interviews to address points raised in some questionnaire responses and in my archival research.² Beginning in March 2007, eighteen past and current writing instructors and course coordinators consented to participate in the study. Fifteen participants completed the questionnaire in spring 2007, and I interviewed seven of them in Jamaica in summer 2007. Participants also got the opportunity to review the penultimate draft of the dissertation and offer revision suggestions on their interview or questionnaire responses that I quoted.

I used the material gathered to explore the historical context in which academic writing courses in English were established at UWI, and attempted to uncover the theories that have informed those courses and the ways in which they have been structured in the curriculum. In order to determine what views of writing have been enacted at UWI, Mona, I explored how the teaching of academic writing there has “historically been implicated in structures that divide, direct, give access, deny access, replicate inequities, and use language in ways that construct ideologies which have

material consequences” (Gunner 275). My aim was to uncover the deeply entrenched attitudes about writing development and what they imply about academics’ beliefs about students’ development in disciplines.

In attempting to unearth how academic writing in English has been understood and taught at Mona, I considered developments in writing instruction in the institution’s six-decade history – the 1940s and 1950s when there was no explicit (or only limited) writing instruction; the 1960s to mid-1980s when the survey English language course was introduced; the late 1980s to 2004 when a basic writing course was introduced; and the end of the twentieth century into the first seven years of the new millennium when “standard” writing courses were introduced and a variety of changes were made in course offerings, including piloting writing across the curriculum in the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences. In each period, I considered some very specific questions in order to assess views about the sources, acquisition, and functions of writing abilities. These questions include

On the NATURE and SOURCE of Writing Abilities:

- How is (academic) writing defined?
- What writing abilities are students presumed to bring to the UWI, Mona, classroom?
- Who is presumed to “possess” the writing abilities that students are expected to acquire in the classroom? In other words, who is presumed to be able to write for academic purposes?

On the ACQUISITION of Writing:

- How are students presumed to develop academic writing abilities?
- How are students actually taught to write?

On the FUNCTION of Writing:

- What is assumed to be the purpose of the writing abilities that students develop?
- What role is writing instruction believed to play in disciplinary learning?
- What is presumed to be the role that writing will play in students' future?

The institution in which I sought answers to these questions, The University of the West Indies (UWI), was established in 1948 as part of a British imperial system of elite universities that emphasized excellence. It is the oldest university and the premier provider of higher education in the Anglophone Caribbean, a region with few such local institutions. The UWI was established as the University College of the West Indies (UCWI), after years of negotiation between the British government and passionate advocates of higher education in the region (Sherlock and Nettleford v). Located in a suburb of Kingston, Jamaica, UCWI was to function as a regional institution, transforming students from the British colonies across the Caribbean into local leaders. By 1962, the University College of the West Indies (UCWI) had become The University of the West Indies (UWI), an independent research university. Today, UWI is a multi-campus, multi-national institution, with three campuses (the two others established in 1960 in Trinidad and 1963 in Barbados). One School of Tourism is located in the Bahamas, and intra-mural centers are located in the non-campus contributing territories. Students can also take UWI approved courses at various tertiary level affiliate institutions in the region. Overall, the university serves three campus and thirteen non-campus

countries. This institution which began with 33 students now has a combined enrollment of almost 40,000 (UWI, *Draft* 4). It no longer operates as it was conceived as a small, centralized, residential institution.

The Mona Campus in Jamaica, which is the focus of my study, offers its changing cohorts of students a range of academic writing courses which, while facilitating students' initiation into the academy, reflect assumptions about writing and learning that, I argue, need to be reassessed to yield versatile writers and disassociate the courses and writing from the alarmist rhetoric that often emerges in the media and in academe. A significant reason that I recommend reassessment of assumptions about writing and learning relates to the changing groups of students who have attended the institution. The UWI's *Draft Strategic Plan* for 2007-2012 specifies that although the institution has accepted "successive cohorts of the brightest and the best" from secondary schools in the Caribbean region, "today the student intake represents a much broader range of aptitudes and abilities as enrolment has expanded to facilitate access to higher education" (11). In this document is the admission that the student body is no longer the homogenous group of students from upper or middle income backgrounds that obtained in the 1940s (see V. Roberts) when the institution was established: "While the UWI continues to compete for the brightest and the best students who are very well prepared to undertake University level work, the expansion of student intake has led to greater diversity in terms of abilities, learning styles, levels of preparation, etc." (UWI, *Draft* 13). What is also true today is that the university's "regional character" continues to be undermined by "overwhelming and increasing dominance of students from the host country on each

campus” (37). One consequence of this shift in demographics is that there are increasing numbers of Jamaican students requiring academic writing instruction on the Mona campus.

Limitations and Delimitations

I use the term “academic writing” to mean the written scholarly discourses that academics produce in conformity with the conventions and expectations of their respective discipline. Most of the knowledge creation and distribution in the academy takes place through such writing. Students – in their quest to increase their learning in new subjects – are expected to comprehend, evaluate, challenge, and eventually produce such discourses in order to communicate effectively in writing in the university and beyond. Courses that provide explicit instruction in student academic writing have differing emphases. Some emphasize general/shared academic conventions, sometimes with reference to forms and ways of writing that are inflected differently in specific disciplines while others address discipline-specific writing requirements in terms of teaching the conventions and assumptions or expectations that govern a particular discipline/specific disciplines. As will become evident in the dissertation, I believe that students *should* learn both shared academic conventions and discipline-specific strategies. Whatever the focus with regard to writing, increasingly these courses tend to include an element of critical thinking/reading. These courses are also called different terms in different traditions: (English) composition or general writing and writing across the curriculum (WAC) or writing in the disciplines (WID) in the US and academic writing in

the UK and some of its former colonies. A range of terms such as *communication*, *Use of English*, *English for Academic Purposes* (EAP), or *English Language* is used in those places and in various other countries including Jamaica.

Specifically at UWI, Mona, academic writing instruction is offered in courses referred to as Foundation “English Language” courses in a Language Unit in the Department of Language, Linguistics & Philosophy (DLLP) in the Faculty of Humanities and Education. Mona’s writing program (called English Language program) bears vestiges of its 1960s’ beginning, but it also reflects features selected from US programs and reinvented in the local context. Ideas about process writing and portfolios in teaching from the US have intersected with local ones, mainly through faculty members’ education, attendance at conferences, or subscription to English and US composition journals. The Language Unit Coordinator (the head of the Language Unit), is supported by individual course coordinators (this writer being one such) and the Writing Centre coordinator who are tenured or tenure-track faculty. These course coordinators supervise writing instructors who are usually employed full-time on two-year renewable contracts. The faculty members and most of the instructors have at least a Masters degree, usually in Literature or in Linguistics. The Unit does not offer specialist graduate writing courses, so graduate students are not usually involved in teaching writing. In the recent past, one or two graduate students in (English, French, or Spanish) Literature or Linguistics were employed along with a few part-time instructors to fill last minute needs. I use Mona’s English Language program as a case for exploring the evolution of the theoretical paradigms, curricular practices, and general politics of writing instruction in Jamaican

higher education. Where possible, I make comparisons with the well-established tradition of teaching composition in the US and the more recent development of teaching academic writing in the UK. Throughout the dissertation, I make necessary connections between writing instruction in the academy, language teaching in schools, and language use in the Jamaican society.

I also use the term “academic writing” because it is convenient, but I acknowledge that it is problematic, misleading even, since it can suggest *one* kind of writing. The reality is that there is no easily defined entity called academic writing, especially when its synonym, “academic discourse,” is invoked. The latter term usually ignores the plural discourses of the academy. My intention, however, is to foreground that plurality. What I want to emphasize, therefore, is *kind*; that is, my focus is on writing done in the academy for the academy or professions as opposed to writing done for popular magazines, for example. I am also focusing on written literacy because, as the 3rd epigraph says, in it are “the foundations of eloquence” (Quintilian 404). In his extended treatment of the utility of and procedures for writing, Quintilian promotes its importance to the development of oratorical powers. My interest is in teaching students to be more than mere consumers or reproducers of disciplinary knowledge so that they can become shapers of texts or producers of knowledge. As writing researcher Charles Bazerman asserts, “It is by writing that we inscribe our place in the literate world and all the social systems that depend on literacy” (Introduction 1).

Additionally, my focus is on written literacy instruction in *Jamaica* – only one of the many territories served by The University of the West Indies. This focus is to be

understood not as a move against regionalization, but as a personal desire to understand the link between Jamaica's specific linguistic context and other issues that have bedeviled the education of Jamaican Creole speakers. Because I focus on the Mona campus, it may seem that I am excluding those Jamaican students who study law in Barbados, engineering or agriculture in Trinidad, tourism in the Bahamas, or other subjects on either of those campuses. Significantly, although my focus is Jamaica, sometimes what I provide are statements about other English-speaking Caribbean island-countries that represent or are intertwined with the Jamaican situation, and for whose peoples UWI was established. Relevant reports from other territories, therefore, include Jamaicans who may be studying on those campuses.

The reader should also bear in mind, as Bakhtin says, that "[e]ach word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life" (293). Some of the terms that I use with reference to the Caribbean or UWI will, therefore, reflect inevitable "[c]ontextual overtones" (Bakhtin 293). As an example, the traditional description of Jamaica and other similar Caribbean countries as "English-speaking" is, as Creole linguist Lawrence Carrington writes, "a convenient inexactitude which excuses itself simply because English is the official language of the states" (*Education* 85).

Additionally, in referring to the archipelago located to the south and east of Mexico and to the north and west of Venezuela, I use two terms interchangeably. The first term, "Caribbean," points specifically to the sea bordering the islands and derives from the "Caribs" – one of the dominant Amerindian groups with which Europeans came into contact in the region. The second term, "West Indies," reflects the misnomer associated

with Columbus who on arrival in the region thought he had reached the “Indies” in Asia. Finally, in addition to the English terms in the glossary, I use the term “writing specialists” to refer to lecturers (full time tenured or tenure-track faculty members) and instructors (full-time non-tenure-track staff on two year renewable contracts) in the English Language section, and “‘content’ faculty” or “other content faculty” to refer to faculty in other disciplines. When I use “content” in quotations marks, it is to highlight the misconception that other courses have content but writing has none.

My connections to The University of the West Indies also contribute to my desire to study attitudes to writing and the politics of literacy in the institution. In his treatise on nationalism, Benedict Anderson writes, “All profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions, in specific historical circumstances, spring narratives” (204). In this vein, my interpretation is but one narrative of the many historical reconstructions that are possible regarding writing instruction at UWI. And this narrative is colored by my own experiences there: I remember being frustrated as an undergraduate with how to write my first English Literature essay after I switched from taking Mathematics to pursuing a full Humanities major between 1991 and 1994. I did not understand why French literature essays were to be written in English at the university, and not in French as obtained in high school, and lecturers did not explain in class how they were to be written. I remember that much writing in my graduate program at Mona between 1995 and 1998 required what Victor Villanueva calls “Professorial Discourse Analysis” (71). This involved going to the library to see what the lecturer had published, “try to discern a pattern to her writing; try

to mimic the pattern” (71). As a tutor in 1998 and then an assistant lecturer in French Literature and Comparative Caribbean Literature from 1999-2001, besides when students attended optional consultation sessions, I did not explicitly address how to write the required course essays: I continued the tradition of assuming that students knew how to write essays based on prior learning or, at the very least, intrinsic ability. I am, therefore, not exempt from some of the criticisms of this tradition. When I started teaching full time in the English Language program in September 2001, I thought I had gotten the opportunity to help students to prepare papers in other courses. However, I quickly became concerned about the focus on general educated audiences, an unstated rule that correct writing is good writing, and the lack of opportunities to help students from different disciplines with real writing opportunities. As the coordinator of basic writing from 2002 to 2004 (before I went on study leave), I was also concerned that most of the measures employed to help basic writing students did not seem to work because such students were not literate in the language in which they were most comfortable. Still, as a young faculty member, I was not adequately cognizant of some of the cognitive and disciplinary dimensions of writing that I propose in this dissertation to challenge “content” faculty to articulate their tacit assumptions about writing, and to push beyond teaching general academic writing or teaching formalist conventions in ways that do not have practical relevance for learners.

To present this history, I drew on those experiences and sources that were available during the 15-month period in which I conducted my study. Considering that spur-of-the moment administrative decision-making is often not recorded, I interviewed

past and current writing specialists who were available when I was completing on-site research in Jamaica in summer 2007. Thanks to their graciousness, I have been able to document and analyze some undocumented aspects of Mona's English language courses. However, my study ignores what John Brereton in his *Documentary History of postsecondary writing instruction in the US* calls "the actuality of the experience of students" (xiv) in terms of examining their writing to show what it reflects in each decade. I could not avoid this omission, since the university did not grant me permission to examine student papers for this study. As well, these scripts would have been examination papers dating back to just about two years because the institution does not keep students' examination papers beyond that period. A future study can make up for this shortcoming with writing samples gleaned from alumni and with the samples including writing from other courses, and especially extended writing pieces that a lecturer had graded or commented on.

Significance of the Study

It seems opportune to analyze how academic writing has been understood and taught at UWI, Mona, since language, and specifically writing, is being invoked in discussions about the purpose of higher education (see Chevannes; Robotham). The second and third epigraphs point readers to the importance of writing abilities. However, I believe that more reflection on the nature of writing and its place in the deeply entrenched conflicts in any educational system is required in Jamaica. As Jeanne Gunner writes in her caution to those who would seek to write histories of writing program

administrators, I have to “take care to resist what might be called Hail and Interpellate narratives: reconstructions that call into official existence” a history of teaching academic writing at UWI “without also invoking a critique” of that history (264). It is, therefore, my wish that the dissertation will assist academics and administrators in Jamaica to reflect on “the submerged conflicts that underlie ... attitudes and approaches to advanced literacy” (Russell, *Writing* 9) and address these important questions: “What is academic writing and how is it learned? What is an academic community and who should be admitted?” (9). The first set of questions is integral to the second because how academic writing is defined and learned will influence communal development. If students, especially first-generation university students, are taught the conventions, they can join the community and contribute to its development; if they are not taught, they are kept out. Students can develop various abilities in a general writing course, but ultimately remain on the periphery of their discipline of interest. The equality implied in the democratization of education in Jamaica requires all faculty’s engagement with the conflict between access to or exclusion from disciplines – a conflict made visible in provisions (or lack thereof) for writing development.

Beyond the reflection that I wish the dissertation will engender, I am intent on engagement with the first epigraph, on gaining “knowledge of history and traditions” to avoid “running in circles while seeking” development. It is my view that worthwhile reflection should yield appropriate adaptations in attitudes and practices to better meet academic writing goals. Reflection should mobilize academics to consider that writing is central to learning and to most forms of evaluation, and think about how students make

sense of a discipline's concepts through writing – and writing in a language situation in which many are largely orphaned. The dissertation will *make transparent* curricular practices at UWI that can be adapted, but I hope that it will also contribute to disassociating advanced written literacy instruction from the intellectual opprobrium and disdain that it is often shown. Ultimately, my concern is not so much with improving instruction that is offered daily in classes, but rather more with changing attitudes to and erasing misconceptions that abound about writing instruction and its place in the academy. Surely, if appropriate measures follow changed attitudes, the institution is likely to realize improvements in classes and student writing.

While providing the theoretical underpinnings of curricular practices and highlighting the value of the discipline of writing, the dissertation may have regional and international appeal. First, this study addresses the absence of a documented history of writing instruction in Jamaican higher education. Although instruction in writing has been offered at UWI, Mona, since the 1960's (and arguably the 1950s), no documented history of writing instruction there or elsewhere in Jamaica exists. The dissertation will therefore be a ready reference on the history of and attitudes to writing instruction in Jamaican higher education. Its usefulness may extend to recently-established Jamaican universities whose faculty can learn from UWI's experience with academic writing instruction. Second, the dissertation will contribute to the extant cross-cultural research into writing. As Lisa Ganobcsik-Williams writes in her introduction to a collection on *Teaching Academic Writing in UK Higher Education*, “the study of university writing is becoming increasingly trans-national and comparative in nature” (xxiii), moving beyond

the longstanding exclusive focus on the US. This development in writing research arises from expansions in higher education. This democratization of education has meant increasing access for previously excluded groups of students. Consonant with these changes in higher education are calls for increasing institutional awareness of the need to address students' writing development – how well students write and how they learn to write in the academy (see for example Foster; Foster and Russell; Jones, Turner and Street; Lea and Stierer; Lillis and Turner). Some concerns arise from increasing numbers of students who seek help with their writing assignments; however, central to these concerns are first year writing courses. In places where these courses have existed, they have been criticized as functioning to welcome students to the academy while they simultaneously “decontextualize writing by separating it from knowledge-making contexts” (Foster 1). Where these courses have not existed, some institutions have begun to attend to the needs of students through various kinds of resource centers and/or discussion about introductory writing instruction or writing across the curriculum for students. My study addresses how one institution could bridge the divide between these poles that Foster calls “writing as distinct competence” and “writing as situated knowledge-making” (12). It, therefore, seeks to contribute to that international conversation about student's writing and writing instruction in higher education – hopefully, a conversation that will serve to foreground the ways in which writing makes learning visible and is grounded in codified disciplinary conventions, and its instruction is, therefore, invaluable in teaching and learning in academic disciplines.

Synopsis of the Chapters

In the first chapter, “Unmasking the Myths about Jamaican University Students’ Writing,” I present a few cases of criticism of student writing in Jamaica to highlight critics’ misconceptions about writing, its instruction, and how it reveals learning. I then outline the heuristic categories that I use in my analysis of writing instruction at UWI, Mona. All of the other chapters are organized by decades, focusing on writing and its involvement in the university’s development, specifically UWI’s response to changing cohorts of students. Convenience explains this arrangement by decades, for what I focus on are continuities in academics’ attitudes to writing, its instruction, and development rather than on chronological differences. In the second chapter, “Developing Local Leaders Prior to Independence, Pre-1960s,” I explore attitudes to writing and its instruction in the periods when the focus in higher education was developing local leaders who were believed to write based on “an assumed instinct” (Strickland, qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1898” 401). Prior to the establishment of the university in 1948, higher education for Jamaicans was limited to study in England or the US and to the overseas programs of the University of London. With the establishment of a regional university, the focus was on developing leaders who could take over administration of the colony from the English. In this period, besides a series of lectures in logic in the 1950s, there was no explicit writing instruction. I, therefore, explored the matriculation requirements of UWI’s early years to determine what they suggest about students’ writing development and the kind of writing instruction that candidates were deemed to have received prior to their university career.

However, as Robin Alexander says, “no educational policy ... can be properly understood except by reference to the web of inherited ideas and values, habits and customs, institutions and world views which make one country, or one region, or one group, distinct from another” (5). David Russell and David Foster also note in a cross-national study of writing that researchers “must look closely at the cultural-historical factors in each nation that shape writing development” (4) if their intention is to use ideas from other nations to inform writing classroom practices, curriculum development, and policy making. Therefore, to locate the roots of the misconceptions about writing in the regional university, I examined Jamaica’s problematic linguistic context and *implicit* language policies that were implemented at pre-university levels. The chapter, therefore, highlights the historical developments, national language policies, and theories of language that obtained in an era when writing was considered an elementary skill that potential local leaders could unconsciously transfer to writing requirements in the university. I argue that the problems that would emerge in students’ writing in the academy are blamed on an education system whose problematic origins are yet to be adequately examined and transformed to yield genuine development.

In Chapter 3, “Professionalizing the Aspirant Middle Class after Independence, 1960s to mid-1980s,” I outline the circumstances that led to the introduction of the “Use of English” survey course at UWI. I indicate possible connections to the introduction of evening courses and non-resident students – suggesting broadening access – in an institution that is modeled on the elite English university – marked by concerns for excellence. Through rhetorical analysis of university and course documents available

from this period, I considered the views of administrators, writing specialists, and other faculty regarding writing instruction. I also cross-checked my findings with Eric (David) King, a retired “Use of English” lecturer, through a questionnaire and an interview. My analysis reveals administrators’ understanding that language/writing instruction to professionalize the aspirant middle class was to be through teaching writing as English language and not necessarily as initiation into disciplinary rhetorical conventions. As well, there was the erroneous view that the necessity for discussion of, and explicit instruction in, language/writing meant a need for remediation rather than for consideration of language use beyond basic English in disciplines. I therefore argue that because of limited understanding of writing, administrators and many academics promoted the rhetoric of transparent disciplinarity and perpetuated the myth of transience in the 1960s to mid-1980s.

Chapter 4, “Nurturing ‘Linguistic Orphans’ in the Post-National Era, late 1980s to 2004,” addresses how writing instruction evolved from a survey model to reflect “relevance” for the Caribbean context. This evolution involved introduction of “Fundamentals of English in 1988. This course served to “nurture” the linguistic orphans created by implementation of government language policies at other educational levels. Such students were, like those described by Patricia Irvine and Nan Elsasser in the US Virgin Islands, “expected to deny the existence of their first language and read and write in a second one” (314). If they failed to give up the conventions of their first language, they often failed to meet the minimum writing requirements for commencing their university career. The chapter demonstrates, however, that Jamaica, like other developing

countries, is not untouched by recent global trends. Concerns about declining finances are accompanied by increasing concern for certification (as in qualifications on paper) rather than education (as in development of character or mental powers). The result has been an unfortunate shift from “nurturing” to “testing,” with the myth of transience yielding increasing marginalization of groups of students who do not display acceptable levels of mastery in written English. I argue that the development of “Fundamentals of English” marked a necessary response to changing cohorts and diverse abilities of students; however, its management – and that of the Writing Centre – suggests administrators and faculty have ignored the country’s distinctive social issues and the interconnectedness of writing and learning in the academy and language learning and use in society.

Chapter 5, “Improving the Graduate’s Profile at Century’s End, 1990s to 2007,” treats developments in the original Use of English course (following the introduction of “Fundamentals of English”) and the introduction of other “standard” first-year writing courses in the 1990s into the first seven years of the new millennium. In this chapter, I rely on recent and current curricula and on interviews with and questionnaires completed by course coordinators and other writing specialists to determine the focus of academic writing courses towards the end of the twentieth century. I determine that the courses focus on preparing students to write for a general university-level educated audience and seem to perpetuate formalist concerns, especially through emphasis on exposition. By emphasizing exposition and encouraging development in general writing courses outside of disciplines, faculty continue to keep disciplinary writing knowledge tacit and therefore alienate learning from writing in disciplines. I also analyze documents for a recent

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) pilot project. This analysis reveals academics' deeper understandings of writing than were exhibited in earlier years; however, like the standard courses, the project reflects a universalist model of writing. Faculty's primary concern continues to be students' English language competence rather than actual writing development in disciplines. I argue that the assumptions and motivations of these valuable courses and program need to be reassessed so that they promote the crucial link between writing and learning in disciplines and outside the academy.

In "Conclusion: Envisioning Versatile Writers in the New Millennium, beyond 2007," I summarize the history and development of writing courses at UWI, Mona, and the writing conventions that they seek to transmit and uphold, even while they propagate the view of writing as transparent recording rather than visible rhetoric. To counter that tradition, I emphasize writing's function as more than a mechanical or intrinsic skill and its "rich relationship with inquiry" (Rose 359). I also propose ways for academics to make rhetoric more visible in the disciplines and writing more valuable in realizing quantity and quality in higher education and, by extension, contributing to both personal and national development. I end by recommending ways in which writing specialists, other content faculty, and administrators may be involved in molding versatile writers and in disassociating writing from the discourses of crisis that often emerge in academe and in the media.

Notes

¹ Although I use the Modern Language Association (MLA) documentation style in this dissertation, when I cite sources from the UWI, Mona, archives I use a different format in the Works Cited. I do this to pay deference to the archives' documentation format requirements, and to facilitate further research. Spacing in the Works Cited also reflects my graduate college's special requirements.

² Two sample questionnaires used with past lecturers and current instructors are included in Appendix A and Appendix B. Each questionnaire is a modified version of the Council of Writing Program Coordinators' "Guidelines for Self-Study to Precede a Writing Program Evaluation" (see White, *Developing* 209-19).

I. UNMASKING THE MYTHS ABOUT JAMAICAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS'

WRITING

When student writing is viewed in [a] particularistic, pseudo-scientific way, it gets defined in very limited terms as a narrow band of inadequate behavior separate from the vastly complex composing that faculty members engage in for a living and delve into for work and for play. And such perception yields what it intends: a behavior that is stripped of its rich cognitive and rhetorical complexity.

Mike Rose 346

*[T]he skills model assumes **transparency** in relation to language and **transmission** in relation to pedagogy.*

Theresa Lillis, "Moving" 32

When public figures and academics criticize student writing, they often focus on quantifiable errors. This focus serves to highlight critics' ignorance of the complexity of written literacy, for it promotes and perpetuates what literacy educator Mike Rose defines as the "myth of transience" and the view of writing described by David Russell that I call "the rhetoric of transparent disciplinarity." I explain these concepts and the influence of transculturation (see Pratt) in Jamaica after I present a few cases of criticism of student writing to highlight critics' misconceptions about writing, its instruction, and how it reveals learning.

Among the criticisms of student writing in the Jamaican print media are statements such as the following that bespeak misunderstanding about writing courses and that even hilariously reflect weaknesses in the critic that are similar to those for which students are criticized. On 8 July 2004, the editorial in *The Jamaica Observer* read "If many of those who are now entering UWI are honest about it, they will admit that

despite matriculating they carry many deficiencies. Which is why so many remedial English courses are around” (“Mr. Crawford”). Since at the time of writing there would have been only one supposedly “remedial course” on the Mona campus along with various first year writing courses, this editorial erroneously equates “standard” writing courses with remediation. Needless to say, the fragment included in the editorial instantiates one type of “deficiency” for which students are criticized even though the critic would probably claim to have written acceptable journalistic prose. On the following day, the newspaper’s editorial read “We have felt that resources should be shifted from the tertiary to the lower reaches of the education totem pole so that there is a better foundation on which to build the tertiary system. We would then be able to drop the courses in remedial English and so on” (“UWI Fees”). Here, again, is a reflection of misunderstanding of the university’s writing courses, and ignorance of how writing develops at different levels of the education system.

Such misunderstandings do not appear in editorials alone. In May 2007, columnist Mark Wignall would include in his article a personal email communication from a student in Pure and Applied Sciences to demonstrate the student’s failure to write a “well-structured” letter with “few grammatical errors” to “invite an intelligent response.” Wignall wanted his readers to try to “skirt the surface of a mind that somehow, by a crazy mix of ‘turd’ [the student’s likely spelling] world standards and the need to cram the Math Department with all available students, the university found it useful to admit him.” Wignall also asserted that the country’s purported 89% literacy rate “makes a mockery of the reality.” That assertion, the many errors in the personal communication, and

Wignall's association of increased intake with poor writing quality can only evoke thoughts associated with a crisis. Indeed, Wignall's article is redolent of the popular US publication, "Why Johnny Can't Write" (Sheils), which appeared in *Newsweek* in 1975. This article served to sound the alarm of a literacy crisis in the US after the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) had adopted and published the *Students' Right to Their Own Language* resolution in 1974. This controversial resolution on language rights called for a de-emphasis of errors due to dialectal differences and for emphasis on content and meaning instead.

Similar and harsher comments than Wignall's were also made by the late Carl Stone, well-known Jamaican pollster, lecturer in Social Sciences, and a regular contributor to Jamaica's oldest newspaper, *The Daily Gleaner*. In a piece entitled "The Threat of Mediocrity," Stone listed as problems among new students in his Faculty in the 1987-88 academic year

- inability to grasp and comprehend fully the reading materials they are expected to
- inability to coherently express themselves in written work
- failure to answer questions adequately because language deficiencies cloud their understanding of what is being taught
- failure to comprehend the meaning of words
- inability to precisely express what they wish to say.

Stone did not realize that some of those problems, especially the last three, could have arisen from faculty's failure to explain evaluation terms to new students. He acknowledged that some students often demonstrated some of those weaknesses prior to the 1987-88 academic year, but noted "The problem has multiplied in the current year as increased admission of students to the various faculties resulted in an increased

proportion of students admitted with deficient and marginal capacity to use the English Language.” He emphasized that beyond the problem posed by “bad grammar, poor spelling, clumsy language or inelegant word constructions” is that of “comprehension.” He asserted that students understand very little of what is said in lectures or what they read, the result being memorization of course materials that are then “reproduced ritually” in examinations.

Stone linked failure rates in general with language deficiency: “As the English problem has increased, failure rates have also increased as the two are organically connected.” It is interesting that Stone spoke of the “English problem,” but did not delve into the issue to point to the way that students’ understanding may indeed be clouded by an imposed language problem that has plagued generations of Jamaicans. Stone felt that 40% of the students in the first year course he was teaching then “ought not to be in a university because language deficiencies severely impair their ability to learn and express themselves.” Worse, he felt that “intellectually deficient students ... corrupt and damage the norms and values operating within the student body.” Such students, he maintained, “have no real interest in deepening their knowledge and understanding or in enlarging their intellect.” Because for such students “University life is just an exam hustle,” they eventually “pollute the learning environment with the debris of mediocrity.” Although in the latter statements Stone seemed to be broadening his focus to students who are probably lazy and uninterested in education, the reader cannot help connecting them to the students who exhibit the language deficiencies that his article focuses on. Terms such

as “pollute” and “debris of mediocrity” are representative of the language of crisis that emerged in the Jamaican media in the 1980s and has continued into the new millennium.

Beyond the alarm that is often raised in the print media regarding student writing, academics have for generations also criticized student writing without adequately attending to writing instruction. A representative case of criticism of student writing within academic circles in Jamaica appears in “Sprinting over the Long Distance: Education at a Crossroad.” In this article, Barry Chevannes, noted Professor of Social Anthropology and former Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at UWI, Mona, invokes writing in discussions about quantity/quality at the university level. Chevannes’ comments appear in Holding and Burke’s *Revisiting Tertiary Education Policy in Jamaica: Towards Personal Gain or Public Good?* – a 2005 collection of the presentations and comments that were made at a three day conference on the role of tertiary and higher education in Jamaica in August 2004. Chevannes discusses the *tertiary* level in general, including community colleges, teacher training colleges, and evening institutes, as well as universities, but focuses on *higher* education, which is traditionally associated with the university. In the Jamaican context, this association is often with UWI.

Chevannes’ pronouncements are representative of those of previous and later commentators (including Stone above) who focus on basic grammatical or mechanical correctness and ultimately perpetuate incorrect assumptions about writing. His comments were inspired by those of another leading figure in Jamaican education, then Minister of Education Maxine Henry-Wilson, who declared that the Jamaican government was

committed to increasing access to tertiary institutions to thirty percent of all eligible applicants to give the country a “competitive edge” (302). Chevannes feels that this is an opportune time to address *quality* since enrollment has already increased to 15% – indeed, “sprinted from seven per cent in 1997 to 15 per cent by 2003.” Chevannes’ concern is that the country focus on improving quality at the secondary level instead of on “continu[ing] the momentum” to reach the new enrollment target of 30 per cent (306). He made this recommendation on the basis that “the strategic considerations we give to the quality of education at tertiary level cannot ignore the state of secondary education” (302), and “quality assurance at the tertiary level begins at the secondary level with the complete and adequate preparation of students” (306). These appear to be fair statements, indicating that what happens at the primary and secondary levels is likely to influence what happens at the tertiary level and should, therefore, never be ignored in any discussion of policy changes at that level. However, Chevannes also makes statements that reflect misunderstanding about writing instruction in the academy. Chevannes asserts that if preparation at the secondary level is “incomplete or inadequate, tertiary institutions will be faced with the need for remedial education to bring their students up to the acceptable level, or with lowered standards of accreditation” (306). Chevannes is aware that no one wants to associate tertiary, especially higher, education with *remedial* instruction. However, he ignores the fact that even if students are considered “good readers and writers” before they start higher education, they are not as mature cognitively as experts in the system and would therefore need help to adjust to the new knowledge making and acquisition experiences that the academy *should* offer.

In emphasizing that the university has had to face the challenge of educating students who come from a secondary system marked by “declining standards” (297), Chevannes recalls the introduction of an English Proficiency Test and “Fundamentals of English” (UC010), an attendant basic writing course. He includes writing samples from three Proficiency Test takers and a final year student in his Faculty of Social Sciences to highlight various errors related to syntax, sentence structure, diction/idiomatic usage, and grammar as regards number and verb forms (300). Since, in Chevannes’ view, the secondary population changes only marginally from year to year, “the conclusion is inevitable that the tertiary sector will have to make room for the likes of those who failed the English proficiency test” (303). He contextualizes his comments by pointing to limited resources in Jamaica: “Greater quantity in Jamaica’s current context of resource-constraints must mean lower quality” (303), he asserts. He reiterates that “[u]ntil we begin to record greater successes in the preparation of students for tertiary education, thus reducing the necessity for remedial work at that level, the increase in tertiary enrolment over the course of the next few years is bound to undermine standards” (303). In essence, Chevannes is arguing that in the present Jamaican context, quantity and quality cannot be realized simultaneously; that is, more students cannot have access to higher education without lowering standards.

To underscore his claim that administrators in Jamaica “at this juncture” should, therefore, focus on quality at the secondary level rather than quantity at the tertiary level, Chevannes remarks that “[e]ducation is not about sprinting but about a marathon begun a hundred and sixty years ago and still going” (306). One of my aims in this dissertation is

to extend Chevannes' cautionary note to *writing*: I would like to add that writing development is also a marathon, one that endures over the long distance, is not completed as short distance runs, and involves multiple trainers. I extend Chevannes' claim on the basis that he, thankfully, invokes writing in this recent discussion of quality and quantity at UWI, Mona.¹ While I am delighted that language issues, specifically writing abilities, are implicated in this debate in Jamaica, I wish to shift the focus of discussions about writing so that policymakers may acknowledge the role that writing could play in enabling a simultaneous realization of quantity and quality in higher education. Indeed, I wish to emphasize that different understandings of writing and its instruction may serve to empower students notwithstanding their numbers at any given time.

As an example, the nature of writing samples considered is important to modified discussions of writing and how it develops. The first writing sample that Chevannes discusses as representing writing by a Jamaican is a paper written about Haiti. Based on my experience advising in the English Proficiency Test Unit and supervising instructors who teach Haitian-Creole speakers, I perceive that this paper bears the marks of one written by a Haitian Creole-speaking student. As the 2003-2004 UC010 Report (that I prepared) indicates, Haitian-Creole speaking students have significant difficulties – far more than Jamaican Creole-speakers – manipulating English in writing. However, very few Haitian-Creole speaking students attend UWI, Mona. Chevannes' sample may, therefore, reflect a worse case scenario rather than be an accurate representation of *Jamaican* UWI student writing. It is also important to note that many students do not take the Proficiency Test immediately after leaving secondary school (see Robotham). Some

of these test takers are already in the workforce and are years removed from any kind of systematic English or writing instruction in a secondary school. Faculty may cringe at the fact that those already in the workforce, in teaching, for example, write in ways that “content” faculty deplore. However, faculty need to recognize, as I will argue in this dissertation, that factors beyond the secondary level are implicated in writing instruction and development.

Of the other two excerpts, Chevannes says the “spelling and grammatical mistakes ... are not all the result of exam nervousness, but reflect serious language deficiencies which are clearly going to hamper performance at the university level” (300). Chevannes rightly suggests that too much may be asked of a basic writing course when students with certain “language deficiencies” are offered a place in the university:

In allowing them in, the hope is that the remedial English course will allow the author of Excerpt 2, for example, to recognize the word ‘neighbouring’ [the student used ‘labouring’] in a sociology text and be able to use it in an essay; or the author of Excerpt 1 to know the difference between ‘they’ and ‘there’, and between capital and common letters – all simple matters which should have been mastered in primary school, corrected at high school, but not left to the tertiary level to remedy. (301)

Identification of some of the problems as “simple matters” seems appropriate for features in writing that, while being distracting or irritating, may not prevent comprehension.

What I believe to be graver and require more pressing attention are the larger writing concerns – such as unfamiliarity with disciplinary discourse – that the excerpts manifest and that pose *real* barriers to comprehension.

In treating the final year sample that is riddled with the same kinds of errors mentioned for the first Proficiency Test sample, Chevannes emphasizes that “students’

performance often falls below acceptable standards of English, whether in speech, essay writing or written exams, and used to be the object of many a good end-of-examinations laugh among academics” (301). He feels, however, that “it is hardly a laughing matter” when grave errors appear in a final year student’s paper. To my mind, the sample provided portrays what Susan Miller calls “the garbled syntax of a [student] finding language for new and complex concepts” (90). Readers may ask, however, if this student got beyond the first year, and if the final year writing is unsatisfactory, what kind of feedback were the “content” faculty providing the student all along? Chevannes does not address that question. He notes, instead, that the student would get a (bare) pass degree, but that the problem extends to “many of the brighter graduates who go on to higher degrees [and] take with them the same or a similar degree of incompetence in English” (302). With approximately ten percent of the graduate students requiring what Chevannes considers remedial instruction, the Faculty of Social Sciences introduced an advanced writing course for those pursuing masters and doctoral degrees. Chevannes argues that although such a course can be rightly considered a “waste of resources” (302), one must recognize that the graduates’ deficiencies will be blamed on the university and not their high schools.

I would not want to seem to be whitewashing the problems that Chevannes mentions, for various reasons. First, writing faculty tend to complain about deficiencies in papers written by Social Science students, as in this comment in which a senior writing faculty member indicated in a departmental meeting in January 2002 that students from the Social Sciences “form the core of poor essay writing and grammar weaknesses”

(Minutes 5). In the early 1990s, Peter Roberts, another senior faculty member (at Cave Hill), had commented on the disparity in requirements for Social Science students and others in the university. Roberts mentioned the grave problem triggered by the Faculty of Social Sciences – “the faculty with the greatest number of students requires no further qualification on the part of its students than a CXC grade II” (“Proposal” 2). The university seemed to require a higher level of expertise in English for students graduating from the Faculties of Arts and General Studies, Natural Sciences, Medicine, Law, and Agriculture than for those in Social Sciences (and engineering) (“Proposal” 2) because the latter were never required to take a first-year writing course until 1998. Second, as UK researchers Christopher Winch and Peter Wells argue, mastery of the rules of spelling, punctuation, and the like help to create “a clear and attractive style,” while the inability to write clearly can “compromise authorship and meaning” (78). Third, and perhaps more important, is the Jamaican context. As Caroline Dyche, the English Language Unit coordinator up to 2006-2007, points out “at the UWI, emphasis is placed on grammatical and discourse competence as it affects the writing and not the speaking of English” (“Writing” 144). She explains that this emphasis on students’ written English proficiency is related to “the sociopolitical role that English, and particularly written English, plays in what are predominantly oral Creole-speaking societies” (145). She, too, notes that critics of students’ written English often emphasize surface errors that “do not impede transmission of meaning” (145) but usually specify class. She rightly notes, “In Anglo-West Indian societies, however, the functional-communicative value of English is often of secondary importance to its high personal and social prestige value” (145).

I am, therefore, not ignoring this “specific UWI academic context [where] students [are] judged specifically on their ability to write grammatical English” (Dyche, “Writing” 146). However, I would like to point out that this focus on “grammatical English” is an unfortunate colonial legacy which reflects a language policy that has been uncritically accepted. I will address that issue in the next chapter, but I wish to assert here that writing is about more than mechanical or even syntactic concerns. I also want to underscore two points: the first that eluded Chevannes is that the mechanical and syntactic confusion suggests the final year student writer could have been experiencing the significant challenge of writing to conform to the disciplinary discourse – a discourse that has remained “new” even though the student is in the final year because content coverage often takes precedence over discipline-specific writing instruction in “content” courses. What other content faculty and writing specialists often miss or ignore is the learning that is represented in writing – a situation that often arises when academics forget that writing is never fixed but is instead continuously being learned and relearned as students learn more complex forms of knowledge, as indicated in the earlier quotation from Susan Miller. It is important to remember too that, as Susan Miller says, “‘missing’ verb endings ... do not demonstrate a writer’s hopeless stupidity. Rather, they invite us to look carefully at the relation of the individual to the overwhelming and inescapable grammars constituting the civilized structures of language that we have made dominant” (167). Additionally, students’ ignorance of conventions often reveals “how arbitrary those conventions are” and the extent to which we aim to “elevate the only, the correct,

ways to write” (169). In the Jamaican context, it is unfortunately not only the arbitrary conventions that are elevated but also those who master such conventions.

The second point is Chevannes’ statement that the students will be seen as *graduates of the university* and not of their high school. And as becomes evident in a book chapter by Don Robotham, former Pro Vice Chancellor with responsibility for Graduate Studies at UWI, the university can be equated to the Faculty from which the student graduates. Writing about five years earlier than Chevannes, Robotham addresses the difficulty of simultaneously increasing tertiary enrollment ratios and enhancing quality. In “Changing a University: Reconciling Quantity with Quality – the Case of the University of the West Indies,” Robotham observes that the university has been exceeding targets set for increased enrollment. He mentions “the Faculty of Social Sciences, Mona, for example, surpassing its enrolment target for the year 2000 from as early as 1993” (238). In his view, this rapid increase foregrounds the “problem of the *quality* of ... graduates and the extent to which the UWI educational experience is fostering those qualities in ... students that fulfil the needs of the community and the individual, broadly conceived” (238, emphasis in the original). Robotham is here questioning the standards of performance of graduates from Chevannes’ Faculty.

Robotham’s chapter also demonstrates how when critics express concerns about quality, they often invoke English, communication, and, by extension, writing, and associate writing skills with differences in the modes of thinking needed at work. “On paper,” says Robotham, “there is little hard evidence of deteriorating standards” (238). After all, increasing percentages of students are receiving first and upper second degrees,

and those graduates are being admitted in prestigious overseas universities and excelling there. However, concerns about quality arise because employers often complain that graduates are “not sufficiently practical; that they are opinionated and have false expectations; that their command of the English language and other communication skills leave a lot to be desired; that they lack vision and leadership qualities” (239). Robotham admits that some of those complaints are contradictory, but feels they should not be ignored, especially since supporting them are the “whispered reservations of faculty colleagues about ... the serious deficiencies in English” (239).

Robotham is careful to make connections with other countries, noting that the US and UK have had to address “the quantity/quality dilemma,” but have found ways to categorize institutions or, especially in the case of the US, controversially pass on undergraduate teaching to graduate students in large research universities. He emphasizes how the developing world with fewer institutions is different: “We have to be all things to all persons, with the same institution required to excel at undergraduate and graduate education, teaching and research, elite and mass higher education; in a word – quantity and quality” (240). However, to address the dilemma in Jamaica, Robotham, like Chevannes, propagates a myth about the academy. Robotham proposes that “if we are to resolve the quantity/quality dilemma, then it is fairly clear that we must ... identify clearly the institutions from which our students come. Having done so, we must ... work with the other institutions to steadily raise the quality of their educational processes over a definite period of time” (245-46). He cites data – admittedly flawed based on the form designed for applicants – that demonstrates that most students admitted to UWI in 1995-

1996 were not from the high schools, but rather the community colleges, teacher training colleges, and evening institutes in Kingston. This same point is also made in the Faculty of Arts and General Studies' "Report on Faculty Review 1986/87" at Cave Hill. Much of what is said in this report about the Cave Hill campus in Barbados is also true for Mona. This report mentions that more than three quarters of the incoming students do not have "genuine 'A' level qualifications" (2) and this number has been increasing steadily. As well, many new students were not coming directly from secondary schools, and more and more faculty members felt that the University was "not receiving the best products" from these schools (2). In his chapter, Robotham calls for a "coherent programme" (246) to improve quality in pre-university institutions. Based on his suggestions for change, Robotham feels "it will be possible to ensure that the level of the 'average' student *entering* any tertiary level system, over time, will be raised *prior* to entering" (248, emphasis in the original). In his view, it is only then that standards can be maintained and enhanced simultaneous with expansions in enrollment.

Robotham, like Chevannes, suggests that as long as more is done for students *pre-university*, excellence can be guaranteed in higher education. I am arguing, however, that their statements should be considered in light of the following recommendations from Cave Hill's "Report on Faculty Review 1986/87":

Clearly the situation is circular. We accept weak students; we turn out poor graduates; and we receive in turn weak students taught by our poor graduates. One consequence is that the UWI degree is devalued in the eyes of the public. ... But, *the more important point* is an internal one. *Do we fully acknowledge the existence of the problem, and do we persistently search for solutions to it?* It is our effort in this area which will determine whether we are serious about the maintenance of acceptable standards. *We cannot sit back and blame the other*

levels of the educational system for the existence of the problem; all that does is to perpetuate the problem. (7, my emphasis)

Discussions and policies that I examine in later chapters suggest that administrators and faculty have largely ignored these recommendations and persisted in locating the writing problem elsewhere – in tandem with perpetuating the myth of transience and promoting the rhetoric of transparent disciplinarity that I explain next.

The Myth of Transience

Literacy educator Mike Rose describes in his 1980s article, “The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University,” the myth that various journalists, Chevannes, Robotham, and others propagate. Rose uses the “myth of transience” in reference to the way in which administrators and some faculty – including those who teach writing – often perceive writing problems as belonging “elsewhere” rather than in the university. Although the focus of Rose’s article is the language institutions use when they discuss writing in America, his ideas can be usefully applied to the Jamaican situation. In defining the myth of transience, Rose notes, “Despite the accretion of crisis reports, the belief persists in the . . . university that if we can just do x or y , the problem will be solved – in five years, ten years, or a generation – and higher education will be able to return to its real work” (355). This myth emerges in journalists’ recommendations to spend more at lower educational levels in Jamaica in order to spend less on English courses in the university and in Chevannes’ suggestion that emphasis be placed on secondary level preparation for a few years, so that the university will not have to address language, specifically writing, deficiencies. As Rose observes, this myth “blinds faculty

members to historical reality and to the dynamic and fluid nature of the educational system that employs them” (356). In other words, because the myth of transience “assures its believers that the ... source of the problem is elsewhere” (356), faculty often consider the problem as temporary, without recognizing that it endures over generations. The “powerful liability” (Rose 356) that accompanies the myth of transience and which Rose observes in the American context is, therefore, true for Jamaica: “Each generation of academicians facing the characteristic ... shifts in demographics and accessibility sees the problem anew, laments it in the terms of the era, and optimistically notes its impermanence. *No one seems to say that this scenario has gone on for so long that it might not be temporary*” (355, my emphasis). As subsequent chapters will establish, each decade brings a new wave of complaints about student writing in Jamaican higher education. Suffice it to say here that among the complaints about student writing is identification of quantifiable errors of the kind that Chevannes names and journalists often highlight. However, as I mentioned, there is usually more involved than the errors that are noted.

Rose proposes that discussions of error need to include “the social context of error, or of its cognitive-developmental meaning – that is, [an] interpretation of its significance in the growth of the writer” (344-45). He points to questionable assumptions that “good writing is correct writing, and that correctness has to do with pronoun choice, verb forms, and the like” (345). As indicated in the first epigraph above, critics detract attention from the ways in which writing simultaneously aids and reflects learning when they focus on quantifiable errors rather than consider how writers negotiate unfamiliar

discourse conventions in their attempts to appropriate them (346). However, Mina Shaughnessy's work confirms "the intelligence of [students'] mistakes" (11), that is, as Rose says, "even the most error-ridden prose arises from the confrontation of inexperienced student writers with the complex linguistic and rhetorical expectations of the academy" (357). Indeed, if faculty reflect on personal writing challenges or adopt a posture of willingness to examine and learn from students' writing, faculty may become self-consciously aware of the situational constraints writers negotiate while working with a discipline's unfamiliar codified conventions.

The myth of transience also "plays itself out against complex social-political dynamics," with each higher education institution forever struggling to define its curriculum to distinguish it from the secondary schools' (Rose 356). Institutions of higher education simultaneously attempt to "influence, even determine," the secondary schools' curriculum to "shape it to the[ir] needs" (357). One factor that is often ignored in these struggles is that preparing students for higher education is but *one* of the secondary school's multiple purposes. Required modifications in the university's current curriculum (to include writing instruction in all courses) or in institutional purpose (to see writing instruction and development as central concerns) may unfortunately not be considered because of the misconception about the temporary nature of the problem. Therefore, Jamaican journalists and academics often recommend that secondary schools and other pre-university institutions prepare students for higher education.

Journalists' and academics' recommendation that pre-university institutions prepare students to write in the university appears to be indisputable, especially in light of

a secondary system that has been considered sub-standard since its beginnings (Parker 137) – and not merely “declining” as Chevannes says (297) – and is plagued by weaknesses that require attention. However, policy makers must realize that when written literacy is considered, there needs to be recognition of what academic writing means and what its development requires. More is at stake than mere pre-university preparation or remedial education at the tertiary level. As well, a recommendation to do more at the secondary level requires some reflection, especially when writing instruction is concerned. After all, students in Jamaica already write a great deal at the secondary level: written examinations are preponderant; students in the Sixth Form (Grades 12 and 13) begin to specialize and could be said to begin to write in specific disciplines before entering the university where they are immediately admitted into a specific Faculty; and there is the well-established writing course (General Paper) that is still offered in some schools along with the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) Communication Studies that was developed to achieve more relevance to the Caribbean situation than did the General Paper examination that is set and graded in England. The unspoken assumption that these writing intensive subjects and examinations prepared students to write at university is one of the factors that led to neglect of considerations of writing instruction and development in the early years of higher education in the UK (see Ivanĭc and Lea) and, therefore, in Jamaica.

The Rhetoric of Transparent Disciplinarity versus Visible Disciplinary Rhetoric

In addition to unintentionally perpetuating the myth of transience, academics and public figures tend to make comments that are redolent of a view of writing as transparent recording – so mechanical, intrinsic, gradually acquired, and plain to “content” faculty that the latter do not recognize that students may require explicit introduction to disciplinary writing conventions. As indicated in the second epigraph above, UK writing researcher Theresa Lillis says this view of writing “assumes **transparency** in relation to language and **transmission** in relation to pedagogy” (“Moving” 32, emphasis in the original). In other words, language is believed to function as a transparent medium, reflecting meaning/knowledge that is accurately verbalized rather than appropriately mediated; and students are believed to learn to produce academic writing in any discipline merely by *hearing* about “the most visible aspects of writing” (32) in some general writing course before entering their discipline. Cross-cultural writing researcher David Russell describes this rhetoric of transparent disciplinarity in *Writing in the Academic Disciplines: A Curricular History*.² This rhetoric emerges as Russell identifies various views of language and writing that militated against establishing a full writing across the curriculum program in US institutions of higher education after more than a century of the introduction of writing instruction in US colleges.

Russell highlights four conflicts related to the nature and acquisition of writing that are useful heuristics for an analysis of the way in which academic writing has been understood and taught at UWI, Mona. These are

1. academic writing as transparent recording as opposed to visible rhetoric –
 “writing as a single elementary skill, a transparent recording of speech or thought or physical reality, versus writing as a complex rhetorical activity, embedded in the differentiated practices of academic discourse communities,”
2. academic writing instruction as remediation or development – “writing acquisition as remediation of deficiencies in skill versus writing acquisition as a continuously developing intellectual and social attainment tied to disciplinary learning,”
3. academic discourse as involving a community or several communities –
 “academia as single discourse community versus academia as many competing discourse communities,” and
4. the goals of writing instruction being excellence or equity – “disciplinary excellence versus social equity as the goal of writing instruction” (*Writing* 9-10).

In very general terms, the first element in each set is negative while the second is positive. As well, the first element of each of these conflicts reflects what in the recent UK writing tradition are study skills and academic socialization/acculturation approaches to writing, whereas the second element embodies the academic literacies approach that views knowledge as mediated through language and writing as situated rather than being a transparent medium. The study skills approach signifies a view of writing as a set of skills that are learned at an early age and that are easily transferred to varying writing contexts. This view also suggests that any instruction in writing reflects a need for remediation rather than indicates development. The academic socialization model

suggests that writing is embedded within disciplinary or professional learning, so that students learn to write at the same time that they are learning disciplinary content. Based on the assumption that students do not need explicit instruction in a disciplinary course or a general writing course, this model renders writing invisible to faculty, students, and administrators. The academic literacies approach does not embrace the views of the other two orientations. It emphasizes the variability, continued development, and centrality of writing in academic disciplines. Therefore, instead of promoting writing as a single, generalizable skill or set of skills or as an unteachable aspect of successful entry into and development in a discipline, the academic literacies approach highlights differences in knowledge creation and writing practices in differing discourse domains (see Jones, Turner, and Street, Introduction; Lea and Street). As I continue to explicate the conflicts that Russell addresses, I draw on other UK discussions of the discourse of transparency where appropriate.

Academic Writing as Transparent Recording or Visible Rhetoric

Russell asserts that faculty may consider writing as a neutral transparent medium for accurately and objectively recording ideas or they may acknowledge that writing is intricately linked to disciplinary writing practices that turn on the writer's desire to influence through persuasive writing. In other words, faculty may see writing as transparent recording or as visible rhetoric. In addressing the tension between these conflicting views, Russell reminds readers of the "old oral conception of writing as transcription" that turns on "blindness to the rhetorical nature of academic writing"

(*Writing* 10). Russell recalls that before the 1870s, “writing was ancillary to speaking” and there was, therefore, “little need for systematic writing instruction” (3). This means that

formal writing instruction essentially amounted to training in handwriting, the mechanical process of transcribing sound to visual form. Literacy meant knowing one’s ABCs. Once these orthographic conventions were mastered, ‘correct’ writing was an ordinary outcome of being raised a gentleman or gentlewoman who spoke ‘correct’ English, which is to say the language of the upper class. (4)

However, as academe changed, as professionals increased in a new print age, and as education was separated into sub-systems/levels, writing’s role changed. Russell observes, “writing was no longer a single, generalizable skill learned once and for all at an early age; rather it was a complex and continuously developing response to specialized text-based discourse communities, highly embedded in the differentiated practices of those communities” (5). Despite such changes, there was a general understanding in the system that writing was “a way to examine students, not to teach them, . . . a means of demonstrating knowledge rather than of acquiring it” (6). Because writing was used for evaluative and not pedagogical purposes, when students did write, they were often responding to examination questions, and writing was kept “independent of content learning” (7).

Coupled with the epistemological contradiction that writing is a single, mechanical skill is a long tradition of deploring student writing and futile attempts to find a comprehensive solution:

Because academics and other professionals assumed that writing was a generalizable skill and that academia held a universal, immutable standard of literacy, they were constantly disappointed when student writing failed to measure up to the local, and largely tacit, standards of a particular social class, institution,

discipline, or profession by which they were in fact judging that writing. (Russell, *Writing* 6)

Since academics considered writing as a mechanical transferable skill, they applied a deficit model to students' writing. Since, based on this model, weaknesses in writing meant that the student was lacking in basic skills, educators always sought "a single solution to a specific educational problem" (Russell, *Writing* 7). And they often felt that the solution lay in pre-university institutions or situations. In other words, educators considered good writing to be "generalized, transparent – a matter of prior instruction, aptitude, intelligence, or dedication rather than of conscious, discipline-specific teaching" (28). In reality, educators clung to and perpetuated what Rose describes as the myth of transience when they located the fault elsewhere when students failed to write by the discipline's standards. Russell notes that Susan Miller's research into classical rhetoric reveals, as she writes, that academics "still in many ways long for [the oral] curriculum" (65) when they talk about what should be learned prior to higher education. Miller asserts, "The idea that 'reading and writing' should be mastered before the main business of education begins is an ironic trace from oral curricula that persisted to the end of the eighteenth century and beyond" (65).

Russell reminds readers that "the naïve view of language as transparent recorder of thought or physical reality" (*Writing* 10) is tied to the scientific method that flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. On account of the "ethics of scientific objectivity," academics hardly acknowledged how persuasion functioned in their scholarly activities and considered their disciplines as "vehicles discovering the bare facts and immutable laws of nature" (11). Additionally, as Russell observes, specialization of

knowledge resulted in “powerful institutional barriers to seeing the differentiated and rhetorical nature of academic writing” (11). Because most academics have learned the writing conventions of their discipline over time, they take them for granted, believing writing ability is intrinsic, even forgetting that most of the writing they do involves much thought, complex abilities, and persuasion, and is tied to specific contexts whose requirements students will need to be taught. These misconceptions abound because, as Rose notes, “[t]o view writing as a skill in the university context reduces the possibility of perceiving it as a complex ability that is continually developing as one engages in new tasks with new materials for new audiences” (348).

UK writing researchers Theresa Lillis and Joan Turner help to explicate what Russell calls the “ethics of scientific objectivity” in their article, “Student Writing in Higher Education: Contemporary Confusion, Traditional Concerns.” In this article, Lillis and Turner focus on “the discourse of transparency in evaluation.” They point out that in the discourse of transparency, “language is treated as ideally transparent and autonomous” (58), and writing as “a self-evidently transparent medium and, therefore, non-problematic” (62). They argue that the view of “language as a transparent conduit” (66) informs the academic discourse of scientific rationality which became institutionally embedded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and prevails today in attitudes to writing in the academy even though we are living in different social circumstances and in an era that promotes different epistemological assumptions than universality and essentialism that were prevalent then.

Lillis and Turner remind readers that the roots of the discourse of transparency are in Lockean empiricism and Cartesian rationalism, specifically in the conduit model of language. This model of language is illustrated in Locke's 1689 *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*:

For Language being the great Conduit, whereby Men convey their discoveries, Reasonings and Knowledge, from one to another, he that makes an ill use of it, though he does not corrupt the Fountains of Knowledge, which are in Things themselves; yet he does, as much as in him lies, break or stop the Pipes, whereby it is distributed to the publick use and advantage of Mankind. (qtd. in Lillis and Turner 62)

In the conduit model, meaning/knowledge is separated from language, with language functioning only to convey discoveries clearly and correctly, and emphasis being on avoiding error and stating only what is true. As Lillis and Turner argue, seventeenth century emphasis on rigor in science and correctness in the language transmitting thought/knowledge is still deeply embedded in western academic culture. These notions have led to the creation of “an ideology of clarity for the inter-relationship between language and thought” and this ideology “continues to fuel the discourse of transparency” (63). This ideology of clarity drives faculty's expectations of student writing as well as faculty's assumptions that their metalanguage on student writing is easily accessible. The operations of the discourse of transparency therefore emerge as “double-edged” (63).

This transparency model of language often leads teachers to assume that the terms and guidelines used in evaluation – in questions for students to respond to and in teacher comments on student writing – are “transparently meaningful” (Lillis and Turner 58) when in fact the meanings are highly situated, meaning different things in different contexts. In their research, Lillis and Turner have found that whereas students are usually

trying to determine the “particular configuration of conventions” (58) in which they are to write, tutors often take it for granted that students know what these conventions are and deny the situatedness of the meanings of such terminology as *write an introduction*, *cite authorities*, *avoid plagiarism*, *faulty grammar*, *faulty punctuation*, *argument*, *structure*, and *define key term*, or such wordings as *state clearly*, *spell it out*, *be explicit*, *express your ideas clearly*, *say exactly what you mean* (58-60). As other UK writing researchers Mary Lea and Brian Street observe, teachers often present such conventions as “self-evidently the correct way in which things should be done” (164), when in reality, as Carys Jones, Joan Turner, and Brian Street remind, academic writing is “an expression of cultural values and beliefs of epistemological standpoints that often remain hidden” (Introduction xxii). Lillis and Turner observe that students often challenge claims about transparency through their complaints about the quirks of each teacher, but such complaints that each teacher wants something different are often not read as a challenge to this discourse. Instead of acknowledging different epistemic conventions in disciplines and the consequent situatedness of language and meaning, “tutors work within a discourse of transparency which both underplays the importance of language and potentially excludes from successful participation in academic discourse those participants who do not already take the norms of this discourse for granted” (Lillis and Turner 61-62). Elsewhere, Lillis states that “the routine enactment” (*Student Writing: Access* 168) of this transparency model of language marginalizes non-traditional students whose confusion and complaints about what conventions mean expose an ideologically inscribed “institutional practice of mystery” which “works against those least familiar

with the conventions surrounding academic writing, thus limiting their participation in [higher education] as currently configured” (“Whose ‘Common Sense’?” 127).

As Lillis and Turner explain, the conduit assumption denies the rhetorical ordering of language, that is, it denies the fact that neither are audiences neutral nor is information ever presented neutrally in real contexts. However, studies (such as Charles Bazerman’s) in the sociology of knowledge demonstrate the influence of language in the construction of knowledge. To counter the conduit assumption, Lillis and Turner recall Bazerman’s discussion of Newton’s work. The latter demonstrates a concern for explicating not only the experiment but also the reasoning process involved in conducting and relaying the experiment. Drawing on Newton’s attention to language because of the need to persuade his readers, Lillis and Turner argue that “rhetorical organisation is highly significant, but also ... socio-culturally situated and, hence, subject to change” (65). In other words, the socio-cultural norms to which Newton subscribed were peculiar to his era: “They privileged, in linguistic form, the values of the time which included a desire for universality, for certainty, and for rational and epistemic clarity” (Lillis and Turner 65). Interestingly, although academics today – in the postmodern world – question the values of universality and essentialism, “their rhetorical norms have become so ideologically powerful, in the wake of the cultural prestige accruing to enlightenment science, that they are embedded, yet invisible, within higher education practices” (65). As Lillis and Turner emphasize, the discourse of transparency is preserved because of this invisibility of the cultural history and rhetorical nature of the values of universality and essentialism.

Academic Writing Instruction as Remediation or Development

When faculty consider writing as transparent recording or as visible rhetoric, they hold a corresponding view of writing instruction as either remediation or development. In distinguishing between writing instruction for remediation and for development, Russell asserts that “modern mass education carried over a premodern view of writing as a single, generalizable skill, learned once and forever. Students whose writing did not conform to a particular community’s standards were thought to exhibit some deficit, which had to be remedied *before* they could be admitted to the community” (*Writing* 15, emphasis in the original). In this deficit model, basic skills are, as Roz Ivančic and Mary Lea say, “conceptualised as decontextualised” (12), with content faculty believing that once students learn these skills they can be transferred to other contexts. This model ignores writing’s relation to knowledge-making in academia, for it virtually equates learning to write with learning to ride a bicycle, rather than promotes it as the non-hierarchical, recursive process that it is (see National Council 2). However, if faculty recognize that writing is not a single, generalizable, elementary skill, but is instead a complex ability whose development is ongoing and which is tied to disciplinary practices, they may understand instruction in writing as development; that is, writing instruction as “a process of socialization or acculturation, analogous to a young child learning to speak” (Russell, *Writing* 15).

Such reconceptions of instruction in writing become clear in Russell’s use of Vygotsky’s theory of first-language acquisition. Russell uses Vygotsky’s theory to

“illuminate the process of acquiring advanced literacy in an academic or professional community” (*Writing* 15) that can be understood as a language community in which members grow up over time. In “linguistic initiation,” initiates observe and model experts, often receiving feedback in a process that “requires the neophyte to use the language of the community *while* participating in its activity not *before* participating, as the remedial view would have it” (16, emphasis in the original). The student gradually develops what Vygotsky calls “an internal language,” that functions to guide the student’s thought and actions which increasingly resemble those of an experienced member of the discourse community. US WAC advocate Mark Waldo reports the negative but exact description of experts as “automatons” (7): In each discipline, which can be read as a language community, experts have gradually assimilated the discipline’s language which eventually – almost unconsciously – directs their reception and construction of oral and written texts. Russell also observes that over time “these conscious actions become automatic and unconscious” to the extent that experts believe they are “‘natural,’ although they only seem natural” (“Activity ... Implications” 70). The result is that “writing tends to become transparent, automatic, and beneath the level of conscious activity for those who are thoroughly socialized into it” (70), and newcomers are expected to fall in line.

As Russell proposes, this theory of writing acquisition reveals how the process of learning to write *seems* transparent or unconscious because of the gradual nature of newcomers’ *active, participatory* learning. Accordingly, a discipline’s scholars and researchers “come to view the particular genres that the disciplinary community has

evolved (and each member has internalized) not as rhetorical strategies, conventional – but gradually changing – means of persuasion; instead, the community’s genres and conventions appear to be unproblematic renderings of the fruits of research” (*Writing* 16-17). Researchers in the area of student academic writing in the UK refer to faculty’s apparently tacit knowledge of disciplinary conventions as “academic ‘common sense’” – the feeling that all conventions and writing requirements are transparent and unproblematic (see Coffin et al; Jones, Turner, and Street, Introduction, “Mystery”; Lillis, “Whose ‘Common Sense’?; Lillis and Turner). These researchers dispute that assumption by demonstrating that although in subjects requiring a formal laboratory report “the overt rhetorical purpose is to recount research experiments and results,” there usually is a “more hidden purpose ... to persuade the reader of the viability of the report or claims” (Coffin and Hewings 51). Russell also draws on Charles Bazerman’s research to show that, indeed, persuasion infuses all academic disciplines; and that the tacit knowledge and conventions that are so deeply embedded in each discipline that members acquire through subtle learning ought to be seen as elements requiring explicit instruction, especially to previously excluded groups of students (*Writing* 17; see also Curry and Lillis).

The UK researchers and Russell’s work confirm that since each academic discipline has its unique topics, vocabulary, values, concepts, processes of inquiry, and forms of writing, students need explicit instruction in each if they are to become successful writers who can “go native” (Kuhn 204) in the discipline’s language. However, because faculty have often not articulated their discipline’s conventions and values and how they are acquired, they have often associated writing instruction with

remediation – a task to be completed in a general writing course. Such attitudes have served to marginalize writing instruction and the discipline of writing. As Russell asserts, the “transparency of rhetoric in the academic disciplines also helps explain why writing instruction has so often been marginalized” (*Writing* 17). If academics do not have a conscious awareness of their discipline’s rhetorical conventions, they are likely to feel that a general first-year writing course or pre-university preparation is equivalent to discipline-specific writing instruction. They, therefore, marginalize writing by expecting the general writing course to instruct students in general skills that students should then generalize to all disciplines. Consequently, academics tend to reinforce the myths of transience and transparency by “mistak[ing] the inevitable struggles of students to acquire the rhetorical conventions of a discipline for poor writing or sheer ignorance” (Russell, *Writing* 18). Instead of assisting students in appropriating the strategies of a new discourse community, faculty encourage students to attend to instruction in general writing courses.

What happens is, as educator Michael Carter writes, the “conception of the disciplines as domains of specialized knowledge, reinforced by the assumption that a writing course outside the disciplines could somehow improve students’ writing in the disciplines, has led ... to a specialized conception of disciplinary knowledge combined with a generalized conception of writing” (386). In other words, “content” faculty consider their “disciplines as domains of specialized knowledge and writing as general across disciplines” (408). Carter explains this misconception in “Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines” in which he juxtaposes knowledge and knowing –

disciplines as “repositories of knowledge” (declarative/conceptual knowledge) and disciplines as “active ways of knowing” (procedural/process knowledge). Carter argues that “[b]ecause the organizing principle of knowledge in the disciplines is typically perceived as conceptual knowledge, faculty and students tend to understand learning in a discipline as a process of obtaining, at least in short-term memory, the particular knowledge base of the discipline” (387). As well, because faculty consider writing to be “universally generalizable,” they do not “conceptualize writing in the disciplines in a way that is grounded in the disciplines themselves” (387). In fact, this view is linked to “content” faculty’s perception of their discipline as “domains of declarative knowledge” rather than “ways of doing” (388) that are often expressed in and through writing. As Carter observes, the “relationship among knowing, doing, and writing is concealed by the disciplinary focus on conceptual knowledge” (389). Because of this emphasis on content, “content” faculty also fail to articulate the ways in which “writing gives shape to the ways of knowing and doing in a discipline” (391). Like other researchers, Carter uses the lab report to demonstrate that faculty should “see that their responsibility for teaching the ways of knowing and doing in their disciplines also extends to writing, which is not separate from but essential to their disciplines” (408). His work, like Russell’s which he draws on, illustrates the point that disciplines and disciplinary knowledge are socially constructed through writing, but faculty do not usually admit this to students or help students appreciate how writing does the work of disciplines.

Even when “content” faculty seem to acknowledge their responsibility in teaching disciplinary writing and design programs geared to initiating students into the strategies

needed to understand and navigate the discipline's codified conventions, such programs seem limited. Russell acknowledges that despite their general tendency to marginalize writing instruction by implying that writing programs/departments can provide all the instruction that students need, "content" faculty sometimes develop research methods courses for graduate students to become familiar with discipline-specific writing conventions. However, because these are graduate courses, only a small percentage of students in an institution benefit from them. This limited reach is evident in the writing course for graduate students that Chevannes mentions. With that course being taught by faculty from the Department of Language, Linguistics & Philosophy, a message is being conveyed – albeit inadvertently: As Russell says of graduate education in the US, "others had failed to teach students to write; others must solve the problem" (*Writing* 246). Faculty may also claim, as Russell acknowledges, that many students have learned to write even without deliberate instruction. However, a compelling counterargument is Russell's assertion that such learning has occurred "perhaps less consciously or less rapidly or less effectively than with direct instruction" (19). Sadly, the common occurrence is that, instead of faculty's taking the time to identify their discipline's rhetorical strategies in order to be able to teach them, faculty often complain about problems in student writing and transfer the responsibility to other individuals and institutions whose worth and work may be undervalued, simultaneous with the unacknowledged importance of writing to the existence, acquisition, investigation, creation, or communication of disciplinary knowledge.

Academia as Single Discourse Community or Several Competing Discourse Communities

Faculty's transference of the responsibility for writing development to first-year general writing courses or pre-university institutions is often an extension of the misconception that the academy is a single discourse community and therefore there is a unified or universal academic discourse that can be taught. In addressing this misconception, Russell recalls the beginnings of higher education in the US – before the modern university – when education was unified and students were selected primarily based on social class which “guaranteed linguistic homogeneity” (20). However, by the early twentieth century, faculties reorganized along disciplinary departmental lines, and broadening access destroyed linguistic homogeneity. Additionally, increasing specialization meant that the university was “an aggregate of competing discourse communities; it was not a single community” (22). Russell rightly concludes that “to speak of the academic community as if its members shared a single set of linguistic conventions and traditions of inquiry is to make a categorical mistake” (22). This is so because although teaching, research, and service may unite disparate disciplines in a common mission, disciplines differ markedly in terms of epistemic conventions, including their nature of inquiry and strategies for documenting knowledge/work. Academic Literacies research in the UK has been highlighting the complex codes and conventions which faculty in specific disciplines take for granted because faculty mistakenly assume such codes and conventions are universal or transparent, but which students must become familiar with, especially when they take modular courses that cross

disciplinary boundaries (see Ivančić and Lea; Jones, Turner and Street, “Mystery”; Lea and Street; Lillis; Lillis and Turner.)

Therefore, when faculty promote “a single advanced literacy” (Russell, *Writing* 24) in academia, they abdicate the responsibility to explain their distinctive discipline-specific conventions, and to consider how they differ from other disciplines’ conventions or from language use in the wider society. Russell observes that because “faculty rarely asked their students to struggle with the complexities of entering a specific discourse community through writing, they could more easily maintain the illusion that the university was still one discourse community, that such terms as *reason*, *the generally educated person*, or *the humanities* referred to single, unitary concepts” (*Writing* 24, emphasis in the original). Consistent with that illusion, first-year general writing or pre-university courses and their instructors and “content” faculty do not always indicate the extent to which the university and the meaning of such terms are as diverse and independent as there are disciplines. What often gets ignored is situatedness or “contextual variability,” a concept that Elaine Maimon defines in the foreword to Russell’s book as “recognition that meaning changes as the stance of the reader and writer change from situation to situation” (x).

Academic Writing Instruction for Disciplinary Excellence or Social Equity

Consistent with faculty’s promotion of a “a single advanced literacy” based on their misconception of disciplinary knowledge as specialized and writing as generalized are their efforts to restrict access to their discipline rather than expand it. Russell argues

that appropriately initiating neophytes into disciplinary discourses has been “marginalized by another fundamental conflict in academia” – (what Burton Clark calls) “the competing claims of ‘equity’ and ‘excellence’ ... or, more broadly, of inclusion and exclusion” (*Writing* 26). Like Chevannes, Robotham, and others, Russell acknowledges that virtually every society has had to reckon with previously excluded social groups who demand equity in education. However, Russell emphasizes that when such groups succeed in gaining access to educational systems, they usually encounter efforts to “value exclusionary standards of excellence over equity” (26). Russell rightly observes that writing instruction is implicated in this conflict; however, as he asserts, writing is often used as a tool to exclude the undesired and maintain standards:

To teach students the discourse of a professional elite is often a crucial part of initiating them into the profession; to exclude them from such discourse is to make that initiation more difficult, if not impossible. By relegating systematic writing instruction to the margins of academic work, outside the specific disciplinary contexts where students are taught to enter coveted professional roles, institutions preserve standards of excellence and reduce social equity. (26-27)

When faculty marginalize writing instruction by transferring the responsibility from those most familiar with disciplinary discourse, they restrict access to the discipline.

Unfortunately, restricting access is sometimes explained as a way to maintain or raise a discipline’s status in the academy, where disciplines often compete for recognition of their excellence in research.

Another educator, Thomas Miller, sheds light on the dialectical relationship between access and excellence in his critique of instruction in Oxbridge-type English institutions which encouraged learning through rote repetition. Miller rightly asserts that “[w]hen a culture is tacitly transmitted rather than formally taught, the cultural capital of

the educated is preserved in several ways,” one of which is that conventions that are not discussed are “not raised to the level of conscious examination where they can be called into question” (66). Discouraging challenge to conventions serves in such situations to maintain the status quo and remind students that they are of the wrong class. In Freirian terms, what is maintained is formalism over critical reflection. If instructors can keep students’ focus on grammar and mechanics, for example, then students remain enshrined in rules that they cannot get past and which confirm their status. This posture is consistent with Freire’s description of the banking concept of education which “anaesthetizes and inhibits creative power” for it “attempts to maintain the *submersion* of consciousness” (54, emphasis in the original). The better approach, “problem-posing education,” which is meant to yield tangible development, “involves a constant unveiling of reality” to facilitate “*emergence* of consciousness and *critical intervention* in reality” (54, emphasis in the original).

In order to avoid being accused of restricting access, administrators may engage in pseudo-egalitarianism. Russell shows how the American system has been able to accommodate the duality of equity and excellence by “institutionalizing ambiguity in many ways through its approach to writing and its teaching” (27). He explains that designated general-composition courses have in one sense been a means of widening access by helping to *prepare* “successive waves of previously excluded students” for college writing. However, “to the extent that those courses were treated as remedial or purgatorial, they also performed a ‘gatekeeping’ function by keeping students on the margins of the institution” (27). As will be established in subsequent chapters, the UWI

English Proficiency Test and its associated course are analogues of such US manifestations. In both the American and Jamaican contexts, general writing courses stem from and perpetuate the myth of transience and the view that disciplinary writing is transparent. As Russell notes of the US, in the face of general writing courses, “[d]isciplines were free to set rhetorically based standards tacitly. At the same time they could deny (or leave unexamined) the rhetorical nature of their work and thus the responsibility to articulate or systematically teach their discourse” (*Writing* 30). In tandem with disciplines’ denied or unexamined rhetoricality and freedom from articulating or teaching their rhetoric is the emergence of the myth of transience as “adaptive, for it helps to mediate within the institution the deep value conflicts between equity and excellence, but it does so at the expense of a genuine examination of the ways that writing influences higher learning” (30).

I believe in enabling students, once they have matriculated, to access higher education. However, I also believe that if they are going to enter and succeed in the various disciplines and help those disciplines maintain standards of excellence, the experts will have to participate in appropriately initiating the newcomers as required, especially if the newcomers are first-generation university students. It is my view that if “content” faculty systematically study their ways of doing, knowing, and writing and make those visible to students, a country such as Jamaica can achieve “greater social equity – helping those individuals and groups who have not been able to enter certain powerful activity systems to enter them and change them for the better” (Russell, “Activity ... Implications” 69). In this way, an egalitarian attitude which promotes

opportunities for all to succeed would serve Jamaica better than the traditional elitist approach that has served those most likely to succeed without discipline-specific instruction because they are from privileged backgrounds. My use of the heuristics in Russell's work is meant to highlight the need for new attitudes to writing and its instruction as the UWI, Mona, continues its commendable attempt to shift from selecting and training a few applicants to fostering the individual development of many of the country's human resources.

Caveats

Although I rely on the rhetoric of transparent disciplinarity that I deduced from Russell's work in calling for an examination of the nature of writing in Jamaican higher education, I disagree with some of his proposals. Russell cautions that in the American tradition "a narrow focus on the history of composition courses may actually reinforce the myth of transience," resulting in a loss of "institutional perspective that would see composition courses as one of many ways students learn (or fail to learn) written discourse of many kinds" (*Writing* 32). I conducted my study with that perspective as a guide, *but* with the awareness that in light of a preponderance of writing for evaluative purposes and the absence of cross-curricular writing instruction, general writing courses represent the major way in which students are provided explicit instruction in academic writing at UWI, Mona. For more than four decades, these courses have, as Merrill and Miller describe US first-year writing courses, "offer[ed] unparalleled support for learning" (214).

I also depart from some post-process views about writing with which Russell is sometimes associated. For example, Russell's stress that writing is not generalizable is a key strand in post-process theory. Post-process scholars have been influenced by post-modernist perspectives, specifically the rejection of universal theories and master narratives and the foregrounding of situatedness – the emphasis on the importance of context to appreciation of writing. Post-process advocates take issue with the writing process because it presents a grand narrative about writing. They also question the view that writing can actually be taught, suggesting, as Lynn Bloom observes, that it is “an unteachable algorithm (37). One of the leading post-process advocates, Thomas Kent, argues against discourse production or analysis as systemic or codifiable or generalizable processes. His anti-process stance would mean abandoning writing pedagogy. Another post-process advocate who is against general writing courses is Joseph Petraglia who writes that such courses constitute “general writing skills instruction (GWSI)” (xi). This framework of writing instruction is informed by the “idea that writing is a set of rhetorical skills that can be mastered through formal instruction. These skills include the general ability to develop and organize ideas, use techniques for inventing topics worthy of investigation, adapt one's purpose to an audience, and anticipate reader response” (xi). Petraglia offers rather simplistic critiques of GWSI and calls for its revision because he feels it erroneously “sets for itself the objective of teaching students ‘to write,’ to give them the skills that transcend any particular content and context” (xii).

Specifically, Russell believes that there is no one universal writing process, but instead plural writing processes that are associated with each “activity system.” An

activity system, Russell writes, refers to “collectives (often organizations) of people who, over an indefinite period of time, share common purposes (objects and motives) and certain tools used in certain ways” (“Activity ... Approaches” 81). I agree with Russell that instructors should study, classify, and commodify the writing processes associated with these systems and “involve students with (teach) them in a curriculum that is sequenced” (88) to help students understand how such processes work in actual systems. However, while I do agree with teaching writing as plural processes, I do believe that some aspects of writing are generalizable while others are specific to each discipline. I believe that the sequence to which Russell refers should begin with general first year writing courses because there instructors (can) teach transferable aspects of writing as well as help students realize how disciplines differ and develop metacognitive awareness to function in different discourse domains.

Russell’s critique of first-year writing turns on its separation of writing and learning in disciplines. Russell acknowledges that a general writing course “can and often does provide a curricular space for welcoming students to higher education and thus, potentially, for broadening rather than restricting access to those social roles colleges and universities prepare and credential students to enter” (“Activity ... Implications” 51). However, he questions general writing skills instruction’s (GWSI’s) aims of “improving students writing and teaching students a general academic or public discourse” (56). He indicates that GWSI courses are believed to “teach students to write or to write better what is thought of as a universal educated discourse, a general kind of discourse that all educated (or truly educated) persons in a culture share” (60). He calls this the

“hypothetical universal educated discourse (UED)” that is often referred to as “academic discourse” or “public discourse.” He notes, however, that writing is a “protean tool” that different disciplines and discourse domains appropriate and transform (60). He, therefore, proposes that in order to “teach students to write academic discourse one must engage them in a specific activity system – and therefore specific genres – where academic work goes on” (63). He opposes “the myth of UED” (63) that he believes is propagated in courses that purport to teach “an overarching discourse, which other activity systems (disciplines or professions) ought to use instead of their own ‘jargon’” (63-64). In his view, GWSI courses “mask the differences in disciplinary discourses” (67) because they involve attempts to “teach writing without teaching the activities that give writing meaning and motive” because they separate writing from disciplinary learning (65). As well, GWSI functions to absolve disciplines and “content” faculty of the responsibility to make explicit their ways of thinking, knowing, and writing to students needing such instruction: “The existence of separate and general writing courses encourages disciplines to mistakenly assume that they do not teach ‘writing’ but only ‘content’” (67).

Here, again, I agree and disagree with Russell’s compelling assertions. I agree, as indicated earlier, that there is no one academic discourse and students learn to write a discipline’s discourse through active engagement in the discipline. However, I agree with Merrill and Miller’s reminder to writing program administrators that “[a]lthough there may be no generic academic discourse that can be taught in formulaic form, the rhetorical strategies involved in mediating genres of discourse can be learned, formally as well as experientially” (214), in a general writing course. I, therefore, support both discipline-

specific and general writing courses – with some conditions that I explain in the concluding chapter.

To counter the weaknesses that he perceives in general writing skills instruction, Russell proposes “a general introductory course *about* writing” (“Activity ... Implications” 73) of the sort that I recommend in the concluding chapter. He writes,

Such a course would not have as its object teaching students to write or improving their writing per se, any more than an introductory psychology course claims to make students better adjusted or a course in music appreciation claims to make its students better singers (although that might be one effect of the course). Rather its object would be to teach students what has been learned about writing in those activity systems that make the role of writing in society the object of their study.” (73)

In other words such a course would teach the findings of the research traditions that study writing and could “help to remove the remedial stigma from writing and its teaching in academia” (74). While ultimately I, too, argue for a general writing course about writing that leads to discipline-specific writing instruction, I do so in the awareness that disciplinary writing instruction can appear to be dogmatic and some disciplines are beginning to intersect, thereby blurring disciplinary boundaries.

Kurt Spellmeyer points to potential problems in discipline-specific instruction. Among compositionists who argue against discipline-specific writing instruction, he values finding authentic voice and manifesting “essayistic introspection and digression” (269). Spellmeyer believes that discipline-specific writing instruction that focuses on “objectivity of academic discourse” (273) through suppression of beliefs, feelings and values “encourages an attitude of calculating alienation” (267). In other words, through the “effacement of subjectivity” (265), discipline-specific instruction results in “a

pervasive absence of commitment” (271) in student writers. This happens because instead of teaching students how to “enter a discipline by finding their own voices” (275), it “encourages both conformity and submission” (266) to the conventions of discourse. He feels that often students have “nothing of [their] own to say” because their primary focus is to abide by the discipline’s “rules and fulfill its expectations” (271).

Here, I believe that Spellmeyer is actually arguing against exactly what happens or can happen when rhetoric is not made visible in each discipline. If in each discipline or in some English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses for second language English speakers, professors suggest that writing is neutral, then there is no need for students to find a voice or to attempt to say anything new. Instead, students would be expected to present neutrally old information that would be presented using what Paolo Freire calls the “banking concept” (45-51) of teaching and learning. However, what I believe to be Russell’s concern, and certainly what I am emphasizing, is involvement of “content” faculty in discipline-specific instruction that does the very opposite by making clear to students disciplinary conventions and the extent to which those are guided by personal attempts to be rhetorically persuasive. As Spellmeyer writes in his defense of “the exploratory, contravening essay” (263) à la Montaigne, “it is both dishonest and disabling to pretend that writing no matter how formal or abstract, is not created by persons from within the contexts – historical, social, intellectual, institutional – of their lived experience” (269). Appropriate instruction would, therefore, be transformative rather than transmissive, thereby foregrounding rhetoric and the socially constructed nature of disciplinary writing and promoting writing development.

Michael Carter provides another claim against disciplinary writing instruction when he reminds readers that “disciplinary boundaries themselves are porous and in flux; the disciplines are not fixed containers at all” (410). Carter highlights an interesting movement in the academy in which the separate divisions of declarative knowledge are being challenged by cross and interdisciplinary studies and by mergers occasioned by straitened financial situations. These developments may actually bring into sharp relief some students’ difficulty in navigating disciplinary requirements. Therefore, although I agree that disciplinary boundaries are being blurred, precisely because of the potential confusion that can arise from such blurring, I believe that there is merit in recognizing and teaching the separate ways of knowing, doing, and writing that seem to keep some students from excelling in some disciplines. Hence, my recommendation in Chapter 5 and the conclusion for administrators, writing specialists, and other content faculty to move beyond an exclusive focus on general academic writing at The University of the West Indies in Jamaica.

Transculturation: Jamaica’s History, Education System, and Languages

Views about academic writing and its instruction in Jamaica have to be understood against the background of the country’s colonial history, linguistic context, and ties with England and other British West Indian colonies. Therefore, in addition to invoking Rose’s and Russell’s concepts in assessing attitudes to academic writing and its instruction in Jamaica, I also consider the concept of “transculturation” that Mary Louise Pratt develops in her explorations of “contact zones.” Pratt relates this largely historical

concept to classrooms, but I wish to focus on her use of the term in relation to history. Contact zones, says Pratt, are “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (34). However, like other scholars, she argues that the domination and resistance binary that is often associated with such contact zones does not provide a nuanced account of relations in them. In such contact zones, cultures and sub-cultures interact, exchanging values, terms, and attitudes in a process of “transculturation.” The latter is a term that Cuban sociologist, Fernando Ortiz, first coined in the 1940s “to replace overly reductive concepts of acculturation and assimilation used to characterize culture under conquest” (Pratt 36). According to Pratt, transculturation describes

processes whereby members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture. ... While subordinate peoples do not usually control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what gets absorbed into their own and what it gets used for. (36)

Transculturation is evident in Jamaica in the way in which subjects in contact constitute themselves through interaction and improvisation. The Caribbean region where Jamaica is located is an archetypal contact zone that was balkanized through European expansionism into British, Danish (now US Virgin Islands), Dutch, French, and Spanish West Indies. Each Caribbean island’s culture is a result of violent contact between Europeans, Amerindians, and transplanted peoples from other continents. However, while domination and resistance abound in each culture, transculturation is also evident in the improvisation that Caribbean peoples demonstrate.

The interactive and improvisational nature of contact in Jamaica dates back to the fifteenth century and influenced educational and language patterns there. When Christopher Columbus landed in Jamaica in 1494, he secured the island for Spain. In 1655, the English took over Jamaica from the Spanish, rendering the island a British Crown Colony (governed by the Colonial Office in England through its appointed autocratic governors) by 1670. Today, more than 90% of Jamaicans are of predominantly African descent, their ancestors forcibly transported by Europeans from the west coast of Africa to plough and populate West Indian sugar plantations. The Spanish left very little, if any, mark on education in Jamaica. Like those of other former British colonies, Jamaica's education system was influenced by England's. Public elementary education was introduced in Jamaica in 1834, public teacher education in 1836, public secondary education in 1879, and public university education only in 1948 (see Figueroa, *Society*; Gordon, *A Century*; V. Roberts; Whyte). Jamaica's young education system suggests that many of present day Jamaicans' forbears were not exposed to formal Western concepts of education. After all, during plantation slavery, when planters were property owners and slaves were property, there was very little concern for education. As the late Sir Phillip Sherlock observes, the Anglophone Caribbean, of which Jamaica is the largest island, was dominated by a white planter class "that for two centuries resisted intellectual enquiry, despised learning and defined the vast majority of its people as 'pieces of property'" (v). However, as the next two chapters will reveal, locals selected and adapted features of British education in their bid to transform the British model university that was established in 1948 as a college of the University of London.

Jamaican Creole, the language spoken by the majority of Jamaicans, is the linguistic embodiment of transculturation. Its development and function in society are germane to discussions of writing instruction in higher education. This language was formed in the crucible of the plantation, from the contact between European, African, and indigenous Caribbean languages. It is testament to the ways in which Jamaicans' ancestors selected from the languages available and reinvented them, as they tried to adapt to the new situation imposed on them in the Caribbean contact zone. Many Jamaicans are justly proud of this emblem of adaptation, but perhaps more stigmatize it because of the high personal and social prestige associated with "proper" English (Christie, *Language*). For a long time, higher education was reserved for a few for whom proficiency in English was considered a mark of distinction. Those considered literate in English could write without interference from Jamaican Creole. Although Chevannes does not name Jamaican Creole in his article, comfort in using this code and resultant difficulties in using English are at the heart of some of the errors evident in the samples that he includes. In fact, as I will show in the ensuing chapters, such language issues have been central to complaints about student writing at Mona and about graduates' communication skills in general.

Notes

¹ Although complaints about student writing often follow expansion (plans) in higher education (see, for example, Brereton; Rose; and Russell, *Writing*, regarding the US; and Ivančić and Lea; Jones, Turner and Street; Lea and Street; Lillis; and Lillis and Turner in the UK), Chevannes is the only conference contributor who explicitly references UWI's writing program.

² I invoke Russell's and Rose's theories and recent research from the UK not because I am proposing a (neo-)colonial imitation or adoption of US or UK models. However, I am recognizing that the US college established a writing tradition in the nineteenth century that has allowed for focused research on writing. This tradition is a useful reference point for English and European higher education institutions that have recently begun to offer academic writing instruction and to study the discipline. More important, as will become evident in later sections, US writing research and UK research into language use have been influencing developments in some of UWI's writing courses since the 1960s – especially in terms of the texts used in courses. As well, recent recommendations from UWI's English Language Foundation program include the intention “to reposition [its] English language programmes within the context of international norms and regional needs and expectations” (WRITE Symposium II 1).

II. DEVELOPING LOCAL LEADERS PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE, PRE-1960S

The key to understanding language in context is to start, not with language but with context. ... Only by examining the relationship from the side of contexts can we see an essential part of what is going on when language is taught.

Dell Hymes, Introduction. *Functions of Language in the Classroom* xix

The question of language is one of the most difficult issues to deal with in Caribbean society for it is an area where whenever you attempt to touch it, you touch all the social concerns.

Lawrence Carrington qtd. in Sherlock and Nettleford 132

[T]he English language was not considered merely as a means of communication but as something invested with the ability to re-form subject peoples into replicas of English men and women of a particular class.

Beverly Bryan, "The Story So Far" 2

In the preceding chapter, I establish that journalists' and educators' complaints about student writing in higher education in Jamaica reflect ignorance of the complexity of writing. Such complaints often demonstrate critics' limited understandings of writing, specifically what Mike Rose calls the myth of transience and what David Russell describes as the rhetoric of transparent disciplinarity. Academics and public figures propagate the myth of transience when they claim that problems in writing at upper educational levels will be eliminated when better teaching is done at lower levels (Rose 355-56). They express the rhetoric of transparency when they suggest that writing is a single, mechanical skill that is learned once and generalized to all other situations. Accompanying such views are those that any instruction in writing at the tertiary level has as its aim remediation, the academy is a single discourse community, and the focus of higher education ought to be excellence rather than equity (Russell, *Writing* 9-10).

In this chapter, I review the establishment and early years of The University of the West Indies, and argue that faculty offered students no explicit writing instruction for two main reasons. The first is that administrators largely followed in the tradition of English universities on which the University College of the West Indies (UCWI) was modeled in the post World War II era. Faculty could be seen to be advocating a liberal view of education that saw writing as a transparent medium for recording thought, specifically a reflection of “genius.” Russell writes that liberals consider writing “an unteachable response to inner promptings, a mode of appreciation or an indication of genius. Writing [does] not aid learning; it show[s] the state of mind” (*Writing* 234). In the Jamaican context, writing – specifically *writing in English* – was considered as part of the character of an educated person. In other words, mastery of English was considered a mark of education, and the educated was assumed to be able to write well. Faculty also neglected to articulate writing strategies and conventions because they seemed to believe that if writing could indeed be learned, it was learned prior to university studies – usually in the *repeated* writing that was done in preparation for examinations. If writing reflects genius, is inherent in the educated, or is learned in pre-university settings, its instruction in the academy is seen to serve a remedial purpose that is not associated with an elite institution such as the University College of the West Indies (UCWI) which emphasized excellence.

There being insufficient consideration of the context-bound nature of good writing, misconceptions arose and were perpetuated about language and writing. Indeed, language in Jamaica and misconceptions about language continue to be closely connected to probably equally disturbing misconceptions about writing development. As the work

of historian of rhetoric James Berlin reminds, every view of writing presupposes a view of language and its relationship with knowledge (see “Contemporary Composition,” *Rhetoric and Reality*). On the one hand, writing may be considered an epistemic activity facilitating development of thought and knowledge *if* knowledge is taken to be socially constructed and persuasively presented in and through language. In this case, writing emerges as an aid to learning and requires careful instruction to help learners create and communicate disciplinary knowledge. If, on the other hand, knowledge is believed to be pre-existent and waiting to be retrieved, language serves only as a transparent medium to neutrally record in writing what is retrieved. In this case, instruction in writing emphasizes correctness in language in transmitting what is retrieved from some permanent repository (such as the mind), and such instruction is considered remedial. These views of language and writing as transparent mediums persist in Jamaica.

Although similar observations may be made about writing and language in other countries, as cross-cultural education researcher Robin Alexander asserts, we understand educational developments in specific countries only “by reference to the web of inherited ideas and values, habits and customs, institutions and world views which make one country, or one region, or one group, distinct from another” (5). Also, as the epigraph from world-renowned linguist Dell Hymes emphasizes, language and context are intertwined: To understand views about language, we should examine context. Indeed, views about writing and language in Jamaica only become clear when considered in light of the development of formal education and the teaching of English in schools in

Jamaica, for, as Kathleen Drayton remarks, this is “the heritage that is blamed for the problems and dilemmas of present-day English teaching” (“The Most” 207).

This context informs the second reason, I argue, that faculty neglected to articulate their knowledge of disciplinary writing: administrators and educators were subscribing to the discourse of transparency that emerged in the 1800s regarding language at pre-university levels in Jamaica. In their collection of cross-national studies of writing, David Russell and David Foster include a set of questions that could be considered for cross-national research. One of these questions is “What are the effects of language policy and traditions on writing development?” (43). Russell and Foster propose that “at the level of teaching, national and local language policies and traditions condition writing development in powerful and increasingly contested ways.” (43). My examination of the Jamaican situation to determine “[h]ow ... language policies and traditions enable and constrain writing development” (44) reveals that informing the views about writing is the belief that students learn language, specifically English, and write based on “an assumed instinct” (Strickland qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1898” 401). One assistant inspector of schools, R. B. Strickland, criticized this faulty assumption that he observed in 1898. This situation arose in the colonial period when English – the language variety of the elite – became the medium of instruction. Colonial administrators seemed to believe that children from privileged backgrounds would write well by virtue of knowing the alphabet and speaking English; and Creole-speaking children would speak and write in English without being explicitly taught it and how to write in it. I argue that this view was one of the guiding forces that were evident in the

UCWI in the 1940s and 1950s. However, this view of language kept some knowledge of writing tacit and therefore preserved the cultural capital of the privileged.

The determination to use English as the sole medium of instruction in Jamaica was not an innocent undertaking. It reveals linguistic prejudice because when administrators imposed a language that was not that of the demographic majority, they favored the children who could claim it – English – as linguistic capital (see Bourdieu). Nineteenth-century colonial officials were aware that language transmits ideology, so they distributed official documents reflecting the ideological dimensions of their enterprise. One such document is a *Circular Despatch* from the Lieutenant Governor of Trinidad to the Secretary of State in 1841. This document can be read as a directive to all British West Indian governments. The intent to disseminate English globally is reflected in the policy “to cause the language spoken to be that of the country to which this colony belongs” (qtd. in Augier and Gordon 166). The most telling document, however, is probably an 1847 *Colonial Office Despatch* that instructs governments to maintain social control by indoctrinating a colored middle class into Britain’s cultures and values. The governments were to develop a “native middle class among the negro population ... by creating a body of men interested in the protection of property, and with intelligence enough to take part in that humbler of machinery of local affairs which ministers to social order” (qtd. in Augier and Gordon, 182). More important, they were to “diffuse a grammatical knowledge of the English Language as the most important agent of civilisation for the coloured population of the colonies ...” (qtd. in Augier and Gordon, 182). As the third epigraph highlights, the result was that people considered English as

more than a language; they viewed it as “a portable commodity necessary for some measure of success in life” (Bryan, “The Story” 4). Administrators’ intention was for English to serve to disseminate the values of the mother country as superior to local values, becoming “the main cultural form of oppression” (Drayton, “Ideology” 291). And what would guarantee such dissemination was the school – that significant bastion of colonialism and custodian of linguistic imperialism.

The result of the 1847 colonial directive has been widespread failure – a situation that horrified educators when the learning revealed in writing indicated that very little, if anything, had been taught. Unfortunately, the idea that one speaks English or writes based on some inherent quality was present in the establishment and early years of the university when students were expected to engage in intrinsic writing – that is, write based on some inherent quality rather than explicit instruction. Although the problems associated with this misconception were apparent, educators never seemed to consider the importance of articulating knowledge that was invisible to outsiders. Instead of articulating codified disciplinary writing conventions, educators remained concerned with the code – English. Since they expected the elementary (and later secondary) schools to teach basic English skills, administrators and academics blamed them and expressed that the writing problems that emerged in the university would disappear following appropriate developments in those institutions and in examinations. I argue, however, that the writing problems at the university level were (and are still being) blamed on a system whose problematic origins have not been adequately examined and transformed to yield genuine language and writing development.

Birth of a Regional University for Caribbean Writing “Geniuses”

One reason for which educators in Jamaica associated writing with genius and something individuals did by virtue of being educated is the nature of the establishment and development of the regional university. What is today The University of the West Indies (UWI) was originally the University College of the West Indies (UCWI), established in 1948 as a publicly-funded affiliate of the University of London under the Asquith Plan for colonial universities and located at Mona in Kingston, Jamaica. Various scholars (see, for example, Copley; I. Maxwell; Parker; Sherlock and Nettleford) highlight the British tardiness in establishing this local institution of higher learning after “long, terrible years during which a colonial philosophy of education and plantation-values wasted the true wealth of the Indies, the creativity and intellectual ability of the people” (Sherlock and Nettleford 303).¹ These scholars assert that the ethnicity, limited qualifications, and concern with financial gain of the colonizers who landed in the islands explain the late establishment and paucity of higher education institutions in the Anglophone Caribbean. The late Sir Philip Sherlock, one of the founding members of UWI who rose through the ranks to become Vice Chancellor, and his co-author Rex Nettleford, a leading Caribbean intellectual and former UWI Vice Chancellor, observe that unlike the Spanish colonists in Santo Domingo, Mexico, and Peru who established universities in the mid-sixteenth century, the British who had been in the West Indies (in Barbados and St Kitts) since the 1620s did not establish a university college there until after over three centuries after their arrival. Based on the white planters’ attitudes,

Sherlock and Nettleford write that the “West Indian sugar-and-slave plantation society could not tolerate a place of light, liberty and learning because it tolerated neither moral principle nor idealism. The motivation force was powerful and destructive, an insatiable greed for riches. Cash came first, Christ a distant second” (7). The late John Figueroa, former Dean of Education, explains that in contrast to the situation in colonies in the US, very few university graduates – who would probably be interested in supporting higher education in the region – were among the settlers who arrived in the West Indies (*Society* 14-15).

The UCWI was, therefore, established late in a region where the colonizers’ main concern was gain. However, it was also located in a region where colonizers and West Indians attended to standards set in England. Alan Cobley, M. Kazim Bacchus, Millicent Whyte, and others report that over the years several *individuals* had proposed the establishment of a regional university, but Britain seemed to ignore them because colonial officials considered public postsecondary education “premature and inexpedient in the colonies” (I. Maxwell 3). After all, the settlers felt that “home was elsewhere” and therefore sent their children to pursue education overseas (Figueroa, *Society* 14). Later, other students “of means” seeking higher education were sent to Europe and North America. As well, bright children from the lower middle and working classes competed for a rare island scholarship to Oxford or Cambridge, and others remained in the West Indies, studying on their own or in an affiliated college (such as Jamaica High School) to take and pass external degree examinations offered by the University of London. The island scholarship and an English education benefited the “almost white” young West

Indian males who obtained them. However, as Alan Copley, then Dean of Humanities at Cave Hill writes, they also elevated “an Oxbridge education to the status of Holy Grail for West Indian students, and, by implication, tended to belittle the efforts of local institutions to offer quality education” (5).

When the British colonial administrators decided to establish a university in the West Indies, they concentrated on educating the brightest and best in the region to ensure social control. Copley, I. Maxwell, Parker, and Sherlock and Nettleford report that various socio-political factors explain why that concentration informed the establishment of the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies (IUC) and the Commission of Higher Education in the Colonies (the Asquith Commission) that investigated the need for such institutions. Among these factors were efforts at social reconstruction evident in increased access to higher education in Britain in the post war years, changes in the perceived value of the colonies because of reduction in sales of cane sugar on the world market, and pre- and post-war agitation by advocates of local university education. Copley emphasizes that because the colonies had become liabilities by the mid-20th century, England wished to sever ties with them. It saw the university as essential to developing local leaders to take over administration after the world wars and ensure self-government and self-reliance in the Caribbean (6-9). Paul Parker observes in his dissertation on changes in the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) and UCWI that the focus of the latter was not for mass utilitarian education but training leaders for government and the professions (161). This rationale was heavily criticized. As Nettleford remarks, “many beneficiaries of the ‘gift’ ... with the advantage of hindsight”

did not consider the UCWI's establishment as a purely innocent undertaking that would facilitate "peaceful orderly transition from colonialism to independence" (7-8). For Copley, "indigenous elites would not only receive the training they required for effective leadership, they would remain intellectually and ideologically tied to Britain" (10).

The focus, then, would be educating leaders in a system that emphasized high standards. Like the other universities established on recommendation by the Asquith Commission, the UCWI "would become an integral part of an imperial university system" (I. Maxwell 6). In this system, excellence was emphasized: "high quality and the determination to secure worldwide academic recognition were the characteristics of the institutions founded on the Asquith plan" (I. Maxwell 62-63). To ensure high standards, the UCWI (and the other Asquith institutions) would be a ward of the University of London. This institution was accorded this "maternal role" on account of its experience in offering external degrees to students who prepared for and took its examinations in various British colonies (Parker 181). The UCWI's *Calendar 1959-60* emphasizes that examinations were conducted by University of London examiners, that is, UCWI and University of London examiners prepared draft examination papers and did first marking of student scripts, but University of London examiners determined the final draft of examination papers and the final examination results. I. C. Maxwell, who served as Assistant Secretary of the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies, recalls

To emphasise quality from the start was a deliberate choice as well as a recognition that any alternative which countenanced mediocrity would have won no acceptance in

the developing world. Britain would not be forgiven there if, on independence, countries found the standards were below their needs; if on the other hand the standards proved too severe, adjustments could be made without recrimination. (13)

Although I. Maxwell's statements suggest that emphasis on standards was to prevent post-independence disgruntlement in the colonies by creating an acceptable elite – in other words, a group whose elite standing would be accepted – the predilection for winning academic respect is, perhaps, better explained as a feature of English universities that was transferred to the colonial institutions. As Copley notes, “in the anxiety to deliver good quality education, standards had been set at a punitive level, so that many of those who did matriculate found it difficult to progress through the university system. Once this pattern was established, however, faculty members at the UCWI – many of whom were expatriates – seemed to take a perverse pride in holding to it” (16). These standards would attract criticism because excellence seemed to translate into meeting standards that perpetuated the system by getting the best and brightest to define themselves in the system's values.

Because of such arrangements, at its inception, everything about the university college that began with a single medical faculty appeared to be English in character – a University of London curriculum and an Oxbridge emphasis on elitism. The matriculation requirements (including writing requirements), the Faculties and departments, the degree structures, the syllabuses, and the teaching methods were dictated by the University of London. In describing the UCWI's academic requirements

and its governing Senate and Council, Nettleford writes, “[t]he British ‘redbrick university’ had come to the Caribbean” (6), but Oxford and Cambridge features were present in the residential requirement. Because the UCWI was modeled on English institutions, its administrators adopted an elitist approach to education, in contrast to US mass-oriented land grant universities. While researchers such as Christopher Hunte and Parker merely indicate that the UCWI admitted a very small number of students, others such as Coble emphasize that that small number underwent a rigid and rigorous selection process at the end of which they were offered a narrow, scholarly curriculum. As historian and poet Howard Fergus recalls, “the university [UCWI] itself was rooted in a liberal education tradition and served . . . an elite function” (21). It offered “[a]n education not concerned with immediate ends and the efficient adaptation of the individual to existing surroundings but with knowledge capable of being its own end” (Joyce qtd. in Fergus 21-22).

This elitist perspective helps explain the belief that writing is an intrinsic skill. Indeed, because of the UCWI’s connections to English universities and because of students’ social class and education in the 1940s, administrators assumed that students would be able to write at the university without explicit writing instruction. Most undergraduates were from middle income groups, and displayed mastery of English befitting their class. Robert LePage, professor of English and pioneer in Caribbean Creole studies, conveys a sense of the social class of students who were usually accepted at UCWI and of their language skills and writing abilities in his call for volunteers to assist with a projected linguistic survey of the British Caribbean region in the early 1950s.

LePage used terms such as “white talk” and “Creolese English” to refer to British English and West Indian English respectively.² LePage’s observations reveal that the majority of the undergraduates then displayed facility in English by virtue of their birth or their parents’ education and students’ personal interests. LePage found that there was “a very small percentage of children whose native speech approximates to the Southern British dialect of English” (“The Language” 41). These children’s parents were usually English administrators or businessmen or West Indians who had spent many years in England where they attended high school and university. Le Page observed that those children who accounted for about 1-2% of the school population were often bilingual (41). He describes a second group of children in each colony. These are “children from middle-class homes where the natural tongue is an educated Creolese English” (41). Such children’s parents used “white talk” among themselves. However, the careful observer would notice that they sometimes included “specifically local words and English words used in a specifically local sense” (41). LePage observed that a significant percentage of the secondary school students and “probably the majority of University undergraduates, at least in Barbados and Jamaica” (42) were from this second group. Children in this group tended to perform well in language and writing because of what may appear to be questionable strategies: LePage’s description of these children’s attitudes reflects Villanueva’s description of “racelessness” (39) as practiced by some minority groups in the US in their attempts to take on mainstream language and culture. LePage reports that when these children became adults, some self-consciously suppressed “lower-class creolese” while others abandoned it to lead a fully middle class lifestyle (42). Various

Caribbean writers have criticized this situation in which many students admired the British, imitated them, and adopted their values. These students who uncritically accepted English values were culturally English. In the English-speaking Caribbean, individuals who were considered culturally white but racially black were called “roast breadfruit.” This pejorative term is the equivalent of the “sugar cane” metaphor used in the French West Indies where Frantz Fanon criticized earlier generations for being black on the outside and white inside in his *Peau Noir, Masques Blancs (Black Skin, White Masks)*. The reality, however, is that many Caribbean students in the first few decades of the twentieth century were thought to have mastered the colonial language better than the colonial masters and their descendants – in both speech and writing.³

Although students’ social class and apparent consequent mastery of English led administrators to believe they did not have to articulate writing instruction, what probably confirmed that students could write instinctively were the institution’s matriculation and, therefore, writing requirements. Students in the 1940s sat writing intensive school-leaving and university-qualifying examinations at the end of their (five) secondary years. Sixteen-year-old secondary level students who were not considering a university education took the (Cambridge) School Certificate (Ordinary Level) Examination. Those students who were planning to attend university and/or obtain a scholarship took the Senior Cambridge and then the Higher Certificate Examination, usually after two additional years. It is to be remembered that because of the special relationship, the UCWI’s matriculation requirements were the same as those for the University of London. Parker observes that there were no detailed statements about requirements in the UCWI

Year Books for 1947-49, 1949-50, or 1950-51. These catalogues directed students to the University of London's requirements. Before 1952, London required students on the London Matriculation Examination to pass English, Elementary Mathematics, and three other subjects selected from a list of twenty-nine in one sitting (201-203). The English public criticized these rigid requirements, particularly the way in which the very specialized entrance tests that the British universities administered virtually dictated the secondary school curriculum that understandably focused on the examinations' content. Following those criticisms and decisions taken by the British Minister of Education, one new entry examination, with "Ordinary," "Advanced," and "Scholarship" levels, replaced the two existing examinations. This new General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.) examination would allow all 16 year olds in or out of school to take any number of subjects they wished and receive a single certificate indicating the subjects they had passed and the levels at which they had passed them (Parker 201-03). Therefore, by 1952, the G.C.E. became the university qualifying examinations, with London and Cambridge being the most popular in Jamaica. In general, students who applied to the university in the early 1950s were expected to have passes in six subjects, at least two of which had to be at the Advanced ('A') level, or have passes in five subjects, at least three of which had to be at the 'A' level. Because taking the 'A' level meant that the student had passed the subject at the Ordinary ('O') level, these requirements really meant having at least eight passes. In 1952, students could choose from a wide range of forty-two subjects on the approved list. Kathleen Drayton notes that because the G.C.E. was not a single subject examination, students had to study for the five or six required ordinary level subjects (one

of which was English language) that they would take at once. English Language and English Literature were treated as separate subjects. For the Language examination, students wrote an essay and a précis, and answered comprehension questions in sentences. They also did sentence analysis up to the mid-1960s. The Literature examination involved knowledge of set texts – usually a Shakespearian text, novels and/or short stories, and poetry (Drayton, “The Most” 210).

Since these examinations, like their predecessors, that West Indians took were set for students in England, some segments of the local population criticized their use as requirements for university entry in the West Indies (Drayton, “The Most” 211). It seems that lay practitioners criticized what they perceived to be limited access created by rigid entry schemes and the suggestion that authorities were forcefully protecting the boundaries of educated culture almost in the same way as did the colonial officials who had refused the colonies a university before the war years. Parker notes that one of the significant factors that contributed to slow enrollment growth between 1948 and 1954 was that “the requirement that students present *passes on the G.C.E.s in Latin* was too high for most West Indians” (227). Requirements in Latin indicate significant boundary restrictions for they suggest that *to be literate meant being familiar with classical languages* and their forms of logic and expression. As well, the UCWI could have only a small pool of applicants since only those students who could access good secondary schools were likely to succeed in the London Matriculation Examinations (Parker 229). Parker reminds readers of what is now a known fact – that secondary educational

development in the Caribbean often lagged behind Britain's, resulting in students' experiencing grave difficulty in passing the 'A' level examinations (137).

Still, as Drayton notes, "[t]he West Indian perennial concern with standards, preferably those set outside, made these examinations, set and marked in the UK, highly valued" ("The Most" 211). Other West Indians, therefore, believed that if a student passed the examinations, that student knew how to demonstrate knowledge in writing. This was because the new 'A' level requirement meant additional writing experience for university-bound students, and educators believed that the requirements prepared students to write in the university. The G.C.E. 'A' level requirement meant that students spent two additional years (in the Sixth Form) beyond the school leaving age of sixteen in preparation for more writing-intensive examinations. Following in the English tradition in which students specialized in established disciplinary areas such as history, chemistry, or law, Jamaican students preparing for higher education would take only about three subjects after the Fifth Form. Students preparing to specialize in a science subject would take 'A' Level courses and examinations in such subjects as Chemistry, Zoology, Mathematics, or Physics, while students preparing to major in Law would take History, English Literature, and French. Preparation in this small number of subjects would be considered as discipline-specific preparation for the areas in which students would major in the university because 'A' level preparation involved writing many essays as a form of subject-specific learning in most of these subjects. It is to be understood that the writing involved included *practice by repetition* rather than developing writing through multiple revisions as became common in the US after the 1960s. The examinations were, as Foster

and Russell observe of some European systems, “grueling tests of early disciplinary mastery” (Conclusion 319). As well, all students aspiring to do higher studies locally or win a scholarship for study overseas had to take and obtain a good pass in English Language, which emphasized essay writing that was *evaluated but not really taught*. Nonetheless, administrators seemed to feel that students were getting more writing practice pre-university while they were preparing for the new university qualifying examinations.

In addition to their ‘A’ level qualifications, applicants had to take an entrance examination (UCWI, *Memorandum for Applicants* 6) in which they displayed their knowledge in writing and, therefore, their knowledge of writing. Having passed the requisite number of examinations and the entrance test, students were considered ready for the writing tasks of their chosen Faculty. As Foster and Russell observe, after preparing for exams in subjects and disciplines that are the focus of their university studies, students began their university career “as experienced apprentices in chosen disciplines” (Conclusion 331) and not as novices as is likely to be the situation in the US where students start with general studies and do not specialize until late in their undergraduate studies. Because of the largely unspoken assumption that preparation for (the London Matriculation or Higher Certificate Examination before 1952 and later for G.C.E.) ‘A’ levels meant students knew how to write for disciplinary audiences, academics did not offer writing instruction in Jamaican higher education. In the Jamaican system, faculty believed that matriculants would continue to write to demonstrate learning in the discipline. However, faculty seemed to forget that although these students

were not complete novices, they were “apprentices,” and not “experts.” As long as faculty neglected to instruct students in how to write, faculty’s knowledge of writing was kept tacit, unarticulated, and therefore embedded in shared experiences that were not readily accessible to outsiders. It is probably the fact that this knowledge was also unarticulated in pre-university settings that some persons criticized “the system” that they did not fully understand for excluding them.

The modes of instruction employed in the UCWI confirm my belief that knowledge of writing remained largely invisible and unarticulated in the institution. Students who were offered a place in the university were accepted into a specific Faculty (with a Dean as head and comprising the students and lecturers in departments of a specific field) to pursue a 5-year degree in medicine or a 3-year degree in the Arts, Natural Sciences, or Social Sciences.⁴ As in the English system, two modes of instruction prevailed in these Faculties – large group lectures and small group tutorials. In England, faculty gave the lectures and often masters and doctoral students led the tutorials. Since there were no masters students to begin with at the UCWI and graduate students were not introduced until 1963 (V. Roberts 44), regular faculty would have conducted the tutorials. Some faculty gave lectures from notes while others read from a fully composed lecture. Lectures were not compulsory at UCWI. They still are not; however, tutorials have always been compulsory. In the mandatory tutorials, one student often presented a paper on a particular topic for peers and the lecturer/tutor to critique it in the lecturer’s office. Eric King confirmed in our interview that these critiques were related to content and not also “how to write.” It seems that much rote learning took place since the goal of learning

was for students to master the information the lecturers were disseminating rather than for students to critically reflect on it to generate new knowledge (see Figueroa, “General,” “Paper”).

Also consistent with the Oxbridge tradition – the centre of English Education – faculty apparently ignored rhetoric and its emphasis on the context-bound nature of discourse. Apparently, there was no discussion of the fact that writing in biology and writing in chemistry, or writing in history and writing in literature, though in the same Faculty were based on certain disciplinary conventions. Since, generally, academics disdained rhetoric because rather than being concerned with Truth it focused on speakers’ invoking shared assumptions when addressing public audiences, academics lost the opportunity to teach students how to claim authority as they position themselves as speakers and writers, and how to address audience expectations and other aspects of each situation faced. With no explicit instruction in how to write for varied audiences, students would have continued to write as they knew how based on what writing practice they would have had in the Sixth Form. All of this seems ironic since the initial aims of the UCWI included developing local public leaders – and rhetoric was concerned with developing such public figures who would be invested in public life and could ably address the public on public issues. Critics such as Eric Williams protested against any inclusion of an antiquarian English education that focused on the ancient languages, perpetuation of domination by a small, stable social elite through striving for the ideal of Quintilian’s “good man speaking well,” or what Thomas Miller calls “the ossified forms of Aristotelianism and Ciceronianism” (69) that pervaded Oxbridge education. However,

these critics never seemed to suggest how a rhetorical education could indeed assist in creating the kind of Caribbean man that was envisioned.

This lack of acknowledgement of rhetoric's civic usefulness that was evident in the lack of explicit writing instruction with reference to public, general, or disciplinary audiences is linked to the institution's beginnings and its emphasis on excellence rather than also equity. In his description of the founding and first two decades of the university in the book he coauthored with Rex Nettleford, Sir Phillip Sherlock quotes from the unpublished personal diary of Raymond Priestly, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham and one of the members of the Irvine Committee that recommended establishing a university in the British West Indies (BWI). In considering changes that he thought should eventually be made to the curriculum, Priestly made some jottings that suggest early considerations of explicit writing instruction. He noted that there should be changes in selection criteria as well as consideration of teaching in the US. He was particularly interested in general education courses, noting

The freshman and sophomore years of their university or college courses – which are, it should be remembered, the equivalent of the British VIth Form years – are practically entirely devoted to such general courses with the addition of the *study of the English Language as a vehicle for thought*. There is a strong feeling throughout the academical world today that *something of the same sort is needed to counterbalance and counteract the specialization that is inevitable when experts are being trained ...* (qtd. in Sherlock and Nettleford 19, my emphasis)

What Priestly was drawing on was the US tradition of teaching general education as a means to instill a “common culture” or rather to teach *the previously excluded* to respect *the insiders'* culture. He felt that that kind of foundational period would be valuable to West Indian students' development. However, the university began and continued for

more than a decade without any such instruction that seemed to be associated with education that did not stress excellence/quality.

Hugh Springer, one of the two local members of the Irvine Committee and first registrar of the UCWI, defended the institution's emphasis on quality. He noted that criticisms of the BWI university, most notably from Eric Williams, were based on experiences with the US Land Grant system – a system that was considered good, “[b]ut although we needed a developmental approach we needed also a high-standard one. The public wanted to be assured of our *degree's currency*” (qtd. in Sherlock and Nettleford 26, my emphasis). Springer's use of “developmental” here is in reference to US four-year first degree programs and the abundance of general writing courses in the initial stages of that scheme that seemed to allow for greater access than in a system that catered to the academically gifted. His use of “public” and his hugely revealing metaphor of “currency” beg the question, “Whose coinage are the degrees valued in?” Since as expressed some locals were critical of the rigid requirements, this public was English or *international*, and the currency was that of London, England. This “currency” indicated that the emphasis on valuing the outside prevailed over criticisms of rigidity or antiquarianism.

Introducing Logic? Or The Beginnings of Writing Instruction at Mona?

Despite the assumption that the high quality of students precluded the need for explicit writing instruction for development, there was instruction of a sort in academic writing conventions, beginning with a series of lectures in logic in 1954. In fact, the reasons for introducing that series of lectures suggest that explicit instruction in language

use and discourse construction began within the first decade of the university's establishment, and not in 1963 with a "Use of English" survey course as Dyche writes (see "English"). In a paper "prepared at short notice" for the Arts faculty in December 1957, John J. Figueroa described the series of lectures in logic that he had been offering since 1954, gave the reasons for starting the lectures, suggested its benefits, and solicited criticism from members of the Arts Faculty based on the content and delivery up to that point. The first portion of Figueroa's paper described the very first instantiation of the subject that was offered in four lectures to students in Arts and in the Department of Education in the first part of the 1954 to 1955 academic year. Topics covered in this first offering included Formal Logic; Immediate Inference; Laws of Contradiction, Identity, and Excluded Middle; Mediate Inference – hypothetical and categorical syllogisms and deduction; "more common fallacies" such as the traditional Ignoratio Flenchi and the Undistributed Middle; the "traditional four figures;" and precise definitions of such terms as "proposition," "concept," "term," "name," and "universal." Figueroa mentioned that more could be done in the lectures, especially as regards "the problem of Induction" and "Scientific Method," but stressed that students seemed to have enjoyed what was presented. He noted that a "quotation of nearly all of the *Spectator* for December the 4th 1711 amused the students very much" ("Paper" 2). Figueroa also reported that since 1954, the lectures had been "repeated, improved and enlarged" (3), with the first lectures focusing on defining what logic is and identifying the reasons for studying it. His paper explained that logic is a special kind of examination of language, different from the other two elements of the trivium – grammar and rhetoric: It is "concerned with the processes

of reasoning aright. It is a science in the sense that it examines right reasoning and establishes norms; it is an art in as much as it teaches us the skill whereby we reason aright” (3). In an apparent attempt to eventually sell the subject to other disciplines and faculties, Figueroa asserted, “Logic is concerned not with truth but with consequence” (3). It is useful as a “tool ... in any sort of discursive, analytic work; ... the necessary first step in Philosophy, as well as in science, law, all argument and reasoning” (3).

This germ of a course that reflects Hugh Blair’s ideas seems to have been organized in an ad hoc manner, with topics that appeared to be abstract and lacking in practical relevance. Figueroa wrote, “I trust that during the next term it will be possible for the Arts Faculty to let me have four more lectures in which we could strengthen and enlarge what we have already done, and introduce one or two new topics” (2). These new topics would probably include Modern Symbolic Logic that an unnamed colleague had offered to teach. The topics seem to be rather specialized, hardly oriented to what appeared to be the learners’ needs. Eric King, informed me in our interview that he and other students who attended these lectures did not perceive the relevance to their writing. Some students felt that the lecturer really wanted to display knowledge of logic that was not popular then. Still, Figueroa’s reason for introducing the lectures is revealing of the roots and persistence of the myth of transience in the Jamaican system. Figueroa felt UCWI students should be introduced to logic because “their writings seem to lack logical insight both creatively and analytically” (3). He started the lectures because many faculty members were “disturbed at the lack of logic, connection and consequence apparent in scholarship essays and in the writing of undergraduates” (4). Figueroa felt that “starting

from this clear need we might move to more epistemological questions [and] encourage our arts students to understand something about the nature of scientific research; about the way by which we acquire many premises from which we often proceed to argue illogically; about the degrees of knowledge and certainty; about the meaning of ‘is’ in many propositions” (4). Herein is the myth revealed: Figueroa and others who frequently visited schools felt that the weaknesses in the students’ writings were to be blamed on the Sixth Forms which did not adequately prepare students “in the general matters of logical thought and consequential expression, not to mention selective and critical reading” (4). He felt that UCWI students should be exposed to courses that would encourage them to develop the skills that would enable them to “examine and evaluate their attitudes and to deepen their insight into important questions of meaning and existence” (5).

Other UCWI personnel would observe problems in student writing, indicating the extent to which problems in university students’ writing are observed in every generation (beginning in the 1950s), but remain without adequate or meaningful treatment. Each observer suggested replacing the qualifying examinations or remedying the problems in schools. As an example, in his reflection on examinations and student preparation, Robert LePage stated, “It has been apparent to me and to a number of other people for a long time that the quality and preparedness of our intake of students here will not improve very greatly until we can radically change their outlook of the school in the Caribbean, which at present is focussed on cramming for examinations conducted by one or another of the English universities” (“Memorandum”). LePage felt that the UCWI should remodel its Entrance and Scholarship examination to replace the Higher School

Certificate which he considered “useless as a criterion of ability and preparedness, and which ... stultifie[d] a great deal of the potential ability of the students by forcing them to cram for the examination.” LePage seemed to be addressing subjects that lent themselves to “cramming” and regurgitation. The implication is that students were not expected to question or critique what they were learning. Although the observation is astute, LePage did not seem to consider how the problem could be addressed *in* the institution. Hector Wynter, the Registrar, would also recognize the problem in the 1950s, to the extent that he would write to the University of London to express the desire to offer English Language in the General Degree so graduates who became teachers would have general linguistic grounding. Wynter observed, “The teaching of English Language is very poor generally in the schools of the West Indies, and the students’ weak command of Standard English stultifies a great deal of the teaching in other subjects.”

What Wynter labeled a weak command of English was, indeed, becoming evident in students’ performance in their external English examination. Based on statistics from the 1950s and early 1960s, widely respected language educator the late Dennis Craig observed,

At GCE ‘O’ level, for instance, the failure rate in English for the region as a whole fluctuates between 70 and 80 percent. This is bad enough, but the real size of the problem is revealed by the fact that these failures come from among those children who have been specially selected to go to high school to prepare for this very examination. Among the others who never get to high school and who, it must be remembered, form about 90 per cent of the age group, standards are even lower. (qtd. in E. Miller 374)

Craig’s observations reveal that although many prospective university students were familiar with the language of schooling and of written examinations by virtue of the

circumstances of their birth or by shedding the Creole language to increase mastery in English, students did not perform very well in the English Language examination. These high failure rates confirm that the country's linguistic realities had begun to affect the institution as early as the 1950s: increasingly students who learned English by virtue of exposure in school rather than because of the circumstances of their birth were accessing secondary and eventually higher education. All of these students had, however, passed through a system based on the belief that students could learn English and write in it based on what Strickland rightly labeled "an assumed instinct" (Education Department, "Report ... 1898" 401).

This belief, I argue, is the other reason that administrators and educators expected students to engage in intrinsic writing in their disciplines and were reluctant to address the problem within the university. However, by suggesting that the schools should address the problems that were becoming evident in the university, administrators and academics were not only propagating the myth of transience. They were also ignoring the problematic aspects of those schools. I am not suggesting that the schools could have taken on the responsibility if situations were different; I am contending that the university was ignoring those students who would have passed through the elementary system or be offspring of Jamaicans who had passed through that system without going on to secondary or postsecondary education. Such students, quite likely first-generation university students, would therefore be further removed from academic discourses than those from more privileged backgrounds. Unfamiliarity with disciplinary discourse in the university setting would have compounded any language weaknesses students may have

been deemed to have. Ignoring those students was one instantiation of the linguistic prejudice that was institutionalized in the 1840s when colonial officials imposed English as the medium of instruction in Jamaica, and lack of explicit writing instruction meant that such students would have been kept on the periphery of their disciplines and how adherents make and convey knowledge through writing.

Historical Roots of the Discourse of Transparency in Jamaica

The social hierarchy and the influence of imported models in the development of education in Jamaica are crucial to understanding the instruction that the local elite received prior to attending the University College of the West Indies in the first decade of its existence and that the educated elite would receive in later years. First, a 3-tiered hierarchy was established during plantation slavery with the white planters and their successors at the top, coloreds occupying the second level, and descendants of black Africans occupying the lowest rung while forming the demographic majority. This hierarchy largely determined who had access to education and to the official language variety. Second, Jamaica's education system, like those of other former British colonies was influenced by England's. In fact, elements of English education were imposed on the local system to the extent that it attracted criticism such as that from the late former Prime Minister, Michael Manley, for being "imported lock, stock and barrel from England without a moment's thought about its relevance to Jamaica's needs and aspirations" (21). This imposition is most marked in terms of language and literacy.

Whereas the planters and their successors and later coloreds could access education overseas and later locally, slaves and their descendants had little access to education. According to reports of the Great Britain Board of Education, there was no public elementary education in Jamaica before 1834. Any available education was for children of the free and privileged classes. W. J. Gardner reports in his history of Jamaica that “[e]very man whose means would allow the expenditure sent his children to England for education” (203). White and colored children “of means” got classical education in England or in grammar schools established for whites in the colonies. Whatever education there was for black slaves was provided by churches. Missionaries provided instruction in pre-emancipation Jamaica in Sunday Schools and night schools, following the pattern of Sunday School that had started in England for children who worked in factories but had Sundays free. These missionaries taught religion through memorization of hymns and biblical texts that they read aloud. Planters feared slave empowerment through literacy development, so the officials forbade the missionaries to teach blacks to read and write. The situation described by Friederick Douglass regarding slavery in the US reflects Jamaica’s: slave owners were not in favor even of religious instruction since they thought it would weaken their powers when slaves learned that all men are equal. A special report from the Great Britain Board of Education records the planters’ belief that “knowledge would entirely unfit the Negroes for the labour to which they were subjected” (577).

Opportunities for literacy instruction for blacks seemed to increase, however, when the idea for a public system of education for all in the West Indies emerged in 1833

and was presented in the fifth resolution of the House of Commons. Shirley Gordon reports that at this same time in the nineteenth century, the government gave grants to schools in Britain to achieve universal elementary education, as happened in other European countries. Consistent with those developments, a Negro Education Grant was included in The Act of Emancipation for British slaves that followed the fifth resolution. This grant was to provide moral and religious education for Negroes. It amounted to 30,000 pounds per year initially, with allotment being dependent on the colony's number of ex-slaves. Jamaica got 7,500 pounds of the total that was gradually increased each year, but was discontinued in 1845 (*A Century*). Thanks to this 1834 grant, elementary education was established in the 19th century for children of ex-slaves in all of the former British slave societies.

Although emancipation led to increased opportunities for literacy development for ex-slaves and their descendants, such development would only be partial because of the oral emphasis in teaching and the use of foreign instructional materials. As in other colonies, after the abolition of slavery, churches assumed responsibility for education in Jamaica. From the Negro Education Grant, the religious bodies received support to build schools, assist with teachers' salaries, and train local teachers. However, as historian, Carl Campbell notes, the stress was on "moral formation and character formation as the primary business of the schools in the West Indies" (370). Training for poor children was, therefore, to involve such Christian virtues as obedience, honesty, patience, and industry. Attendees would also be taught reading and arithmetic, but writing would not be stressed. Various researchers indicate that writing was included at an extra cost of one penny per

week (see Drayton, “The Most”; Gordon, *Reports*). Gordon includes the following telling pronouncement that John Sterling submitted in an 1835 report that the British government had requested to help to determine the best agency to direct “Negro Education” after emancipation. Sterling wrote, “Writing is an accomplishment of little value to the very poor; and is less beneficial than almost any other branch of instruction in cultivating the faculties of the child” (qtd. in Gordon, *Reports* 64). He, therefore, encouraged religious instruction to the exclusion of writing, recommending that anyone taught to write should pay for the instruction. Attaching a fee to writing on the basis that it would be of little benefit to the masses meant automatic exclusion of the very poor who would not be able to pay for such instruction. This stipulation would have pleased the powers that be who, as Gordon writes, would be more interested in keeping ex-slaves in low-paying jobs on the sugar estates than in having them in any literacy program (*Reports* 11). This view which the Colonial Office’s 1847 *Circular Despatch* supported suggests that even where writing was included it would not be treated as an avenue for social mobility. Governments were to “communicate such a knowledge of writing and arithmetic, and of their application to his wants and duties, as may enable a peasant to economise his means, and give the small farmer the power to enter into calculations and agreements” (qtd. in Augier and Gordon 182). Such statements demonstrate that administrators’ attitudes to the writing development of the children of ex-slaves were hardly different from those shown to slaves in earlier decades.

Also having an impact on children’s literacy development in the post-emancipation era were the teaching materials that would guarantee dissemination of

Britain's superiority and develop students' grammatical knowledge. Teachers used the Bible and select Readers and Grammar Books to ascertain students' grammatical knowledge of the English language. Among the available Readers used were the *Irish National Readers* (INR) beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and *The Royal Reader Series* (which drew heavily on the INR's content and format) beginning in the 1870s. Drayton observes that the latter was in use in West Indian schools until 1954. Educator Errol Miller notes that *Blackie's Readers* – a text published for Scottish children up to the 1930s – was also used in Jamaica up to the 1970s (373). It is not surprising that these materials that are experientially distant from the school child's Jamaican environment would have been coming out of the British Isles. As Thomas Miller indicates, it was in the British cultural provinces – Scotland and Ireland – that the first attempts were made to establish and formalize the conventions of English usage and taste so that those conventions could be taught to those desirous of moving from the margins into educated culture (1, 165). In addition to those readers, Drayton identifies the following as the four main Grammar Books in use in the nineteenth century: Richard Hiley's *Grammar of the English Language with the Principles of Eloquence and Rhetoric* (1832), George Darnell's *An Introduction to English Grammar Consisting of a Graduated Series of Easy lessons in Language* (1846), Robert Sullivan's *An Attempt to Simplify English Grammar with the Observation and the Method of Teaching it* (1852), and George Currey's *English Grammar for the Use of Schools* (1858). Common to all of these grammar books is the use of Latin rules as the basis for English grammar ("The Most").

The emphasis on grammar in the teaching materials means that English, itself, was not taught as a new language to students or as an integrated communication tool for public speakers/leaders. As in other colonies, it was taught, instead, as discrete subject areas including spelling, reading, handwriting, dictation, recitation, grammar and composition/writing at pre-university levels. Emphasis in literacy instruction was placed on rote learning of vocabulary, definitions of parts of speech, and rules of grammar. Grammar learning was to be accomplished through synthesis, analysis, and parsing. Parsing involved students' applying concepts regarding number, gender, case, person, and tense to assign to each word in the sentence its part of speech (see Christie, *Language*; Drayton, "The Most"). Rhetoric and eloquence were also taught. Drayton quotes Hiley's definition of these from his 1831 text, *Hiley's English Grammar Abridged with Questions for the Use of Young Pupils*. Hiley defines rhetoric as the "art which teaches us that choice and arrangement of words and phrases and that use of figurative language which shall convey our ideas in the most eloquent, impressive and persuasive manner," and eloquence as "the study of authors, the cultivation of memory and conversation by observation, reflection and the classics" (qtd. in Drayton, "The Most" 204). These definitions emphasize arrangement and style, an emphasis that is consistent with teaching grammatical knowledge.

The emphasis on "eloquent" presentation of ideas in Hiley's definitions points to the focus on the oral in teaching. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, children did not engage in silent reading or *oral composition*. The emphasis then was on *pronunciation* and *intonation*, that is, on elocution – Thomas Sheridan's eighteenth

century (re)definition of rhetoric. Children, therefore, read aloud daily from reading books imported from Britain. Oral reading was also accompanied by ‘recitations’ (oral rendering of a poem or gem that was memorized), dictations, and transcriptions of portions of reading material. As Thomas Miller notes, elocution always seemed to appeal to those who wished to speak like the English, that is, “those whose language it set out to eradicate” (138). As well, this kind of preparation would not yield a local leader who could speak extemporaneously because elocution’s focus was on *reading aloud* – “the art of oral interpretation” (T. Miller 139-40) – and not spontaneous oral composition.

Still, it was expected that English language instruction in Jamaica would yield students who were competent/proficient in English. Their proficiency or communicative competence should be revealed in the situations for which instruction prepared them. These situations include final examinations, higher education at home or overseas, formal interactions in public, interactions with other native speakers of English, or interactions in other societies where English is the official medium of communication. The result of the language teaching techniques that imposed English on Creole-speakers has, however, been high failure rates and underachievement. Perhaps the most glaring accounts of such failure in students’ language and literacy development appear in reports prepared by the English Superintending Inspector of Schools and his mainly English assistants who executed and reported on school visits and examinations in the late nineteenth century until mid-twentieth century. In the ensuing sections, I quote extensively to demonstrate these inspectors’ prescience and misconceptions regarding language development and to

locate the roots of the myth of transience that university administrators propagated in the 1950s.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century – over 60 years after the introduction of universal elementary education in which English was the language of instruction – school inspectors observed no difference in language usage by the schooled and unschooled. Inspector C. E. Sterry would note in 1895 that “in the great majority of cases, children leave school from the highest standard no better equipped in the correct use of the English language than the people surrounding them who have in many instances never been to school at all” (qtd. in *Governor’s Report 1894-1895*, 331). In 1914, one assistant inspector, Bury, observed that “English is one of the greatest stumbling blocks in Jamaica [sic] elementary schools” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1914” 486). In 1920, another assistant inspector, Mr. Mitchell wrote, “The correct use of the English language is perhaps the most difficult thing that the children have to learn. Predominant forms of speech in the home and on the street seem to overwhelm the results of teaching. Even the teachers in many cases resort to common and incorrect forms when teaching and questioning their classes” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1920” 68).

Other assistant inspectors incorrectly considered English the native tongue and the only vehicle for expressing thought: Mr. Mercier would write that “the urgent necessity of learning to express themselves properly in their native tongue should be impressed upon all scholars” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1916” 344). Mr. Mornan felt, “It would ... be a great gain in the teaching of Writing and English if teachers would

more generally begin early, not simply to teach writing but to teach it as the correct expression of thought” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1916” 343). He wanted teachers to “realise the value of writing as a means of intellectual training, and also of the development of character” (343). Mornan probably made the first statement in light of the fact that there was, as Mr. Lockett wrote, “a tendency to regard neat writing rather than the ability to express thought as the main object of this part of the curriculum” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1917” 304). The conclusion was, in assistant inspector Lockett’s words, “The force of habit is too strong to be counteracted by a limited acquaintance with correct English, and knowledge of the rules of Grammar seems to have little practical effect” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1908” 451).

It appears, as Drayton observes, that “English as a system of meanings was grasped by a small elite minority” (“Ideology” 297). Therefore, faced with the English linguistic system, most pupils applied the Creole rules that they knew – such as deleting final consonants and using an invariant verb form. Geo Hicks, one of the few assistant inspectors from the United States, mentioned as “frequently recurring errors” the following: “the omission and incorrect use of capitals, the omission and incorrect use of the apostrophe, the omission of final ‘s,’ the division of words in the middle of a syllable – (as trun-k, trium-ph, etc., somewhat frequent even in the papers of Pupil Teachers) – the substitution of ‘on’ for ‘and,’ and the reverse, and of ‘his’ for ‘is,’ and like errors” (qtd. in *Governor’s Report 1892-1893*, 275). Hicks would also note that in composition, the “most prominent defect is the mistaken use of tenses and this defect is very general. Scholars in writing dictation very frequently omit the final ‘d’ or ‘ed’ of the past tense of

verbs” (qtd. in *Governor’s Report* 1895-1896, 385). When Hicks’s proposed reasons for such occurrences are read with the benefit of hindsight, they seem hilarious. He wrote that “this omission might possibly be attributed to some lack of distinct enunciation on the part of the Inspector, were it not that it is so generally the habit of scholars in their written exercises to drop these terminations, sometimes putting them in, however, where they should not appear” (qtd. in *Governor’s Report* 1895-1896, 385). However, the hilarity triggered by his consideration that students were in the “habit of making a wrong use of the present and past tense” (qtd. in *Governor’s Report* 1895-1896, 385) also points to the persistent myth of transience with regard to language teaching in general in Jamaica. The myth emerges as early as Hicks’ writing when he noted, “When this defect is removed, and scholars shall also have learned to recognize the completion of a sentence in their letters and essays, instead of running on with two, three, or four sentences without fullstop or capital, the common errors in composition will be lessened by fifty percent” (qtd. in *Governor’s Report* 1895-1896, 385).

Other assistant inspectors’ similar observations would reveal that although the problems were not going away, that fact remained unacknowledged. Among these inspectors, Mr. Deer wrote, “children seem totally unable to write a grammatical sentence for even if the grosser forms of error are absent, the final ‘s’ in both verbs and nouns presents a universal stumbling-block” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1899” 375). He ignored the vernacular and the teachers’ prescience, claiming instead that the “general excuse is that the children write the vernacular, but consistent and patient correction by the teachers must eradicate the worse faults” (qtd. in Education

Department, “Report ... 1899” 375). He would later remark, “Faults of speech and local idioms are faithfully reproduced, and even if correct otherwise, there is present an indefinable sense of a translation, sometimes literal, as though the child were not employing its native tongue, which, as a matter of fact it is not” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1905” 53). By the early twentieth century, Mr. Deer realized the reason “children seem unable to explain the simplest idea in idiomatic and grammatical English” is that “except during school hours, they never hear it spoken” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1910” 395). The writing was so bad that he remarked “much of [English Composition] still might be a rendering from another language by an indifferent translator so [sic] ungrammatical and lacking in idiom is the English and unusual the application of words and phrases” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1911” 191). Mr. Deer would later admit, “The speaking idiom must frequently crop up in written work in a country where people read in one language and talk in another” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1915” 532). Another assistant inspector, Mr. Nelson, would also write in 1915, “Children as well as others are more likely to write as they speak than to speak as they write” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1915” 532). After all, as Mr. Urquhart observed “almost generally children do not look upon the school language as a means of self-expression at all” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1915” 533).

These inspectors failed to realize what Urquhart hinted at: the students were forced to lead what Janet Bean et al call a life of “double consciousness” (31) – a situation in which the language they knew (Creole) and the one imposed (English) served

mutually exclusive functions, the one for speaking and private affairs and the other for reading, thinking, and writing. Because the students were more conversant with their “speaking” language, they conscientiously applied its rules to what was imposed in school. However, most teachers and inspectors did not recognize what Mina Shaughnessy would call “the intelligence of [students’] mistakes” (11). The school inspectors, therefore, constantly recorded persistent problems in students’ writing, and called the application of Creole rules “grammatical errors.”

Significantly, a few inspectors recognized that the problem did not lie with the students but rather with the methods. One assistant inspector, John Kerrick, made an observation in his 1898 report that characterized observations throughout much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: “In writing, composition remains, and appears likely to remain by far the weakest point. This is only to be expected, as very few of the scholars speak or hear anything approaching correct English, out of school at any rate” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1898” 398). In that same year, assistant inspector R. B. Strickland wrote what I deduce is an unfortunate principle that has been prevalent in education in Jamaica: “I am not able to report much in favor of dictation and composition. I fear that too generally both subjects are left to *an assumed instinct* in the children aided by occasional practice” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1898” 401, my emphasis). In the early twentieth century, another assistant inspector, McClaughlin, made similar observations in which he explicitly shifted the blame away from students. He noted that the “lamentable weakness is much more to be attributed to a want of proper tuition tha[n] any inherent want of capacity in the scholars” (qtd. in

Education Department, “Report ... 1917” 304). His observation that weaknesses in students’ writing was not a reflection of their abilities was rare and so, consistent with the prevailing views of Creoles as bastardizations of standard languages, the general response was to eliminate weaknesses through the teaching strategy of correction.

Based on the school inspectors’ observations and recommendations, teachers corrected – meaning *marked up* – student writing heavily and called it writing instruction. The annual reports from the Education Department at the turn of the twentieth century record that in their attempts to help teachers facilitate Creole-speakers’ acquisition of English, the Inspectors recommended, as Mr. John Kerrick advised in 1894, that teachers stop leaving students’ original compositions unchecked. Feeling that the weakness in composition was due “partly to the want of a proper system of correction” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1897” 432), Kerrick recommended,

Everything written should be carefully corrected by the Teacher who should draw a line under every mistake in spelling, or piece of faulty construction or incorrect grammar. The child should then be required to re-write the exercise correcting each mistake to the best of his ability. The Teacher should then correct it again and in this second correction he should not only indicate the mistakes but tell the scholar what the right expression is, and make him write it out on his slate or in the Book ten or twenty times. (qtd. in *Governor’s Report 1893-1894*, 222).

Kerrick felt that “writing the corrections in full above the mistakes and giving them back to the scholar to look at ... is almost as bad as not correcting them at all, for the average child will put the book away and pay no more attention to the matter” (qtd. in *Governor’s Report 1893-1894*, 222). He was not aware, however, that the teachers’ correction in the second round and multiple transcriptions would not necessarily have practical relevance for the pupils. Teachers actually followed the apodictic approach to correction that is

implied in Kerrick's suggestions throughout much of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries – and many still use it – even though it appears to be a futile exercise since students usually do not understand what has been corrected, the reason for the correction, or how to avoid repeating the error. The discourse of transparency is particularly evident in this area of correction and feedback for, as Connors and Lunsford and Lillis (“Whose”) observe elsewhere, teachers often incorrectly assume that students understand their correction marks/symbols. In Jamaica, such assumptions abounded in the grammar schools, where students were usually from backgrounds in which English was widely spoken. However, as this chapter reveals, even those students experienced difficulties in passing qualifying examinations to attend the University College of the West Indies.

Besides the fact that students were to speak and write English based on what Strickland called “an assumed instinct,” or through vague correction, at this early stage, language and writing development were often kept separate from content learning. This separation is evident in calls from inspectors for a kind of language across the curriculum program. One assistant inspector, Mr. Mercier, recommended that “greater practice in composition should be afforded by the other subjects in the curriculum” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1918” 192). Another, Mr. Kennedy, would assert in 1920 that “early success [in writing and English] will be attained if the subject is taught in correlation with the other subjects” (qtd. in Education Department, “Report ... 1920” 68). Such advice was, however, ignored for more than a century, despite widespread failure.

The teaching focus was hardly different in the teacher training colleges that developed beginning with Mico College in the 1860s. These teacher training institutions played the role of secondary school for many aspiring Jamaicans from the elementary sector (as did the equivalent Normal Schools in the US) until public secondary schools were established in 1879. Various historians report that there were elementary schools and teacher training colleges for blacks and poor coloreds, and preparatory school and local grammar/high school for coloreds and whites of “modest means,” or preparatory school and British grammar school for whites and coloreds of “substantial means” (see Gardner; Gordon, *A Century*). For over a hundred years, then, the highest levels of education available locally were provided by teachers’ colleges (for students from low income groups) and secondary level schools (for students from middle to high income groups). These secondary schools were “fee paying private schools [that] grew from the need to educate the children of the upper and middle class who could not go ‘home’, i.e. to Europe, to school” (UNESCO 45). Indeed, as Gordon writes, “[i]n Jamaica, secondary schools were not called middle class schools. But ... they remained in practice what they did not claim to be in principle – the educational preserve of those who could afford it” (*Reports* 33). The high schools in this secondary sector, with their academically-oriented classics curriculum, became feeder institutions for the university. However, with later expansion in the secondary system, even these high schools changed – albeit slowly – to include students from elementary schools and Creole-speaking backgrounds. When secondary schools increased in the late 1950s and onwards on account of the government’s attempts to increase access to education for the masses, language education

continued to be based on the requirements of an English education. Students were taught English grammar, composition, literature, mathematics, scripture and English history, geography and physical sciences. In addition to English (grammar) that was taught as the first language of Jamaicans, Latin, Greek, and French language and literature were also taught in the grammar schools. Ian Robertson asserts that Latin and Greek were thought to have “inherent goodness” and the power to “instill ... academic rationalism” in users (113). Although Jamaica has millions of Spanish-speaking neighbors, their language was not considered. French was taught, not because of recognition of the West Indians in the nearby French islands, but to be consistent with the practice in English grammar schools. More important, the language policy in place in the early years of public education in Jamaica confirms that Jamaican Creole was always neglected in favor of other languages and to the detriment of predominantly Creole-speaking children.

Increasingly, however, there is recognition that, as Peter Roberts rightly says, “standard English for most West Indians is neither foreign nor native” (*West Indians* 189). This situation distinguishes the Jamaican experience from the colonial and early national periods in the US. Many children in Jamaica grow up hearing the English language but just as many have difficulty producing it in speech or writing. Whereas many modern-day Jamaicans are simultaneous bilinguals, more are likely to be Creole monolinguals or Creole-dominant bilinguals. Therefore, English is perhaps better seen as a *second* language for many Jamaicans; however, even this categorization presents a challenge. In the average classroom in a Jamaican public school, most pupils are monolingual Creole speakers, a few may be bilingual, some may speak English and

Creole with varying degrees of facility, and very few may be monolingual English speakers. As various scholars recognize, this situation renders difficult adopting strategies directed exclusively to first language, second language, or foreign language teaching (see Bryan, "Language"; McCourtie).

Unfortunately, what is marked in the system is, as Errol Miller notes, "no compromise in bridging the gap between Creole and Standard English" (372) for the Creole-speaking child who arrived at school where English was the medium of instruction. The result is that the failures in English, revealing lack of literacy development, continued into the late twentieth century and the new millennium. One UNESCO report states, "Private and public employers complain about the low levels of general literacy proficiency and trainability of secondary school leavers and are seriously worried about the continuing decline" (12). The same report specifies that a factor that "weighs heavily in the primary schools is that of the language of instruction. Although English is the language of instruction and that of examinations, the majority of pupils enter school speaking Creole rather than English" (73). The report also mentions an estimation that "perhaps as many as 50% of the primary school leavers are functionally illiterate," to the extent that "the primary education system appears more as an economic and social liability than an asset" (74). Additionally, more than half of the candidates consistently fail the regional Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) English language examination at the end of the Fifth Form (see Craig, *Teaching* 227; Task Force 56-57; Taylor, "Towards").⁵ As was becoming evident in the 1950s in the UCWI, and as the next two chapters will establish, these students' experience in written English usually

influences their performance in higher education. But why have these failures been so widespread and persistent? University personnel ignored the problematic foundations of the Jamaican school when they suggested that problems in the university be addressed in the school or through examinations, but what specific contextual feature had they ignored? Indeed, what did the colonial and university administrators not know or ignore when they contributed to institutionalizing linguistic prejudice?

Jamaica's Linguistic Context

It appears that colonial administrators and university personnel were mistaken in ignoring the vernacular spoken by the demographic majority. Since the 1960s, some linguists at UWI have been trying to convince academics and undergraduates, the Ministry of Education, and the society in general that two languages co-exist in Jamaica: Standard Jamaican English (SJE), which is the country's *superimposed* official language, and Jamaican Creole (JC), which is the *native* language of the majority. Although some Jamaicans are simultaneous bilinguals (having acquired two languages as a first language), only a small minority of the Jamaican population can claim English alone as their first language. That variety, which shares the syntax and morphology of Internationally Accepted English, is evident in the formal writing and careful speech of educated Jamaicans. Jamaican Creole is understood, if not spoken, by all Jamaicans. While its lexicon is English-based, it differs significantly from English in terms of formation and expression of plurals, tenses, possession, and negatives. Formed in the crucible of the plantation from the contact between European, African, and indigenous

Caribbean languages, the Creole language epitomizes transculturation (see Pratt 36). However, precisely because it reflects selection and reinvention of elements from these different languages during plantation slavery, Jamaican Creole is heavily stigmatized by outsiders and locals while English signifies high personal and social value. The stigma persists because linguistic discoveries and descriptions have not been adequately publicized, and where they have been made public, social perception continues to override them. The reality is that although linguistic analyses demonstrate that Jamaican Creole is a fully developed functional linguistic system, it has always encountered the dysfunctional attitudes of those who stigmatize it.

With two languages present, the Jamaican context is described on the one hand as diglossic and on the other as a continuum. Jamaica's linguistic context can be described as diglossic since there are "two separate language varieties, each with its own specific functions within the society" (Devonish, *Language and Liberation* 9). One Caribbean linguist, Hubert Devonish, draws on the work of Charles Ferguson to explain that this is a "diglossia involving Creole as the language of everyday informal interaction for the mass of the population, and English as the written, public-formal, and official language" (88). However, another Caribbean linguist, Ian Robertson, maintains that the Creole and standard languages in the Caribbean are not really in a "complementary or diglossic relationship" (113). Robertson draws this conclusion from his assessment of the variations in speech and the overlaps in use of the two languages, with Creole being used not only in informal settings such as the market, but also in formal venues such as the electronic media, church, and Parliament. Also, as Celia Brown observes in her masters'

thesis on “Language Variation and Sociopolitical Structure in Jamaica,” many Creole speakers who have gained social mobility continue to use the Creole rather than take on English patterns. Such speech behaviors that indicate Creole invasion in areas normally reserved for English erode the diglossia by undermining “the stability of the poles of English vis-à-vis Creole” (22). Thus, in describing the Jamaican (and other Caribbean countries’) language context, linguists also speak of a continuum ranging from basilectal Creole (varieties most removed from English) through to acrolectal English (varieties closest to the standard). Devonish notes that “because of the similarity of the vocabulary of Creole and English, there has been a tendency [...] to develop a series of language varieties in between the most Creole varieties of language on the one hand, and the most standard varieties of English, on the other” (*Language and Liberation* 115). The term “Creole continuum” is used to refer to the range of varieties between the Creole base and standard English. The use of the term *continuum* is, however, as problematic as the determination of the boundary between Creole and English. Dennis Craig rightly notes that English Creole, varieties that constitute the mesolect (midway between Creole and English), and Standard English are “more distinguishable in theory than in reality” (“The Use” 108). Some linguists such as Donald Winford continue to speak of a Creole continuum (*Predication*, “Re-examining”), whereas others such as Mervyn Alleyne use the term less readily, preferring instead a recognition of Creole as the *Jamaican* language with its own myriad variations (“Problems” 12; *Roots* 131). Lack of agreement among Creole linguists regarding the specific linguistic model that obtains in the Jamaican

language situation may be attributed to this complex variability in the country (see Brown).

Despite differences among these linguists regarding the Jamaican linguistic context, there is consensus that the Jamaican language is not slang, broken English, pidgin English, or a debased patois as some laypersons would believe. Although a continuum may be manifest in any one Jamaican's speech, studies show that Jamaican Creole is a fully developed linguistic system that can be distinguished from English and other languages based on its *morphology* (or grammar of word formation), *phonology* (or system of sounds), *syntax* (or organization of elements in a sentence), *lexicon* (or set of vocabulary items), and *semantics* (or meaning associated with lexical items) – features that qualify a language as such. Analyses reveal that although JC is lexically related to English, the two languages differ markedly in the other features, especially in terms of phonology and syntax (see Alleyne, *Comparative*; Bailey; Cassidy; Cassidy and LePage). Hubert Devonish highlighted these differences in a proposal for the inclusion of language rights in the draft charter of rights in the Jamaican Constitution that he presented to a Joint Select Committee of Parliament in Jamaica in 2001. Devonish gave the following as “a rough estimate of the linguistic distance between Jamaican and English:

- (i) For the lexicon/vocabulary, about the distance between the lexicon of Spanish and Portuguese,
- (ii) For phonology/pronunciation patterns, at least the same distance as that between the phonology of French and Spanish,
- (iii) For morphology/word construction patterns, about the same distance as between the morphology of English and German,
- (iv) For syntax/grammatical structure, ranging from about the distance between the syntax of French and Spanish to the distance between the syntax of English and German.” (“Language Rights”)

These are not dialectal differences: they indicate that the individual who is unfamiliar with Creole will not readily understand a Creole speaker, especially if (based on the continuum model) the latter is using basilectal Creole. However, because of the similarity in lexis, the English speaker who is unfamiliar with Creole will after some exposure be able to communicate – to some extent – with a monolingual Creole speaker, as a Spanish and a Portuguese speaker may be able to do. Where the JC-speaker is concerned, the lexical similarity facilitates comprehension of English statements. This means that JC speakers' perceptive knowledge of English is high. However, the same is not usually true for production of oral or written English. Indeed, the lexical relation complicates matters. As Craig observes, “through high recognition, *the learner tends to get the illusion that he/she knows the lexifier already*” (*Teaching 6*, emphasis in the original). The other unfortunate consequence of the close lexical relationship is the view that JC is broken English.

This similarity in lexis and the overlap in function of the two languages help explain why the sociolinguistic configuration and interaction in Jamaica defy facile descriptions. The presence of the two languages and the varieties along the English-Creole continuum facilitate code-switching but sometimes result in code shifting and code mixing – the kind of transculturation that occurs in contemporary multilingual societies. Code switching (movement back and forth between two codes) is useful, especially in a diglossic situation. Code shifting speaks to “the change into one language code and the continuous maintenance of the change,” and is “a normal reaction of monolingual groups given tasks to perform in an inadequately acquired L2” (Craig,

Teaching 42). Code mixing is facilitated in Jamaica because of the close lexical relationship between Creole and English. As Pollard says, “The close lexical relationship serves to camouflage the differences of phonology, grammar and idiom” (“Code Switching” 10). Code mixing is often confusing to the English speaker, but the “mixer” is usually unaware of the “mix” and unaware that the “mix” is not English. Hence we have such expressions as “Is English we speaking” (Morris 1) or “a hinglish mi a taak” (Pollard “Code Switching” 10). Mervyn Alleyne observes, “Speech variation is very intense in Jamaica, and speakers command a series of levels of registers through which they shift without any necessarily apparent motivation” (*Roots* 138). Difficulties arise, however, because speakers do feel that they are always “speaking (in) English.” As retired senior lecturer in linguistics Pauline Christie observes, few Jamaicans are “conscious of the extent to which their actual linguistic behaviour contrasts with the traditional ideal that they would very likely claim to uphold” (*Language* 2).

Despite the transcultural “varieties” in Jamaicans’ speech, colonial administrators and later local leaders fostered the assumption that since English was the official language, it was the first language or mother tongue of the majority of Jamaican students. This is the assumption that has been borne out in the methods and approaches employed in English language teaching at all levels of the Jamaican education system for too long. English language teaching was seen as mere reinforcement of English – the language variety of the elite. In this approach, the Creole language was usually ignored or recognized only as a hindrance to mastery of English. With most teachers in the school system in the nineteenth century and at UWI at its inception in the twentieth century

being originally from Britain, teaching methods reflected those to which teachers had been exposed in Britain. Because the teachers were predominantly British, children were exposed to the variety of English that they spoke. Additionally, since those teachers were accustomed to instructing students who spoke (dialects of) English, they would not have known how to usefully include the Creole in teaching. Unfortunately, however, when local teachers began to be hired, they modeled their British teachers, avoiding and repressing the use of Jamaican Creole. Peter Maxwell, former president of Jamaica's National Association of Teachers of English (NATE), reports a local situation that may be painfully familiar to Spanish and American Indian students in the US or to Creole speakers who are required to use a different (standard) language in schools in other Caribbean islands. Maxwell writes, "Traditionally, the school system has given recognition only to the official language, English, and there have even been schools which have fined pupils for using anything else on the school premises" (2). Carrington explains the reason for this penalty: "Within the framework of the education systems it is not until the 1970s that any official language syllabuses have discussed the existence of creoles and their educational implications with any degree of enlightenment" (*Education* 86). He summarizes the prevailing linguistic attitudes well: "Prior to this, the [Creole] languages have been variously proscribed, ignored or rejected as nuisances causing persistent errors in English which have to be eradicated by punishment and drastic language drills in English grammar (most of which have doubtful practical value)" (*Education* 86).

In an attempt to right the wrongs of earlier administrators in Jamaica, various linguists have proposed ways to accommodate predominantly Creole-speakers in education. Hubert Devonish, for example, has been advocating for institutionalizing Creole as the major language of internal communication. In his view, this measure would allow Creole speakers to feel less disenfranchised than they do in the country, especially in legal matters where “Creole speakers are bound to be discriminated against on grounds of language” (*Language and Liberation* 89). However, as in the US where non-standard dialects and languages other than English are sensitive matters, in Jamaica any suggestion about the use of Creole in hitherto English domains sparks much debate. Discussions of the legitimacy of Creole for educational purposes yields reactions such as those in the US to *Students’ Right to Their Own Language* in the 1970s or to the Oakland School Board’s 18 December 1996 resolution that acknowledged that Ebonics is the primary language of its African American students. As the epigraph from Creole linguist, Lawrence Carrington says, to speak of “language” in post colonial situations is not merely to refer to verbal expression of thoughts and feelings or the creation of knowledge. It is, instead, an indication of entry into an on-going debate on a very sensitive issue. This situation is captured well in Mikhail Bakhtin’s assertion that “[w]e are taking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view” (271). This debate exceeds linguistic codes, with the concern being projecting a particular perspective or ideology. In the Jamaican *weltanschauung*, language usually means English. Whatever language can do or whatever can be done in or through language, that language is English because, as language

educator Velma Pollard says, there is a “misconception that English is ‘Language’ rather than ‘a language’” (“A Language”). Thanks to the 1847 *Circular Despatch*, this erroneous association of English with *language* and not just *a language* is deeply ingrained in the Jamaican psyche, and significantly influences attitudes to writing and its development. As stated, the students who suffer the most because of this erroneous association constitute the majority – those who are monolingual Creole-speakers or Creole-dominant bilinguals. Many of these children arrive at school already adept at code switching and with other linguistic resources and principles of linguistic competence that could aid learning, but then find that their natural language abilities are ignored. The result has been a form of silencing that has yielded the lack of personal and national development that is alluded to in previously mentioned reports (see Craig, *Teaching*; Task Force; Taylor, “Towards”; UNESCO). This situation has arisen because, as Lisa Delpit writes regarding the experiences of many African American children who are required to express ideas while simultaneously applying new rules learned, “[f]orcing speakers to monitor their language typically produces silence” (94).

In recent times, linguists’ persistence at promoting the realities of Jamaica’s language context has begun to influence national language policies. In Jamaica’s most explicit policy for language teaching to date, *Language Education Policy*, the Ministry of Education described the Jamaican language situation as “bilingual with Standard Jamaican English (SJE) and Jamaican Creole (JC) being the two languages in operation” (3). This 2001 document was prepared to address concerns about language use, inhibitions of learners, and unsatisfactory performance in English language examinations.

The Ministry's policy position "retains SJE as the official language and advocates the policy option which promotes oral use of the home language in schools while facilitating the development of skills in SJE" (3). Importantly, there is recognition that "the fluid nature of language usage between these two languages, as well as the peculiar nature of the linguistic relationship they share, creates difficulty for the majority of Creole speakers learning English" (3). Although I really believe that the problem seems to be the approach taken in teaching rather than "the relationship" the languages share, this document points to a long awaited recognition of the "real" linguistic context of the country and consideration of related teaching methods.

Today, it is not surprising to see passing references to the 'home language' in the curriculum guides for primary and secondary schools (the Primary Education Improvement Programme--PEIP II and the Reform of Secondary Education--ROSE). For example, the *Revised Primary Curriculum* that was implemented in 1999 records the first objective in Unit One of the first grade (Grade 1) as "pupils will use home language to talk about themselves and their experiences" (298). This is in marked contrast to the largely implicit policies that were implemented up to and beyond the first half of the twentieth century to prepare students to "write" their way into the university. However, all of the statements really continue to support development in English only, ultimately maintaining its dominance and Creole's and Creole users' inferiority. As Carrington writes, "One of the fundamental obstacles [to literacy development] has been the lack of reasoned relationship between the language of the learner and his community and the language of instruction" (*Literacy* 131). For a long time, Jamaica's education system

ignored the “fundamental and long-standing principle of language teaching that a learner acquires the skills most readily when he is exposed to them in his own language in particular at the beginning of his exposure” (Carrington, *Literacy* 133). Continued high failure rates suggest that what Carrington wrote in 1981 is still largely true in Jamaica: “Where [the principle] is finding its way into official thinking, its execution is poor and ineffective” (*Literacy* 133).

Conclusion

Because of the way in which English was imposed as the medium of instruction and because of the resultant failure evident in students’ inability to demonstrate proficiency or communicative competence in English as required, I argue that educators in Jamaica have been sorely mistaken in expecting lower educational levels to prepare students to do disciplinary writing in English in the university. As shown, when students failed to engage in intrinsic writing in the first decade of the university’s existence, administrators and educators perpetuated the myth of transience by locating the problem in the high school and in preparatory examinations. They suggested that the ills be remedied in the Sixth Form or that the institution consider different preparatory and entrance examinations. No one in this period suggested the need for writing instruction as an integral part of disciplinary learning; rather, administrators and academics seemed to perpetuate the faulty assumptions that locals used English based on an assumed instinct, and that writing is an elementary skill which potential local leaders could unconsciously transfer to writing requirements in the university. These assumptions reflect the discourse

of transparency, which becomes evident at the elementary level of education since the beginnings of public education in the country. In this system, excellence – as far as it could be associated with wealth and class – was valued over social equity. In other words, children of means could access educational opportunities in a system where provisions were not made for all children of school age to access the system and succeed. Simultaneously, English – the language variety of the elite – became the medium of instruction, thereby privileging those who already spoke that variety or could learn it quickly by virtue of exposure in the school. When administrators chose to use English as the medium of instruction in a land where the majority spoke Creole, and when teachers did not teach English but only taught *through* it, they conveyed the sense of transparency in language use. In other words, the belief was that students arrived at school prepared to use English and would therefore not need to be taught English. It is this same discourse of transparency that would emerge in the university setting: only that there the view was that after much “repetitive” writing and being educated, students did not require explicit instruction in disciplinary discourse.

These attitudes to the two languages are consistent with the rhetoric of transparency, specifically an attempt to promote those already in possession of the appropriate linguistic capital. The original British teachers and their later local successors maintained and perpetuated what Pierre Bourdieu termed the “habitus” – the habits, practices, and ideology – of a white elite. As M. Kazim Bacchus argues in his series on education in the ex-British Caribbean colonies, the policies and procedures implemented by the local elites and educational authorities served to (re)establish the “legitimacy” of

the hegemony of the ruling class. Therefore, all children were taught literacy in English, often to the detriment of monolingual Creole-speakers. Patricia Irvine and Nan Elsasser's description of the situation in the US Virgin Islands is applicable to Jamaica's: "students are linguistic orphans, expected to deny the existence of their first language and to read and write in a second one" (314) that they do not own. As shown, mastering written English is a Herculean task for many Jamaicans, and the result of marginalizing Jamaican Creole in the school system has been massive failure, though the connection is rarely made to the language of instruction.

In alerting Caribbean policy makers to the crucial link between personal development and the appropriateness of the language selected for literacy learning, Ian Robertson advises, "International currency may be sacrificed initially for a positive self-concept, or the other way around" (118). In Jamaica, a positive self-concept and genuine language and writing development may have been sacrificed in the attempt to implement a deliberate English language policy and achieve international currency – an attempt that persistent failures confirm is largely frustrated. In the 1940s and 1950s, university administrators and many educators continued to focus on excellence and achieving international currency to the extent that they ignored various factors: the country's linguistic context, how many prospective local leaders would have learned English, and how writing in disciplines requires knowledge that extends beyond the linguistic code to codified writing conventions. The discussions surrounding a survey "Use of English" course that would be introduced in 1963 suggest that some administrators and faculty may have understood that writing enables and reveals learning, and, therefore, believed in

tying writing instruction to disciplinary learning. However, as the next chapter will reveal, the myth of transience and the rhetoric of transparent disciplinarity persisted largely because some academics associated explicit writing instruction in academe with remediation.

Notes

¹ Only four pre-UWI tertiary institutions operated in the West Indies. The first – the Caribbean’s only tertiary institution with roots before the twentieth century – is Codrington College, which was established in 1710 in Barbados. It awarded degrees in theology and, beginning in 1878, in secular subjects through an arrangement with the University of Durham in England. The second, Queens College in Spanish Town, Jamaica, was opened in 1873 but shut down within a year due to lack of funds. The third, a University College founded in affiliation with Jamaica High School in 1890, closed by 1912. The fourth institution is The Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture that was established in Trinidad in 1922 and was incorporated into the UWI as the Faculty of Agriculture in 1960.

² While I recognize that the implied biases in such terms may not resonate well with contemporary linguists or advocates of World English, I am more interested in what the terms convey about university students of the day.

³ See, for example, The French Surrealist André Breton's 1940s panegyric to Aimé Césaire in which Breton described the (late) famous Martinican poet and statesman as a "Black man who handles the French language better than any living White (French) man could" (80, my translation).

⁴ The first set of 33 students was admitted to the single Medical Faculty in 1948. The other Faculties were added later: Natural Sciences in 1949, Arts in 1950, Education in 1953, and Economics and Political Science in 1958.

⁵ The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) was established in 1972 in response to calls for examinations that were regionally relevant but would also be recognized internationally.

III. PROFESSIONALIZING THE ASPIRANT MIDDLE CLASS AFTER INDEPENDENCE, 1960S TO MID-1980S

We considered that the orientation of our school programmes did not make West Indian students sufficiently aware of their unique cultural and historical background and failed to create the perception that would enable and inspire them to play a confident role in Caribbean and World Affairs. For these reasons we decided to introduce Survey Courses in the first years at University in such subjects as Caribbean History, the Development of Civilization and the Use of English.

UWI, *Vice-Chancellor's Report 1970*, 3

The assumptions of the discourse of transparency work to obscure the materiality of language and the operation of values in preferred rhetorical strategies, and so the 'visibility' of language means that something is wrong, and the issue becomes one of remediation.

Carys Jones, Joan Turner, and Brian Street, "Mystery" 125

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the establishment and early years of The University of the West Indies, and argued that, like the colonial administrators, university personnel expected students to write in their disciplines based on some inherent quality rather than on explicit instruction. Administrators and academics, therefore, perpetuated the faulty assumption that writing is an elementary skill that potential local leaders could unconsciously transfer to writing requirements in the university. When students failed to engage in intrinsic writing in the first decade of the university's existence, administrators and educators perpetuated the myth of transience by locating the problem in the high school and in preparatory examinations. I argued, however, that the writing problems at the university level were (and are still being) blamed on a system whose problematic origins have not been adequately examined and transformed to yield genuine language

and writing development. In this third chapter, I argue that because of limited understandings of writing, administrators and faculty persisted in promoting the rhetoric of transparent disciplinaryity and perpetuating the myth of transience in the 1960s to mid-1980s. The rhetoric of transparent disciplinaryity persisted especially regarding the institution's emphasis on excellence over social equity and faculty's association of writing instruction with remediation and view of writing as largely separate from disciplinary learning. In this period, administrators and faculty also persisted in stating that any problems in students' language use or writing should have been remedied in the high school, thereby perpetuating the myth of transience. These views emerged in the discussions surrounding the development and teaching in the "Use of English" survey course that was introduced in 1963 after the UCWI became the independent University of the West Indies (UWI).

To demonstrate the persistence of these views, I outline the circumstances that led to the introduction of the "Use of English" survey course at UWI in an era that is marked by political independence for Jamaica, upward social mobility through education, and an impulse for relevance. I also indicate possible connections to the introduction of evening courses and non-resident students. This change suggested broadening access in an institution that is modeled on the elite English university and is, therefore, marked by concerns for excellence. Relying on information obtained from past lecturers, and through analysis of various course and course-related documents preserved by former course lecturers and/or available in the UWI (Mona) archives, I reveal the attitudes of administrators, "content" faculty, and "Use of English" staff to language instruction as it

served to professionalize the aspirant middle class. To fill in the gaps or confirm my interpretations about the institutional and course reports, interviews, conference papers, minutes, and other documents from the period, I also relied on questionnaire and interview responses from Eric (David) King who was an undergraduate in the 1950s, “Use of English” tutor in the 1960s, and later course Moderator in the institution.

This largely documentary history will demonstrate that administrators and “content” faculty understood language/writing instruction as *remedial* instruction in English language and not necessarily as initiation into disciplinary rhetorical conventions. However, because “Use of English” faculty graded but did not teach grammar and because they eventually emphasized sociolinguistic content but not also disciplinary content, they too promoted formalist presuppositions. Academics, therefore, did not provide adequate opportunities for students to gain practical understanding of new content (including grammar) and to critically reflect on such new knowledge within disciplines. In essence, academics’ incorrect assumptions about entering students led to a curriculum that appears to have been largely linguistically mistaken. Ultimately, the debate sparked over the conception, implementation, and evolution of the Use of English course evidences the transparency conceptualization and, therefore, limited views of writing – beliefs that the focus of higher education ought to be excellence rather than equity; the academy is a single discourse community; writing is an intrinsic skill that is learned once and generalized to all other situations and is therefore not connected to disciplinary learning; and any instruction in writing at the tertiary level serves the purpose of remediation rather than development in disciplines (see Russell, *Writing 9-*

10). Hence, although it will appear that the rationale for introducing “Use of English” in Jamaica is different from that for introducing composition in the US in the late nineteenth century to address issues of correctness in student writing, some attitudes expressed in the Jamaican situation are redolent of accounts (such as John Brereton’s) of opposing attitudes to the need for composition in the US in its early years.

Political Independence and the Impulse for Relevance

The emphasis on excellence at the UCWI was not immediately apparent at the beginning of the 1960s. Indeed, it appeared that the institution was shedding its English character that combined a University of London curriculum and an Oxbridge emphasis on elitism by expanding enrollment and providing access to hitherto excluded groups of students. These changes occurred after world-renowned economist, Professor (later Sir) W. Arthur Lewis, assumed duties as the first West Indian principal of the campus in April 1960. With his expansionist, egalitarian outlook, and probably in response to years of criticism of the elitist and conservative orientation of the UCWI, Lewis broadened the curriculum toward more instrumental ends and facilitated new campuses, eventually leading to the UCWI’s independence from the University of London. Lewis expanded the student body from a solely upper and middle-income group to include students from working classes and changed the campus from being predominantly residential to including even evening students (see Sherlock and Nettleford). The UWI’s *Official Statistics 2005/2006* records that whereas in 1959/60, only 695 students were registered

at UWI (Mona), by 1962/63, this number had risen to 1486, with another 118 and 583 at Cave Hill and St. Augustine, respectively (1).

While Principal W. Arthur Lewis is often credited with initiating this expansion in enrollment at the institution, changes in the UCWI's character also arose from tension between nationalism and regionalism. The 1960s was a decade in which many territories in the English-speaking Caribbean region shed their colonial status and became politically independent. Among these countries is Jamaica, which achieved independence in 1962. Several of these countries contributed financially to the regional university, leading Sherlock and Nettleford to highlight one of its peculiar features: "the British universities bargain with one government, we in the Caribbean negotiate with fourteen" (v). This feature implies problems arising from having so many small-nation government contributors. Therefore, it is not surprising that, as various scholars imply and Vivienne Roberts states, the UCWI/UWI has also been pulled between centrifugal forces of nationalism and centripetal forces of regionalism (47; see also Marshall; Sherlock and Nettleford). This tension has led to what Cobley calls the "political and ideological struggle for the soul of the university in the region" (15). Cobley associates this struggle with the Caribbean peoples' penchant for improvisation: The British established a regional university and encouraged the formation of a West Indian Federation of islands that it could continue to dominate, but West Indian nationalists – notably Eric Williams, Oxford graduate, Howard University professor, and later premier of Trinidad – had their other aspirations. These individuals saw in Federation the route to independence from Britain. Moreover, as the UCWI encouraged West Indian thought, the students and the

islands from which they came experienced a sense of local identity – far greater than the collective identity that the institution was meant to promote (Cobley 14-15). Ironically, then, the attempted Federation of West Indian islands and Guyana collapsed in the early 1960s as Caribbean islands gained independence from Britain. As individuals and islands asserted their identity, they also called for changes in the university.

The pull of nationalism of that era extended to transformation through transculturation in the university, that is, through institutional and curricular changes that arose from appropriation rather than abrogation of materials from the University of London. As I established in Chapter 2, the UCWI began as a ward of the University of London and a part of an imperial university system. Therefore, the UCWI's matriculation requirements, calendars, syllabuses, examinations, and degrees were the same as London's. However, as Nettleford observes, the university's historical profile does not adequately reflect the longstanding tension between "a total Anglophile commitment" and a persistent attempt to provide education that is informed by "West Indian sensibility and historical experience" (9). This attempt to be regionally relevant was partly inspired by public criticism of what Sherlock and Nettleford call the institution's "limited access, inequality of educational opportunity and the wide gap between the content of education and the real world" (126). Confronted with an external agenda, and with criticisms from many individuals in Jamaica and elsewhere about the relevance of a specialized English education, UCWI faculty and administrators began agitating for reform in the institution's early years. They began the process by selecting from the University of London's curriculum and reinventing it in the local context, although London had to

approve the reinvention. Consequently, after operating as a college of the University of London, the UCWI received a new Royal Charter establishing it as an autonomous degree-granting institution in 1962.

The curricular and other changes that led to the UCWI's independence from the University of London also embodied the institution's attempts to respond to local demands for upward social mobility. In his address at the Matriculation Ceremony in October 1960, Lewis informed the gathering that the cost for each student at UCWI was £1,350 whereas a student could be sent overseas for £600 per year. He wished to reduce the costs at UCWI to £950 per year for each student. Lewis' premise for expanding the student population was, therefore, related to economics. However, the change he initiated would result in expansion in the middle class. Lewis seemed to reinforce the existing class structure when he informed the incoming students that they would be "among the leaders of West Indian society" and would have responsibility for "the mind, or the life or the work of other West Indians." In saying that they would have responsibility for shaping society, Lewis asserted that the students would be "the solid middle class of society." Most of the students whose social class Lewis confirmed would have been coming from Sixth Forms and would be considered representatives of the meritocratic elite at the secondary level. However, based on LePage's description of the UWI population in the 1950s that is included in Chapter 2 ("The Language"), among the gathering there would have been students from the lower middle class who were aspiring to increased social mobility. By 1963, there would also have been more students from this stratum in the university owing to the provision of evening classes and

accommodation of non-residential students beginning in 1963/64 (see UWI, *Calendar 1964-65*, 120). Because of the political and social changes evident then, by the 1970s increasing numbers of students from lower-income homes would also have entered the institution. In this period, the then Prime Minister of Jamaica, Michael Manley, introduced “free education.” This development followed explanations in the *New Deal for Education in Independent Jamaica* that the thrust in education would be based on the view that “opportunity for the best education that the country can afford must be open to every child, because all children are equally important” (i). The democratization of education in this period of strong nationalist sentiment led to attempts to teach students who would not have gotten into high school and university in earlier years – not because of academic performance but on account of their social class and consequent financial means. The result was that more individuals than those in previous decades could use education as a route to enter and expand the existing middle class.

These changes are germane to my investigation into attitudes to writing instruction. Although faculty began to comment on problems in students’ writing before the 1960s, large-scale instruction in language/writing did not appear until the 1960s. Indeed, large-scale language instruction was to surface almost simultaneously with the expansion in enrollment and curricular changes at UWI in the 1960s. When the Mona Campus began to accommodate non-residential students in its second decade of existence, the university began to attract a large proportion of students from low-income groups, changing from a situation in which the majority of students were from middle-income groups which displayed facility in using English. The new cohort of students,

many of whom did not claim English as their first language, would be among the first to take “Use of English.” This was one of three foundation courses introduced in the 1960s, when Caribbean conditions began to be increasingly emphasized in the curriculum over British courses that some critics such as Copley thought to be “of doubtful utility” (17) in the West Indies. Many of those first-generation university students were also first-language Creole speakers whose linguistic backgrounds are not irrelevant to discussions of writing instruction and personal, institutional, and societal development. My analysis of the developments in and attitudes to that course confirms I. Maxwell’s observation that, despite the changes, the institution continued to emphasize excellence. This emphasis was to the extent that observers described the institution as one which *ab initio* “had been designed to be an institution of the highest academic standard and this ideal had been ardently preserved” (378).

Ad Hoc Beginnings of “Use of English”

In the 1960s, the transparency conceptualization, specifically regarding emphasis on excellence over social equity, first becomes evident in the ad hoc beginnings of the Use of English course. Here, I am referring to how the course was introduced, which students were required to take it, what the course emphasis was, how teaching was to be conducted, and faculty’s subscription to the conduit metaphor. When the first English language course called “Use of English” was introduced at UWI in 1963, it was offered to all students except those doing an Honours degree and those in the Social Sciences. This interfaculty survey course, which did not stress writing, was modeled on a similar

survey course that had been introduced in universities in England (Dyche “English). Paul Parker reports that survey and interdisciplinary courses were introduced in England to raise the prestige of general degrees, and familiarize students with their society’s cultural, historical, political, and scientific foundations. Therefore, in the early 1960s, following similar concerns in England that too many students there were taking special degrees, administrators encouraged students in Jamaica to do general rather than special degrees (330). The UCWI’s achievement of full university status and Jamaica’s independence in 1962 also inspired reflection on the degree structures and their suitability to local needs. After officials from the three UWI campuses toured British universities, they made the announcement contained in the first epigraph: general degrees and similar survey courses would be applicable to the developing West Indian society. These courses that were introduced in revised general degree programs were to include English, the development of civilization (including a survey of the humanities and the development of science and technology), and the historical development of the Caribbean (UWI, “First Report” 3). The British “Use of English” course had links to the study of rhetoric in terms of the different appeals people used and how to evaluate them. The focus at UWI was also on language in use, with the tutors aiming to raise students’ awareness about language in use in general and, by the 1970s, in the Caribbean in particular.

Towards mid-1963, after having decided to offer the survey courses, the upper administration appointed committees to define the content and instructional procedures for the new courses that would be included in revised degree programs. The committee with responsibility for “Use of English” described it as “Practice of Oral and Written

English. Different kinds of Communication. Techniques of Argument. Critical Analysis of Commonplace English” (Senate Paper 18, 1; *UWI Calendar 1964-65*, 171, 227) .

Senate Paper 18 records that Mr. William Carr, a lecturer in the English Department, would act as Moderator for the course. Fifteen mixed classes, each with approximately 30 students from different faculties, would begin at Mona. Although earlier Senate papers and minutes indicated plans for “Use of English” to be taught for two hours each week, Senate Paper 18 documents that there would be 1½ hours for each class weekly – “a suitable time for which would be 5-6:30p.m.” (1). Because there would be about 250 day and evening students and limited accommodation in the Faculty of Arts, Carr recommended that some teaching would have to be done on Saturday mornings (“The Use” 3). Contemporary readers can imagine that a negative impression would probably have been created by the time and day when the course was to be taught. The large classes also suggest that students would probably not receive much individual attention. It appears, however, that because teaching was usually done in large lectures, thirty students in a “Use of English” class seemed like a small number.

Other faculty members also proposed how the course should be taught. Among these were John Figueroa, the dean of Education, who had given the lectures in logic that are mentioned in Chapter 2, and R. J. Owens, the acting head of the English department. Based on their recommendations, in the first year, instruction in the Use of English course was given in weekly 1½ hour *seminars* and not in a large group lecture followed by a small group tutorial, as was the case in other university courses. Teaching was (and still is) centralized, so all tutors and students used a common “Use of English” Course

Content and Course Exercise syllabus that the Course Moderator prepared and distributed each term. The syllabus used in the first year was largely ill-defined because, according to Carr, “Use of English” was “a course new both to teachers and students and development [could] only be created in the classroom not predicted in advance” (“The Use” 4). For the second year of teaching in the course, Richard Allsopp, in his capacity as Chief (University) Moderator of the course, drew on Carr’s and Owens’ 1963 papers as well as suggestions from Jean Creary at Mona to “provide a more detailed programme for the guidance of tutors.” This syllabus, “The ‘Use of English Course,’” contained a list of topics for teaching, class-discussion and writing each week; an advance reading assignment (from a UC100 course text-book) as preparation for the class of the following week; and five in-course, out of class, and essay assignments (including one review of a recently published book, magazine or issue of a journal to be done over the Christmas vacation). None of the books used in the course was written by a West Indian (see Allsopp, “The ‘Use of English’”), which suggests that the university continued the tradition started at lower educational levels of using content materials that were usually foreign to West Indian sensibility.

Administrators solicited part-time help in order to offer the course, and this situation resulted in negative perceptions of “Use of English.” Allsopp noted in “Report on the Use of English Course 1966/67” how attitudes to staffing served to undermine the status of the course and its teachers in academia. He reported that the problem with staffing intensified when Medical, Nursing, and Theological students began to be required to take the course that was originally a requirement for students pursuing a

General Honours degree. Full-time staffing was not increased commensurate with increased numbers of students to be taught, so part-timers were continually sought, though usually not in sufficient numbers. More part-timers meant more scrutiny of marking, with moderation through reviewing of scripts “proving a heavy and exacting exercise” for Allsopp (5). Attitudes to the course and its instructors were affected because, as Allsopp wrote, “it is impossible to avoid the impression among students, and ... among staff, that a course which has to be largely carried by a number of ‘outsiders’ whose continuance in service cannot be guaranteed is not an important course” (3).

The Vice-Chancellor attributed the problems in the first year to the short time in which administrators and faculty had to prepare for the course. The *Report to Council from the Vice-Chancellor for the Year Ending 31st July 1965* provides some explanation for the ad hoc feeling associated with the beginnings and structure of the course. It indicates that because the Council decided only in June 1963 to offer the survey courses in October 1963, there was not enough time to “organize them completely satisfactorily” (221) in terms of staff appointments and program planning. The then Vice Chancellor explained that regular staff from other subject areas along with an abundance of part-timers taught in the course at Mona. He noted a situation that is reminiscent of literature faculty regarding composition in the US: “the natural decision to give the Use of English course in small groups made ... a large demand on staffing far beyond the reach of the full-time staff in English Literature, some of whom did not accept it as being within their domain” (221). As well, with approximately 400 students involved at Mona, and with inadequate arrangements for staffing, Science students were not offered the course in the

first year. The Vice Chancellor concluded that the survey courses had been heavily criticized because of those challenges and because “other students and staff not involved in the programme” considered the courses “an added burden” (221; see also Allsopp “Report ... 1964/65”).

Despite the Vice-Chancellor’s concessions, later course reports show that there were few changes in the course arrangements to improve perceptions of it. Allsopp’s 1971 “Report on the Use of English Course” provides other reasons for which the course would be marginalized in Jamaica. While on the other campuses, the course was delivered 2 hours for each of 25 weeks for the year, an anomaly persisted at Mona where each session lasted only an hour and a half. Staffing problems also persisted. Allsopp observed that the university had “more than 800 students rising to more than 1400 doing a compulsory Course, staffed by 2 to 4 full-time teachers aided by about 12 changing part-time teachers” (2). He explained that on two of the campuses, those full-time teachers were “temporary replacements of the permanent appointees” (2). Allsopp underscored that “the very high proportion of part-time staff at Mona in particular ... [was] a factor undermining the effectiveness of the programme and general student attitude to the Course” (2). One result of large student numbers and limited staff was that the classes were too large, “making pursued discussion and effective approaches to oral English only notional” (3, emphasis in the original). In addition to increasing student numbers and to insufficient provision of teaching staff, there were also inadequate provision of secretarial help and lack of specified times for the course on some Faculty time-tables. Changes to the course that could have helped to increase staff and student

perceptions of it were slow in coming. The seminar length changed to two hours in the late 1960s, and it was not until 1980-81 that the course was restructured at Mona to increase contact hours to three per week (King “Projection” 1).

The course emphasis may also have affected how students and staff perceived the course. Allsopp recorded that the three initial aims of the course were to “train students to obtain maximum benefit” from lectures and printed materials, “acquaint students with the methods and purposes which can control the use of language,” and “familiarize students with different languages of persuasion and to inculcate in the students a capacity for reasoned and coherent argument and discussion” (“The ‘Use of English’” 1). Since the focus was on language use in the university, for the first eleven years, tutors emphasized

- a) the development of thoughtful interpretation, clear thinking and critical judgment of all forms of communication in English,
- b) intelligent statement of opinion in English, and
- c) improved attitudes to types of language and a more enlightened use of ‘the Dictionary.’ (Allsopp, “UWI Use” 1)

Allsopp stressed that the course was meant to encourage students to develop their general knowledge in order to be able to present reasoned opinions. Increased knowledge should be realized through “personal research,” and students should learn to evaluate sources, including dictionaries and reference works (“The ‘Use of English’” 3). However, administrators had originally conceived the course as a largely oral one. Discussion was central to teaching in the course, with the approach being one King described in his questionnaire responses as “more one of lecture-seminars than of lectures proper” in which the following topics were covered in the first year: Attacking the power of Print in the first term, Communication and Logic in the second term, and Critical approach to

statistical information in the third term. The seminar format confirms the recommended oral emphasis in the course. Students were forewarned that seminars were not lectures and that they were expected to participate actively for at least half of the time. According to King, in the late 1960s and onwards, the standard procedure was as follows. In the first 15 minutes, the tutor reviewed very briefly the advance reading assignment and then invited students to ask the question(s) they had brought to class following their advance reading assignment. Other students in the class were then invited to supply their answer to the student's question, if they could. Finally, if no student could provide an answer with which the student who asked the question was satisfied, the class-tutor intervened and hopefully supplied a satisfactory answer. In the next 30 minutes of the session, the tutor distributed a course content and exercise handout and taught its content. The class then separated into small groups and completed the course exercise, each group doing a different one, in about 30 minutes. In the last 45 minutes, the class reassembled for small groups to report back to the large group. These reports were usually followed by a culminating class discussion.

Consonant with the oral emphasis in the course was faculty's submission to the conduit metaphor, which reflects the discourse of transparency (see Lillis and Turner). With initial emphasis on study skills, extended writing seemed to be incidental. In the early years of the course, writing functioned as a demonstration of knowledge, especially in terms of note-taking in lectures and answers in examinations. What little writing was done in the course involved a 2-stage linear process of "think" then "write," reflecting the conduit model of language that is espoused in John Locke's work (see Lillis and Turner

62). Owens had proposed that oral work be emphasized to develop “students’ ability to listen, grasp and to reproduce” for two reasons: “People talk well before they write well” and “more work can be done, more quickly, and ‘marking’ is eliminated – though checking and correcting are not” (2). The first reason epitomizes a myth that was prevalent then, and both reasons indicate what little stress was placed on actual writing development. Because Owens believed that in addition to the study skills that students would develop, they should be taught “the rules of argument and the use of logic” (3), he recommended the use of what was then “the manual of rhetoric,” Brooks and Warren’s *The Fundamentals of Good Writing*. He believed this manual could introduce students to the modes of discourse and help students “realise that each type of discourse calls for a different use of English, and it calls for careful preparation and a clear plan of what is intended” (3). In all of these recommendations, Owens, propagated the conduit model of language which is consistent with the rhetoric of transparency, for he believed “[b]efore any good writing of any kind can be done, the writer must think clearly” (3). In other words, in his view, writers did heuristic work in their mind, and writing merely served to record (clear) thought.

Carr would also support the conduit metaphor by stating explicitly the – not totally true – claim that “people speak well before they write well so the first term’s work would be predominantly oral, getting students to shape and handle their own experience, to do justice in language, to what they themselves feel and think” (3). Carr seemed convinced that it was thinking before speaking or writing that would allow for clear expression and prevent fraudulent language use in any discipline. He emphasized that the

primary concern of faculty who would be involved in teaching the course, “the concern which ought properly to inform any university course, is the quality of the student’s mind when he leaves the university” (4). Carr asserted that “a mind which can acquiesce to cliché, take the word for the deed, employ stale ingredients of language, permit words to shape thought rather than thought words is of manifest inutility to the society it lives in” (4). In promoting thought as predeterminant of words, Carr unfortunately reinforced the conduit model of language – a sense that words are always and only in service of thought which precede them and are also transparent and neutral (see Lillis and Turner 62-63).

Although Allsopp, unlike other early course Moderators, encouraged a balance between oral and written work in the course (“The ‘Use of English’” 2), he also suggested that writing merely transcribes thought. His views emerge in a 16 January 1964 “Interview with Gladstone Holder,” the Government Information Officer in Barbados. This interview was to allow Allsopp to follow up on what Holder called “the question of whether or not this course could not be provided at Secondary level and so take some of the load off the University” (1). In this interview, Allsopp advocated the view of language as transparent recording when, in defense of the course, he stated: “... you must be able to express your thoughts clearly. *First think clearly then express them clearly and analytically*” (3). In this response, Allsopp expressed the conduit metaphor which separates thinking and inscription. In stressing the desire for honesty in communication, Allsopp asserted that a student has to be taught “to be clear about his own thinking, that his *clear thinking must precede expression* because the person should be clear on what he wants to say and learn the best way to say just that” (7). In these responses, Allsopp

ignored the way in which expression/words can help to clarify thinking, that is, how through the process of writing the writer may discover what he or she really wants to say. Allsopp and others who perpetuated the conduit model of language encouraged people to believe that you demonstrate understanding through writing rather than also use writing as a means to gaining understanding. This emphasis on thinking before writing – although not expressed in such terms – probably helped to fuel later charges for the course to teach students to *write clearly*.

Excellence versus Equity: Assumed versus Real Linguistic and Writing Profile of Students

Besides failing to exploit the usefulness of writing to learning and to developing thought, “Use of English” faculty as well as administrators attributed an incorrect linguistic and writing profile to some in-coming students. Faculty’s response to the realization that their assumptions were wrong also attests to emphasis on excellence rather than social equity in the institution. Although there had to have been students from backgrounds in which they had limited contact with English, often only learning it in school, course materials mention that the Use of English course was designed for students with high levels of proficiency in English. Donald Winford, then Moderator at the St. Augustine campus, explained that the course “presupposes familiarity with, and ability to use, Standard English” (“A Brief “ 1). The course was concerned more with helping students develop the “capacity for reasoned and coherent argument and discussion” and the “ability to discern and comprehend nuances of meaning and precise language” rather

than with learning “the conventions of standard written English” (1). Winford also explained that the course was structured “based on the premise that students [had] already acquired a basic command of these skills before entry into university” (“Revision” 1). He admitted that “Use of English” faculty were “aware that certain language skills” besides those they addressed were “essential for University students, and that some students in fact lack[ed] certain of these skills” (1). However, the “Use of English” staff were reluctant to make changes to the course to address written English conventions:

“mechanics of Standard English (e.g. grammar, conventions of spelling and punctuation) as well as those involved in composition (coherence, paragraph structure, clarity of expression and the like” (1). This reluctance was because of staff’s belief that the Use of English course “offer[ed] certain kinds of information, and address[ed] itself to certain more sophisticated types of language skill which ... represent a vital ingredient in the academic programme of first year University students” (1).

Mertel Thompson, one of the “Use of English” tutors, shed light on the specific aspects of writing in which students did not demonstrate adequate levels of proficiency when she provided a description of “Freshman English students” in Jamaica in a presentation at the Convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in New Orleans in 1986. Her exposé shows the extent to which the course as designed may not have met students’ needs, and , instead, continued the tradition of the schools in using a curriculum that appeared to be linguistically mistaken. Thompson observed that some students “exhibit[ed] a lack of organizational skill, pa[id] scant attention to details and in general display[ed] very little control over their material”

(“Literacy” 6). As regards “Lower Order Concerns,” she noted that “certain types of writing miscues [were] overwhelmingly present” (6). These often fell into three categories, indicating the influence of the oral Creole language, incomplete mastery of English – the medium of instruction, and lack of familiarity with the requirements of print. Instructors concluded that “[t]he language barrier engage[d] so much of [students’] attention that it inhibit[ed] progress both at the level of thought and surface correctness” (7). Thompson also observed that most of the students who “experience[d] greater problems” were those enrolled in the Sciences (13). She explained this weakness based on the fact that – in that era – these students got little writing practice after the fourth form in high school when students were streamed into Arts and Sciences. She felt then that too much was being done in the one noncredit Use of English course that the university offered. The many components included “basic linguistic concepts, research skills, elementary principles of logic, the use of statistics in communication, the elements of style, and the use of emotive persuasion in advertising and political propaganda” (14). In her view, attempting to cover so much in 22 teaching weeks only led to “a highly structured, content-oriented approach to teaching and testing” (14). Her recommendation was that, instead of attempts to include a reading and writing skills unit into the Use of English course, another course should be introduced “especially devoted to writing” because the “problem of adequate time preclude[d] successful teaching” (14).

Students’ writing challenges, especially as they relate to Jamaica’s linguistic context, are also explained in Joyce Walker’s “Some Comments on the Work done by Students in Use of English.” In this 1966 document, Walker presented excerpts from a

science student's failing script to consider "the degree of his mastery of the conventions at the structural level of language" (1). With regard to spelling, she noted that many errors "illustrate the tendency to reconcile pronunciation with orthography" (3). She considered such confusion of "as" with "has" and "is" with "his" as reflecting how "pronounced speech habits work their way into the writing" (3) although she did not mention that these were likely to be "Creole" speech habits. She felt that students could usually identify these errors in their and others' speech but they persisted in writing. What is important is her notation that they were "all errors teachers ha[d] been pointing out for years" and they were not errors that "people [could] be reasoned out of" (3). Still, she concluded that "[p]erhaps these errors [were] not all that serious in that they d[id] not affect comprehensibility. They illustrate[d] however that it is worth insisting on some of the niceties in formal spoken English" (3). Walker was careful to note that "the disregard of spelling conventions often develops into a dangerous habit. What is written on a page is misread" (3). She felt that confusion of one letter with another could result in misinterpretation of an examination question. Walker also maintained that omission of inflections (such as -ed in the English past participle) "is often a matter of carelessness" and it is "possible to connect many of these faults in structure to looseness in thinking" (5). Interestingly, Walker did not include any consideration of the Creole lack of inflection in verb tenses that would be deeply entrenched in students' language habits and frequently transferred in English. As well, the problem could have been lack of revision and editing, for which time was clearly not provided in examinations, and which were not among the concerns of the course. Walker also suggested that there would need to be

more writing in class without abandonment of discussion in order for students to be motivated to work on grammar. She noted, too, that “[m]any students like[d] to feel that a close watch [was] being kept on their English and that as far as the conventions [were] concerned they [were] mastering new points” (11) – a telling statement about students’ limited mastery of or comfort in English.

The problems that Thompson and Walker identified as being characteristic of young science students extended to other students. Walker’s “Minutes of the Meeting of Lecturers in the Use of English at Cave Hill 28th to 29th January, 1972” includes the emphasis from Mona representatives that, as is established in Chapter 1 based on Robotham’s work, “[i]t was not always the young N.1 students fresh out of school that had problems with understanding and interpretation of material or even with organizing their work, but older students who had been occupying positions of authority for years” (Walker, “Minutes” 5). It appears, however, that faculty ignored these students’ needs when they adopted the Use of English course. Chapter 2 established that faculty had begun to complain about weaknesses in students’ writing as early as the 1950s. However, when Allsopp prepared the first detailed course syllabus, he seemed to ignore those problems and inadvertently encouraged a form of linguistic prejudice. As stated, unlike Owens and Carr, Allsopp encouraged a balance between the written and oral in the course. He invoked Denys Thompson’s *Reading and Discrimination* to stress the importance of written work – “only thus can it be ensured that every member of the group commits himself to an opinion” (“The ‘Use of English’” 2). He noted in “The ‘Use of English Course’” that teachers should not insist on the essay form when an answer

required listing points in complete sentences, “since this is essentially a course in critical thinking, judgment and expression of constructed opinion” (2). However, he added a questionable caution about grammar and spelling: “Although the course does not strictly concern itself with grammar and spelling students must clearly understand that a) their work will be marked down for spelling and grammatical errors, and b) inconsecutive or non-standard jottings will not be accepted as an ‘answer in note form’” (2). Allsopp’s caution typifies a form of linguistic prejudice that is perpetuated in the university when graders deduct marks for aspects in which students seem to be weak but which the course does not teach expressly. In a system where, as Chapter 2 established, many students are already made to feel uncomfortable in language at the primary and secondary levels, deducting marks for what is not taught explicitly demonstrates continued ignorance of the sheer trial that such students must endure in performing in English, and suggests that the university is the province of *only* students who are from an English-speaking/-supported background.

Allsopp’s treatment of the high failure rate in the course would also perpetuate the institution’s emphasis on excellence and probably prevent students’ special language needs from being addressed. Although every one of his reports mentioned a high failure rate, Allsopp insisted that the failures were not due to unacceptable English. His “Report on the Use of English Course 1964/65” reflects the transparency conceptualization with regard to evaluation, as defined in Lillis and Turner’s work (58-60). In his report, Allsopp recognized as major faults students’ lack of preparation for classes, unwillingness to share opinions in class, and written work that “too often showed a lack of common sense,

and far too often was in shabby English or had bad grammar, which was always drawn to their attention in the marking” (1). Allsopp noted that the part-time students often “seemed disillusioned” and rarely participated in discussions. In his view, afternoon fatigue alone could not account for their behavior: “many [were] teachers and a failure or frequent low grade in what [was] still regarded as merely ‘English’ hurt... their pride without stimulating a thoughtful approach to the next project. In any event the Examination showed their English to be simply bad in many cases” (1). Approximately two-thirds of the students failed the first final examination. One of the first faults that Allsopp noted that this test revealed was weaknesses in mechanics and grammar: “Punctuation was widely negligent or quite intolerable. There were a great many spelling errors in spite of the allowed use of a Dictionary in the Examination and the warning in the instructions to the paper. There was also a great number of faults of simple grammatical agreement, verbal and adverbial inflection, vocabulary, choice of word, and sentence structure” (2). He added, “For most of these a mark was taken, for not only had there been plenty of warning during the year by [sic] the warning was repeated at the head of the paper” (2). Here, Allsopp provided the background to the practice in which untaught aspects of writing are graded: “The course cannot treat such weaknesses, but where they occur, by the very nature of the course, they must be penalised” (2).

What Allsopp noted as weaknesses regarding the proper course concerns and the primary reason for failure typifies faulty assumptions about the transparency of evaluation terms. He asserted that there was “widespread failure to inspect a question properly and discern its actual requirements. ... Indeed missing the point of a question

was the greatest cause of failure” (2). However, Allsopp did not acknowledge that teachers could have wrongly assumed that students would have been able to discern the “point of a question.” After all, the syllabus/course outline had no section treating the metalanguage of evaluation. And this was a period when the Use of English course, like content courses then and now, was concerned with only the product of the act of writing – when writing was involved. The high failure rate in the course, especially among evening (part-time) students, would be addressed in subsequent reports including Allsopp’s “Report on the Use of English Course 1966/67.” Here, Allsopp noted that many students failed because the examination “defies swotting up” (2), the practice of cramming in which students engaged for other courses. To address the continued high failure rate in the course, when Allsopp gave his 1971 “Report on the Use of English Course,” he provided samples of student writing and his views about “the principal causes of failure and of the massive mediocrity of performance” (3):

The Course ... pre-supposes that the student, having passed into the University through an “O” Level English Language entry requirement, comes with an operative command of English morphology and syntax and a reasonable disciplined sense of the structure and consecutiveness of recognizable sentences. Yet there is an indetermined number who ... freely display English morphology that is unpermitted ... or grossly undisciplined ... and sentence structure that is also grossly undisciplined ... or actually illiterate. (3)

Because of the gravity of the identified weaknesses, Allsopp felt that “[e]ven if the U/E Course be heavily modified to pay substantial attention to remedial work, it is difficult to see how any one-year University Course could detect the roots of and then eradicate malpractices such as those displayed in [the samples]” (3).

Despite the stated weakness, Allsopp was not of the view that “the writing of unacceptable English account[ed] for a large part of the failures” (3) in the course. What Allsopp would recognize in this report as the reasons for failure would also reflect the transparency paradigm regarding evaluation. Based on his experience, “the principal causes of failure and of the massive mediocrity of performance” are

- (a) Widespread irrelevance due to misunderstanding (not misreading) of the core of a question, or the central claim in a statement.
- (b) Unexpected ignorance of some middle-level educated vocabulary (although students are always invited to use a dictionary in the exam room).
- (c) A very great lack of background reference, general knowledge and reading experience, and a persistence in unprepared, rather than informed discussion.
- (d) Certain difficulties attributable to Caribbean English. (3)

The last reason that suggests interference from Caribbean English highlights the absence of explicit instruction in the metacognitive contrasts between the language required in the course and the varieties that students often used. Together, the factors that Allsopp identified as being responsible for students’ failure suggest that there was need to increase writing and evaluation during the year. It is to be remembered that “Use of English” was a largely oral course with students completing only five written pieces for the year. Increased formative evaluation could have allowed tutors to address “exam” techniques by discussing evaluation terms and the meanings of questions. However, “Use of English” tutors seemed to omit such instruction that would have been considered “basic” for students who were assumed to have the requisite competencies in English for pursuing undergraduate studies.

Because the “Use of English” faculty attributed an incorrect linguistic and writing profile to some students, and probably because they did not carefully interpret

examination results, they did not readily define and implement measures to address those students' special needs. Surely, they engaged in discussions about restructuring the course: by the close of the 1970s, the teachers at Mona had begun to depart from the original survey course to try to meet the language needs of new students. However, the various measures they employed to address the weaknesses of about 30% of the institution's new and primarily first-generation university students were largely unstructured and unsuccessful. These measures included incorporating a six-week English proficiency component into the course and giving individual tutoring to students deemed weak in English Language (Department of Linguistics and Use of English, "Report" 1). A general recommendation was for the course to be offered on two levels to match the two general categories of students: UC100 – the regular course – and UC102 – a proficiency course. The proficiency course would address such topics as mechanics, structure, grammar, usage, and style (Use of English Staff). However, these courses were not formally taught separately at Mona, probably because administrators' and faculty's lack of acknowledgement of the linguistic shifts in the academy continued to delay the development of the proficiency program. Indeed, faculty's limited understanding of writing and its connection to learning in disciplines and outside of the academy resulted in neglect of many incoming students' special writing needs. Academics failed to follow through on suggested changes so that up to 1987, no course had been developed for students requiring a proficiency course although Mona had gotten approval to plan what its remedial course/ program would look like by the end of the 1970s (UWI, *Vice Chancellor's Report 1979*, 21).

“English”: *Survey or Service?* Academic Preserve or School Subject?

The increasing problems in students' writing would fuel a debate that signified that both “Use of English” faculty and “content” faculty ignored the role of writing in disciplinary learning and their role in students' writing development. This debate had actually started in the year the Use of English course was introduced when critics expressed opposition to teaching the course in the university. While upper administration considered new degree structures and the relevance of current degree programs in 1963, various interest groups and individuals attempted to influence the decisions that would be taken regarding the survey courses through meetings or paper presentations. R. T. Smith reported the main points of one such meeting in his capacity as secretary of the West Indies Group of University Teachers (WIGUT). Smith's account suggests that the Use of English course was introduced in a climate in which deficiencies at the secondary level were being considered. Smith noted that among criticisms of UWI's three-year general degree were views that “since most West Indian students come from ... communities where reading and the fluent use of English is [sic] inadequate, all undergraduates should be introduced to the proper use of English and Logic” (2). Some critics called for such teaching to be done in the Sixth Form. Considering – as Peter Roberts points out – that the course came at a time of expanding education when the institution was shifting from elitist to mass orientation, critics could have considered the course as pre-university (“Proposal” 1). However, staunch advocates defended it vigorously. Among these was John Figueroa. He disagreed with transferring the teaching of the survey courses to the

schools on the basis that the schools would experience much difficulty in offering some courses, with the English course posing special challenges if the focus is “Consequential Expression and Logic.” He felt such difficulty would arise because the course “does not deal with matters that Sixth Forms manage too well, especially if we are to judge from the students who come from the schools, and who write such muddy and illogical prose in the scholarship exams” (“General” 1). Unlike what is conveyed in his description of the logic course in Chapter 2, here, Figueroa demonstrates prescience regarding avoiding transfer of the responsibility for students’ writing development to schools. Understanding that the survey courses could “encourage an awareness and an ability to think critically and imaginatively – to experiment and to judge” (“General” 1), Figueroa cautioned that the UWI “should not slip out of its responsibility by asking the schools to do what it should be doing – encouraging its students to examine their environment, their history, their language, their values, themselves. . . . Even if the schools start, at their level, the kind of work envisaged by the general courses, we should expand and deepen this work, not give it up” (2-3).

Figueroa’s insight before the Use of English course began was not necessarily acknowledged because course directors and instructors would also have to defend what they were teaching against outsiders’ views that their subject could/should be taught in secondary schools. Among those who would defend the original Use of English course were R. J. Owens and William Carr, both of whom had been commissioned to assist with the development of the course in early 1963, and Richard Allsopp who became the first University Moderator of the course. Part of the problem with the course lay in its title.

The difficulty in naming the course is mentioned in “Information for ‘Barbados College News’” that was disseminated on July 6, 1964 from the College of Arts and Science, Barbados. This document mentions that “[b]oth the names ‘Survey Course’ and ‘Use of English’ have caused much inquiry and both, indeed, are names used for want of better ones.” However, the course was “intended to cover certain basic information which it is felt every Graduate should have, and which, heretofore, was not designedly provided by the University.” Each survey course was meant to “lay the ground for a more critical and informed approach” by students in any discipline. Such names as “Uses of English,” “Language and Logic,” “Critical Thinking,” and “Communication” were suggested for the Use of English course, with each providing clues about the course content. This content, the document emphasized, “ha[d] nothing to do with grammar and little to do with English language – précis and comprehension – such as is done in schools, or with literary criticism and appreciation which is a clearly defined aspect of English studies.” Owens and Carr (“Uses”) had emphasized similar aspects of the course.

Cognizant of the difficulty in naming the course, Allsopp was careful to reject any association of the name with lack in the teaching of English. In his defense of the course against criticisms of its being *school English*, he *hinted* at “content” faculty’s involvement in its teaching. In his “Interview with Gladstone Holder,” Allsopp emphasized that although he felt that secondary schools – specifically the Sixth Form sections – could offer a course resembling “Use of English,” he did not feel that all aspects of the course could be addressed at that level. He emphasized that the course “was not really limited to English. It is the ... discipline of thought and this of course is

spread over all the studies, all the subjects” (2). In response to Holder’s assertion that the course concerns about “the examination of thought, motive and feeling” should indeed be included in the English course at the secondary level, Allsopp made a statement that suggests he was aware of the importance of “content” faculty’s being involved in instruction in thought and language, but he made the point in a very cautionary way so that it was almost lost: Allsopp stated, “I feel that in the training of the teacher in communicating his subject ... material to the student you can eventually get him to involve the training of thought even if he is teaching Geography” (3). He added that the necessary discipline of thought “is the orientation of teaching generally; it can’t be English alone” (3).

“Content” faculty did not necessarily share Allsopp’s views that they should be involved in “the training of thought.” In fact, they would continue the debate about the course based on what they understood its purpose to be – as reflected in the course title. Therefore, by 1965, when “Use of English” staff members were faced with glaring grammatical and mechanical weaknesses in students’ scripts but avoided making grammar a focus of teaching, other faculty seemed to be bent on making it an inevitable addition to the course. Some of these “content” faculty were unaware of the course’s intended purpose but some were perhaps a little more conscious than some “Use of English” faculty of the needs of changing cohorts of students. This emerging “grammar” concern is evident in Allsopp’s “Report of a Conference on ‘The Use of English’ Course held ... on Friday August 6, 1965” at UWI, Mona. Conference participants discussed the widespread weaknesses that were appearing in students’ written course work and

examination pieces on the three campuses in terms of written pieces containing logically unsound arguments, not answering the specific question set, and/or not answering the question clearly on account of faulty English grammar. They agreed to add a fourth aim to the course: “To improve the quality of the students’ written expression” (2). This addition would necessitate “some remedial treatment of faulty grammar” (3) in the course. Significantly, participants agreed that “the assumption that the students at this level should be able writers of grammatically correct English with good structuring was quite unrealistic” (3). When they *eventually* acknowledged that a faulty linguistic profile had been attributed to significant numbers of incoming students, participants decided that a test would be given in the first class each year to determine students’ grammatical weaknesses. This decision meant that tutors would then use either a few classes or some minutes toward the end of each class to address the faults. As well, tutors would compile the common errors to inform future course planning regarding grammar.

Despite the decisions from the conference, neither “Use of English” nor “content” faculty really addressed students’ problems based on any keen understanding of writing development or the region’s linguistic realities. “Content” faculty associated visibility in language with the need for remediation, and “Use of English” faculty avoided associating their course with remediation. However by doing this, “Use of English” faculty seemed not to address students’ special language needs. They emphasized that the Use of English course was an *applied* English course, suggesting a reluctance to address issues of equity rather than excellence only. The “Use of English” faculty’s attitudes are probably explained by the theoretical underpinnings of the course and their training.

King explained in his questionnaire responses that, at its inception, the development of the Use of English course and its teaching at UWI were heavily influenced by research and new developments in the teaching of critical reading and writing in England at the time. Such research was being conducted by the Schools Council Programme in Linguistics and English Teaching, chaired by Peter Doughty; Professor James Britton of the University of London Institute of Education and the Writing Research Unit Council; Professor Basil B. Bernstein at the Institute of Education, London; and Professor Randolph Quirk, Quain Professor of English Language and Literature, University of London. Piaget and Vygotsky and ideas from the US based on the grammar research that was being done at M.I.T. also influenced teaching and research interests but they were overshadowed by the English influence. W. E. K. Anderson's *The Written Word: Some Uses of English*, which was used in the first half of the school year, gives a sense of what the focus of the course would have been: separate chapters address English in newspapers, advertisements, disguise, and arguments. This emphasis on the "range" of English usage speaks to issues of register and taste that were addressed in the course. The core text used when the course was introduced was Randolph Quirk's *The Use of English*. That book, which is influenced by Quirk's observations in the Survey of English Usage at University College London, addresses "the nature, use, and range of English" (vi). It began as a series of talks commissioned by the BBC and aimed at stimulating "a mature and informed approach to our language, so that we can understand the nature of English, be encouraged to use it more intelligently, respond to it more

sensitively, and acknowledge more fully the implications of its international use today” (vi).

According to King, in the eyes of the designers of the Use of English course at UWI in the 1960s, “a mature and informed approach to our language,” compared to the traditional English Grammar approach to English teaching, which students in the Caribbean had been receiving in primary and secondary schools, constituted a new development in teaching. It implied, among other things, that course instructors would help their students free themselves of the many misconceptions that they heard every day about language in general, and about English-based creoles in the Caribbean and Caribbean English in particular. Indeed, the course was designed to challenge and, hopefully, remove what the course-designers considered to be certain false notions about language that most students brought with them to the course. One misconception that was prevalent in the 1960s was that the Creole (popularly called “patois”) that the children of most poor black people spoke at home and when interacting informally among themselves was nothing but “broken English,” and that it had “no grammar.” Another misconception was that the language spoken in the newly independent territories was simply “a regional dialect” of British English, just like the Yorkshire dialect was, and that proper Standard English was the English that “people in England” spoke. In the context of these Caribbean countries’ achieving political independence, the Use of English course was meant to foster more rational and informed thinking and writing among university graduates and the larger society about the nature of language and about how language

functions, and also to remove misconceptions and change attitudes about Caribbean Creoles and Caribbean English within the society.

Based on the scholarship that informed the course, “Use of English” tutors defined language as “a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates” (Bloch and Trager 5). Working within the confines of the modes of discourse, these tutors adopted a theory of discourse that sought to analyze language behavior in terms of the speaker’s or writer’s purpose, the intended audience’s expectations, the function(s) the speech or writing was intended to serve, and the situation or context in which the act of communication was taking place. Such a discourse theory encouraged students to evaluate a speech or written text not in absolute terms of good or bad but in relation to how well it was likely to achieve its intended purpose, given the constraints imposed on it by the nature of the intended audience or readers and the communicating situation or context. The course was designed ultimately to sensitize students to the fact that communicative competence at university involved much more than writing correct, idiomatic, Standard English – important as that is, and although, as I have demonstrated, grading in the course suggested otherwise. Students learned that communicative competence also involves a thorough knowledge of one’s subject matter and a clear understanding of one’s specific purpose in communicating. As well, it involves being conscious of, anticipating and satisfying, the expectations of one’s intended audience, and overcoming the constraints imposed on the writer by the situation, or context, in which he or she is communicating. At first glance, the terms used may suggest that the “Use of English” tutors were concerned with how audiences, purposes,

and contexts drive writing. However, the focus in the course involved not rhetorical theory in general – that the terms imply – but how students should prepare an expository versus a narrative essay, for example. In essence, then, this modes-driven approach was still somewhat limiting as I will explain in the next two sections.

The academic disciplines in which the “Use of English” tutors had studied also influenced their attitudes to students’ needs. “Use of English” tutors had first degrees in English Literature, Linguistics, Mass Communication, or Stylistics, but the overwhelming majority was in English Literature. King explained in his questionnaire responses that most of the instructors had been offered the part-time position of writing tutor in “Use of English” on the basis of their post-graduate training in the teaching of English, and on the basis of their experience, and proven success, in their full-time occupation – the teaching of English language and literature to tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders preparing for their ordinary level examinations in high school. Consistent with the ideas of the staff who had degrees in literature, the emphasis in the course was on critical and stylistic analysis. Instructors wanted students to understand style and focus on the purpose for writing. Rhetorical influence was limited to focus on the modes of writing and students’ being able to differentiate among them. According to King, the emphasis was “more on analysis than on writing.” As was the focus in the disciplines, what little writing there was in the course initially was focused almost exclusively on the product of the act of writing: the finished script. In this way, “Use of English” seems to fit the current-traditional paradigm as defined by James Berlin and Robert Inkster: the informal essay and research paper were emphasized, with the focus being “the composed

product rather than the composing process,” and discourse was classified into (four) modes, with emphasis on exposition (1). Additionally, one of the representative current traditional texts, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren’s *Fundamentals of Good Writing: A Handbook of Modern Rhetoric*, was one of the fundamental readings in the Use of English course. And because the course did not really address how writing is relearned in new contexts but seemed instead to focus on applying skills learned in the past to note-taking in lectures, for example, it reflected what UK researchers describe as the study skills approach to academic writing (see Jones, Turner, and Street, Introduction; Lea and Street). However, unlike the emphasis on usage in the current-traditional model, the focus of instruction in the Use of English course was not grammar. Indeed, the “Use of English” staff tried to disassociate themselves from the teaching of grammar and tried to elevate the course. Basil Bernstein and his ideas about elaborate and restricted codes with regard to roles ascribed to the speech of different classes helped the teachers to justify having the course address misconceptions about language in the Caribbean.¹ Additionally, stress on functionalism in England in terms of allowing students to write naturally without emphasis on formal grammar (see Britton et al) was one of weapons they used to justify exclusion of formal grammar instruction in the course – even though they penalized grammatical errors.

A Single Discourse Community: Visible Language Equals Remediation

This initial lack of emphasis on grammar instruction attracted criticisms of the course from those academics who associated any course in “English” with grammar

instruction. Therefore, whereas the Use of English course designers promoted the course as a way to facilitate students' language development with regard to critical or linguistic analysis and logical reasoning, others emphasized writing instruction as remediation by calling for emphasis on grammar to address students' English language deficiencies. In this regard, although "content" faculty were highlighting the importance of addressing students' special language needs, they also expressed various faulty assumptions about writing. One of these was the view that if language is visible its instruction ought to address the need for remediation. This is the myth that is implied in the second epigraph: prior to discussions about problems in students' writing, language was largely invisible; however, when language became the subject of discussion, administrators and some "content" faculty immediately recommended that any instruction in language use had to serve the purpose of remediation and should in fact be addressed in the high school. In this way, they proved that, as Turner writes about research in the UK, "when language is working well, it is invisible. Conversely, however, when language becomes 'visible,' it is an object of censure, marking a deficiency in the individual using it" (150). The corresponding view was that the language/writing faculty should take responsibility for remediation – a view that would serve to marginalize such instruction in the academy, as Chapter 1 explains.

The association of visibility of language and remediation is most evident in the actions of faculty from Social Sciences and Natural Sciences. King explained in our interview that Social Science students were not required to take the Use of English course on account of various factors: first, the Social Sciences Faculty started much later than

other Faculties; second, the courses had the status of “honours courses” because courses such as Economics were not taught in the high schools; third, the Social Science timetable was always full; and fourth – and most important, the faculty felt that “Use of English” was a sophisticated course because of its eventual focus on linguistics, Creole, and other language-related issues. When faculty in Social Sciences were convinced that evening students exhibited limited writing abilities, they requested a special “remedial” course (see Academic Board, 11 April 1985). Hence, in 1986, “The Essentials of Good Writing” course was introduced for twenty-five students from the Social Sciences (Mertel Thompson, “Report”). In this arrangement, there was no discussion about gearing a writing course to learning in the disciplines in Social Sciences; the concern was formalism.

Natural Sciences faculty also associated visibility in language with the need for remediation; in fact, they were probably the most intent on calling for grammar emphasis, having called for changes to the course since the 1960s. Allsopp reported that Natural Sciences faculty felt that students were “deriving little benefit from the Course” (see Walker, “Minutes” 2). Later, in the first quarter of 1975, a Faculty of Natural Sciences committee considered the “Use of English” syllabus, reading list, and examination papers for June 1972 and June 1974 and the summary of recommendations from the “Use of English” conference held in January 1975 (E. Robertson et al). E. Robertson and the other committee members complained about what was being done in the course and about the “too long” weekly reading preparation, among other aspects. Most of their comments demonstrate their misunderstanding of the purpose of the Use of English

course, the language situation in Jamaica, and the need for disciplinary writing instruction: They believed that “a Use of English course should remain a compulsory service for Science students, designed mainly to supplement their frequently inadequate background in English language proficiency” (1). Committee members felt that “Use of English” tutors spent too little time on language proficiency and too much on “sophisticated topics for which many students [were] not yet ready” (1). Members emphasized that they understood “Use of English” staff’s reluctance to address language proficiency, but they promoted the myth of transience in saying they understood that if the university were to change its admissions’ policies that need would no longer be a concern. The committee members expressed ignorance of the course focus by stressing, “But until it does so, the need remains; surely that was why the Use of English course was created in the first place?” (2)

Perhaps because the Natural Sciences faculty misunderstood the course focus and the need for disciplinary writing instruction, in considering “Use of English” teachers’ proposals to make the course a “First Year Course in all options,” the members stated that their Faculty would not consider “Use of English” as equivalent to a first-year course in Natural Sciences (2). They believed that a “basic Use of English course” should help *their* students:

- (a) to understand the spoken language and to be able to take notes of salient points from lectures or discussions
- (b) to read and comprehend standard English, to extract relevant information from books or papers, and to make useful notes or precis therefrom
- (c) to understand the principles of logical argument and to recognize fallacies
- (d) to appreciate that incorrect grammar and misuse of words frequently lead to unclearness or ambiguity

- (e) to appreciate differences in meaning and to value the precision which they make possible
- (f) to write reports and essays in as clear and as precise a manner as possible, without too much emphasis in the first place on the finer points of style. (2)

In expressing what they thought the Use of English course should be, the committee members were clearly trying to dictate the direction of the course without recognizing how *they* would probably be best suited to address most of the concerns that they expressed. They supported having two sections of “Use of English,” but proposed that the first should have a remedial bent suitable for their students, and the other portion be only optional since it was “of less immediate concern of [theirs]” (3). The members also suggested a curious kind of collaboration – that copies of examination papers, and a “complete set of the assignments” be sent to the Vice-Dean of Natural Sciences for comment each year (3). Their idea of collaboration was not based on addressing disciplinary conventions, but rather emphasizing and ensuring that the basics of English grammar and mechanics be addressed. Thus, what Donald McQuade wrote of Composition studies in the US would be true of writing/English Language at UWI: “[It] remains one of the few academic disciplines in which outsiders insist on naming and authorizing its activities, without accepting the intellectual responsibility – and the institutional consequences – for doing so” (qtd. in Cheramie 145).

By 1987 the “language” problem was so acute that some science faculty sought again to influence the course and to push for an emphasis on formalist concerns. This time, they blamed students’ limited linguistic competence on research in the department of Use of English and Linguistics and on the course content, and ignored how students were learning their disciplines’ content. In a 14 April 1987 memorandum, Ken E.

Magnus, then Dean of Natural Sciences, brought to the Academic Board Chairman's attention a 13 April 1987 newspaper article regarding the launching of Hubert Devonish's *Language and Liberation*. Magnus was concerned that the book/launch seemed to promote development in Creole rather than in English because Devonish was arguing for instituting Creole as an official language in Jamaica. Magnus expressed concern because external examiners of undergraduates' papers in his faculty had been noting the following:

- "Language: The level of expression is generally low. The students are generally careless, not only with paragraph and sentence construction but with simple tense/number rubrics"
- "*but it is clear that the faculty members in the department are not placing enough emphasis on this aspect .. [sic] it is not enough to carry out a good study you must also be able to present your results in a clear manner.*" (1, my emphasis)

Ironically, the faculty in Natural Sciences seemed to miss the clear statement to *them* in the second comment, nudging *them* to address students' presentation of research. Had the faculty attended to the comment, they would have realized the need for addressing how doing, knowing, and writing are interconnected in learning in disciplines (see Carter). Unfortunately, the response from the head of Use of English and Linguistics, Pauline Christie, while being incisive, would miss the opportunity to emphasize problems with language policy at lower educational levels and "content" faculty's contribution to students' writing development. Christie reminded the chairman of Academic Board (and Magnus) that "Use of English" tutors are "not miracle workers. They cannot achieve in one year all that the schools have been unable to achieve in several years. Besides, the content of the Use of English course is not primarily remedial" ("Comments"). Christie's response was accurate, but because she did not openly state why the schools may have

failed, as I indicated in Chapter 2, readers could have inferred that she implied – erroneously – that the real responsibility for language development lies with the secondary school.

A Single Discourse Community: Writing Content as Sociolinguistic Content

Ultimately, both “Use of English” and “content” faculty neglected to link writing development with learning in disciplines to really assist students. Essentially, they demonstrated limited understandings of the connection between content, writing, and learning. Importantly, the Science faculty may have been moved to criticize what they believed Devonish was claiming because of the focus on Caribbean language in the course. Besides concerns about whether writing should be taught in the university or that the course should address proficiency matters, some “content” faculty were concerned that the course promoted the view that the stigmatized Caribbean Creoles were functional languages. In the 1970s, “Use of English” faculty had begun to address linguistic issues in the wider society, resulting in a shift from addressing general language issues to focusing on Caribbean language. This shift seemed to be consistent with movements elsewhere. At this same time, socio-linguists in the US were advocating for recognition of non-standard dialects in the classroom. One result of their advocacy was the *Students’ Right to Their Own Language* resolution that the Conference on College Composition and Communication adopted in 1974 (Smitherman, “CCCC’s” 358). In his “A Brief Summary of the Aims and Contents of the Use of English Course,” Winford emphasized the new aspects of the West Indian course which included “a detailed look at the roles of

language varieties in their social context, the nature of Standard and Non-Standard languages, and the characteristics of Creole languages such as those used in the Caribbean area” (1). “Use of English staff considered such examinations important to the development of “informed persons” in the Caribbean where “prestige value” or stigma is attached to the different language varieties that serve different purposes.

By 1972, course readings reflected the changes, and the syllabus included Beryl Bailey’s 1966 *Jamaican Creole Syntax* and Frederick Cassidy’s 1961 *Jamaica Talk* (see “University Courses”). The shift from a general focus on language to focus on Caribbean language issues in the 1970s is also evident in the record of course lectures that were given in the 1970s. The 1976 course manual indicates that five of nine lectures focused on language/linguistics, with such topics as “Communication and Language,” “Some Contributions of Linguistics to the Use of English Course,” “Linguistic Aspects of Communication in the West Indies,” “Semantic Shift,” and “Language and Ritual” (Cuthbert *Language*). Kathryn Shields explained that such topics constituted the “content component which [sought] to disabuse students’ minds of the several misconceptions, shared by the wider community, about language, as well as about communication styles” (“Justification”). Consequently, consistent with the prevailing national sentiments following independence, students learned that Jamaica had its own language, and that there were distinctions among British English, standard Jamaican English, and Jamaican Creole. Shields argued that having that “content component” was important: “Especially at University level, the *importance of content to the production of appropriate language* cannot be overlooked” (“Justification,” my emphasis). This is a telling statement, begging

the question of why the focus should be *sociolinguistic* content and not (also) subject content to help students to write in their disciplines. The science faculty were not interested in the emphasis on linguistics, particularly the sociolinguistic content of the course. However, like Shields, they did not address how subject content could facilitate language production. They were merely interested in the remedial aspect of the course; hence, the reason they pointed to possible Creole interference in writing and requested that students receive assistance to eliminate the resultant errors and use *correct* English grammar.

A Plural Academy: Collaboration on *Problems* versus Disciplinary Writing

Requirements

It appears that neither “content” faculty nor “Use of English” faculty realized the extent to which they were promoting formalist presuppositions that limited students’ critical reflection on and practical understanding of new content and how to convey it. Besides when “content” faculty tried to dictate what the course focus should be, and when “Use of English” faculty emphasized sociolinguistic content rather than the content of students’ disciplines, “Use of English” faculty also seemed to promote the erroneous view that writing is separate from disciplinary learning. This unfortunate promotion occurred when they, too, requested superficial forms of collaboration and suggested that disciplinary writing instruction should focus on *problems* in writing rather than *requirements*. These weaknesses were evident even before the Use of English course started in 1963.

Before the course started, Owens suggested that there should be collaboration with lecturers in the other survey courses, but he did not make this suggestion based on disciplinary differences. He mentioned that a survey course lecturer could be present during discussion of a lecture that that individual had given. The discussion “would bring out practically the accuracy of recall, the accuracy of the notes taken, and give students a chance to talk over and to discuss what they had heard” (2).). Like Owens, Carr recommended collaboration with other faculty, but Carr’s intention was to include a focus on disciplinary requirements. Carr felt that when the class had become “alert to questions of cogency and evidence,” the tutor could present a badly constructed mini-lecture for students to critique and offer suggestions for improving it. As well, faculty in the History of Civilisation survey course could participate in a class to check students’ note-taking skills (“The Use” 3). Carr recommended that a representative from history or science could present examples of good and bad historical or scientific writing and explain to students “his criteria of ‘good’ and ‘bad’” (4). He also reminded his constituents that while the English Department would “naturally cooperate in the teaching and [be] prepared to exercise supervisory control,” it could not be “solely responsible for the teaching burden of the course” (5). In suggesting discussions for establishing the quality of the writing, Carr sought to address disciplinary requirements. He conveyed the sense that differences in academia were understood, even if only in a superficial way, in that he understood that there is a different way to *talk about, not create, knowledge* in each discipline. In talking about different kinds of communication that students would come to terms with, Carr noted “[c]ommunicating information about

a scientific experiment or explaining a scientific concept is clearly not the kind of communication which the poet or the novelist or [sic] the historian or the sociologist attempts” (“Uses” 3). A one-page document, entitled “Use of English Course. Suggestions for Seminars 4-8,” and attached to a 2-page unsigned letter to a “Gordon” on 13 January 1964 also explicitly addresses differing disciplinary requirements. The sender (quite likely Carr since he was the then course moderator) asserted that “[m]ore extensive work is aimed at, with the hope of helping students to understand the stylistic problems they face in their different disciplines, as well as what they could expect to find in writing outside their own fields.” The sender also noted that “[s]ome mention should be made of the difficulties of communication between disciplines which use the same words in different senses, as for example, medical ‘motor,’ and mechanical ‘motor,’ ‘physic’ and ‘physics,’ mathematical and mechanical ‘differential’” and so on.

Although the “Use of English” faculty seemed to consistently address disciplinary concerns, they tended to emphasize problems rather than general disciplinary requirements, and therefore emphasized formalist concerns although without specific considerations of the linguistic context. Consequently, they did not conceive of collaboration in broad terms that would have been beneficial to students’ development in disciplines. When Allsopp presented the “Report on the Use of English Course 1967/68,” he turned to “content” faculty for help with students’ writing challenges. Allsopp mentioned that the many errors signaled a need for faculty to consider distributing a list of common errors that students should avoid in writing. He called for collaboration with faculty in other areas, but only in terms of grammatical/ mechanical error identification:

“We should get from other Departments written criticisms and perhaps samples of undergraduate English (in their experience) which might be of use in orienting some exercises in the course” (2). He made a similar request in 1972 after “Use of English” faculty considered a diagnostic test and/or a second course to address language deficiencies. Walker’s “Minutes of the Meeting of Lecturers in the Use of English at Cave Hill 28th to 29th January, 1972” records that neither the matter of testing nor a second course was settled. Therefore, the meeting agreed that until a second course was considered again or designed, a workbook could be developed to help weak students to address the faults in their written work. In “A Use of English WORKBOOK,” a letter sent in March 1972, Allsopp apprised colleagues of the “Use of English” tutors’ decision to develop the workbook, and requested that faculty besides those involved in the course submit writing samples for inclusion in the workbook. Faculty’s involvement would include “copying off complete sentences from students’ written work in [their] subject as [they] mark it, containing examples of any of the following: faulty usage, regional or non-standard vocabulary, wrong choice of word, poor phrasing, faulty or weak grammatical structure, regular mis-spellings.” Allsopp sent this request on the basis that “all persons marking ... students’ written work must come across striking examples of defective English which students bring with them to the University, and your special cooperation is respectfully sought in pooling these defects in an attempt to organise remedy.” These categories would probably have been perceived as a sad commentary on the language policies implemented and the teaching methods employed at pre-university levels in Jamaica. Their presence at the tertiary level confirms the error in assuming that

students could learn English instinctively, but they should also have awakened faculty's consciousness to the equally faulty assumption that students write intrinsically in any discipline. Unfamiliarity with new disciplinary discourse would have compounded such problems in the university setting, but neither the "Use of English" nor "content" faculty addressed that concern.

Winford would also emphasize problems rather than disciplinary requirements when he considered disciplinary concerns in "A Brief Summary of the Aims and Contents of the Use of English Course." Winford pointed to the benefits of "familiarising students with the various purposes which language serves" (1) to help students to become confident and to discriminate well when analyzing other people's work and when they wrote (2). However, he recognized that although developing such abilities was useful for all students, notwithstanding their subject area, there was need for more work regarding disciplinary differences: "there is still a great deal of room for improvement in our attempts to orient the Use of English course towards the *problems peculiar to specific disciplines*" (2). In this statement, Winford unfortunately suggested that disciplinary work is read in terms of *problems*, not *requirements*, to be addressed. However, his "Proposal for Development of Part of the Use of English Course" suggests ways in which recognition of disciplinary differences were frustrated. In this June 1973 memorandum to Heads of Department, Deputy Librarian, Senior Assistant Librarians, and Assistant Librarians, Winford called for modifications to the "study method" section of the course that included note-making, note-taking, and organization of bibliographies. He indicated that treatment of this aspect of the course was "severely handicapped by not being

followed up with practical experience geared toward the particular disciplines pursued by students” (1). He proposed that the various Faculties cooperate and use the opportunity to make the course relevant to their students by “making suggestions about themes and topics in various disciplines which might be useful in providing practical experience in the use of the various devices of study method” (3). Communications from Walker also confirm that most attempts at soliciting campus-wide faculty assistance or at addressing disciplinary specifics – even if only in a limited way – were frustrated by administrative issues. In her “Letter to Mr. Arthur Drayton, Vice-Dean, Faculty of Arts and General Studies” in March 1973, Walker traced staffing problems and difficulties in addressing remediation. Walker’s letter also showed a recognition of disciplinary differences, with Walker reminding the Vice-Dean of having already mentioned to him “the need for the development of special emphases in the Course for students in different fields of specialization” (1). She was concerned that such efforts were frustrated by lack of adequate numbers of staff members in their “many-faceted programme” (2).

Sometimes, the Arts faculty, and specifically “Use of English” faculty, blocked collaboration by rejecting proposals from within their ranks. Based on the perceived language problems in the course, Allsopp offered some proposals that would include a call for collaboration and a reinforcement of the course’s value. In his 1971 “Report on the Use of English Course,” he recommended that

with the agreement of other Faculties, appointments might be made of persons in those Faculties able to participate in teaching the F/GS U/E programme as a part of assigned duties. Such persons, bringing privileged information on the language material and possibly language difficulties encountered in their particular disciplines, might actually be a special advantage in orienting parts of the Course for their own Faculty students. (4)

Allsopp wished to address disciplinary differences through collaboration in teaching. The then Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Leslie Robinson, would recognize the need to address such differences in his 29 March 1971 follow up “Letter to David King” regarding Allsopp’s proposals. In Robinson’s words, “The possibility of gearing parts of the course to the needs of particular groups of students should be further explored.” However, the Arts faculty did not support Allsopp’s attempt to accommodate disciplinary difference in the course, and cast blame for students’ deficiencies on the school. Minute 70 in the “Minutes of A Meeting of the Faculty of General Studies Committee, Mona, Held on Friday, 23rd April, 1971” records their rejection of Allsopp’s proposal to include “content” faculty in the course. In the Committee’s eyes, “it did not follow that such members of staff would necessarily be the best persons to take Use of English classes” (3). The committee members refused to consider the disciplinary advantage because of concerns about content faculties’ qualifications, workload, and remuneration (3).

King’s “Some Proposed Modifications” also records rejection of Allsopp’s proposal. In this 3-page letter to the Dean of the Faculty of General Studies in September 1971, King and Walker reported that the tutors at Mona did not favor disciplinary support in teaching in the course. They noted, “while we agree that the Use of English programmes would be benefited by the use of specialists in certain subject areas, we see the value of specialists to the programme largely in the planning stages, for consultation and in the preparation and development of proper course materials suited to the specific needs of the students” (2). The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) would, however, continue to push for recognition of disciplinary difference even though his communication

simultaneously seems to suggest he was probably unconsciously shifting the responsibility to “Use of English” instructors as special groups demanded addressing concerns specific to their areas. In his one-page “Letter to Dr. S. R. R. Allsopp” in May 1971, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Robinson wished to know if the Use of English course could accommodate an emphasis on “report writing” to facilitate the new program in Librarianship that would begin in October of that year. Robinson also reminded Allsopp that he (PVC) had already mentioned that “the Nurses were anxious to have some work of this kind built into their Use of English programme.” Robinson ended by suggesting that he was in favor of gearing the course to meet specific disciplinary groups: “I need not reiterate my own personal view that I can see no reason why the Use of English course has to be identical for all groups within the University.” However, while PVC Robinson promoted a course design that would be relevant to specific groups of students, he did not recommend that “content” faculty would need to contribute to that realization.

Writing: A Single, Generalizable Skill/ The Myth of Transience

Perhaps, the kind of collaboration that Allsopp suggested did not materialize, and a proficiency program to address students’ special language needs was not immediately developed, because some academics held the same view as the public that neither the Use of English course nor a proficiency component belonged in the university. They promoted the myth of transience by suggesting the course would not have to be considered if the schools improved instruction or if the university changed its selection policy. Even when some faculty and administrators suggested the university had a

responsibility to develop the region's human resources, their concern seemed to be less with helping students and more with helping the university avoid blame for graduates' weaknesses. In "Report on the Use of English Course 1968/69," then Chief Moderator, Joyce Walker noted observations that "the remedial aspects were becoming more pronounced" (1). Added to those concerns, "content" faculty seemed to have misunderstood the aims of the course to the extent that some were requesting that their students who were exhibiting language deficiencies be provided special help. Walker explained that the challenge increased because "in an effort to teach more elementary aspects of usage and style, the proper concern of the Course might be set aside" (1). Moreover, those involved in teaching in the course would offer remedial help where they could, but they felt that "this should not be part of the University's Use of English Course for which a student receives credit" (1). Walker's "Minutes of the Meeting of Lecturers in the Use of English at Cave Hill 28th to 29th January, 1972" reports that attendees discussed a previous Senate decision to institute a test to exempt students from the Course and reduce numbers. By recommending that some students be exempt from the Use of English course while others took a remedial course, upper administrators demonstrated limited understanding of what it means to write or receive writing instruction in the university. Perhaps, in an unstated recognition of such limited understanding, attendees avoided the trap of passing the responsibility to secondary schools by pointing out that the course was "required and conceived to be a habit-forming system, whereas the examination was an almost marginal check of performance" (9). Attendees felt that "the University [could] not share the responsibility for teaching a full

University credit course with the Secondary Schools, though this is in effect, what some proposals for exemption, made outside the meeting imply” (14).

Allsopp, who had rejected the view that basic English problems accounted for most of the failures in the course, would be instrumental in laying the ground work for addressing students’ special language needs. In “UWI Use of English Course: Proposal for an Adjustment in Course Content,” Allsopp acknowledged that the Use of English course served a useful purpose in addressing the “undeveloped judgment and uncritical acceptance of written matter and lack of insight in interpreting almost any subtlety in mature English” that resulted in “massive mediocrity of examination results” (1) in courses in the different Faculties. However, he also felt that the “attention to performance” (1) in the course had been “at the expense of attention to linguistic competence” (1). The course had not been conceived to address “the grammatical conventions of morphological and syntactic structure, and verbal accuracy” (1). Allsopp noted that the very popular Cambridge G.C.E. ‘O’ level English examination also focused on performance and did not test linguistic competence. He concluded that since neither of these forums addressed linguistic competence, tutors could only expect “the gross decay or increasing ignorance of the conventions of English spelling and structure which [were] commonplace with the older ‘flogged’ generation” (1). Allsopp, informed readers that although – as he stressed before – he did not think the majority of students failed the course on account of grammatical or mechanical errors, he was aware that “the problem of substandard written English displayed in the U/E Course [was] too great to remain a peripheral objective, notwithstanding the merits” (2) of the course. Therefore,

he proposed a “compromise involving adjustment of content” (2) so that linguistic competence could receive “separate attention” (1).

The Faculty of Arts and General Studies’ “Provisional Report of a Conference of Use of English Teachers Held in the Council Room, Mona, on January 3 & 4, 1975” reveals that attendees disagreed with Allsopp’s earlier proposals regarding remedial instruction, but “unanimously adopted the following motion” that reflects the persistence of the myth of transience even amongst the “Use of English” staff:

The Use of English Conference recognizes that work in English Language proficiency is necessary and will continue to be necessary until the UWI changes its entry requirements; that such work in language proficiency should be provided either in remedial workshops or in individual schemes, and either using the workbook now being prepared by Mr. Allsopp or by other organized procedure; that the work in proficiency should proceed alongside the general Use of English course; and that where increased staffing is needed for the implementation of this proposal we emphasize the University’s obligation to provide for this need or to eliminate the need for this provision, by the exclusion of students lacking in language proficiency by means of an appropriate English Language test as an entry requirement.

The Academic Committee would accept this “Use of English” teachers’ January 1975 proposal and recommend that a Department of Linguistics and Use of English be created at Mona to include the current lecturer in Linguistics, staff from the Language Laboratory, and the “Use of English” staff (“Matters”). The creation of a department is significant because it meant that administrators were beginning to recognize the need for a stable unit to address writing requirements in the university – albeit only until they thought the problems had disappeared.

When the Use of English course was first offered in Jamaica, the rest of the university was not interested in talking about writing as a discipline. This situation was

compounded when the university began to acknowledge weaknesses in students' writing and various segments called for the course to emphasize grammar. "Content" faculty considered the course as introduced to remedy the ill *until* the high schools began to do a better job of preparing students in English. King confirmed in our interview that by 1967, the University had lost faith in the Cambridge G.C.E. 'O' level results in English for Jamaicans and questioned the quality of students who were seeking admission to the university. Even students who had earned an "A" in the external examinations performed poorly in writing at the university. King recalled that when he started teaching in the course in the late 1960s, he heard terms such as "terminal" that suggested something "cancerous" being associated with the course. King emphasized that people in Barbados and Trinidad felt that the situation was particularly grave in Jamaica while their students were arriving at UWI fully prepared. Barbadians and Trinidadians felt that funds were being used to teach grammar and other features that should have been taught in high school. The general view was that when the Jamaican government improved teaching in high school, the course would disappear. Therefore, far from approving of the critical and informed approach to the teaching of writing at university level that the Use of English course had adopted, many academics and members of the public claimed that the teaching of "Use of English" did not properly belong at a university. By using the term "terminal" to emphasize that as soon as students improved, the English survey course would not be needed, UWI's administrators and even some writing specialists rejected the view that the work of literacy in higher education is not going away. Their attitudes suggested a belief in writing instruction as inoculation and prevented the development of

both writing courses to address students' specific language needs and vital writing across the curriculum programs to allow students to learn both language conventions and content within disciplines.

Unlike most of the "Use of English" faculty who supported addressing the problem internally, upper administration kept the focus on the schools' addressing linguistic competence. Minute number 367 of the Academic Board Minutes of 13 June 1985 states, "Academic Board, Mona, heard from several of its members and expressed its concern that there appeared to be a great need for remedial English at the University and agreed to consider ways to improve the standard in conjunction with teachers in the Secondary Schools." Whereas in this case the suggestion was to *consider* the problem along with the schools, the schools would eventually be *blamed* for student performance. Minute number 686 of the University Academic Committee (UAC) Minutes of 24 March 1988 reflects academics' continued consideration for transferring the problem to schools: "UAC noted the view expressed that the poor level of English of many UWI students had been a problem for a long time and that it was one for the schools to tackle. However, UAC also noted the view that the University needed to assist and that the Use of English Course which was probably not designed to deal with the problem should be modified." Therefore, as in the months preceding the course and in the first few years after its introduction, interest groups were again faced with defending the Use of English course and addressing the university's responsibility to the students it accepts but whose actual performance did not match the expectations held about their linguistic competence.

One of the groups to proffer views about the university's role in student's proficiency in English on all campuses is the Unit of Use of English and Linguistics at Cave Hill. The comments appear in the 1986/87 "Report on Proficiency of Third Year Students," the results of a rare study conducted to determine final year students' level of proficiency in English that is often considered "unacceptable." The report stresses, "It is thought that this deficiency reflects adversely on the University and that the University needs to take some action to rectify the problem. While the problem may be one inherited from the elementary and secondary levels of education, the reality is that U.W.I. is at the end of the line and so gets and will continue to get the blame" (1). Like the UWI academics mentioned in Chapter 1, those at Cave Hill were highlighting the serious situation in which the university would be blamed for the deficiencies in students' language usage. The recommendation was, therefore, for the university to get involved to *avoid blame* – not necessarily to *enable* students' development.

A similar recommendation that the university address the situation was also made in "Report on Faculty Review 1986/87" for the Faculty of Arts and General Studies, Cave Hill. However, this document implies some academics' recognition of the need to cease perpetuating the myth of transience. Much of what is said in this document relates to the university in general and what is said about Cave Hill is also true for Mona. This report mentions that more than three quarters of the incoming students did not have "genuine 'A' level qualifications" (2) and this number had been increasing steadily. As well, as established in Chapter 1, many new students were not coming directly from secondary schools, and more and more faculty members felt that the university was "not

receiving the best products” (2) from these schools. Besides the weaknesses often noted in students’ language use, the report mentions the generally poor quality of students’ work exhibited in the quality of degrees awarded each year (4). The conclusion was for the university to play an active role in students’ language development by *acknowledging* the problem and addressing it *in the university*. The writers insisted that administrators and faculty could not “sit back and blame the other levels of the educational system for the existence of the problem; all that does is to perpetuate the problem” (7). They considered potential restrictions on intake, but noted “any rigorous screening of applicants would cut intake by at least one-third” (7) and the institution could not afford that loss of funds. The report recommended that the university strike a “pragmatic balance ... between self-interest and commitment to acceptable standards” (8). The writers felt that the entrance examinations should be enlisted in this effort “primarily as diagnostic tools rather than as mechanisms to restrict intake” (8). They were aware of the longstanding dilemma that the university has had to face: screen students to exclude those who cannot write, which means emphasizing excellence, or screen them to determine who may need extra help in writing in their disciplines – to achieve equity and maintain excellence.

Richard Allsopp would also express the view that the university should share the responsibility for students’ language development. He recognized that the reason the secondary schools could not carry the burden alone was that the teaching methods were faulty. Nevertheless, he did not acknowledge that the problem was not only imported teaching methods, but one also rooted in an imposed colonial policy yet to be dismantled.

His comments appeared in *Report on the State of Written English at the UWI at Cave Hill, Barbados*, a document prepared in 1988 to give the background to the teaching of “Use of English” at UWI, reasons for students’ poor written English proficiency skills, approaches to teaching, and changes needed. In preparing this document, Allsopp drew on his experience as University Moderator until 1972, so his comments are applicable to Mona. Allsopp expressed that “consistently good written English is not automatically to be expected of the average student” (2). The situation being as it is, Allsopp recommended that “weak command of English must now be considered a fact of life at University level. Therefore blaming the school system (even if/when such blame is accepted and eliminated!) will not help present and immediate future students. About them UWI must do something, which must be remedial” (21, emphasis in the original). Allsopp explained that the school system may not represent the answer to the problem faced at the university because of imported teaching methods that are not only irrelevant to the region but also guarantee failure. These arose from changes in Britain in the post World War II era when schools stopped teaching Greek and Latin and consequently abandoned parsing – the process of identifying each component and its structural function in a sentence. Teachers abandoned “grammar fatigue” and replaced it with the “direct method” in foreign language teaching and “English at work” in teaching English to native speakers. The problem arose because, as Allsopp wrote,

the Caribbean received and developed its share of these approaches without taking due account of the fact that in the massively oral cultures of the Caribbean the effective pragmatics of speech ... made the parsing of written structures indispensable in a way that could hardly be argued in Britain. In our case it is perhaps the only available means of revealing to the Caribbean schoolchild that syntactic function is the vital factor in differentiating meaning in written

language, and that therefore it must be scrupulously studied if educated international English is to be produced.” (22-23, emphasis in the original)

Compounding the problem then, Allsopp asserted, was that teachers did not get formal training in English structure, with the result being that people often “take refuge in the argument that it is not necessary” (27).

Allsopp also indicated that testing procedures did not contribute to students’ development, and suggested shifts from emphasizing summative writing to exploiting formative writing. Allsopp advised that there is a sad error in not allowing students to see their corrected diagnostic test scripts:

the only sure way to convince not only the failures but nearly the whole body of students that their command of English is faulty is to return the scripts to them as soon as possible after the test for organised corrective exercises question by question. By present departmental policy they never see these scripts again and ... this is a serious error by which the most telling way of getting across urgent messages of deficiencies to the student is lost.” (*Report 15*)

Non-use of students’ writing under examination conditions for developing proficiency and testing skills is consistent with the general emphasis on summative writing and little concern for students’ language/writing development through formative writing in the university. As Chapter 2 established, the emphasis on *testing* writing is, unfortunately, consistent with the emphasis on testing *language* that students may not even have as a first language.

Non-use of students’ scripts may also be associated with the original intentions of the course designers who were primarily concerned with oral discussions in the course. As stated, neither at its inception nor by the mid-1980s was the Use of English course concerned with knowledge creation through writing. Kathryn Shields’ defense of a five-

year limit on the validity of a pass in the course confirms that the focus in “Use of English” in its early years was not writing, per se. Shields noted that up to 1983, the course focus included “the heightening of the students’ awareness of language use in the society, and ... the development of their higher-order reading skills.” She mentioned that the lack of emphasis on writing was most evident in the final examination. There, students were allowed to answer up to 50% of the questions in note-form. It was not until 1984 that students were required to provide responses in continuous prose instead of short-answer note form. Such responses included reports, expository essays, commentaries, and analyses of argument and figures. It was only in 1985 that equal emphasis on writing and oral work was strengthened when a Library Skills component was introduced to formally expose students to research techniques and documentation (“Justification”).

King explained in his questionnaire responses that the limited writing focus in “Use of English” before 1984 is also explained by the fact that the faculty were mainly from literature and promoted the emphasis on critical analysis of poetry. Such faculty were interested in a sophisticated awareness of language, and audience needs, which could easily be taught through reading. As well, there were no courses on writing theory. Faculty did not really have a concept of writing as such then; they really just talked about “English.” It was also easier to find passages for students to look at style, denotation, meaning, and so on, rather than to focus on teaching students to write, or look at drafts. Indeed, it was cheaper to teach reading rather than writing. Instructors also assumed that students would transfer skills learned through reading to their own writing. There was

also the belief in education that the initial focus should be on the oral, that is, students should learn to remove their errors in the oral first before there was any focus on writing. With no clear philosophy of writing then, the belief persisted that writing was about regurgitating information. Consequently, writing largely occurred for examination purposes, and students did not get the practice to understand how writing helped with developing thought and learning.

Conclusion

Allsopp's 1980s reflection on UWI's "Use of English course" recalls its focus: "in keeping with the course's intended stress on using English, its programme focuse[d] patently on interpretative and operative skills, declaring sentence structure to be not within its function" (*Report on the State* 3, emphasis in the original). As the chapter reveals, however, complaints arose from various segments of the university regarding students' level of English proficiency and the lack of teaching of aspects such as grammar and sentence structure in a course that seemed to be about "English." However, while "content" faculty were concerned about the quality of students' writing in the academy, they, like members of the public, were also confused by the nomenclature. As Allsopp, writes, "on all three campuses alarm has been expressed and noted for some two decades over the structural faults of students' written English, which the Use of English course was not designed to remedy but which it has been called upon to answer for largely because of its name" (*Report on the State* 9). Still, like some "content" faculty and administrators, the "Use of English" staff had been operating on incorrect

assumptions about incoming students. Because the course designers had assumed that virtually all students entering the university would have already achieved at least basic competence in Standard English grammar and in the mechanics of writing, they had made no provision, either in the allotment of teaching time or in the course syllabus, for tutors to help their students deal with their English proficiency problems in grammar, sentence structure, and in the mechanics of writing within the course. Allsopp writes that “spelling and structure were, however, early and widely recognized as problems” so that as of the May 1965 examination students were allowed to bring in an English dictionary and, up to 1973, were “warned that a very serious view will be taken of faulty spelling, grammar and sentence structure” (*Report on the State* 3). While acknowledging students’ errors in English proficiency – through severe penalty, “Use of English” staff did not really teach to address those errors. What they attempted were informal inclusions of individualized instruction for the students’ concerned and superficial collaboration with other faculty members to address the *errors* in writing in different disciplines.

Besides those problems, in this period, while some academics acknowledged that the academy comprises several competing discourse communities, that acknowledgment never translated into the kind of meaningful collaboration to develop students’ writing as rhetorical activity tied to specific disciplinary practices. In fact, “content” faculty, especially in Natural Sciences, considered writing instruction in the Use of English course as remediation of their students’ language deficiencies – remediation that Natural Science faculty should supervise superficially. Faculty’s misconception that the necessity for discussion of, and explicit instruction in, writing meant a need for remediation rather

than for consideration of language use beyond basic English in disciplines is perhaps the most glaring of those that appear in this period. “Content” faculty appeared to marginalize language development when, by insisting on what the course should teach, they transferred the responsibility for writing instruction to the “Use of English” staff. The result was reinforcement of the erroneous idea that academia is a single discourse community.

As well, statements from some “Use of English” staff, “content” faculty, and administration suggested that the problems that were appearing regarding grammar and mechanics would disappear when the institution changed its matriculation requirements or when positive changes were realized in secondary schools. Such hope that writing instruction would continue in the university only until there were changes in the university’s selection policy or there were changes at the secondary level signal the persistent myth of transience. The fact that that desire was not being realized helped to secure plans for restructuring the course to address remediation. By 1980 when “content” faculty’s complaints persisted, the Vice Chancellor reported that “teachers on all campuses have accepted the need for supplemental teaching aimed at improving the language proficiency of students as early as possible in their academic career” (UWI, *Vice Chancellor 1980*, 23). Students’ language proficiency would, therefore, become an enduring topic of discussion in the 1980s, and writing and language instruction would be increased in the course, but in response to the need for remediation. However, as indicated, the measures were ill-defined and unsuccessful.

Because the Use of English course maintained a limited focus on writing and was subsequently criticized, some of the important changes made to it in an attempt at achieving equity *in society* could be overshadowed. Although the course may have begun as another English importation, by the 1970s it was already appropriated. One of its hallmarks was to be consciousness-raising with regard to students' awareness of language use in Caribbean societies. As Dyche puts it, "by 1973, aspects of the educational and political agenda of Caribbean and other linguists had indeed found their way into the course" ("English"). The unit offering "Use of English" was interested in disabusing students of the idea that the Caribbean Creoles are forms of broken English. This interest in the local languages, in the promotion of Caribbean Creoles as legitimate languages, was sparked in the wake of independence – at least for the linguists who were then employed to the university. These faculty members had to address the negative attitudes to Creole that manifested in negative labels attached to it. Their intention was to bring *language* to the fore of discussions about national identity and self-sufficiency by challenging university students to consider and act on those issues. However, other segments of the university were concerned that interest in Creole would not assist students in writing grammatically correct English, as critics of the *Students' Right to Their Own Language* in the US believed about interest in non-standard dialects (see Sheils). Hence, "content" faculty at UWI vocalized their frustrations about the language deficiencies exhibited in students' writing, and called for the course whose focus was "English" to address such matters. "Content" faculty believed that instruction should address remediation by virtue of the fact that "language" was being taught. The "Use of

English” faculty, however, rejected this deficit model of teaching for a long time. Even when course documents suggested a proficiency program was being considered or developed, no formal program was in place at Mona even after the mid-1980s.

That various individuals within the university had different views about the content and purpose of the Use of English course is not insignificant. As Dyche notes, “there were, from the beginning, two different, conflicting perspectives on the nature of the ... course” (“English”). Those involved with the course considered it as a *survey* course, while other faculty and public figures considered it a *service* course. To my mind, this attitude of the faculty and other individuals who were not involved in teaching the course is hegemonic in orientation. Seeing the course as having a corrective role, they perpetuated the belief of English as *language* rather than *a language*. Those in the survey camp were more interested in familiarizing students with broader sociolinguistic issues, yet they could not always be seen to be responding to student needs, especially those of increasing numbers of first-generation university students from Creole-speaking backgrounds who were aspiring to middle class status. And neither group considered how a focus on purposes and contexts would help students to critically reflect on disciplinary content and develop practical understanding of language use in disciplinary communities.

Tangible change to address primarily Creole-speaking students would not be evident at Mona until 1988. This change suggested that the university was shifting from an exclusive focus on excellence to – as I am arguing in this dissertation – consider critical ways to achieve social equity and maintain excellence *in the institution*. This change came in the form of “Fundamentals of English” – a basic writing course

developed to accommodate students deemed to demonstrate inadequate levels of proficiency in English. However, as I will show in the next chapter, both supporters and opponents of this course continued to separate language development from learning in disciplines and outside the academy because they continued to shroud writing knowledge in formalism.

Note

¹ Basil Bernstein's description of restricted codes led to interpretations related to deficiency in speakers' cognition and/or expression and not related to restrictions based on class relations (see Atkinson, Davies, and Delamont x; Bernstein 19). However, unlike many scholars in the US and elsewhere, "Use of English" faculty at Mona did not seem to believe that Bernstein was promoting a linguistic deficit position; rather, it appears that they used Bernstein's descriptions of restrictions on languages based on the roles ascribed to languages (see Hymes, "Bernstein" 6-7) to help to argue for the legitimacy of all language varieties. Of course, "content" faculty at Mona seemed to consider the Creole as being "restricted" and thus "limited" for communication purposes.

IV. NURTURING ‘LINGUISTIC ORPHANS’ IN THE POST-NATIONAL ERA,
LATE 1980S TO 2004

[Basic writers] have been invited, and they are here.

Lynn Quitman Troyka, “Defining Basic Writing in Context” 12

Academic writing is never a student’s mother tongue.

Nancy Sommers CCCC 2005

Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion The student has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define ... the various discourses of our community.

David Bartholomae 134

In Chapter 3, I argued that because of limited understandings of writing, administrators and faculty persisted in promoting the rhetoric of transparent disciplinaryity and perpetuating the myth of transience in the 1960s to mid-1980s. These views emerged in discussions surrounding the development and teaching in the “Use of English” survey course that was introduced in 1963 after the UCWI became the independent University of the West Indies (UWI). The rhetoric of transparent disciplinaryity persisted especially regarding the institution’s emphasis on excellence over social equity and “content” faculty’s association of writing instruction with remediation and view of writing as largely separate from disciplinary learning. Although the “Use of English” faculty rejected the emphasis on remediation, especially regarding formalist conventions, they did not associate writing with knowing in disciplines. In that period, administrators and faculty also persisted in stating that any problems in students’ language use or writing should have been remedied in the high school.

This new chapter addresses how writing instruction evolved from a survey model to reflect “relevance” for the Caribbean context. I establish that the university sought to “accommodate” those students who displayed limited mastery of English but who usually excelled in content areas, following persistent complaints by “content” faculty, “Use of English” faculty’s eventual acknowledgment of many students’ actual linguistic and writing profiles, and calls from groups within the institution to avoid an exclusionary policy and instead consider social equity to achieve regional development. This accommodation was consistent with continuing expansions in enrollment in the post-national era. This was the late 1980s after Jamaica had changed hands from leaders who considered themselves democratic socialists to those deemed as capitalists.¹ The institution continued to realize expansions in enrollment in this period, and a consequent increase in its number of Creole-speaking first-generation university students. The 1986 *Report of the Task Force on Tertiary Education* reveals that increasing numbers of students had been from lower income homes: “Within the U.W.I. there has been steady growth in admission of students. These are from lower income homes” (41). Many of these students were admitted on the basis of their teacher training or nursing certificates. This report referenced a study that was showing that 45% of the students enrolled then were from low-income groups. (13). As Chapter 2 revealed, such students would have been coming from backgrounds in which they had limited contact with English, often only learning it in school. A 30% cess on tuition that was applied in 1986 did not stem the tide of students from Creole-speaking backgrounds in any significant way. In 1984/1985, enrollment on the Mona Campus had increased by 166 to 5,345. In

1985/1986, when the government announced that students would have to pay 30% of the economic cost of their education, enrollment decreased by 266 to 5,088. In the first year, when the cess was applied, enrollment decreased again to 4,979. However, by the next year, 1987/1988, enrollment increased by 256 to 5,235 students on the Mona campus (UWI, *Official Statistics 2*). In this same period, faculty continued to complain about students' language competencies, leading to evolution in the Use of English course.

The evolution of writing instruction at Mona involved introduction in 1988 of "Fundamentals of English" (the basic writing course that Chevannes invokes). Mona's administrators and faculty abandoned the faulty assumption that all students possessed the required English Language competencies for writing in their disciplines. To address the problems demonstrated by many of those students, the Academic Board approved an entrance test and the elementary English course, "Fundamentals of English," for students who received a border-line score on the test. This course served to "nurture" the linguistic orphans created by implementation of government language policies at other educational levels. Such students were like those Patricia Irvine and Nan Elsasser observed in the US Virgin Islands: they were "expected to deny the existence of their first language [Creole] and read and write in a second one [English]" (314). If they failed to give up the conventions of their first language, they often failed to meet the minimum writing requirements for commencing their university career. For more than a decade, the university "accommodated" such students – displaying the egalitarian ethos that is consistent with democratization of education. However, while the institution appeared to provide opportunities for all entrants to succeed, its emphasis was on *accommodating*

those students only *temporarily*. Because administrators and faculty sought to *manage* rather than learn from students' language and writing challenges, they seemed to oscillate between the egalitarianism that is supposed to inform "the rhetoric of widening participation" (Lillis, "Whose" 66) and the elitist emphasis on excellence that is entrenched in the institution's foundations. By 2004, administrators and faculty seemed to be engaging in "new elitism," associated with institutions in the US that are also facing tightened budgets and are trying to abolish basic writing (McNenny; Soliday). The university would divest itself of its basic writing course but would accommodate the duality of equity and excellence by "institutionalizing ambiguity" (Russell, *Writing* 27). As explained in Chapter 1, this ambiguity is evident in the US in the provision of general composition courses that were meant to prepare previously excluded students to write in the academy; however, they functioned as gatekeepers because they were associated with remediation or a liminal position. In Jamaica, ambiguity has been institutionalized in a policy to accept students who do not get a clear pass on their entrance English Proficiency Test but not provide accommodations in the normal curriculum for those students to develop their writing before they are re-tested and can go on to take their required first-year writing course(s), which they must pass before being able to graduate. The result of this change has been an unfortunate shift from "nurturing" to "testing" students, with the myth of transience yielding increasing marginalization of groups of students who do not display acceptable levels of mastery in written English.

Many academics who were in favor of this course wanted it to focus on formalist conventions; however, precisely because of that focus, those who countered it called for

its teaching in secondary level schools. Neither group realized the extent to which everyone was shrouding writing knowledge in formalism and continuing to separate language development from learning in disciplines and learning outside of the academy. This disconnect between writing and learning is evident in the introduction and development of the course, debates surrounding its development, and its eventual divestment from the university. I argue that the views about, and organization of, this course perhaps best demonstrate attitudes to the work of literacy, the persistence of the myth of transience at UWI, Mona, and the need for reconsiderations of the provisions (or lack thereof) for the students who arrive at the university with inadequate levels of proficiency in English. The development of “Fundamentals of English” marked a necessary response to changing cohorts and diverse abilities of students; however, its management – and that of the Writing Centre – suggests administrators and faculty have ignored the country’s distinctive social issues and the interconnectedness of writing and learning in the academy and language learning and use in society.

Students’ Real Linguistic and Writing Profiles Acknowledged: Social Equity Considered

Because faculty and administrators did not immediately adapt the British model course that was introduced in 1963, they attributed faulty linguistic and writing profiles to students. However, they appeared to acknowledge students’ varying language and writing abilities when in the 1988/1989 academic year, the university finally began to offer a separate elementary English course for students who demonstrated low proficiency in

understanding and producing written English. The university's Chief Moderator for "Use of English," Richard Allsopp, had first recommended in 1971 that a course be developed for such students on each campus, and "content" faculty had been calling for similar arrangements or for increased "remedial" focus in the Use of English course since the late 1960s. "Use of English" faculty made every attempt to disassociate the course and themselves from remedial instruction. However, when persistent complaints were received from various segments of the university in the mid-1980s to signal that the proficiency problem had become more acute, the "Use of English" faculty seriously considered a program for the students concerned. These complaints had been lodged by faculty in Social Sciences in 1985 and in Education in 1987 and by external examiners for the Faculty of Natural Sciences in 1986 and for the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication in 1987 (see Dyche "English"). The course developed in response to such complaints and to "Use of English" faculty's observations is "Fundamentals of English" (UC010).

I describe as "linguistic orphans" the students for whom this course was developed. These are students who, like those described by Irvine and Elsasser, found themselves without a language for written literacy. They had to abandon their oral Creole language in the schoolroom, but they never really developed mastery of the written English code (314). Although students from various territories could be found in the UC010 course that was developed at Mona, most of the takers were Jamaicans. Dyche confirmed this constituency in a letter in 1996 to the editor of the then *Arts Newsletter* in which she attempted to correct inaccuracies about the English Language courses and the

university's responsibility in such teaching. Dyche pointed out that the percentage of non-Jamaican students from the English-speaking territories who take the UC010 course is "relatively insignificant, but there are at least ten in the course each year" (Letter 2). Given that there were 200-300 students in the course in each year in the 1980s and 1990s (Shields, "Proposals"), if approximately ten were non-Jamaican, then over 90% were Jamaican. As I have established, significant numbers of those Jamaican students were from Creole-speaking backgrounds.

The students who had to take this UC010 course can also be described as "basic writers." The late Mina Shaughnessy, basic writing theorist and teacher whose work influenced the development of UC010 (see Dyche, "Characteristic"), concludes that basic writers are students who "write the way they do, not because they are slow or non-verbal ... but because they are beginners and must like all beginners, learn by making mistakes. These they make aplenty ..." (5). Basic writers in the Jamaican context are somewhat similar to those described by Shaughnessy, and their peculiarities can be inferred from the program to which they are attached. Their course, UC010, was designed for students deemed to have demonstrated inadequate reading and writing skills in the English Language Proficiency Test. Typically, students offered a place in UC010 receive very low or failing scores in the reading comprehension, grammar, and analysis of numerical data sections, and write essays that – based on the Mark Scheme for the test – display a student's satisfactory, partial, or unsatisfactory competence in "giving focus/direction to the writing and in developing and organizing ideas." The writing is usually coherent and even if the student displays unsatisfactory competence in giving focus, "the message can

be generally understood.” However, there usually is a significant problem at the level of expression: “recurrent – although not pervasive – errors of expression ... detract from the overall quality of the writing” (Mark Scheme). Trained and experienced markers and the Academic Advisors in the Test Unit usually determine that students offered UC010 can learn to correct the errors within a year.

The most concrete response to observations of and complaints about such students’ limited English language proficiency came in Kathryn Shields’ “Proposals for Upgrading Students’ Proficiency in English.” In this 1987 document, Shields, who was then convenor of “Use of English,” acknowledged students’ linguistic and writing profiles by addressing the problem of having in the university many students who did not master basic English for reading and writing. She made recommendations similar to those from Allsopp in 1971 for having students take a proficiency test on entry and an elementary English course if their test results confirmed limited English proficiency. She made such recommendations on the basis of observations that “Mona students who are granted UWI matriculation belong to two separate categories: those functionally literate in English [and] those who have limited ability to produce and understand coherent prose in English” (1). Shields pointed out that the schools did not teach the skills of critical reading that were taught in the Use of English course, “basic tools as they are for maximum benefit to be derived from university education” (1). She asserted that with increasing numbers of students being accepted into the university with limited proficiency in English, more was needed than the proficiency component that was added to the Use of English course five years earlier. Shields proposed that students sit a

diagnostic test in the first week of the first term, and those failing to “demonstrate mastery of basic English skills” should take a non-credit course in “Elementary English” before going on to “Use of English.” This elementary course should be for 2 hours per week, with between eight and ten students in each group of a projected total of approximately 300 students.

Administrators and faculty accepted Shield’s proposal, but not without objections (which I discuss in the next section). In the 1987-1988 *Departmental Reports*, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and General Studies (FAGS) mentions that “widespread concern at the low proficiency in English among many students led to approval of a Fundamentals of English course, compulsory for any new student registering for an undergraduate degree who failed a proficiency test on entry” (9). The Mona Academic Board Minutes of 7 July 1988 confirms that the University Academic Committee accepted Shield’s two-pronged proposal for a diagnostic test and a related proficiency course to be offered beginning in October 1988, but not before the board noted that “the proficiency test should be taken and passed *before* a student was admitted to the UWI” and “for UWI to undertake basic English training was a misuse of its resources” (Min. 905, my emphasis). The appended course outline evidences the “basic English training” for which the course was criticized then and that would attract more criticism later. The topics to be covered over a 23-week period would include format and style of essay/letter/report writing, reading comprehension skills, grammatical relation, and writing mechanics and sentence structure.

The 1988-1989 *Departmental Reports* specified that whereas basic training began immediately following acceptance of the proposal, the test's gate keeping function that the Academic Board sanctioned was not activated immediately. On first administration, the test "screened" new students "for competence in English" (46). However, it had not been administered to all new students (13-14). Shields' "Preliminary Report on UC010" in January 1989 confirmed that the first test was administered to only some entrants because of dislocation caused by Hurricane Gilbert in September 1988. This first test was two and a half hours long and comprised an essay; a multiple choice section testing students' ability to distinguish between correct and incorrect grammatical structure, and identify basic grammatical concepts; and a comprehension exercise. The 200 (of 800) students who were offered UC010 were considered to be "unable to write grammatical English," "so lacking in organizational skills as to produce writing which is incoherent," "exhibiting a combination of the first two categories," and "unable to comprehend English at a basic level."

Convinced of the "widespread and serious nature of the problem," the department appointed a new full-time member of staff – Caroline Dyche – in December 1988. Dyche had responsibilities for developing and coordinating "Fundamentals of English," which began fully in the 1989/1990 academic year with students selected primarily based on their performance in the essay component of the proficiency test. Although the course had a full-time coordinator, the staffing problems that plagued the Use of English course would be magnified in UC010. The student-teacher ratio was 12 to 1, but to achieve it, seventeen tutors were involved in the 1989/1990 program – 13 part-time and 4 full-time

(“Report on UC010, 1988/89” 1). This staffing situation suggests how the institution perceived the course. On the one hand, it seemed to be accommodating the course, but on the other, it did not really make the necessary preparations for instruction. Indeed, the weaknesses in Jamaican university students’ language usage caught the attention of various stakeholders, but they did not really consider measures that would go beyond acknowledgement to meaningfully address the problem *within the institution*.

Following the introduction of the course, Jamaica’s National Association of Teachers of English (NATE) recognized that the wishes expressed in the Colonial Office’s 1847 Circular Despatch (described in Chapter 2) had not been realized to date. The association observed that the test instituted at Mona showed that “many students with satisfactory grades in CXC English A and the General Paper did not write *grammatical English* at an acceptable level, and were not conversant with the organization and style appropriate to formal essay writing” (“General Paper” 27, my emphasis). Members of this primarily secondary-level association concluded, “The English A and General Paper examinations, it seemed, permitted other skills to compensate for weaknesses in *formal grammatical expression*” (“General Paper” 27, my emphasis). They recommended that secondary level teachers would, therefore, need to do more in preparing students for university level work. Upper administration was also struck by the situation. However, what was even more striking was faculty’s attitude to the problem along with the persistence of the myth of transience in the institution. So bad was the *language proficiency problem* perceived to be on all campuses that, as happened in the 1970s to early 1980s, it continued to merit inclusion in the UWI *Vice Chancellor’s*

Report. In 1989, the Vice Chancellor reported, “All three campuses continued to grapple with the problem of the low level of competence in English Language exhibited by the majority of students. This problem is exacerbated by limitations on staff caused by limited finances and an unwillingness by certain elements within the University to treat this as a University problem” (22). The inclusion in the 1992 report was no more promising; indeed, it indicated a decline in the number of students with an acceptable level of proficiency in English: “On all three campuses the Faculty continues to grapple with the problem of proficiency in the English Language. While programmes put in place are showing signs of success, the number of students who on entry to the UWI are proficient enough to reap the full benefit from university level materials and teaching seems to be declining” (30).

These reports suggest that neither faculty nor administrators had adequately considered the complexity of the problem, especially regarding the country’s linguistic context and development of public education as explained in Chapter 2. All of these reports highlighted the gravity of students’ weaknesses; however, none addressed the problem in relation to the country’s/region’s linguistic context. No one seemed to suggest that teaching methods for Jamaicans would probably have to be different from those for Spanish or French speakers, for example, who exhibit similar deficiencies but for different reasons when learning English. Although course materials included token sections on Creole, instruction was not consistently relevant to Jamaican students’ linguistic backgrounds. Moreover, there is no documentation suggesting how instruction could have had practical relevance for such students if the course were designed to focus

on real writing tasks in students' disciplines. This measure could have included grouping students based on their specific discipline.

Oscillating between Egalitarianism and Elitism: Equity or Excellence?

Perhaps, because administrators and faculty did not consider the language problem in relation to larger social issues, and because they did not acknowledge how language and writing abilities develop, they often wavered between emphasizing excellence and striving for social equity. Chapters 2 and 3 highlight the ways in which academics at Mona emphasized excellence between the 1940s and early 1980s. The Fundamentals of English course signaled a concern for equity. However, beginning in the late 1980s, administrators' and faculty's attitudes to language and writing instruction were marked by oscillation between the two poles. This oscillation is almost expected, given that some faculty and laypersons opposed the teaching of "Use of English" – an *applied* English course – in the academy. After UC010 was planned and submitted for approval, some administrators and "content" faculty continued to "debate" the course's value. Minute 616 of the 9 June 1988 Academic Board, Mona, meeting records the contrary opinions that various attendees expressed with regard to Shields' proposal:

that a preliminary course would impose an additional burden on students; that (on the contrary) the course, by improving students' reading comprehension and basic writing skills, would assist them to follow other courses more easily; that a summer remedial programme would be inadequate in relation both to time allowed and the number of students able to enroll; that an extra (Preliminary) course would not extend the time spent at University for either part-time (Arts) students or preliminary (Natural Sciences) students; that many students had little motivation anyway for University courses, especially when so many examiners of Faculty courses marked for 'content' and did not penalise poor expression, grammatical errors and illogical statements.

Minute 620 bears the possible thoughts of a contemporary reader regarding those continued concerns about whether the course is burdensome or beneficial, whether it should be done in the summer or during the first year, and whether students would be motivated to take it based on their “content” lecturers’ grading practices. There, Professor Magnus reminded the meeting that “agreement had been reached about the need for such a course,” so he was concerned that the Mona Academic Board “should still find it necessary, now that an actual proposal was finally submitted, to again debate about the need for such a course.”

After the test was approved and the elementary English course was introduced, it appeared that the various segments of the university had accepted the need for what was referred to then as “remedial” instruction. Dyche asserts that the shift from the single Use of English course for all students meant “an acknowledgement by the University of the wide-ranging language abilities and needs of its entrants, along with a glimmer of recognition of the diverse body of knowledge and learning being promulgated in the name of post-secondary English language studies” (“English”). “Glimmer” is, however, the operative word because disagreements about offering the course reigned in the media and within the academy. The UWI Vice Chancellor reported in 1990 that “the introduction of a remedial Fundamentals of English Course at Mona sparked a public debate on language issues” (18). It is also not insignificant that the university labeled the noncredit bearing Fundamentals of English course as “pre-university,” indicating that its teaching belonged anywhere but in the academy.

As there were disagreements about offering a “remedial” course in the academy so was there concern about using the proficiency test for exclusion of students from the University. The Faculty of Arts and General Studies (FAGS) *Regulations and Syllabuses* for 1989/90, which includes “Fundamentals of English” under its listing of University Courses, explains how both the test and course functioned as gatekeepers at different points in a student’s university career. With the exception of students pursuing law, all first year students had to take the proficiency test at the start of the academic year.² Students were advised that if they failed the test, they had to take UC010. This “preliminary course [did] not count for credit towards the degree.” If they passed the test or UC010, students proceeded to take “Use of English.” However, until they passed UC010, they could not proceed in their degree program: “No student failing UC010 [would] be allowed entry into any Second Year course in any Faculty.” However, Minute 84 of their 25 November 1988 Minutes includes a University Academic Committee notation that the Faculty Consultative Committee, Arts and General Studies, felt that “the UWI had a commitment to develop the human resources of the region and that *it was not justifiable to institute an entrance test in English Language which would exclude from the university persons whose abilities in other areas would allow them to make a contribution to their societies and to the region*” (my emphasis). This view had been expressed earlier in the Faculty of Arts and General Studies’ “Report on Faculty Review 1986/87” at Cave Hill.

In response to those concerns about the gate-keeping function of the course and test, and as happened with the Use of English course, the language department solicited

“content” faculty’s assistance in addressing the problem. In a draft response in 1993 to the Dean of FAGS regarding questions about the especially high failure rates in the language courses, the then head, Mervyn Alleyne, proposed to consolidate the regular program. However, he noted that “other necessary measures will require the support and intervention of the university” (“Memo to Members” 2). In pointing to the perception of “content” faculty’s attitudes to language competence, Alleyne called for collaboration to bring about improvements in English language proficiency:

Other Faculties will also have a role to play. They have to take up a clear position on the role of language in the education of their students and adjust accordingly the evaluation of their students. As it is now, there seems to be no overall policy, but the general tendency is for some Faculties or Departments or individual lecturers to ignore language competence in the grading of students or not to provide opportunities for students to display language skills in tests and examinations. (2)

Alleyne’s request evidences a focus on formalism and concerns about who should attend to teaching students formalist conventions. Although such conventions represent only one aspect of writing that is often unfortunately taught separate from content, concern about who should teach them was only one reason for which faculty would waver in their support of the test and elementary English course.

Divergent opinions on the course would yield intermittent discussions about whose responsibility it was for financing it and/or about its place in the university. In his “Memo to Members” of the language department in December 1993, the head, Mervyn Alleyne, indicated, “We shall also, in the course of the new calendar year, begin to examine proposals for phasing out UC010 or at least reducing its scope at UWI” (3). Following recommendations by the Department through the FAGS Board to phase out

the course (*Departmental Reports 1994-1995*, 38), Academic Board mandated a sub-committee to consider available reports and other relevant data on English Language Proficiency. The committee of Don Wilson, Joe Pereira, and Caroline Dyche presented its findings in “Report on English Language Proficiency Requirements for UWI Mona Undergraduate Study” in January 1995. Wilson et al mentioned that among the significant problems that plagued the course was staffing: the instructors were primarily part-time, there was high attrition, and the complement reached the unwieldy number of 22 in 1995. However, “[t]he Committee did NOT support the view that in principle remedial English instruction was not the province of the University” (10, emphasis in the original). The committee members “felt that it was in the University’s best interest to continue to offer a remedial course (within the regular academic year) to those students who could be expected to have achieved the desired level of proficiency by the end of the course” (10, emphasis in the original).

To support their recommendation, Wilson et al mentioned that the University could not ignore the high failure rate in CXC English Language in Jamaica between 1984 and 1993. The mean failure rate was 67.369%, with a high of 75.53% in 1993 and a low of 56.42% in 1984 (5). Therefore, the university needed to consider the attributes of the population from which it would select incoming students. The committee also referenced research that addressed “the international nature of the problem,” specifically in “most American universities [that] routinely test the English proficiency of prospective students and offer remedial courses to those diagnosed as being weak” (6). Wilson et al, therefore, recommended that the university maintain the course and test, but make some changes to

testing procedures. They recommended that some students be exempted from the Test; however, like the Academic Committee did in 1988, they recommended that the test be a gate keeper. The students exempted from the test would be those with CXC English Language Level 1, G.C.E. English Language Grade A, or G.C.E. A/O level General Paper Grade A. “Conversely, those students required to take the entrance test who demonstrate marked incompetence in fundamental areas of written expression and/or reading comprehension should be excluded from the University until they have acquired the necessary skills and are able to pass the test” (11). If this controversial policy of exclusion were to be enforced, the test would have to be administered in March. That would be in the semester before students started UWI rather than at the beginning of the first semester when the diagnostic test used to be administered. The committee recommended the establishment of an English Proficiency Test Unit (to begin in 1996/1997) to facilitate a first test from the Unit in March 1998.

Although the committee’s recommendations were accepted, some faculty members continued to voice their disagreement at the Faculty Board level. In the *Departmental Reports* for 1995-1996, the Head outlined that the university had approved setting up an English Proficiency Test Unit “to test all *applicants* to the university, with a view to excluding from entry to the university those who did not have the requisite English language competence. This would serve to contract the need for UC010, a pre-university level course to be offered” (43). The Dean, in turn, emphasized the distance sought from remedial instruction by noting, “[t]here was support in principle for decreasing our involvement in remedial English, largely divesting this to pre-university

and summer school, focusing instead on a Proficiency Test on entry with the establishment of a Proficiency Test Unit in the Faculty” (16). At the same time that some faculty members and administrators were voicing disagreements about the course, Caroline Dyche was writing to secondary level teachers in 1996 to outline the kinds of problems that were appearing in students’ test scripts and the levels of success students experienced in the Fundamentals of English course. Dyche emphasized that despite the significant problems that students exhibit in syntax (in terms of sentence structure and idiom) and in other aspects of grammar (such as faulty subject verb agreement or incorrect use of singular or plural number or verb forms), “by the end of the year, the majority (approximately 70%) do succeed in attaining the standard required to pass the course and to produce in their other university courses a more acceptable level of essay writing than that displayed in the English Proficiency Entrance Test” (“Characteristic” 26). However, faculty and administrators did not seem to focus on the stated success in the course. The abbreviation of “Fundamentals of English” yields the acronym “FOE,” which represents some faculty’s attitude to the course and some students’ perception of it.

With the diagnostic proficiency test functioning as a gatekeeper – at least in the Faculty of Arts and General Studies – and thanks to the persistent myth of transience, plans to phase out UC010 increased in the late 1990s. The “Minutes of a Meeting of the DLLP held Thursday, October 2, 1997” states, “Once the Test Unit has become fully operational the UC010 programme will be offered on a reduced scale” (3). In an April 2002 meeting of lecturers (including this writer) in the English Language section and the head of the department who chaired the meeting, “The Chairman proposed that the

Department consider moving the teaching of UC010 to Summer, commencing in the academic year 2003/2004. This would free up resources used for teaching UC010 to develop and teach third year English Language courses” (“Minutes of English Language Section DLLP,” 2). The explanation given about using available resources for upper level courses is practical; however, that explanation ignored two significant implications of phasing out the course. One of these is, as Chapter 2 outlined, the incorrect assumption that the problem that led to its introduction would be eradicated by the test; the other is the view I address in Chapter 5 that the institution is concerned more with students it perceives already write well than with basic writers, despite claims of increasing access to higher education.

Institutionalizing Ambiguity: Neither Equity nor Excellence (?)

The Fundamentals of English course was still offered in the department in 2003/2004; however, by the 2004/2005 academic year, it was removed from the campus budget, with less than satisfactory results for the institution’s basic writing students. This is a change that, while being influenced by them, did not necessarily result from the years of debate about remedial instruction in the academy and phasing out UC010. At the beginning of the 2003/2004 academic year, the university announced changes in the financial arrangements for courses. Among the changes was payment by credit. Since UC010 was equivalent to a 6-credit course but was non-credit bearing, students protested having to pay for a course that did not count towards their degree. Following the protests and negotiations with representatives from the Guild of students, the institution

sanctioned changes to the course structure and administration. To my mind, these changes are likely to yield neither excellence nor social equity. Indeed, they bespeak ambiguity on many levels: an institution that seems to have relinquished control of its basic writing course to a unit in one of its departments, students deemed successful in “content” areas but weak in language and who are accepted without provisions for their writing development, and students who unknowingly strove to become complicit in their own marginalization.

Ambiguity is evident in the *Departmental Reports* for 2004-2005 in which the Dean of Humanities and Education explained, “The use of the English Proficiency Test (ELPT) ... to identify potential matriculants who have deficiencies in writing English and to offer them a remedial writing course was taken a step further during the year. As a result of budgetary constraints, the remedial course UC010 is no longer offered as part of the normal curriculum for students needing to do the course” (213). In those reports, the Head of department explained that the course had been divested to the self-financing Test Unit *in the department*. With these new arrangements, the year-long course taught over 52 hours was reduced to an intensive one-semester course taught over 39 hours. Based on those changes, the university gave students who failed the proficiency test various options for fulfilling their English Language requirement. The Head explained that “[s]tudents identified as requiring remedial assistance were encouraged to sit and pass the course in the summer prior to their formal entry to UWI, or to seek alternative tuition during the summer, and re-sit the test at the end of that session” (54). By 2006-2007, the options were expanded: As one option, applicants who failed the test were encouraged to

take the UC010 course during the summer prior to starting their first semester. Applicants could then retake the test in August. A second option allowed students to take the UC010 course during their first or second semester at the end of which they could retake the proficiency test. As a third option, students could choose to not take the UC010 course before retaking the proficiency test, but the Test Unit advises such students who intend to “challenge” the test to seek assistance with writing from sites outside of the university (Dyche, “Excerpt of Report”).

In his explanation in 2005 for changes to UC010, the Head reported what I consider unsurprising low pass rates and concerns about writing that emerged following the changes:

A UWI policy decision taken during the year at the request of the Guild of Students resulted in students not being compelled to take the divested UC010, but being allowed to take the end-of-course examination as a challenge. Students who sat the course did significantly better than those who were registered for exams only, leading to more concern in the Department that those who continue to sit the examination without help in upgrading their skills will be severely handicapped and unable to sit their Level 1 Foundation courses. (*Departmental Reports 2004-2005*, 54)

The low passes and concerns would persist into the next two years. Indeed, Dyche reports that following the implementation of the policy regarding UC010, the Department has witnessed “a high failure rate in the ELPT, the resultant barring of students from pursuing their compulsory Year 1 English Language course (the Use of English replacement courses) and, ultimately, the delayed graduation of these students” (“English”). The “Minutes of a Meeting of the DLLP held Monday, 27th February 2006” records attendees’ concern about the high failure rates and “woefully poor writing skills of students” (5). Table 1 presents results that show a decline in enrollment and the

corresponding dramatic and continuing decline in pass rate since the Fundamentals of English course was removed from the campus budget and reduced from 52 to 39 hours of instruction.

Table 1
Results for the One-Semester UC010 Course for the Period Semester I 2004/2005 to Semester II 2006/2007

Semester	UC010 Enrollment	Pass Rate
I 2004/2005	309	63%
II 2004/2005	136	61%
I 2005/2006	142	35%
II 2005/2006	50	48.6%
I 2006/2007	106	36%
II 2006/2007	53	34.6%

Source: Caroline Dyche. "Excerpt of Report on English Language Proficiency Issues at UWI Mona (for presentation at Faculty of Humanities & Education Retreat, May 17, 2007). (Language, Linguistics & Philosophy, UWI, Mona, Jamaica, 2007).

The low pass rate reported following the change in arrangements for the course is in marked contrast to what obtained in the year-long course (see Table 2). Table 2 presents figures showing a high pass rate in the six years preceding the policy change: over 80% between 1998 and 2001, and over 75% in the last two years. The exception in 2001-2002 when the pass rate was just over 60% can probably be explained by students' significantly lower levels of proficiency in that year. The "Minutes of a Meeting of the DLLP held Thursday, 17th January 2002" includes complaints about "the quality of the cohort for the 2001-2002 academic year, whose performance, in the general view of the teaching staff, is the worst in the history of the [UC010] course's existence" (3). The

increased numbers of students in the course in 2002-2004 when this writer was the coordinator has a two fold explanation: 1) in those years some individual Faculties at Mona began to admit even students who had failed the Proficiency Test; and 2) joining the course were repeaters and other students who knew they had to take the course before doing their required standard writing course and/or before graduating, but who had delayed doing it as long as possible.

Table 2
UC010 Results between 1998 and 2004^a

Year	# of students who took UC010	# or % passed
1998-1999	192	157 (82%)
1999-2000	240	approx. 85%
2000-2001	approx. 312	84%
2001-2002	304	60.5%
2002-2003	505	76%
2003-2004	538	77.3%

Source: Departmental Reports, UWI, Mona.

^a These results are based on the *Departmental Reports* for each corresponding academic year.

Not only has there been a decrease in the pass rate in UC010 since the policy change, but the Test Unit has also seen a decline in passes in the proficiency test. Dyché reports, “With the declining enrolment in the UC010 course, one has seen a decline in the pass rate for the end of semester ELP tests taken by students” (“Excerpt of Report”).

Table 3 confirms this declining pass rate (Reid). When the first proficiency test was administered prior to the start of the new academic year in 1998, 74% of the 3,747 applicants passed (see UWI, *Vice Chancellor’s Report* 1999, 46; *Departmental Reports*

1997-1998). In the following year, 77.1% of the applicants passed the test. With the exception of 2000/01 when the pass rate was 70.9%, the rates for the years following for applicants who did not possess the English Language requirements to qualify for exemption from the test show a general decline in passes. This rate reached as low as 45% in 2006/07.

Table 3
ELPT Results between 1998/99 and 2006/07

YEAR	# of test takers	# passed	010/Fail (1)	Fail (2)
1998/99	3468	2676 (77.1%)	547 (15.8%)	245 (7.1%)
1999/00	2827	1922 (68%)	605 (21.4%)	300 (10.6%)
2000/01	2654	1882 (70.9%)	599 (22.6%)	173 (6.5%)
2001/02	2913	1539 (52.8%)	685 (23.5%)	685 (23.5%)
2002/03	2553	1423 (56%)	903 (36%)	207 (8%)
2003/04	2343	1081 (46%)	1150 (49%)	112 (5%)
2004/05	4163	2362 (56.7%)	N/A	1801 (43.3%)
2005/06	4541	2186 (48%)	N/A	2355 (52%)
2006/07	4140	1867 (45%)	N/A	2273 (55%)

Source: English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) Unit. Department of Language, Linguistics & Philosophy, UWI, Mona, 2007.

These results in Table 3 are presented based on categories that Dyche provides in “Excerpt of Report on English Language Proficiency Issues at UWI Mona (for presentation at Faculty of Humanities & Education Retreat, May 17, 2007).” Dyche explains that in 2006/2007 there were three possible result categories for the proficiency test: Pass; Fail (1) and Fail (2). Applicants who pass the test can register for the appropriate Level 1 course. Fail (1) means that “with the remediation offered by the

University, the applicant should be able to attain the necessary standard within the first year.” Fail (2) indicates that the applicant “has an extremely low level of proficiency & is not recommended for admission.” In this table, I combined the “genuine” UC010 total with a previous “borderline” category that used to be included for nursing and University of Technology applicants whose programs did not require/allow them to take UC010. The “Fail (2)” category reveals a failure rate that has been on the incline since 2004-2005 when the UC010 policy change was implemented.

The decline in passes in the course and test is not unrelated to the fact that both students who take the new UC010 course and those who do not take it along with new entrants take the test. Additionally, as Dyche confirmed in our interview, many students are merely retaking the test without getting additional instruction. Such students probably experience stagnant or diminishing writing abilities in the semester or year(s) that they wait to take another test. The high failure rates also suggest the extent to which students were probably unaware that in succeeding in getting the institution to make taking the course optional, they would delay their own development and ultimately realize only a pyrrhic victory.

The declining pass rate may also be explained by other problems that are associated with the new UC010 course, one being differing objectives for the course and the test that students take. “Fundamentals of English” is a typical prerequisite model basic writing course. This model requires students to take and pass a prerequisite course, before registering for their regular first-year writing course(s) (Lalicker 6). Students who do not get a clear pass in the Proficiency Test are usually required to take and pass it

before taking a standard first year writing course. In the year-long program in which students attended one 2-hour weekly seminar, attention was given to developing their expository writing skills. In 2001-2002, a summary and response essay were added to the course. Summary skills were included to ensure that students understood what they read and could express ideas in their own words in English. Since based on anecdotal evidence students' writing improved when they had the necessary content, the then coordinator added a response essay to allow students to have some content for their essay. Based on the course objectives given in the UC010 Course Outline (that this writer as coordinator prepared for 2003-2004), among the things students would be able to do by the end of one academic year are

- Write simple and complex sentence structures that comply with the grammatical and syntactic rules of the English language.
- Punctuate correctly.
- Write unified and coherent paragraphs ...
- Plan, write, revise and edit essays and paragraphs as steps in the writing process.
- Read, analyse and evaluate paragraphs, articles and essays.

The 2003-2004 outline states that the “course seeks to improve the student’s level of proficiency in English in an academic environment. The course is designed for students who need instruction in grammar, punctuation, sentence construction, paragraph development and essay writing” (1).

The one-semester course that was first offered in the first semester of 2004-2005 is guided by the same objectives. One crucial difference in instruction, however, is that students spend three hours per week in a 2-hour tutorial and a 1-hour workshop. In its new form, the course is taught each semester (including at/through Brown’s Town, Knox, and Moneague Community Colleges) at the end of which students take the proficiency

test. The English Language Proficiency Test Information Guide explains that the test is “used to assess whether persons applying to pursue undergraduate degree programmes at the UWI Mona campus possess a satisfactory level of writing and reading proficiency in English for university academic purposes.” Consistent with that description, up to the 2007-2008 academic year, the test included writing, reading, and grammar components. Candidates completed two writing tasks: a 300-word essay “on a topic of general interest,” and a 250-300-word description of “numerical data contained in a table or in some form of graphical illustration.” With regard to reading, candidates read one or more passages and provided answers to “alternative/multiple choice questions concerning any or all of the following: main idea/ secondary ideas; writer’s attitude/tone/primary intention; literal and figurative meaning; explicit and implied meaning; organizational structure.” Grammar was tested through “alternative/ multiple choice questions on any or all of the following : a) Grammar of the Simple Sentence, b) Grammar of Complex/Compound Sentences, c) Idiomatic Usage (diction), d) Idiomatic Usage (structures), and e) Writing Mechanics & Spelling.” The descriptions of the course and test demonstrate that whereas UC010 focuses on essay-writing and comprehension of prose texts, it does not address interpretation of numerical data that is included in the proficiency test. The equivalence of a UC010 examination with the proficiency test, therefore, represents an anomaly because UC010 does not sufficiently prepare students for the test. There may also be problems related to the duration of the course. In her “Report UC010 Semester I, 2006-07,” Eileen Scott, who coordinated the course for the stated period, noted that “tutors saw improvement in students’ writing skills even among

very weak students. However, there were calls for ... a longer course” (3). She concluded that “the students clearly benefitted although many need more time to consolidate gains” (4).

The differences in UC010 and the test and the high failure rates should be cause for concern, for they suggest a need for reexamination of the arrangements for accommodating basic writers at Mona. The resultant low passes in the proficiency test taken by both those students who take the one-semester course and those who simply re-take the test without instruction suggest the need for more ethical actions from administrators, writing specialists, and other faculty regarding basic writing Jamaican students at Mona. Chapter 2 established that in the Jamaican context a vernacular and an official language sharing the same vocabulary base coexist, posing myriad problems in English for learners. Because of the coexistence of these two lexically related languages and because of the way in which English is taught in many pre-tertiary level settings, many students often fail regional/ external examinations in English (Craig, *Teaching* 227; Task Force 2004, 56-57) and the proficiency test. It, therefore, seems imprudent for administrators to require that those students who fail the test but are accepted into the institution find the support to prepare them to enter the standard courses without mandating that the students do this before or during their first semester. Certainly, if students are consciously working on increasing their writing abilities, their writing and learning are likely to improve in their areas of specialization. The Dean of Humanities and Education writes that “the rationale of [the writing] courses is to provide students with what we identify as the essential skills that they need in order to pursue successfully

their undergraduate studies. (“Memo” 1). This means that by delaying in taking and passing UC010, students delay in getting to the regular first year courses that are meant to provide “skills” necessary for successful pursuit of the undergraduate degree. If the Dean is right, when students delay in taking and passing UC010, they not only take a long time to get their degree since the latter is dependent on completing their mandatory writing course(s), but also benefit less than they could from their core courses.

Chevannes and others (see Chapter 1 and Task Force 2004) recommend that instead of measures to address the problem in the institution, resources should be increased at lower levels of schooling to increase students’ readiness for post-secondary level work. That recommendation is valid because there is great need for reconsideration of, and changes in, the current pedagogical practices in literacy teaching in the nation’s schools. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is widely practiced and encouraged to the extent that children are not developing metacognitive awareness of the contrasts between Jamaican Creole and English. Teacher training is still largely focused on teacher preparation for a situation in which English is the first language. There is yet to be serious preparation in contrastive analysis so that teachers in training will have a good sense of how to help the many Creole-speaking children that they will meet in schools. Further, with increasing acceptance of Creole as a language, there is increasing use of Creole in the media. There are, however, increasingly fewer English-speaking models for children from predominantly Creole-speaking backgrounds. Resources are required to effectively address those deficiencies.

Although the recommendation is valid, and even if it were true that the language/writing problem would one day disappear, the needs of the present and immediate future cohorts of university students would still need to be addressed. As the 1986 *Report of the Task Force on Tertiary Education* confirms, some of those students are early childhood and primary school teachers with a very simple vocabulary and some are teachers who barely scraped through their writing courses in training college and who will admit their weaknesses in written expression. Others are experienced workers who cannot remember the last time they wrote a personal letter or were able to give a complete oral report in formal English. In his recollection of the university's development in the text co-authored with Sherlock, Nettleford recognizes departures from an elitist model and recommends that administrators "open the doors of the University still more widely without sacrificing excellence" (303). His statement typifies the genuine and reasonable concern about maintaining excellence that is usually expressed simultaneously with increased enrollment in the institution. However, whether administrators admit it or not, one of the attendant features of the democratization of education is the presence of students of low socio-economic status, some of whom will not have mastered the language variety and registers appropriate for academic writing. Accepting such students requires appropriate measures to ensure that their entry into the university is, to borrow from Mary Muchiri et al, "without intellectual brutality, loss of identity, and waste of talents" (354).

Ambiguous “Writing Centre” Provisions

The institution has also institutionalized ambiguity in its provision and management of the writing center. Like an institution’s writing courses, its writing resources can reflect how academics on the campus understand writing. At Mona, the Writing Centre started with the “goal of improving communicative competence and empowering student writers ... of diverse backgrounds and experiences in writing, in a welcoming, supportive and collaborative environment” (Writing Centre). The *Departmental Reports* for 1999-2000 explains that a proposed “walk-in Writing Centre ... would integrate computer-assisted learning and teaching with direct face to face help. This would be made available to anyone with English Language writing problems on the university campus” (51). Mona’s Writing Centre was completed in July 2002 with the help of funding identified by the campus principal. It started operating in September 2002 and was formally opened in January 2003 (*Departmental Reports* 2002-2003). Services were free to students when the Centre started, but that arrangement has since changed, resulting in fewer students going there for consultation on their writing and more instructors complaining about lack of assistance for students.

Although the Centre was conceived and started as a place where students could go in for assistance with their writing, it has departed from plans to provide maximum benefit to students taking the various writing courses in the Department. Monica Taylor informed me in our interview that the idea for the Centre arose out of research that she was conducting regarding the concept of a self-access center in 1996/1997 while she was teaching “Language: Exposition/Argument” (UC120). She had received funding from

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in the US to conduct a small project in her office that she was using as a resource center. She had used the funding to buy books and other materials, and students would go to her office to borrow the books. From that project, Taylor saw the beginnings of what could be a full-fledged writing center. She was also reading about writing centers and self-access centers in North America and Europe. When Taylor prepared the proposal for Mona's Centre, she had worked with a concept she saw at Michigan Technological University where graduate students were hired as writing consultants to meet with and hold sessions for other students. She also intended to have removable dividers (and not solid walls as are in place inside the building) so that big seminars could be held whenever necessary. She had also envisaged having booths instead of the big counter and desk that were in the building up to 2007-2008.

While Paulette Ramsay was coordinator of the Writing Centre, she put in resources such as books for on site use, and she started coaching sessions offered by graduate students who helped undergraduates with mechanical/grammatical problems. Two experienced writing tutors were also paid to offer one-to-one coaching, and then small group tutorial sessions that undergraduates booked to attend in 2005-2006. There was to be a minimum of 10 students in small group tutorial sessions; some were cancelled because fewer than 10 students registered for them. Decline in registration started in the second year of operations in the Centre when students began to be required to pay to receive assistance. When concerns arose about funding for the center towards the end of 2002-2003, Ramsay recommended that the department could ask students to

pay J\$100 (approx. US\$2) once for the year. Ramsay reminded me in our interview that although she knew paid service does not reflect the idea of a writing center in general nor as Mona's was conceived, she had to suggest a desperate measure because the immediate alternative was to cease operations. The result of introduction of the fee was a dramatic decline in consultations and reduction of assistance for basic and stronger writers to get help with language concerns in the context of essays that they were preparing.

In 2006-2007 more concerns about funding arose and coaching ceased in the Centre. Both Dyche and Taylor informed me in separate interviews that after discussions in 2007 between the head of department and writing faculty and reminders about the purpose of the Centre, the department would be attempting to request funding under a category such as "student welfare" since the university was not likely to provide funding for "paying a writing centre instructor." This situation is interesting, because *student welfare* is, indeed, the central concern. However, because faculty have to avoid mentioning the real need of paying someone to ensure student welfare, one can only wonder at how much administrators really understand the critical nature of writing instruction and development and the linguistic paradigms within which they and instructors work. Application of a fee in the Centre can be understood in light of a straightened financial situation in the university in general. However, the ad hoc manner in which the change emerged and the continued lack of funding from the central budget suggest the need for more careful consideration of the Centre's connection to the writing courses and the university, and the role the Centre can play in assisting all students, including those linguistically orphaned by the school system. Such considerations should

have been undertaken when changes were made to the Fundamentals of English course and in light of the fact that, as I will establish in the next chapter, students continue to be penalized for errors in grammar in the standard writing courses that do not teach grammar.

Conclusion

The introduction of “Fundamentals of English” in 1988/89 marked academics’ acknowledgement of students’ varying language and writing abilities. However, because supporters and opponents of the course kept the focus on formalist concerns and continued to separate language development from learning in disciplines and learning outside of the academy, the course’s position in the academy was tenuous. When the institution accepted basic writing students and offered them help, it supported egalitarianism – providing opportunities for all entrants to succeed. Changes in fee structure, leading to the removal of the course from the campus budget, suggest that the provisions were costly. “Who should bear the cost for instruction in “Fundamentals of English”?” had to be, and probably will continue to be, a challenging question. Whatever the answer is, talk of dissolution of basic writing suggested elitism, aptly described by compositionist Edward White as “the restriction of opportunities to the most ‘deserving’ – which often means to those from a relatively privileged home” (“Revisiting” 19). Chapter 2 described the extent to which such elitist approaches at UWI were criticized because they are not consistent with expansions in education. However it seems that in order to escape the accusation of “new elitism,” administrators at UWI, Mona, decided to

accept the students but stop offering the basic writing course as one of its “foundation courses.” Additionally, the institution is not managing its Writing Centre so that it can be a valuable writing resource for all students who need out of class assistance with their writing in all disciplines.

As late Professor of English at City College of CUNY Marilyn Sternglass (1999) argues, basic writing students need the “requisite time” to develop (20), and as the UC010 and ELPT results reveal, the developmental needs of basic writers may not be met by the replacement of extended time (one year) with intensive time (one semester). Worse yet, lack of engagement in any writing program will only cause students’ abilities to atrophy. Also, as indicated in the second epigraph from a 2005 conference presentation by compositionist Nancy Sommers, no one can claim academic writing as his/her mother tongue. The reality is, however, that the student who is less than fluent in English and whose reading and writing abilities are underdeveloped will require extra time and help to master the formal variety of that language and later meet academic writing requirements within a discipline. Such a student who is accepted to study at Mona underscores Mike Rose’s challenge to the myth of transience and reminds educators that the work of literacy is here to stay, especially in a context where an imposed official language prevents students from first developing literacy in their first language. An immediate concern, then, is the importance of acting ethically and responsibly by ensuring support programs for those whom basic writing specialist Gerri McNenny calls “students occupying the borderlands of academe” (11), but who are admitted to pursue undergraduate programs at Mona. Indeed, the university has the responsibility to provide

a model to ensure that the basic writing students it admits are engaged with the act of writing as are its other more fortunate/privileged students so that all can learn to “invent the university,” as David Bartholomae says in the third epigraph.

In a presentation to the “Why English?” Conference held in England at the University of Oxford in October, 2006, Caroline Dyche, then Coordinator of the (English) Language Unit at UWI, Mona, mentioned that UWI’s English language courses have now been accepted as “non-remedial bona fide tertiary level academic offerings” but plaguing further developments in the program are “the University’s straitened financial position” and ironic marginalization of students who demonstrate “poor mastery of standard English, the majority of whom originate from the lower social classes” (“English”). This group of students, the basic writers, will continue to pose a significant challenge to writing program and general administration as the university tries to fulfill its mission “to unlock West Indian potential” and simultaneously grapple with expanding enrollment to include them. As indicated in Chapter 1, “[n]on-academics, as well as some academics, might assert: These students deserve no attention because they are not “[university] material” (Troyka, “Defining” 12). However, the challenge to appropriately ensure their development in the academy is one deserving to be faced responsibly especially since, as compositionist Lynn Quitman Troyka reminds in the first epigraph, basic writers usually come by invitation.

In referring to Jamaica’s linguistic orphans in the academy as “basic writers,” I wanted to acknowledge the influence of Mina Shaughnessy’s work on programs developed outside of the US for such students (see Dyche “Characteristic”). However, I

also wanted to hint at the infiltration of developments in US composition in writing courses in the Caribbean. In the 1970s and onwards, the “Use of English” faculty had adapted the British survey course to give it an emphasis on Caribbean sociolinguistic issues. This emphasis meant introducing students to the various linguistic systems in the Caribbean and distinguishing among British English, Standard Jamaican English, and Jamaican Creole. By the late 1990s and first few years of the new millennium, this emphasis was no longer apparent in the original Use of English course. Dyche argues that the sociolinguistic focus has been changed because of changes in the high school curriculum, but as I will establish in the next chapter the US influence provides a better explanation. After all, teaching the individual – presumably a monolingual English speaker – seems natural to the average US writing teacher. Indeed, the Conference on College Composition and Communication’s resolutions such as *Students’ Right to Their Own Language* and *The National Language Policy* have yielded no substantial change in the language of instruction and the target language in all written pieces in the average classroom. Additionally, many US universities have abolished or are considering abolishing their basic writing programs and teaching only generic first-year writing courses where abolishing those is not also being considered. I suspect that because of the reduced emphasis on sociolinguistic content in the original Use of English course, instructors in “Fundamentals of English” (this writer included) and the institution may not have sought persistently to learn from students’ errors. The challenge that basic writing students presented was viewed as something to be managed rather than learned from in the way that Mina Shaughnessy did with her students in New York. However, if

faculty and administrators gave due thought to the country's linguistic context and the realities that examination results reveal, they – we – would probably consider how to provide for Jamaican students on whose numbers they – we – rely and who must function in a predominantly Creole-speaking region, notwithstanding their mastery of English or lack thereof. In the next chapter, I address the university's provisions for its stronger writers through generic first-year writing courses whose universalist paradigms may be as disabling as the lack of provisions for basic writers.

Notes

¹ The leaders included “democratic” in describing their orientation to distance themselves from a communist ideology.

² Beginning in the 1993/94 *Regulations*, the course description was revised to indicate exemption from the test for Law students with A-Level passes in both English Language and English Literature.

V. IMPROVING THE GRADUATE'S PROFILE AT CENTURY'S END,
1990S TO 2007

The near universality of the first-year ... writing requirement contains an implicit recognition that in higher education new levels of writing and expression are demanded.

Bazerman, Introduction. *Handbook of Research on Writing: History, Society, School, Individual, Text 2*

... if we want to improve literacy in colleges and universities, we are going to have to give our students more practice and more feedback in a broader range of writing; we are going to have to introduce them to the discourse practices of a wider range of communities than can be offered in a [first-year writing course]; in a sense we are going to have to make writing instruction the responsibility of more than [writing] specialists and writing programs.

David Smit 183.

In the preceding chapter, I establish how writing instruction at Mona evolved from a survey model to reflect “relevance” for the Caribbean context. This evolution involved introduction of “Fundamentals of English” (UC010), a basic writing course that was meant to help the institution to *accommodate* increasing numbers of students who displayed limited mastery of English but who passed examinations in “content” areas. The university accommodated such students for more than a decade, displaying the egalitarian ethos that is consistent with democratization of education. However, by 2004, administrators and faculty seemed to be engaging in new elitism – when the institution divested the course but continued to accept students who could benefit from it and without mandating that the students find the support to prepare them to enter the standard courses before or during their first semester. I argued that the development of the course marked a necessary response to changing cohorts and diverse abilities of students;

however, its management along with that of the Writing Centre suggests that administrators and faculty have ignored some of the country's distinctive social issues.

In this chapter, I establish that administrators accept that standard (as opposed to “basic”) writing instruction is important in the academy. This attitudinal change was important since there had been limited attention to *writing* in the Use of English course and many calls for teaching that course in secondary schools in the 1960s to mid-1980s. With this change, the institution enlisted writing, in terms of not only continuing to offer “Use of English” (under a new name), but also in mandating that all undergraduates take it or another standard first-year writing course. These developments signify administrators' and faculty's growing understanding of the importance of writing in the development of university students, confirming, as Bazerman says in the second epigraph, “an implicit recognition” that higher education demands “new levels of writing and expression.” However, recent and current curricula that I analyzed include course descriptions that focus on preparing students to write academic discourse for a general university-level educated audience and on addressing formalist concerns outside of disciplines.

One of the new courses, “English for Academic Purposes” (FD10A), which upper administration introduced in 1998, is taught through the Department of Language, Linguistics & Philosophy (DLLP). FD10A focuses exclusively on exposition, marking formalist concerns in the course. Exposition is the paradigmatic “universalist” genre because it is the mode that was central to current traditional rhetoric, which gave lip service to audience and situation and which treated writing as a decontextualized process

(see Berlin). Process, in this model, is informed by the conduit metaphor, which, as I explained in earlier chapters, suggests that students complete heuristic work in their mind before they write. This 2-stage process implies that the purpose of writing instruction is to help students to record/write clearly what they have thought about. Writing specialists in Jamaica have, however, employed the four-stage process approach that is common in the US, and also attempted to adapt it based on the focus on summative evaluation in disciplines at Mona. Nevertheless, I will show that although process seems to have been adapted to cultural and disciplinary trends in Jamaica, it typifies an emphasis on formalism. This focus is obvious in grading practices. As stated, the conduit metaphor implies a focus on writing clearly, that is, on grammar and usage. This focus may be considered good in the Jamaican context, only that usage is *graded* strictly but is *not taught*. The other course, “Writing in the Disciplines” (FD14A), which the DLLP introduced in 2004, purports to teach what its title says – writing in the disciplines. However, the arrangement of the classes and instruction in the course suggests artificiality. FD14A involves mixed groups of students from various disciplines and is taught solely by language instructors. The students who are allowed to take this course must have demonstrated high levels of mastery in English in qualifying examinations. The very general description, objectives, and essay topics for this course and others suggest that these courses are probably not adequately grounded in the cultural context. In essence, administrators and faculty at Mona have enlisted writing in the form of what could be considered “universal” first-year writing in the US and elsewhere; however, the various manifestations represent “universalist” models of writing that, I argue, have

prevented more than superficial consideration of Jamaica's linguistic context and distinctive social issues.

I argue that these courses are universalist because the descriptions are usually very general, suggesting that they reflect norms that make them suitable to be taught elsewhere. In other words, they appear to be universal. However, they simultaneously maintain a limited focus – on formalist concerns in the emphasis on exposition and in the ambiguous relationship to grammar, which is graded but not taught. These emphases appear to justify the marginalization of writing instruction because since they are so general, they can be addressed outside of disciplines. By emphasizing exposition and encouraging writing development in a general course outside of disciplines, faculty continue to keep disciplinary writing knowledge tacit. As expressed in the introduction to this study, I am not exempt from some of these strictures – having worked in the program from 2001 to 2004 before going on leave to reflect on what I was teaching. Because “content” faculty do not articulate writing knowledge, they have managed to alienate learning from writing in disciplines. As well, faculty and administrators continue to unknowingly promote linguistic prejudice.

The institution seemed to be moving beyond universalist writing courses when upper level and graduate writing courses were introduced in the new millennium. However, the provisions in these courses suggest that the institution's commitment to writing development is only partial; as well, the courses continued to emphasize form. The upper level and graduate writing courses demonstrate continued separation of content from learning and marginalization of writing because “content” faculty transfer

the responsibility for teaching graduate courses to writing specialists in the DLLP. A Masters in English Language that the DLLP introduced in 2005 appears to offer good practical instruction in English and English courses. However, the focus on the code suggests that the course may be limited regarding the treatment of writing instruction at the postsecondary level, how writing works, and how it works differently in different disciplines.

Formalism carries over into the latest development – a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) pilot project that the DLLP started in Pure and Applied Sciences in 2006/2007. Terms such as “reinforcement” and “support” with regard to writing *skills* recur like leitmotifs in project documents. Although this WAC initiative should integrate writing and learning in disciplines, it highlights academics’ continuing limited understanding of the complexity of writing. “Content” faculty claim that they want help with students’ expression, and writing specialists are advocating a more “writing-intensive” undergraduate education to improve the profile of Mona’s graduates. Writing faculty are therefore calling for “content” faculty to “support” writing instructors and “reinforce” what students learn in writing classes. The reality is, however, an emphasis on form to the extent that everyone continues to shroud knowledge in formalism and “content” faculty continue to keep writing knowledge tacit. I argue that either stance only serves to alienate learning in the academy from learning language in disciplines and outside the academy. Although the WAC pilot project implies that academics have a deeper understanding of writing than they had in earlier years, these developments are still not adequately incorporating the country’s linguistic paradigms and reflecting the

interconnectedness of writing and learning in disciplines. The general separation of writing from learning disciplinary content bespeaks a need for re-examining the universalist assumptions that inform developments in writing instruction at Mona at the turn of the century.

Enlisting Writing (Instruction): Universalist Models Foreshadowed

The formalist preoccupations of the newer writing courses were foreshadowed in changes to the original “Use of English” course name and focus. When the department began to offer “Fundamentals of English” (UC010) in 1988 to students who had not fulfilled matriculation requirements for placement in the standard Use of English course, the university was considering shifts from a year-long to a semester system. As was done with other courses, changes were made to the Use of English course to suit the semester system that started in 1990/1991 and came in fully except in Medicine in 1991/1992. The department was mandated to develop semester versions of the course, so students could receive a grade at the end of each of two semesters. Based on the changes, “Use of English” (UC100) was taught for a brief period as “UC10A: Language: Style and Purpose” and “UC10B: Language: Argument” before the department reverted to offering the year-long course, with law students taking only the second semester portion. However, in recognition of the stigma attached to “Use of English” and to get away from much misunderstanding associated with the course name, the department also changed the course to “UC120: Language: Exposition/Argument.” The “120” designation marked the coding change, and the other portion the fact that the course presented exposition and

argument in the context of language in general and language in the Caribbean. In this same period, the department name also changed. The 1992-1993 *Departmental Reports* mentions that in 1991-1992 the department had changed from *Linguistics and Use of English* to *Language and Linguistics* “to reflect the Department’s broad perspectives on language competence” (42).

The universalist models of writing that would be employed at Mona are foreshadowed in the changes made to “Use of English” (UC100) after it was renamed “Language: Exposition and Argument” (UC120). The course description from the 1987/88 *Faculty of Arts and General Studies Regulations* informs students that the course “seeks to develop competence mainly in critical reading and in expository and analytical writing” (82). Topics to be covered in the weekly lecture and tutorial/seminar which students had to attend embodied the emphases in the course since the 1970s:

- (a) The nature and functions of language in general and in the Caribbean in particular.
- (b) Kinds of writing, and techniques for achieving a given purpose.
- (c) Reasoning clearly and cogently in everyday language.
- (d) Advertising and Propaganda as psychological persuasion
- (e) The use and abuse of numbers/charts/tables in exposition and argument; or to effect psychological persuasion.
- (f) Library skills. (82-83)

Although “techniques for achieving a purpose” suggest a concern for rhetorical contexts, by 1992, the course description still emphasized modes/“kinds of writing,” but only two – exposition and argument. As I will outline, this shift would mark what Sharon Crowley calls the persistence of current traditionalism (212) rather than real engagement with the situatedness of discourse production. In the *Faculty of Arts and General Studies (Mona) Regulations and Syllabuses* for 1992/93, the UC120 description is shortened to inform

students that the aim is to teach them to “write expository and argumentative essays; and develop analytical and critical reading skills by identifying the characteristics of exposition and logical argument and distinguishing them from those of psychological persuasion” (38). The *language* content was also emphasized in a statement that the course “uses as its content current information and ideas about the nature of language in general and its manifestation in the Caribbean in particular” (38). This version of the course continued to be offered to students in all Faculties except Social Sciences until 1998 when “English for Academic Purposes” (FD10A) was introduced. The *language* focus was, however, reduced as the UC120 course continued to evolve.

Dyche asserts that between 1990 and 2006, “the hard fought for Caribbean sociolinguistic content was deemphasized, as due to the involvement of Caribbean linguists and English language educators on the regional examining bodies for secondary schools, this content was integrated into the upper secondary school curriculum, rendering the teaching of it at the tertiary level less necessary” (“English”). I contend that while some of the changes in the course were made based on changes to the secondary school curriculum, some were made because of coordinators’ concerns about the emphasis on language in the course. Such concerns were different from “content” faculty’s complaints about the course focus in the 1970s and 1980s. As an example, although emphasis on writing had increased in the course in the mid to late 1980s, new coordinators felt that students were still not writing enough in/for class meetings. In a June 2002 “Proposal for Restructuring of UC120,” Vivienne Harding (in collaboration with Jasmin Lawrence) observed that insufficient time was being spent on writing in

seminars and that the “number of lectures on language could be reduced and the information condensed” (1). As I will show, other changes were made because of the influence from US writing research that was not necessarily appropriately adapted to the Caribbean region.

The topics on which students wrote their essays suggest a gradual shift from the course’s primary focus on language, but they highlight the separation of writing in the course from writing in students’ disciplines. The *general* focus is evident in expository essay topics such as “Globalisation” and “The Role of Language in the Media Coverage of the US/Iraq Conflicts” and in moots for argumentative essays such as “Caribbean males cannot restrict themselves to Standard English if they wish to be considered ‘macho’” or “The death penalty is not a deterrent to murder” (UC120 Examination). These topics that the course coordinator usually determines appear to test general knowledge/knowledge of current affairs, implying that the kinds of writing done in the course would not necessarily focus students on writing in any one discipline. This disconnect would become more pronounced when “UC120: Language: Exposition/Argument” was split into “UC10A: Language: Exposition” and “UC10B: Language: Argument” in the new millennium. That change was made largely in response to research findings about reading and writing. A past coordinator (who wishes to remain anonymous) informed me that the structure of UC120 was adjusted in 2002/2003 to teach reading (instead of exposition) in the first semester and then writing (instead of argument) in the second semester. This experiment was based on transfer of knowledge research that showed that reading to write was a successful tool in teaching academic

writing. The concept of “reading to write” was also used in the UC10B (portion of the) course. It worked well in UC10B, and the failure rate was insignificant. However, students in the year-long course found it difficult to make the connections between reading and writing because of the passage of time between one semester and the other. Therefore, after two years of experimentation, the UC120 faculty and instructors decided to maintain the “reading to write” concept but within each of the two genres of exposition and argument that would be taught separately. This experimentation contributed to decisions made in 2004/2005 regarding UC120. Consequently, in 2005/2006, the DLLP reintroduced the split in “Language: Exposition/Argument,” and the two *genres* were taught as two separate *courses* – UC10A and UC10B.

The very general emphasis that would mark later courses is pronounced in the descriptions of the separate versions of the course. With the exception of references to language in the Caribbean, the courses seem appropriate for instruction elsewhere.

According to the website, UC10A is

designed to help students acquire the language skills they will need in order to successfully complete their academic programme; develop an understanding of the linguistic context in which they operate within the Caribbean region; and participate intelligently in discussions (both written and oral) regarding a variety of topics related to the disciplines within the Faculty of Humanities and Education. Classes provide instruction in reading and writing exposition. Students ... work on individual as well as collaborative writing assignments in class, designed to develop communicative competence in a variety of discourse situations.

The other portion, UC10B, addresses certain rhetorical considerations for argumentative discourse including such issues as the nature and types of argument, presenting a convincing argument with a claim and refuted counterclaims, structuring the

argumentative essay, and analyzing arguments in everyday discourse. The course is designed to enable students to “respond critically to a variety of texts, identifying purpose, and central arguments; explain supporting evidence and analyse effectiveness and interrelationships,” and “assess the needs of their audience in a variety of discourse situations and respond appropriately,” among other things. The website advises students that “[w]riting assignments allow for drafting and redrafting in keeping with the idea of writing being a recursive process.”

The weekly lecture topics in the UC10A “Syllabus” indicate a general focus on language rather than also Caribbean language or disciplines in the humanities. These include functions of language, language and society, a light history of the English Language, analyzing expository writing, and organizing the essay. Like those provided for UC120, the topics on which students write are also “general.” However, students are advised to choose one and “formulate a question that is relevant to [their] research discipline.” These topics on which students were to write an 800 word expository essay in the first semester of 2006-2007 included “Alternatives to Petroleum,” “Child Abuse,” “Cultural Icons in the Caribbean,” and “The USA and World Politics.” In response to my interview question about how exactly instructors helped students to develop a question with relevance to specific disciplines, the coordinator in 2006-2007, Janice Cools, informed me that she was not aware that instructors in the course “actually strive to focus on different disciplines.” She emphasized that students who take UC10A and UC10B are in the humanities, so although instructors encourage students to start out with a question that would be relevant to their discipline their concerns are usually limited to literary or

historical situations. As in UC10A, the essay topics in UC10B no longer focus primarily on language. The topics from which students chose to write an 800-1000 word argumentative essay in the first semester of 2006-2007 included “The Politics of Response to Natural Disasters,” “Performance-Based Pay for Teachers,” “Crime,” “The Patriot Act,” and “The benefits to be derived from an armed conflict between the United States of America and Iraq are not worth the costs.” In the second semester of 2006-2007, they included “Financing for Political Parties,” “Language Rights,” “Developing Countries hosting Major International Sporting Events,” “Civil Rights and Religious Practices,” and “Stem Cell Research.” Clearly, while these topics are likely to keep students grounded in current regional and international events, they seem somewhat limited in helping students consider very specific questions in disciplines that include Literatures in English, History and Archaeology, Library and Information Studies, Linguistics, Media and Communications, Modern Languages and Literatures, and Philosophy.

The influence of developments in US writing research is evident in two other significant changes that were made to UC120 in the 1990s and that were carried over into other courses. These were the introduction of a writing portfolio and adoption of a process approach to writing. Portfolios were introduced by Mertel Thompson who had received formal training in rhetoric when she completed her doctorate in the US in the 1980s. Each portfolio contained answers to all assigned short answer questions and practice exercises, two or more drafts of assigned essays and reports, and weekly one-page reflections in which students explored and attempted to evaluate their

learning/writing experiences in particular units or assignments. The pieces were prepared over time so the students could benefit from the drafting, rewriting, reflecting, refining and perfecting stages, which are components of the “universal” writing process. The process approach was adopted following various faculty members’ exposure to developments in England and in US composition. The British influence came through James Britton’s work on the development of writing abilities in children. Britton and his colleagues were dissatisfied with the shortcomings they perceived in the four traditional modes of discourse – narration, exposition, description, and argument – because those categories addressed purpose or intention “only in terms of the intended effect upon the audience” (4). Britton and his colleagues were interested in “processes” involved in writing and therefore sought to “characterize all mature written utterances and then go on to trace the developmental steps that led to them” (6). As will become evident, exposition is emphasized in Jamaica, and the process approach used is consistent with a lock-step system rather than the open, recursive nature of writing presented in Britton et al’s work and emphasized by process theorists such as Janet Emig whose work paralleled Britton’s (see Crowley; Perl; Tobin).

Mona’s writing specialists inflected the imported models with Jamaican cultural and disciplinary trends but only to a limited extent, especially with regard to the universal writing process. What process advocate Lad Tobin calls “mechanistic process” (8) stages that have attracted criticism in the US are evident at Mona. Additionally, missing from the courses is process philosophy that opposes “traditional, product-driven, rules-based, correctness-obsessed writing instruction” (Tobin 5) – but which did not promote the view

that the quality of the product was inconsequential. The process approach to writing that was adopted in Jamaica and is addressed in all of the courses consists of the following four stages:

1. Prewriting: generating ideas through brainstorming, clustering and/or by some other strategy; planning, outlining, library and internet research, and the preparation of citation cards.
2. Drafting: writing the essay first draft (focusing primarily on content and underlying essay structure), and including a Works Cited page.
3. Revising: following peer review of the content and organization of the first draft based on a checklist provided for the course or by the instructor.
4. Proofreading: re-reading the final essay draft for errors in sentence structure, grammar, style/idiom, and in the mechanics of writing.

As in other places, sometimes the syllabus requirements at Mona suggest that what is involved is what Crowley and others consider process grafted onto current traditional rhetoric (211-13). The courses seem to remain in the traditional vein because as Lester Faigley says of composition studies in the US, while such courses have “professed to value process, it is not process for its own sake but rather the process of teleological development toward a product” (*Fragments* 14). At Mona, students may be told that they have to do at least two drafts of their essays and usually the first draft is done in class. The instructor has to sign this draft (in some cases all pages) to ensure the draft was written by the student. As well, the instructor has to approve other changes that the student makes to the first draft, and especially in the case of FD10A, the changes cannot

be extensive. As in other countries, there is also the faulty assumption that there is a universal writing process: All students are expected to proceed in the same way, according to the pace of the course, with sources, outline, and first draft required on specific days during the course. With few exceptions and recent changes, typically students also write a timed final examination in the presence of proctors even though process writing informs the course. That the “process” approach to writing is involved in the courses appears, then, to be only notional because when students write their first draft in class, it is not so much to allow students to employ varied/idiosyncratic composing processes, but more to check that the work was done by the student and signed off by the instructor. The issue in the courses, therefore, appears to be one of questionable trust in students and superficial elements of process writing grafted onto a product-driven system.

Omission of process philosophy is most marked in the absence from course documents of what Faigley calls process’s “deemphasis of errors and its validation of students’ experience rather than traditional authority” (49). Grammar instruction is absent from the descriptions and syllabuses of the standard courses at Mona; however, the rubrics emphasize formalism. Additionally, grading can be quite rigid – an apparent residue from the days when the UWI had a special arrangement with the University of London: “in the anxiety to deliver good quality education, standards had been set at a punitive level” (Cobley 16). In those years when West Indian students took the same examinations but did not always cover the same amount of content as students in England, the pass mark was set at 40% and West Indian students needed attain only 70% to earn an ‘A.’ Those standards that are still in place may seem to be easily attainable, but

they prove to be extremely difficult to achieve. In the language courses, the rubric used and special clauses for assessment epitomize a rigid emphasis on correctness. Equal marks (of 10 each) are allotted to the five categories on which students are graded – Mechanics/Grammar, Organization, Content, Analysis, and Style (MOCAS). In FD10A, for example, up to 2005-2006, if students scored below the pass mark of 4 out of 10 on any category in the coursework or in the exam, they failed the course. The rubric (called the MOCAS scheme) states, “Papers submitted for grading must satisfy minimal requirements in all of the five features listed.” Following are the descriptions provided in the rubric for the minimal passing score of 4 out of 10 in each category. As expressed, students must get that score or higher on every category in order to earn a passing grade on a paper:

- (M) Grammar & Mechanics: Exhibits some inconsistency in control of sentence boundaries and some lapses in usage but no more than 3 types of error occur or errors occur at an acceptable frequency.
- (O) Organisation: Exhibits some level of organization but is deficient in TWO or more of the characteristics required.
- (C) Content: No misinformation present but there is some vagueness suggesting that the writer is not sufficiently well informed.
- (A) Analysis: Maintains a clear purpose most of the time BUT there is some evidence of lack of clarity or depth.
- (S) Style: Exhibits some clear lapses in register & tone. Uses unsophisticated vocabulary and limited sentence variety.

The emphasis on correctness and standard of taste, implied in the quantification of errors in mechanics and organization, is anomalous. Although grammar and mechanics are graded, these elements are not normally taught in the courses. Such attitudes to grammar typify academics’ misrecognition of the country’s linguistic paradigms and superficial understandings of writing. Worse these attitudes continue to have serious

consequences, the extent of which most academics seem to be unaware. As in “Use of English” and its developments, one thing that has remained constant in the courses is a concern expressed in previous decades about language deficiency. However, also constant are incidental measures to address the challenge. The “Minutes of a Meeting of the DLLP held Thursday, 17th January 2002,” includes complaints from two philosophy lecturers who “underscored the necessity of all students being exposed to FD10A to get much needed help to improve their essay writing skills” (5). In their view, “the quality of English used in writing, from first through to third year students, is astonishingly poor” (5). Schontal Moore, in her capacity as coordinator, wrote in her “FD10A Report ... 2005/2006,” “There continues to be great concern expressed by instructors over the low levels of grammatical and writing competencies exhibited by students.... As such instructors have had to dedicate more time to teacher-student consultation and expend more energy into grading assignments and devising creative methodologies to address problems evident in students’ work” (2). Unlike “content” faculty who normally transfer the responsibility for writing to the English language courses or to secondary schools, the writing instructors in FD10A recommended addressing the grammar problem in the institution’s Writing Centre. Moore wrote, “The consensus among FD10A staff is that some of these problems could have been addressed had The Writing Centre continued with the special seminars on improving writing skills that have helped so many other students in the past” (2). That kind of action would, however, require changes in the Centre’s administration, as explained in the preceding chapter. Moreover, this consideration still meant that academics were probably not consciously engaging with the

country's linguistic realities and how they would have to be addressed in teaching *in courses*. Janice Cools, the UC10A and UC10B coordinator in 2006/2007, planned to address the problem *within* the courses. She informed me in our interview that she had considered including grammar teaching for about 10 minutes in each UC10A/UC10B seminar. Along with instructors, Cools had discussed the longstanding anomaly where students are told they will fail the course work or final examination if they fail grammar even though grammar teaching is not included in the syllabus. Cools was concerned that students are extremely weak in grammar, but besides the limited workshops in the Writing Centre students do not really get actual teaching in grammar. Like faculty in previous decades and more recently in FD10A, Cools felt the problem was acute. Her attempt to address it *in the course* marks writing specialists' recognition of the challenging linguistic context in which they work. However, even this recognition may have its limits if the teaching of formalist conventions – as in an isolated 10-minute session – does not have practical relevance for students.

Institutional priorities may explain how the process approach is employed at Mona. In other words, Mona's writing specialists probably recognize, as Sidney Dobrin recommends, that “while theory helps inform pedagogy, pedagogy must be indigenous” (7). The emphasis on correctness and standard of taste *in grading* is informed by continued association of prestige with English. As I established in previous chapters, and as Dyche explains, this association “stems to a great extent from the sociopolitical role that English, and particularly written English, plays in what are predominantly oral Creole-speaking societies” (“Writing Proficiency” 145). Faculty at Mona desire that any

approach employed yield improvements in students' writing, particularly in terms of demonstration of mastery of the code. In the US, process is criticized for not really improving writing because of the focus on passing through stages and on personal development (see, for example, Fulkerson, "Composition" 667). Also, some writing researchers critique the emphasis on recursiveness in general writing courses because that kind of reflective writing practice does not necessarily transfer to disciplinary courses where "content" faculty are not likely to require it and students do not perceive its necessity for their success (see Foster 114-15). In Jamaica, a significant concern is improvement in writing, including instant writing as done in timed examinations. Timed "essay" examinations mean that in this system, as Russell and Foster write of similar systems, "one-draft writing is king" (36). In recognition of the fact that students are still largely evaluated through instant one-draft writing in final examinations, writing specialists give students practice in *recursive thinking* for writing by requiring them to write at least one paper under test conditions. In UC10A and UC10B, for example, Cools appeared to respond to institutional priorities through evaluation in each course. Whereas there was 100% course work in UC120 since 1997, she reverted to pre-1997 when students had to complete course work and a final examination that was supervised. Therefore, in the new millennium, UC10A and UC10B students, returned to writing a final examination (worth 60%) under test conditions. Cools emphasized in our interview that the topic on which students write is one that they would have been researching for the entire semester. This means they get a specific question on that research topic, and there is also a general question so that students should be able to find a question on which

to write. Students still write instant essays in final examinations for the courses in their discipline, so the requirement in UC10A/ UC10B and in the other courses is likely to give them practice in the art of writing such papers. The process stages are, therefore, applied in Jamaica only in so far as they are believed to improve writing. Still, what is missing in the courses is a sense of differences that may obtain in different disciplines in the (application of the) various stages of any process.

The limited adaptations of US models in the Jamaican context can also be explained by the instructional materials used. Most of the readers, textbooks, and handbooks used in the courses are still procured from overseas; however, unlike in the 1960s when most were from England, most of those used up to 2007-2008 were written by North American authors. Among these are Laurie Kirsznner and Stephen Mandell's *The Brief [Holt] Handbook*, Lynn Quitman Troyka's *Simon & Schuster Handbook for Writers*, Ann Raimés' *Keys for Writers: A Brief Handbook*, Royce W. Adams and Becky Patterson's *Developing Reading Versatility*, Sylvan Barnet and Hugo Bedau's *Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing*, Barbara Harris Leonhard's *Discoveries in Academic Writing*, Nancy Wood's *Perspectives on Argument*, and Teresa Glazier's *The Least You Should Know About English*. Caribbean texts that focus on writing are available but few. They include Barbara Lalla's *English for Academic Purposes Study Guide*, Hazel Simmons-McDonald, Linda Fields, and Peter Roberts' *Writing in English: A Coursebook for Caribbean Students*. Janice Cools informed me in our interview that the textbook *Perspectives in Argument* would be replaced because instructors were concerned that it is "steeped very heavily in American culture and controversies." Cools and a team of

faculty members were preparing a regional argument text for use in the course. This text would reflect West Indian sensibility, with all selections written by Caribbean writers on the Caribbean.

The proposed change to the UC10B textbook implies writing faculty's recognition of the importance of contextual assumptions and regional knowledge in the production and reception of discourse. However, most of the materials being used indicate the infiltration of North American influence in the local courses – indeed, more North American than English or Jamaican influence. On the one hand, it may be argued that today it is easier to import books from the US than from England. However, on the other hand, the selections epitomize writing faculty's conscious engagement with developments in composition teaching in the US even though the emphasis at Mona is formal academic writing, rather than also personally expressive nonacademic discourse that is also taught in some US composition programs. Indeed, writing faculty at Mona share the general view held in the US that, as Nancy Sommers said in her 2005 CCCC's presentation, "academic writing is never a student's mother tongue." All of the Mona course objectives indicate a glaring similarity between the Jamaican situation and virtually all North American ones – the large aim of acculturation – of initiating new undergraduates into academic writing so they can "invent the university," as Bartholomae puts it (334). Dyche expressed in our interview that writing specialists are "trying to prepare students to write for the university, for academic purposes, making sure that they have certain skills in terms of critical thinking and analysis, that they know and can observe the different conventions such as citing sources, [and] conducting research." The

problem, however, is that most of the North American texts promote a universal writing process and the incorrect view that the academy is a single discourse community. This infiltration and adoption of faulty assumptions would become particularly evident when upper administration declared in the late 1990s that writing instruction was necessary for all students.

Academia as a Single Discourse Community: General Writing Instruction for/before Engagement in Disciplinary Work

After the mid-1990s, upper administration (including the principal and vice-chancellor) proposed having a set of foundation courses in a preliminary year or semester concept (see Brandon). This proposal signified US influence in terms of administrators' attempt to institute a foundation period similar to the year in which students take general education courses in the US. Faculty members did not accept the foundation year/semester concept; however, the Faculty of Arts and General Studies (Mona) *Regulations and Syllabuses* for 1997/98 records that as of the 1998/99 academic year the university would be “requiring all undergraduate students to complete nine credits of FOUNDATION COURSES over the period of their degree” (44, emphasis in the original). Specifically regarding language, the proposal meant that all students across the three campuses would take a language course. FD10A was proposed as the one-semester, 3-credit English/Communication skills course to be taught instead of UC120. All Faculties had the option of doing this one-semester course, which Natural Sciences (later Pure and Applied Sciences), Medical Sciences, and Education selected for their students.

The Faculty of Social Sciences would also require this course of its students. Only the Arts Faculty kept the year-long “Language: Exposition/Argument” (UC120) course because it wanted its students to continue to take a 6-credit course. In some senses, then, FD10A, with its very limited focus on language may be seen as the triumph of those who had called for a less sophisticated (linguistics-based) course than “Use of English” in the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, the course instantiates academics’ ambivalent attitudes to writing development.

FD10A’s introduction signals, on the one hand, administrators’ belief in the importance of writing instruction in the academy. Changes in the provisions for teaching in the writing courses confirm this belief. The introduction of FD10A meant a move from the very unwieldy situation of having large numbers of part-time tutors to a manageable number of full-time instructors, indicating the value that the institution was placing on writing courses. In anticipation of the new FD10A course whose constituency would include the Social Sciences Faculty that had previously not required its students to take a language course, the department reduced numbers in UC010 and UC120 from approximately 44 part-timers to 13 full-time tutors (*Departmental Reports* 1996-1997). By 1998, there were 5 full-time (tenured or tenure-track) lecturers in the Language Unit and 12 full-time instructors on one-year contracts (*Departmental Reports* 1997-1998).¹ “Instructor positions” were negotiated through the West Indies Group of University Teachers (WIGUT), with instructors expected to engage fully in teaching but not research. The reduction in the number of part-timers was also expected to address the

longstanding concern from the 1960s about marking with the same standards since part-time tutors were not usually available for standardization or other training.

On the other hand, while the proposal for this development indicates the institution was valuing writing instruction, it could also be seen to work to marginalize writing instruction because the course suggests that upper administration encouraged offering courses that would continue to lack a sense of initiation into disciplinary writing. FD10A, like its predecessor and successors, would be offered by language instructors and taught separate from disciplinary content. These arrangements suggest that the academy is singular, and general writing courses and their instructors can provide all of students' required writing instruction. These limitations are evident in the emphasis on exposition, the corresponding emphasis on general topics directed at general university-level educated audiences, and the resultant superficial consideration of the rhetorical situation, among other features.

Although the FD10A course that was introduced through a top-down approach bears the name "English for Academic Purposes" (EAP), a course which normally introduces students to the language and genres of writing in their disciplines such as the exact and social sciences (Benesch 4), at UWI writing outside of a specific discipline and the expository essay have dominated the course. This focus on exposition is consistent with the early years of EAP teaching and its practical rather than political stance in preparing students to adopt (rather than also question) disciplinary practices. Sarah Benesch reports that the beginnings of EAP lay in attempts to "provide an alternative to English language teaching as humanities, preparing students to read literary texts" (5).

Both Dyche and Monica Taylor (a former FD10A coordinator) informed me in our separate interviews that the course focus, at Mona, is to be understood in light of its origin. Since the course proposal arose from discussions at the upper administrative level, members of the DLLP were not involved in the discussions to highlight the importance of other kinds of writing, especially argument. Those who proposed the foundation language course seem to have assumed that exposition is the typical mode of writing expected of university students in all areas except law. Administrators, therefore, enlisted writing but in a very limited way and with only a peripheral connection to the university.

While the focus on exposition bespeaks a narrow understanding of writing in the academy, the original course design is even more limited – a situation that the writing faculty at Mona tried to change. The course was designed to be offered by distance, with material given to students every other week; that is, the conception was that students would do most of the work by distance and have a face-to-face meeting with their tutor once every two weeks. That was the model held for the foundation courses by those who conceived them. Upper administration expected FD10A to be taught in the same way; however, members of the DLLP lobbied to have the course taught face-to-face.

Administrators' limited understanding of writing and how it develops is also evident in the time allotted to this course. Although the department had some success in changing the delivery mode, before the end of the first semester in which the course was introduced, staff began to complain about the course arrangements. The "Minutes of a Meeting of the DLLP held Thursday, October 29, 1998" includes complaints that "the time allotted for the course was not enough. The students were likely to leave with the

same problems with which they entered” (3). Ornette Blair, an instructor with extensive experience in the program, confirmed in her questionnaire responses that when she started teaching FD10A in 2000, “the course focussed mainly on writing the research essay and summary writing. However, the syllabus included introduction of concepts such as ‘Communicative Competence’, ‘Academic Writing,’ and ‘Language Varieties in the Caribbean.’ Therefore, it was always a race against time to complete all the planned tasks in the one-hour seminar.” Based on their understanding of writing development and in response to those complaints, the language faculty managed to lobby for a further increase to two hours per week in contact time by 2001.

Based on the input of writing specialists at Mona, the FD10A course has developed from one in which the objectives were to enable students to develop essay-writing and English language skills to one the current website describes as being “designed to take students beyond basic competence in the comprehension and production of English prose, by building competence in the processing (reading) as well as production (writing) of the language of academic discourse.” Students are expected to develop competences in reading, writing, and speaking, so that by the end of the 13-week semester they are able to do the following, which could easily be required in a writing class outside of Jamaica:

(READING)

1. Distinguish academic writing from other kinds of writing
2. Identify a variety of styles appropriate to different academic audiences, contexts and purposes
3. Decode meaning in samples of academic writing
4. Critically analyse and evaluate written materials

(WRITING)

1. Manipulate a variety of styles appropriate to different academic audiences, contexts and purposes
 2. Write competent summaries in paragraph form
 3. Write short expository research essays (800 words)
 4. Use approved citation and documentation techniques in written papers
- (SPEAKING)
1. Orally present ideas individually and in groups
 2. Discuss and comment on oral presentations done by peers
 3. Critically evaluate and discuss written passages.

What is intriguing in these objectives is the omission of objectives related to grammar instruction. While such instruction usually attests to an emphasis on form, as does exposition, its omission in Jamaica's linguistic context is questionable, bearing in mind that students are heavily penalized in this area that accounts for the majority of the failures in the course. Past FD10A coordinators probably felt that the course design would compensate for the omission. In this 13-week, one-semester writing course, students are taught in 2-hour seminars of 20 to 25 students. Students can supplement seminars with paid sessions in the Writing Centre. An Essay Pre-test is given in the first week of classes to diagnose potential weaknesses that could prevent students from passing the course, so students can seek help in eliminating those problems from their writing. Additionally, up to 2004, students were required to produce a writing portfolio, which included self-help exercises from Glazier's text, and specifying which weakness in the student's own writing was the target of each exercise, among other items. Such measures seem insufficient, however, since – as outlined – coordinators continue to report language problems in significant numbers of students' writing.

Despite the very general nature of the course description and objectives, and the omission of substantive considerations of the linguistic context, students are given a

sense of disciplinary difference in this course when they are taught about “Academic English.” They are taught that Academic English is formal and objective, “may vary across disciplines” (in terms of format and jargon), is researched and documented, and is comprehensive (Lalla 91-98). There is at the same time, however, a negation of the persuasive element in writing. Barbara Lalla writes that objectivity is marked by honesty in collecting and selecting information, and neutrality in conveying information. What Lalla’s text that is used in the course does not convey is the sense that disciplinary writing differs in more ways than in format and jargon, that indeed the way meaning is made and what is understood as objective or neutral are contingent upon the disciplinary context. The somewhat superficial consideration of the rhetorical situation in the text carries over into the topics on which students write in the course.

Like those in UC120 and its derivatives, the essay topics that the FD10A coordinator determines before the course begins each semester confirm the general nature of the course even though students from select Faculties take it in specified semesters. These topics include the following taken from a combination of past examination papers: Responses to Domestic Violence, Health Care in Developing Countries, Ways in which the Personal Development of a University Student May Be Enhanced, Road Fatalities In My Country and How These Can Be Reduced, A Recent Scientific Innovation, Communication Across the Curriculum, Popular Culture, Healthy Lifestyles, Science and Technology, Heritage, Education and National Development, Man and the Environment, Sustainable Economic Development, Impact of the Arts, Human Rights, Language and Society, The Road to National Development. Like the topics in UC120, many topics such

as “Health Care in Developing Countries” or “A Recent Scientific Development” will appeal to students in specific disciplines while others such as “The Road to National Development” and “Sustainable Economic Development” are likely to appeal to all students in the course because the latter topics are concerned with communal success. However, like most of the topics, writing in the course is not fully linked to disciplines.

Consistent with the conception of the FD10A course, students are expected to get content from their disciplines or general knowledge of current events to write on the topics. However, considerations of audience and purpose are problematic in the course. Because the topics tend to be about current global and national issues, they also focus on a general audience for whom students are to write their expository essay. The course seminar schedule instructs students that, when writing the expository essay on the topic chosen from the list provided in a given semester, they are to “[b]e informative and write for English speakers with university level education.” This audience is usually considered as the instructor or students. Although students from specific Faculties enroll in the course in a given semester, all students and the instructor in a given seminar will not necessarily share specialization with the writer. This means that the class instructor or students may not be conversant with writing practices in the student writer’s discipline. Since the emphasis is on exposition, to inform or instruct, purpose is often not considered in terms of the topic itself or what students would want to do with the topic. In other words, the course does well in assisting students to write for a general academic audience, but does not really address audience awareness in terms of having students write for say a science audience, using the relevant jargon and moves to achieve a

specified purpose in that audience. Clearly, time would not be available to accommodate all such requirements in a one-semester course that meets only once for two hours per week. However, the view of writing that is likely to be conveyed is that the student is always writing for a general academic audience, and perhaps, unfortunately, what he/she needs to address are grammatical/mechanical writing concerns. Consequently, the course is not likely to meet its objective to provide students the opportunity to “[m]anipulate a variety of styles appropriate to different academic audiences, contexts and purposes.”

The course emphasis on exposition was reinforced in February 2005 when a cross-campus gathering of language/writing specialists from the three campuses recommended that “reading and writing exposition will continue to be the central focus of FOUN1001 (FD10A)” (WRITE Symposium II 4). However, changes that may be as progressive as they are problematic have been made to other aspects of the course at Mona. The *Departmental Reports* for 2004-2005 mentions changes that included FD10A’s being “revised to increase the tasks related to the development of the critical thinking skills of students” (51). Other changes include de-emphasis of decontextualized summary writing; inclusion of two graded oral presentations; substitution of a writer’s journal for the portfolio; grading of the research essay as the final examination; cumulative grading so that students no longer need to pass coursework and the final examination separately in order to pass the course; and use of the APA instead of the MLA documentation style. According to Schontal Moore, the course coordinator in 2006-2007, these changes followed from suggestions given in cross-campus meetings and staff-student liaison meetings. The changes were meant to make the course “more

relevant to students' needs, less burdensome to teach and more enjoyable for students and instructors" (Moore, "FD10A Report ... 2005/2006" 1). I detect, however, that while most of these changes are positive, the last one may actually perpetuate misconceptions about writing.

One of the positive changes is that in the approach to summarizing in the course. In the past, students read and summarized a passage under timed-test conditions. The better current approach requires students to demonstrate summarizing skills in their annotated bibliography and other materials for their research paper. Another positive change relates to evaluation in the course. In the past some instructors required oral presentations from students, but the presentations were not graded. Awarding marks for them is likely to encourage students although there may be the concern that longer presentations to be graded could take away from "writing" time. Also, although a process approach is employed in the course, in the past students received marks only for the final research essay that they submitted. Students now keep a writer's journal, indicating instructors' attempts to award marks to each student's process in conducting and writing up research over the semester. The portfolio that the writer's journal has replaced included many items that were usually graded once they were submitted to the instructor. It did not really serve to allow a student to work on one or just a few fixed pieces over several drafts and track his/her development as a writer.

Another positive change regarding evaluation is the shift to using a cumulative total in the course. The FD10A course was introduced on the other campuses before it was first taught at Mona in 1998, so instructors at Mona tried to observe the requirements

on the other campuses. One such requirement is a clause that students had to pass course work and final examination separately. The amendment to this requirement is explained in “Report of Language Section Meeting Held Thursday, March 9, 2006.” This report notes, “The section supported in principle OBUS 24/01/06 decision to change the assessment of FD10A to 40% in-course test and 60% final exam, and to add together both in-course test and final exam to determine the passing grade.” Before this change came into effect in 2006-2007, the weighting used to be 50% in-course test and 50% final examination (50 CW/ 50 Exam). Now it is 40 CW/ 60 Exam, with students passing the course as long as they earn 40% or more cumulatively. Some of the changes regarding the portfolio and writer’s journal stem from this decision when the meeting “suggested that the in-course tests/ assignments be revised to be more compatible with the new weighting and that these revisions take into account the cumulative weighting of both in-course test/assignments and final exam.”

The change suggests more focus on the final examination – on instant/pressure writing – which contradicts “process.” However, what students write under test conditions in the final examination is the final draft of the research essay that they would have been preparing over the semester rather than an instant essay on a general topic that they would see for the first time in the examination. Despite the fact that students are still expected to produce effective writing in very limited time and with few materials, the change demonstrates writing faculty’s attempts to recognize the developmental nature of writing, a feature which was hardly recognized in the previous scheme where students had to pass the in-course portion and the final instant examination separately in order to

pass the course. Removing the final timed examination would be consistent with a flexible process approach; however, Moore indicated in our interview that in the UWI context students would probably not take the course seriously if it did not include a final examination element. To my mind, students would probably appreciate a course examined only by course work if an attendance policy is implemented. This policy could involve deducting a specific percentage for each absence over a specified number of allowed absences, as I have observed in one US institution. This deduction would affect students' cumulative average.

Besides those positive changes is the potentially problematic change in the documentation style. During a lecture on documentation style, students are sensitized to various discipline-specific formats. Students see examples of how sources are documented depending on the selected style, but the lecture focuses primarily on APA. Students are, however, allowed to use a format required in their disciplines, but students need to inform their instructor about this before hand. The fact that students have to inform their instructor about using a style that is different from APA confirms the emphasis on *one* style. Moore explained in our interview that one reason for focusing on one style in the course is that some "content" faculty do not always specify a particular style for students, seeming to accept the style used as long as the students use it consistently. Clearly, the APA documentation style is more suitable than MLA for more students in the course, especially those from Education and Social Sciences. Moving away from MLA marks a significant effort to avoid foisting "literary" requirements and practices on all students. However, the APA documentation style is probably problematic

for students in Medical Sciences and Pure and Applied Sciences (PAS). Additionally, if “content” faculty accept any style that the student uses consistently, they may not be helping students understand their disciplines’ peculiar conventions. The issue of documentation style in FD10A – as in other writing and “content” courses – is another instantiation of limited initiation of students into specific disciplines, in terms of a discipline’s ways of knowing and writing that are often reflected in the documentation style used. The stipulation that students inform their instructor about the style they will use underscores the emphasis on form rather than what is appropriate based on the rhetorical situation. In other words, the emphasis in the writing courses is still on mechanics – formalist conventions – in terms of basic requirements for in-text citation format and the reference list, rather than also on the way of knowing or outlook that is conveyed in the documentation style. “Content” and writing faculty’s attention to these differences in disciplines would demonstrate that they – we – acknowledge the different needs of students from PAS, Social Sciences, Education, and other constituencies.

A Plural Academy?: Preparation and Prejudice

The later course, “Writing in the Disciplines” (FD14A), would attempt to distinguish between the needs of students from various disciplines, but would be unsuccessful because of its eventual emphasis on social sorting and adoption of universalist paradigms regarding research and instruction. Beginning in September 2004, the DLLP introduced FD14A as another first-year writing course for students who receive upper range passes in the regional Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations

(CAPE) Communication Studies examination.² Dyche explained in a September 2006 communication that the course “was developed to meet the English Language needs of students with high levels of linguistic competence in English; for this reason, as of [the 2006-2007] academic year, it has been restricted to students with either a Grade 1 or 2 in the CAPE Communication Studies course” (“Equivalence”). All Humanities (previously called Arts) and Law students take “Language: Argument” (UC10B) in the second semester, but Humanities students with the required CAPE passes in Communication Studies now take FD14A instead of “Language: Exposition” (UC10A) in their first semester. Students from the other Faculties take either FD14A or “English for Academic Purposes” (FD10A) based on their pass ranges as explained above.

The conception of “Writing in the Disciplines” suggests academics’ understanding of the importance of addressing writing in disciplines; however, it does not indicate involvement of “content” faculty in the course delivery. “Writing in the Disciplines” is a course that Paulette Ramsay and a team of Language Unit lecturers had proposed; that is, this was not a course introduced by fiat from upper administration. Ramsay’s intention was for the course to be delivered in subject workshops so that students focus on what is written in their disciplines, and how people read or write in those areas. However, that model of having disciplinary groups being guided in discipline-specific workshops was not adopted up to the 2007-2008 academic year. Up to the time of writing, FD14A, Mona’s version of Writing in the Disciplines (WID), resembled a common Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) model about which David Russell cautions interest groups. Russell explains that “in the 1970s and 1980s, WID was

usually seen as ... integral to WAC, not something separable. But in the 1990s, many composition scholars and programs began to draw distinctions between learning to write in the ways disciplines do (which they called WID), and writing about the subjects disciplines study (which they called WAC)" (*Writing* 310). The second approach, WAC, was considered as "fundamentally 'writing to learn,' developing cognitive performance in a field" (Russell, *Writing* 311). The other approach, WID, was thought to be "fundamentally 'learning to write' professional discourse, the rhetorical marshalling of arguments in a field" (311). The WID model that Russell cautions against is a mere revision of the more common general first-year writing course, involving instructors whose specialization is literary analysis. Often, "content" faculty are not actively involved in the program (297).

While the delivery of FD14A at Mona enacts faculty's deepening understanding of writing and its development than obtained with previous language/writing courses, various factors prevent accomplishment of disciplinary writing instruction. The course was beset by administrative problems in the first year, including glitches related to computerized registration, late arrival of texts, limited planning with the result being an overwhelming number of writing assignments, and a focus that has been criticized as being very similar to FD10A. Monica Taylor, who first coordinated "Writing in the Disciplines," considers the course a challenge. She feels the concept of teaching writing in particular disciplines is useful, but she explained in our interview that the kind of support material required was not available, and one class per week is insufficient. She recalls observing students' frustration as they grappled with insufficient time to reflect on

and review all of the material that was being covered. There was no time to focus on writing in each student's particular discipline. Adding to that frustration is the fact that each class is mixed. There is no class of Pure and Applied Sciences students, for example, so instructors focus on writing in *all* disciplines in any one class. Despite the challenges, during her year as coordinator, Taylor followed up on suggestions from Ramsay to involve "content" faculty in the course. Ramsay's intention was for "content" faculty to give introductory lectures or participate in discussions at different points in the course. When Taylor communicated with lecturers from other Faculties, her concerns were the kinds of tasks that students were expected to write in their disciplines. She had considered cross-modular/cross-faculty teaching where students would be assigned a technical task that would require the "content" lecturer to examine segments of it. However, she does not recall the collaborative element going beyond talking about usual required tasks. Margaret Newman, who succeeded Taylor as coordinator in 2005-2006, tried to modify the course to reduce its many FD10A features. She also changed the texts used in the course. Initially, *Simon & Schuster Handbook for Writers* (7th ed.) by Troyka and Hess was used. Newman changed that text to Kennedy et al's *Writing in the Disciplines: A Reader for Writers* (5th ed.) because she felt the latter "gave the students more guidance and teaching on writing from multiple sources" ("FD14A Coordinator's Report"). Christine Manion's *A Writer's Guide to Oral Presentations and Writing in the Disciplines* is also used in the course. Needless to say, these are texts that are external to the Caribbean reality, but useful for a course that focuses on general disciplinary writing.

Although the course texts appear to provide disciplinary materials, other aspects of the course that Newman inherited really focus little on disciplinary writing. The course description (which is different from what Ramsay proposed) hints at limitations in the stated course objectives. The website informs students that the course will provide an alternative to FD10A or UC10A in which students will “acquire other essential writing skills, as well as an appreciation of the manner in which academic language reflects the thinking within each discipline.” The site also states that Writing in the Disciplines has as objectives students’ being able to

demonstrate an awareness of the defining elements of academic discourse used in different disciplines; critically evaluate and discuss a variety of texts intended for specialist and general audiences; write competent summaries (descriptive, informative or evaluative) of texts in different disciplines; write in a variety of formats on discipline-related issues for specialist as well as general audiences; use approved citation and documentation techniques in written papers; and use writing to reflect their learning experiences.

The course description suggests that students would consider different research methodologies, the thinking behind research, and writing conventions in different disciplines. However, realizing those objectives would probably be limited because of the instructors’ background. Most of the instructors in the course are not trained outside of literature: some may have training in the Social Sciences but none has training in Pure and Applied Sciences, for example. Given the background of the instructors, it is likely that students get very general – perhaps even stereotypical – introductions to “the defining elements of academic discourse used in different disciplines.” Another description that is provided on-line (perhaps to clarify the objectives) and that students received as a handout in the second semester of 2006-2007 seems even further removed

from disciplinary writing with wording that could fit any of the other courses. This handout states that at the end of the course, students should be able to

1. analyze various discourse situations
2. critically evaluate and discuss a variety of texts
3. write competent summaries and paraphrases
4. use approved citation and documentation techniques in written papers
5. plan and write essays
6. revise, edit and proofread
7. conduct research.

Other aspects of the course suggest that it involves more writing *of* the disciplines rather than writing *in* the disciplines. As preparation for their third week in the second semester of 2005-2006, students were to read from their texts “Subjects of Study in the Natural Sciences and Technology,” “Humanities,” and “Social Sciences,” and note “two similarities and one difference.” This reading assignment means that this mixed group of students was being introduced to aspects of writing in various disciplines, which is useful exposure. As writing administrators and researchers Yvonne Merrill and Thomas Miller opine, cross-disciplinary inquiries “make the rhetorical dynamics of academic discourses visible,” thereby enabling students to “see knowledge making at work in different settings” (210). However, given the assignments, students were probably not focusing specifically on how to write in their respective disciplines – the more immediately necessary and valuable skill.

Students’ research projects also suggest work directed at only general academic audiences. For their research essay, students are told that they can choose their own topic. Those students who cannot arrive at a topic are allowed to write on one of several that are covered in one of their textbooks. The only condition for all students is that they write on

the topic “from [their] discipline’s perspective.” Newman explained in our interview that writing on a broad topic from the discipline’s perspective meant that students were to write on a topic that their discipline would deal with. She explained that for a topic such as “Family,” a student in a health-related discipline could write on “Family Health” or “Community Health” whereas one in Social Sciences could write on “Family Structure,” “Family Functioning,” “Dysfunctional Family,” “Changes in Family Structure,” or “Roles within Families,” among others. However, this approach proved difficult for students doing Mathematics or Physics, for example. Newman, therefore, changed the instruction to say students can write on a topic in *another* discipline in which they are interested and with which they would like to challenge themselves. They should talk to their instructor in such a case. These instructions and the background of the instructors suggest that students in this course, like those in FD10A, probably have to adapt their disciplinary relevant pieces to a general academic audience. While it is useful for students to be able to adapt disciplinary writing to the needs of diverse audiences, including the public, that kind of instruction is not the primary objective of the course.

Despite those limitations, the course represents a move to address disciplinary writing conventions, which, I argue, should inform writing instruction. However, the course embodies linguistic prejudice. Newman admits that now that only students with upper range passes in CAPE are allowed to take the course, instructors do not complain as they did in the past about students’ mastery of English. As I do, Newman questions the rationale for offering the course to students who have the highest scores in CAPE; if it is such a good course, why should the students with more problems in writing not be

allowed to take it? Of the current first-year writing courses at Mona, FD14A most clearly addresses the need to assist students with recognizing and employing writing strategies in specific disciplines. However, this course also best reflects a contradictory emphasis on excellence over equity. In other words, this course evidences some of the politics of literacy with which writing teachers have had to engage: on the one hand, there is what Lester Faigley calls “the ideal of literacy as a means for achieving social equality” and on the other “a cynical acknowledgement of education as part of the machinery for sorting people into categories of winners and losers” (*Fragments* 52). The requirements suggest that the stronger (meaning *grammatically abler*) writers will get the necessary exposure and those who really need the exposure are still excluded.

A kind of discriminatory social sorting is, therefore, implied in the prerequisites for the course. In fact, UWI, Mona, appears to be explicitly offering differentiated educational opportunities based on the selection process for this course, but only for students with demonstrated high levels of mastery of English. If taught well, the course could empower some students regarding disciplinary discourses, while other students would be disenfranchised. Such arrangements highlight the need to reexamine the assumptions on which this course and the other first-year writing courses are based. Having an alternative course for students with high levels of proficiency in English and from secondary institutions where they have already covered most of the sociolinguistic content of the other writing courses reflects commonsense. However, not wanting to copy CAPE or simply wanting to attend to students with upper range passes should not be the reasons for offering instruction in writing in the disciplines. Additionally, if the course is

meant to provide differentiated instruction, then it seems odd that in the very year that this “honors” course was introduced, the “basic” writing course (UC010) for less able (meaning *grammatically weaker*) writers (that I discuss in Chapter 4) was divested.

Reexamination of the assumptions on which FD14A is based could lead to modifications that would indeed enable students to “write in a variety of formats on discipline-related issues for specialist as well as general audiences.” *General audiences* seem to be adequately treated in this course and the others. However, students will probably grasp concepts better about writing for specialist audiences if “content” faculty are involved in instruction. The subject workshops that Ramsay recommended would also prove useful in terms of grouping students who are specializing in the same area. However, a problem would remain regarding instructors who may not share the students’ specialization. Aviva Freedman, Professor of Linguistics and Language Studies at Carleton University in Canada, highlights this problem in her critique of failed attempts at offering writing instruction outside of disciplinary discursive contexts: “It is very difficult for those who are not in fact immersed in these fields, who are not themselves disciplinary specialists, to be sensitive to and to articulate the complex nuanced understanding of what counts as evidence or appropriate warranting, or what can be accepted as shared knowledge” (140). Freedman shows from her research that “simulations of disciplinary writing tasks ... are just rhetorical complications of the task” that “carry with them the invidious possibility of causing inappropriate transfer when the student is confronted with the real thing” (140).

Faculty could reconsider the kind of collaboration that Ramsay intended or that Taylor attempted to initiate in 2004-2005 in order to avoid the problems that can arise in what Freedman calls “stand-alone WAC classes in which the writing teacher independently teaches one section on sociology, one section on literature, and one section on biology” (140). FD14A could actually include prompts from other disciplines, with the “content” faculty coming to discuss them – as used to be done in “Use of English” with faculty in the other survey courses. Such shared writing assignments and team teaching to link faculty courses and foundation writing courses would be more useful than the end of semester panel presentations that a former FD10A instructor organized in 2001/2002 and in which a Professor from Pure and Applied Sciences participated. This presentation seemed to reinforce writing for evaluation since the presentation was organized to give students tips for writing just before the FD10A final examination in which students wrote an instant essay. While that kind of collaboration is useful, more is required to achieve transformation in attitudes to writing and students’ achievements in writing. Since 2003-2004, panels of professionals from within the academy as well as from the private and public sectors have been invited to address students taking (UC120 and later) UC10A/UC10B, and lead discussions about the functions and processes of writing in their disciplines. Such changes are likely to reinforce the relevance of writing to students’ development. However, they do not speak to the kind of actual instruction in disciplinary ways of knowing and writing that would be beneficial to students. A well worked out program would involve writing-intensive courses beyond the first year to support writing-to-learn assignments used beginning in the first year.

Faculty's reexamination of FD14A will also necessitate a reexamination of the other courses for various reasons. First, students with lower range passes in CAPE take UC10A if they are in Humanities, and FD10A if they are in other Faculties, except Law. As I have explained, both FD10A and UC10A address exposition. Although it may be argued that UC10A is an enriched course because it includes a lecture and therefore three hours per week, it can also be argued that resources are being stretched to have two different courses that address similar aspects of writing. It is also true that although the language emphasis in "Use of English" has been deemphasized in the current writing courses, UC10A still gives students more exposure to Caribbean language issues than does FD10A.³ One may say such exposure is appropriate for students in the Humanities, but based on the language prejudices identified in previous chapters, all students are likely to benefit from discussions about language and power that could contribute to students' sense of identity and critical awareness. After all, although all of the courses perpetuate the hegemonic role of English, the accepted language of academe, UC10A lends itself to far more discussions on challenging linguistic imperialism and changing attitudes to language in the academy and in the society than does any other course.

Second, the question of "What does following FD14A with UC10B mean for Humanities students?" should be considered. If FD14A really does what it should do, a general "argument" course as its sequel may be redundant. Alternatively, such a course could act like a test of what was learned in FD14A, but one then needs to question the need to have general language instructors functioning as the examiners of specialist writing.

If administrators and faculty understand FD14A's potential, they – we – may consider different approaches to research and writing processes in all of the courses. One intriguing aspect of all of the courses is that, just as all students have to follow a lock-step writing process, all students have to find a specific number of sources as they research to write their papers and then they are expected to use a specific minimum number of sources. In FD14A, students do not have to write their first draft in class as happens in FD10A, for example. The check in FD14A is the reference list, which cannot be too different from the first one that students prepare. What is not taught, then, is the fact that even number of sources is contingent. The courses do, however, convey a sense that writing begins before students actually think they are writing because students usually have to do research and share findings. Unfortunately, however, because the moves in preparing a paper are not necessarily explained as writing steps, students may actually leave the courses thinking that writing is only the final paper they submitted. As compositionists Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle observe, “[w]hat students traditionally imagine as writing is actually only the final move in a much larger series of events” (563). “Content” faculty also unconsciously pass on this erroneous idea when they do not explain to students that writing begins when they begin to plan and conduct their experiments and other studies that will lead to reports or papers. Should students and faculty develop a new understanding of writing, they/we would then begin to understand what Carter describes as writing as knowing and doing in a discipline. This connection is evident even in the documentation style that is used; however, as in FD10A, the documentation style that students use in FD14A reflects convenience rather

than substantial links to purpose and context. According to the FD14A syllabus, each final draft has to be “correctly formatted according to the citation style preferred by [the student’s] discipline.” Students are advised that where their discipline has no stated policy, they are to use the APA documentation style. As expressed regarding FD10A, a clear connection is not made between documentation style and ways of knowing and doing in disciplines.

The largely arbitrary sessions in which students receive guidance on documentation could also be improved to reduce the emphasis on formalist conventions, following reexamination of the courses. In these sessions, librarians present various kinds of examples of sources and how they should be documented in-text or at the end of a text. However, students do not necessarily use the kinds of sources that are presented. The reality is that the sessions focus largely on mechanics rather than also on how the use of documentation styles conveys disciplinary epistemologies, and in the end students seem to grasp neither the mechanics nor how to avoid (accusations of) plagiarism. After observing students for over three decades in UC100, UC120, and FD10A, King explained in his questionnaire responses that one of the most persistent problems that students experience is citing accurately from written sources. He observed that the citation problems seemed to follow the same step by step sequence, as follows. Students write short essays consisting entirely of their own personal opinions; copy the words and substance from some unnamed source and include no personal opinion; misrepresent their sources, deliberately or accidentally, by paraphrasing incorrectly and then putting the paraphrase between quotation marks; and put the heading “Work Cited Page” (with

no -s, on the end of Work) immediately below the final paragraph of an essay instead of on a separate page when using the MLA style. Below this heading, students sometimes list all the works that they read on the general subject area of the essay topic, some of which they did not cite in the essay. Sometimes, works cited in the essay do not appear in the list. Various other errors appear in the list including no or incorrect inversion of names and listing by title or publication details that are often incorrect rather than by the available author. Sometimes students also overgeneralize: when some students learn that the main author's last name must appear first on the Works Cited page, they also invert the author's first and last names in their footnotes or endnotes.

King feels that these problems have persisted because in the past tutors relied on model essays in handbooks and now they rely on library sessions. I feel, however, that the problems he identifies testify to the absence of needed disciplinary instruction. King explained that in the past, tutors directed students to model essays with a separate Works Cited page containing illustrative citations from books, articles, the print media, and later the Internet. Tutors asked students to use these as guides when writing or revising their essay drafts. However, students did not always observe what tutors required – suffixes, alphabetization, inversion, and so on. King admitted that tutors forgot that many Jamaican students would not see the suffix '-s' at the end of the word 'Works' because that suffix is absent from their Creole language. In recent times, students seem to forget about format after leaving library presentations. To my mind, the issues related to plagiarism really stem from disciplinary misunderstanding, and those related to the mechanics of documentation stem from lack of disciplinary instruction. Instead of only

handbooks or arbitrary sessions presented by librarians on APA or MLA, students should be assisted with such matters in the context of their own writing. Such assistance can come from instructors in the writing courses and from coaches in the Writing Centre. However, “content” faculty should also initiate students into the ways in which documentation styles characterize disciplinary epistemologies.

A Plural Academy: beyond Universalist Models of First-Year Writing?

More recent developments in the university suggest that the climate is right for consideration of “content” faculty’s involvement in students’ writing development. However, these developments also bring out in sharp relief ambiguities regarding the extent to which the university is indeed engaging in writing development. Other (non-foundation) Language Unit courses taught to second and third year and graduate students and projects that arose in the new millennium suggest academics’ attempts to reach a wide cross-section of students and to address a variety of *English language* needs on the Mona campus. However, even when faculty attempted to move beyond the universalist model of first-year writing, they ignored the connection between writing and learning in disciplines. This omission is implied in “content” faculty’s belief that writing specialists alone are responsible for students’ – including graduates’ – writing development. I argue that this omission persists because of over attention to the code – English Language – that has functioned to overshadow attention to other aspects of writing and the connection between writing and learning in disciplines.

The institution's partial engagement in language development and the disconnect between writing and learning in disciplines are evident in the provisions in upper level and graduate writing courses. In 2004-2005, when FD14A was first offered, the department also offered "Language and Ethics" (LG20A) for students in their second or third year and "The Art of Public Speaking" (LG30A) for students in their third/final year. The *Departmental Reports* for 2004-2005 indicates that a member of the Language Unit and a team of lecturers from Mass Communications delivered LG30A in the first semester. According to the website, that course focuses on developing prospective graduates who can "deliver themselves confidently and competently" in public or professional contexts. Students learn to research, write, and deliver a speech and then respond to an audience's questions about it. Naturally, the emphasis in the course is "delivery – that is, the choice and use of appropriate language, the proper use of the voice (including elocution, pronunciation, and voice projection) and the employment of visual aids." Although there is mention of enabling students to prepare "for various occasions," the emphasis is on language usage: the presentations for which they are being prepared will be "in a formal context, which often necessitates the use of English." Clearly, this course will help to improve the profile of the institution's graduates by providing them with useful oral communication skills. However, it does not appear to address disciplinary learning. What it reveals most, however, is lack of understanding at the upper administrative level about language development because of the insistence on having the same minimum number of twenty students as in other courses on the campus. In the early years of the new millennium, the university mandated that the lowest number of students

in any course is to be twenty. That decision can be understood in light of limited resources due to financial constraints; however, a “speaking” course usually requires small groups to be effective (see Berlin, *Rhetoric*; Connors).

The other course, LG20A, which was designed for students in their second or third year, was first offered in the second semester of 2004/2005. Paulette Ramsay and a team of faculty from the Philosophy Unit taught this course to students from the Faculty of Humanities and Education, specifically from Mass Communications, Literatures in English, Linguistics, and Library Studies. Based on the on-line course outline, students learn that “[e]thical issues are inherent in writing and speaking because what we write and say can influence users, either in a positive or negative way. Furthermore, how we express ideas affects people’s perception of us and of our organization.” By the end of the course, students are expected to develop “an understanding of the basis and justification of the ethical statements” and “an appreciation of the relationship between ethical questions and language usage.” In our interview, Ramsay described the course as involving both reading and writing to help students to analyze other people’s writing and to examine the ethical lapses, if any. As they read texts with a critical eye, students learn to determine the extent to which the writing is ethical, that is, adhering to ethical principles as they relate to discourse modes. Ramsay feels that one of the emphases in the course that distinguishes it from courses such as FD10A, UC10A, and UC10B is treatment of the different ways in which people use language across cultures in writing and speaking. Those courses tend to ground students in specific discourse types, which is

only one aspect of LG20A. The idea of having students examine other people's writing is that students will use the same principles to inform their own writing.

Since this course involves much reading and analysis of other people's writing, it may be skewed to reading rather than writing. More important, it appears to be a very general "language" course that does not address ethics in relation to any discipline. In fact, the course appears to speak to *universality in writing*: the topic to be covered in the sixth week is "[i]ncreasing effectiveness by writing universally to include diversity of readers." Certainly, "writing universally" does not address the different purposes and audiences for which members may write in different/specific disciplines/contexts. Ramsay admitted that there was no real treatment of disciplinary writing in the course, but because about three professional fields (journalists, librarians, and linguists) were represented, those students examined the code of ethics for those careers. The students critiqued the code of ethics and considered how they would breach the code of conduct if they were writing in those areas. The students who were not in a clear career area, such as those from literature, considered the UWI students' code of ethics. Ramsay was considering another course in which students could examine a specific curriculum area for ethical problems. That would probably be a more research-driven course in which students focus on a specific discipline, and could form a part of the sequence that I propose in the concluding chapter.

The department has also prepared graduate level "English-Language" courses; however, the focus on "English" seems to promote the view that the responsibility for teaching graduate writing courses should be transferred to language instructors. The

Departmental Reports for 2002-2003 mentions that in that academic year, the Language Unit “offered its first English Language graduate-level course, Advanced Academic English Language Skills to Social Science students” (56). This is the course that Chevannes mentions in his article that is discussed in Chapter 1. Chevannes reports that the Faculty of Social Sciences had requested this course, LG600, to assist graduate students, about ten per cent of whom needed “a remedial course” to meet matriculation requirements (302). In mentioning that some critics may consider the course “a waste of resources” (302), Chevannes suggests that the course addressed only weaknesses in English grammar and mechanics. However, the Revised LG600 Outline syllabus specifies a broader coverage. Most of the fourteen objectives address disciplinary writing considerations. Examples include students’ being able to “identify the main uses of writing in their field,” “employ the main features of writing in their field,” “meet the expectations of readers in their field,” and “practice appropriate documentation of their work.” Only one objective mentions mechanics, requiring students to be able to “control surface features such as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.” Another graduate level course that has been developed and approved but not taught up to the 2006-2007 academic year is “Advanced Writing in English.” This is a course in writing that the Modern Languages and Literatures department requested to accompany their “Diploma in Translating.” Taylor designed “Advanced Writing in English” to focus on professional writing and meeting the standards that would exist in students’ profession. Based on this course description and the LG600 objectives, the course designers and some “content” faculty understand the extent of students’ writing needs; that is, the courses suggest

“content” faculty’s acknowledgment of the multiple discourses in academia. However, they also instantiate “content” faculty’s attempts to transfer the responsibility for writing, since there is no indication that the courses are or would be taught collaboratively with writing and other content faculty. As well, the focus on “English” in a course for graduates in Modern Languages (where writing in other languages has to be considered) suggests how *writing* is limited to *English* in the university.

Another development in the DLLP which is fulfilling an important need but probably keeping the focus too closely tied to “English” is the “MA in English Language” that is offered through the Jamaican Language Unit (JLU). The description indicates that this program began in September 2005 and targets “persons interested in English Language usage in Public Media, Editors, English Language Trainers and Teachers at the Post-secondary level (especially for courses such as CAPE Communication Studies, UWI courses such as UC010, UC120/FD10A/FD14A, and equivalent courses at Teachers’ Colleges, and other universities and tertiary institutions).” Students are expected to develop “a sound technical knowledge of the structure and usage of English” and “gain a grasp of the social issues surrounding its use both within the Caribbean and around the world, and the competence to design and teach English language courses at the post-secondary level.” While the emphasis on English Language may be useful for teachers in pre-university institutions, it appears to be limited for teachers who should be doing more than helping students to write for general audiences. In other words, the program does not seem to concentrate much on how writing works *in*

different disciplines, and – as in the undergraduate courses – instruction is assured by language specialists only.

A Plural Academy?: Collaboration as “Support” or “Reinforcement”

Academics’ attempts to address writing development beyond the foundation courses are also evident in the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) pilot project that was introduced at Mona in 2006-2007. This initiative speaks to the important need for academics to move beyond understanding writing as a generic skill and beyond seeing the responsibility for students’ writing development as resting solely with language instructors or a first-year writing course. However, it omits specific considerations of “content” faculty’s involvement in explicit disciplinary writing instruction rather than in mere reinforcement of basic English Language principles. Indeed, I argue, WAC is proving to be another universalist model of writing in its application at Mona.

The project’s universalist orientation is evident in its development. In the 2006-2007 academic year, the DLLP began to pilot the project in the five departments in Pure and Applied Sciences (PAS) – Chemistry, Life Sciences, Geography and Geology, Mathematics and Computer Sciences, and Physics. The project was meant to help PAS faculty improve their pedagogy by integrating more writing into their courses so that students become more effective learners of their discipline. Project documents reveal that it arose out of a Writing Centre Day that was held in 2005, and was in part a response to a cross-campus meeting that the Office of the Board for Undergraduate Studies (OBUS) had organized for faculty and instructors in the English Language writing courses and

administrators in 2005. When the Writing Centre Day was held in 2005, the Harvard film *Shaped by Writing* was shown and discussed by attendees and representatives from the Language Unit. The PAS faculty expressed concerns about students' writing and acknowledged that they needed help with students' written expression. Following such discussions, the DLLP proposed a WAC project for which PAS agreed to seek funding. Funding was received through the university's Finance and General Planning Committee (F&GP) for two years, and the project began in earnest when compositionist Chris Anson conducted the first workshop in January 2007. The project is to be evaluated at the end of two years to determine a model that could be used in other faculties.

The WRITE symposium that OBUS organized also influenced the WAC project but did not realize much success in other ventures. This symposium involved a cross campus collaboration of faculty in the foundation writing courses. These faculty members aimed to examine writing requirements for tertiary education and synchronize course content, delivery, and evaluation. One agenda item at the meetings of the WRITE Symposium was the suggestion to increase the number of writing courses across the undergraduate degree in the Faculty of Humanities and Education. This suggestion is outlined in the *Departmental Reports* for 2004-2005:

Recognizing the importance of writing for academic success, the Faculty with the approval of the Mona Academic Board and Board for Undergraduate studies decided that as of the start of the 2005/06 academic year every student of the Faculty will be required to do a writing course at each of the three levels in order to fulfill requirements for the Bachelor's degree" (23-24).

Such plans were consistent with a new BA degree in Liberal Studies "offering students a broad liberal education rather than narrow specializations at the undergraduate level"

(24). This is a sensible direction to take to give students writing practice over all the years of their degree, but what is not mentioned is actual disciplinary engagement – which I am advocating. Also, there is no mention of what would obtain in the rest of the university – beyond the Faculty of Humanities and Education. The WRITE Symposium would consider and recommend some connections to disciplinary requirements; however, Dyche informed me in a personal communication that the main goals of this short-lived cross-campus initiative, including recommendations for writing courses at each level, have not been fulfilled (“WRITE”).

Despite the short-lived nature of this cross-campus initiative, the decisions and recommendations foreshadow the way in which “content” faculty’s involvement in students’ writing development would be understood as *support* or *reinforcement* rather than as *integral engagement* in instruction. This limited understanding of collaboration was evident when, in February 2005, members of the OBUS and representatives from the English Language Sections on the three campuses considered the “university’s thrust to improve the profile of its graduates and in doing so ensure that they are fully equipped to function and compete in a world in which ability to communicate is a crucial element of success” (WRITE Symposium IIA 2). These participants acknowledged that “competence in writing is addressed primarily if not only in the language foundation courses. However, writing and reading in the academy are complex processes that cannot be dealt with only at Level I of a three or four year academic programme, nor can they be addressed solely by those responsible for delivery of writing courses” (WRITE Symposium II 1). Attendees emphasized that “[w]ithout *reinforcement* even the best

undergraduate writer is unlikely to exhibit the levels of competence that are expected of a student upon graduation” (1, my emphasis). In consideration of “disciplinary needs,” attendees noted, “[l]earning to write is a complex process, requiring continued practice and *reinforcement* over time” (2, my emphasis). With regard to practice, attendees acknowledged the limitations regarding financial and human resources with which the English Language program has had to contend over the years, and proposed solutions to “reposition [the] English language programmes within the context of international norms and regional needs and expectations” (1). In other words, attendees called for writing courses beyond the first year to facilitate more practice in writing: “the writing units on each campus will continue to develop Level II and III courses in the disciplines with input from faculty in those disciplines; all students should be encouraged to take these courses to ensure that they have achieved the level of competence in writing that is expected of a UWI graduate” (2). These recommendations mark an important step toward addressing writing instruction throughout the academy, but like other recent developments may not have acknowledged the complexity of writing development. For example, to continue to speak of “reinforcement” seems to keep the concern at the level of the basics in English rather than move to considering actual development in disciplinary writing. Also, although these suggestions evidence academics’ increased understanding of writing development, they still seem to be “external” to the discipline. In other words, the suggestions do not address “content” faculty’s full understanding of their role in students’ development in writing *in their* discipline.

The WAC project that was introduced later would respond to the proposal for the “mandatory enrolment of every student in a writing-intensive course for each year of the undergraduate degree programme” (Moore, “A Proposal 4), but which had not been realized up to October 2006. However, this project also emphasizes “content” faculty’s support and reinforcement rather than active engagement in writing development. The background to the Department of Language, Linguistics & Philosophy’s “Writing Centre Pilot Project Proposal” states that students’ failure to “experience writing as an integral component of their university education in general, and their academic discipline in particular ... is evidenced in the complaints by university staff and by employers about the weak writing skills of many students and graduates.” In a letter sent to US WAC faculty to request a “kick-off” workshop, Schontal Moore, the then project coordinator, wrote

Currently, the general quality of students’ writing at UWI is not what many lecturers would like it to be and the feeling is that if students get more opportunities to write in their courses and are expected to achieve a certain standard in writing and English Language competence, then lecturers should begin to see a turn-a-round in students’ writing. It’s against this background that the WAC project is being implemented.

Moore explained in our interview that these statements are indicative of “content” faculty’s requests. “Content” faculty had expressed concerns that students’ English language proficiency was affecting students’ ability to communicate discipline-specific content. “Content” faculty’s concerns about improving students’ communication of course content, therefore, determined aspects of the project’s focus. Unfortunately, however, this focus appears to be formalist conventions, addressed as “English Language competence,” rather than disciplinarity/disciplinary writing.

This formalist preoccupation and omission of a commitment to explicit teaching of disciplinary ways of doing, knowing, and writing are evident in the Department of Language, Linguistics & Philosophy's description of the "UWI Mona Writing Centre Mission." This document states that the facility is "a means of achieving the University's educational objective of producing students whose level of English Language communicative competence is consonant with success in their specialist and non-specialist academic courses as well as in their post-graduate studies and future occupations." It expresses that the facility's short term objective is "to transform and enhance teaching/learning processes and to improve students writing by promoting & facilitating ... institution-wide commitment to the incorporation of a WAC approach into the programmes of all departments so that students receive a writing-intensive education." Moore would clarify that objective in the project proposal in which she justified the urgency for a WAC program at UWI on the basis that "a majority of University students at both the undergraduate and post-graduate levels lack the communication skills required to function effectively at the tertiary level and in professional contexts" ("A Proposal" 3). She explained that the WAC project has a twofold aim. On one level, the project is meant "to sensitize staff to the fact that writing is integral to students' education and should not be treated as a generic skill to be taught and mastered only in the English Language foundation courses" (3). At another level, the project is "to train staff to effectively integrate WAC approaches into their courses' learning objectives and teaching methodologies to promote writing, critical thinking and communication skills" (3). Moore also noted that one reason that students do not continue

to develop their writing abilities beyond the first-year language foundation courses is that “the requisite reading, writing and critical thinking skills introduced in these courses are not *reinforced* in other university-wide courses” (4, my emphasis). She, therefore, stressed the importance of collaboration to the success of the project. She drew on WAC research in the US to assert,

Ultimately, the successes of the Writing Centre and the WAC pilot project will depend on the collaboration across disciplines and faculties to devise a WAC model that addresses the peculiar needs of students who come from primarily Creole-speaking environments, but who must ‘use written language to develop and communicate knowledge in every discipline and across disciplines.’ (5)

While Moore’s explanations in the proposal suggest a more comprehensive understanding of writing and its value in education than other academics had expressed in earlier years, the explanations do not mention the necessary reflection on how writing varies in each discipline. They also do not address how actual instruction in disciplinary writing will be assured through a *writing-intensive* education. Surely, students may receive a writing-intensive education (as they do in the Sixth Form) without actual, explicit, instruction.

The Centre’s writing principles include statements that would suggest an understanding of differing writing practices in disciplines; however, these remain vague. They explain that students need to “practise writing for different purposes & audiences using different modes” and “receive critical feedback from readers (peers & teachers) at all stages of their writing process.” Students also need “instruction & help in overcoming their own writing/reading problems in the context of real writing/reading tasks.” The WAC principles identified in the document are, however, more explicit regarding

disciplinary writing: “Writing is integral to a professional education in any discipline, and is not simply a generic skill easily mastered in one or two ‘writing’ courses and then transferred to all disciplines.” Nevertheless, there is a sense that knowledge making and acquisition are separated from communication of knowledge, and the focus is on the student with no clear indication of how instruction will occur. The document emphasizes, “Only by practising the conventions of an academic discipline will students begin to communicate effectively within that discipline.”

Collaborative efforts in the academy, as Smit recommends in the second epigraph above and as Moore recognizes, is going to be vital to revolutions in writing on the Mona campus. However, the kind of collaboration that will assure students’ writing development – by promoting the importance of writing to learning in disciplines and minimizing the focus on demonstrating/grading English Language in courses – requires academics’ acknowledgement of the plural nature of the academy. As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, faculty have been slow in acting in ways that are consistent with that acknowledgement. Faculty may also have a better understanding of the kind of collaboration and instruction that will work if they understand that the myth of transience and the view of writing as transparent recording have militated against students’ writing development in and across disciplines since the university’s earliest years. Such an understanding is important to “content” faculty’s involvement so that they do not consider their role as being to *support* writing specialists *until* the problematic situation improves. The more appropriate perspective is for faculty to be concerned with students’ writing development *within* their discipline, and remember that learning to write is a

lifelong endeavor. As well, if “content” faculty do not see writing as integral to disciplinary learning, they will see it as burdensome to disciplinary development. Russell captures this situation well when, after examining many WAC programs, he concluded that “[e]ven when WAC programs attempt to make writing part of every class, every discipline, the writing can be marginalized if it is perceived as an additional burden rather than as an intrinsic part of learning” (*Writing* 297). Moore informed me in our interview that WAC is not compulsory in PAS and it was very difficult to get faculty to become involved with the project. She noted, however, that more faculty members were joining the project after talking to others who were interested in trying the strategies. Lecturers were beginning to understand or acknowledge that it is not true that students learn to write once and for all in high school. “Content” faculty’s acceptance of the pilot suggests that they are beginning to accept their responsibility in teaching writing. What is important, however, is that faculty also realize the extent of that responsibility, which will include *examining and making visible* their discipline’s writing practices. As Russell cautions

unless disciplines first understand the rhetorical nature of their own work and make conscious and visible what was transparent, the teaching of writing in the disciplines will continue to reinforce the myth of transience Writing in content courses will be seen merely as a further opportunity for evaluation or remediation, a means of introducing pedagogical variety . . . and not as a central part of disciplinary research and teaching.” (*Writing* 300)

Conclusion

Faculty’s examining and making visible their discipline’s writing conventions is crucial because of the persistence of universalist models of writing in the institution that

do not necessarily enable students to excel in disciplinary writing. As I outlined, shortly after “Fundamentals of English” was introduced, the institution made other changes to the original Use of English course. Administrators and “content” faculty no longer linked writing instruction and remediation, but they still conveyed a sense that the academy is a single discourse community and that writing in disciplines is neutral and hardly influenced by persuasion. They did this by recommending that students’ writing development take place outside of disciplines, and by promoting emphasis on expository writing with training provided solely by writing specialists in the Department of Language, Linguistics & Philosophy. Therefore, although administrators seemed to enlist writing, they still marginalized its instruction. Indeed, the institution has enlisted writing in the form of almost universal first-year writing, with its emphasis on the writing process and instruction before engagement in disciplinary work. However, just as administrators and linguists involved with “Use of English” had adapted British models to the cultural and social concerns of the Caribbean in the 1960s and 1970s, in the late 1980s and 1990s, writing specialists at Mona attempted to inflect American models with Caribbean cultural and disciplinary trends. Writing specialists’ adaptations of the universalist model of the writing process and other aspects of writing from the US to the linguistic paradigms and cultural contexts of the Caribbean remain superficial, however. Although process seems to be adapted to cultural concerns and disciplinary trends, it really reflects emphasis on formalism. This emphasis is consistent with the focus on exposition that functions as the paradigmatic universalist genre that keeps process separate from disciplinary learning. The institutional context, involving many Creole-speaking first-generation students, is

quite compelling, but linguistic prejudices are abundant and writing faculty either do not have the means or have been stretched too thin to develop appropriate models of writing that could engage with the linguistic richness and cultural distinctiveness of Jamaica and the Caribbean region.

Recent developments such as FD14A, upper level and graduate writing courses, proposals from the cross campus collaboration of lecturers (WRITE symposium), and the WAC initiative suggest new and more comprehensive understandings of writing than those that obtained in discussions and delivery of UC100, UC120 and its derivatives, and FD10A. However, such developments suggest that those involved in writing and “content” faculty have not gone far enough in transforming writing instruction to realize fully its potential and place in higher education. Past and current thinking about writing, in its emphasis on English language, has failed to develop a transformative model of writing and its instruction that takes as its aim the development of students in disciplinary writing. The WAC project, for example, if fully implemented institution-wide is likely to yield positive results because studies consistently show improvements in writing itself in new WAC/WID programs (Haswell 341). However, some discussions surrounding the project at Mona do not reflect broadening to consider how “content” faculty understand writing and why they may withhold instructional development. Project documents do not convey a clear sense of “content” faculty’s specific involvement in articulating their knowledge of writing in disciplines. Because faculty continue to keep writing knowledge tacit, they have managed to alienate learning from writing in disciplines.

The collaborative effort needed to assure students' writing development may, therefore, have to include "content" faculty's understanding of the importance of consciously including writing development in their goals for teaching and learning. In other words, the concern should not be merely to eliminate problems in writing so that students write better for "content" faculty to understand the "English" writing and for pass rates to increase. However, it should be instruction to enable learning and assure students' success in the discipline during and after completion of studies. "Content" faculty are yet to understand the extent to which writing makes learning visible. In the Jamaican context, this is learning of the code, codified writing conventions, and content knowledge. If faculty understand the interconnection of writing and learning – in disciplines and outside the academy, they may better assist students to use the code in meaningful ways to demonstrate both their knowledge in writing and knowledge of writing. In a country where mastery of the written code is a Herculean task for most Creole speakers, increasing numbers of whom are entering the academy, academics would be well advised to consider how that mastery can increase if students are not only graded on the conventions, but also taught them, and if students are allowed to focus on formalist requirements less in decontextualized situations and more in content areas whose practical relevance may be immediately apparent to students.

Lawrence Carrington's advice about language and teaching in the Caribbean is applicable to writing and student development at UWI, Mona. Carrington cautions that the "elimination of illiteracy in the English-speaking Caribbean must be undertaken as a positive act of public education linked to a conscious process of societal development. It

must not be undertaken as an exercise in changing statistics for the vain improvement of national image” (*Literacy* 200). Similarly, where university students’ development is concerned, all involved should consider writing instruction – disciplinary writing instruction – not merely as a way to eliminate problems to increase pass rates in any course or a way to improve the university’s profile, but rather as a route to students’ optimal development which will in turn impact national development. New attitudes to writing in the academy that depart from conventional yet largely inaccurate models of writing may influence attitudes at other educational levels and elsewhere in the society. Indeed, enlistment of rhetoric may work better than the attention to general university-level educated audiences or to formalist conventions. Such an engagement could help students see the connected ways of knowing, doing, and writing in specific contexts to achieve specific purposes in specific audiences. In the next chapter, I propose ways in which the institution can engage such “visible rhetoric” to foster learning, increase awareness about writing, and improve attitudes to writing and its development.

Notes

¹ These were later upgraded to two-year contracts.

² CAPE is somewhat similar to AP in the US. CAPE and Cambridge Advanced level courses are really postsecondary level programs that are offered in the Sixth Form in the Caribbean. They are the general matriculation requirements for students’

acceptance at university to do the three-year first degree, a significant difference from the US where students complete the first degree in four years after displaying arguably less rigorous and less fixed secondary level passes.

³ Students at Mona who would not have taken CAPE would not have covered some topics on language. As an example, CAPE focuses much on the language varieties in the Caribbean whereas FD10A normally sensitizes students to the subject through one class discussion held after students do a reading on language varieties. CAPE also addresses discourse types (the modes) whereas FD10A focuses on exposition only (see Caribbean 1). Moore has introduced a few lectures in FD10A to try to give students the exposure they would have missed because they did not take CAPE.

CONCLUSION: ENVISIONING VERSATILE WRITERS IN THE NEW
MILLENNIUM, BEYOND 2007

Writing will continue to be transparent and the myth of transience powerful among those who do not understand or acknowledge the relationship between writing and the creation and acquisition of knowledge.

David Russell, *Writing* 298

Only when academia confronts its confusion of tongues and its myth of transience can the slow work of translation and transformation begin.

David Russell, *Writing* 33

Taking a rhetorical stance on writing can enable us to see writing 'problems' as an opportunity for collaborative deliberations on shared needs.

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In Chapter 5, I proposed that administrators and “content” faculty at Mona are yet to acknowledge the extent to which writing makes learning visible. This is learning of the written code, codified disciplinary writing conventions, and content knowledge. If faculty understand the interconnection of writing and learning in disciplines and outside the academy, they may better assist students to use the code in meaningful ways to demonstrate both their knowledge in writing and knowledge of writing. In a country where mastery of the written code is difficult for Creole speakers, academics would be well advised to consider how that mastery can increase if students are allowed to focus on formalist requirements less in decontextualized situations and more in content areas whose practical relevance may be immediately apparent to students. Indeed, enlistment of rhetoric may work better than the attention to general university-level educated audiences or to formalist conventions that remain the primary concern because faculty continue to

keep disciplinary writing knowledge tacit. Such an engagement could foster learning by helping students see the connected ways of knowing, doing, and writing in specific contexts to achieve specific purposes in specific audiences. It could also increase awareness about writing and improve attitudes to writing and its development.

This approach rests on the view that disciplines are rhetorically constructed through writing and on the knowledge that writing makes learning visible to students and teachers. It also requires academics' awareness that students' writing development is a shared responsibility. By attending to writing, Jamaican students can begin to reflect upon their own learning processes, and by attending to writing, Mona's faculty can discover strategic junctures in students' learning processes where intervention and collaboration can be most effective. By attending to writing, "content" faculty at Mona are challenged to address how knowledge is composed in their discipline and the processes that students go through to acquire and convey that knowledge. By attending to writing, UWI, Mona, is also challenged to attend to students' learning processes, including what they have learned before coming to the institution, what they will learn in the institution, and what they will do with that learning after they leave. As writing faculty usually experience in the classroom, attending to writing can enable the institution to discover strategic sites in the learning process where interventions and collaborations can help students. First-year writing is one of those sites, and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) is another. As Merrill and Miller assert in the third epigraph above, rhetoric provides useful categories for such interventions because its attention to purpose, audience, and situation provides teachers and students with metacognitive categories that

can be used to help students' in transferring learning from prior occasions to novel situations and problems.

Rhetoric can help foster the connection between writing and what anthropologists Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez and James Greenberg call “funds of knowledge.” These are the “strategic and cultural resources that households contain” (47). Educator Luis Moll and his colleagues use this concept to refer to the interpretive strategies, cultural assumptions, and collaborative networks that students bring to the academy (see González, Moll, and Amanti). Rhetoric can foster the connection between students' “funds of knowledge” and academic writing requirements if Mona's faculty break out of formalistic modes such as exposition and work from the language, experience, and engagements that Jamaican students bring to the class/lecture room. A rhetorical stance on writing focuses not on formal conventions but on interpretive and problem-solving strategies that can be used in varied situations. As I have argued in this dissertation, keeping disciplinary writing knowledge tacit or shrouding it in formalism works to alienate learning in the academy from learning and language outside the academy. A better approach is for all faculty to provide students with connected ways of knowing and doing, and rhetoric's aides for metacognitive analyses can help with that challenge.

Toward Abandoning the Rhetoric of Transparent Disciplinarity and the Myth of Transience

I propose a rhetorical perspective on writing that goes beyond superficial considerations of purpose in a predetermined genre in both first-year courses and WAC

because of the weaknesses that I have outlined in the ways in which Mona's administrators and faculty have understood writing and how students learn to produce it in the multiple disciplines that constitute the academy. My study demonstrates that academics at UWI, Mona, have largely understood writing as separate from disciplinary learning. In other words, they have understood writing as, to borrow from Merrill and Miller, "a prerequisite for professional knowledge that should have been mastered elsewhere" (207). As a consequence, the rhetoric of transparent disciplinarity is evident in the institution in terms of academics' seeing writing as a neutral, transparent medium for recording ideas; understanding writing instruction as remediation; providing opportunities for strong writers to develop their writing while marginalizing weaker writers; and promoting the academy as a single discourse community by expecting a general writing course and its instructors to prepare all students to write in all disciplines.

This view of writing is evident in various ways. First, there is the absence of writing instruction in most of the institution's first decade of existence because of academics' beliefs that students had developed sufficient mastery of English and learned to write sufficiently in disciplines while preparing to enter the university. Second, administrators and faculty perpetuated the faulty assumption, evident at the elementary level, that students speak English and write in that language based on an assumed instinct. Third, when the Use of English course was first introduced, course administrators used the conduit metaphor in relation to language, incorrectly emphasizing that writers do heuristic work in their mind before writing, that is, they think before they write well. In this regard, course administrators ignored the power of writing in

developing thought and achieving clarity. Fourth, by the 1960s and 1970s, course administrators addressed high failure rates largely by expressing incorrect assumptions about the transparency of evaluation terms. Fifth, although it was evident that course administrators and tutors had attributed incorrect linguistic and writing profiles to students, formal developmental programs were not implemented to address students' special language needs. This lack is due partly to "content" faculty's misunderstanding about the visibility of language, and partly to "Use of English" faculty's attempts to avoid associating the course with "remediation." Once writing became visible, "content" faculty declared the aim of writing instruction to be remediation. They also promoted the view that writing development was to be in the language course and that writing could be sufficiently developed in one year or one semester. "Use of English" instructors resisted the association of the course and, by extension, themselves with remediation. Sixth, some "Use of English" faculty believed that the challenges could be addressed through collaboration; however, their understanding of collaboration seemed limited. Sometimes when "Use of English" faculty highlighted disciplinary differences in the academy, they did so in ways that addressed *problems* in writing in disciplines rather than disciplinary writing *requirements*. Therefore, the Arts faculty, and specifically "Use of English" instructors, did not support the chief moderator's recommendation for collaboration in teaching in the course. Seventh, when "Use of English" faculty mentioned the importance of content to written language production, they did so in relation to (Caribbean) language, which was the stated content of the Use of English course, and not (also) in relation to the content of students' disciplines. Eighth, persistent debates about whether

language/writing instruction belonged in the University suggested – incorrectly – that students learned to write before engaging with new content and contexts. Ninth, when various segments of the university recommended that the institution become involved in students’ language and writing development, their recommendations seemed to be based on attempts to help the institution avoid blame for problems in students’ writing rather than for the institution to enable learning and realize student development.

When academics eventually acknowledged students’ linguistic and writing profiles in virtue of the language problems many students were believed to exhibit, it introduced a basic writing course for students who failed an entrance diagnostic test. Some academics consistently challenged this egalitarian approach largely because of their concerns about associating the university with remediation and bearing the responsibility for the financial costs. By the early years of the new millennium, that “Fundamentals of English” course was removed from the campus budget although some Faculties continued to accept students who failed the proficiency test. Such actions lead to questions about the responsibility for the writing development of primarily Creole-speaking first-generation university students. I argue that if such students cannot take their standard first-year writing course that administrators believe teaches skills essential to success in students’ academic disciplines, the institution conveys a negative message by accepting students but not providing equal opportunities for their success. Lack of adequate provisions for such students’ development suggests that the students are invited and then marginalized. This lack also suggests stagnation at UWI arising, as Thomas Miller says of English universities, “when ... received traditions are not assessed against

the changing needs of students” (21). The standard first-year writing courses suggest some consideration – albeit insufficient – to provide for new populations of students, with such courses functioning, as Thomas Miller describes the teaching of English, “as an area where the conventions of academic discourse and the learned culture still come into contact with those who have not been taught to respect them” (29). However, general failure to make adequate provisions for basic writers can only lead to widespread problems. As continued complaints about students’ writing in the standard writing courses reveal, the work of literacy will always come back – and in frightening ways if it is continually ignored.

Beginning in the late 1990s, the institution seemed to enlist writing when it introduced the foundation communication course, “English for Academic Purposes” (FD10A), to teach students exposition. This course and others developed after it attest to academics’ recognition that higher education requires new forms and levels of writing into which students have to be initiated in the academy. However, the focus on exposition evidences attention to form – with form determining a limited purpose and general audience. That focus – on exposition and not on argument – also indicates administrators’ incorrect assumption that writing in the academy is not largely dependent on presenting convincing claims, that is, that writing is not dependent on rhetorical persuasion. The later course, “Writing in the Disciplines” (FD14A), reveals prejudices regarding sorting of students into strong and weak writers, but has the potential to be a bridge course. This course could help students to shuttle between general and disciplinary writing, and help faculty in the Language Unit and in other disciplines to collaborate in the interest of

students' writing development. The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) pilot project that was introduced in 2006/2007 comes closest to promoting disciplinary writing instruction. However, as expressed, it reflects limited considerations of "content" faculty's actual role in writing instruction and development.

Certainly, there is merit in the programs that the university has enlisted. However, as expressed in the preceding chapters and as the first two epigraphs imply, genuine writing development may only be realized when the assumptions on which the courses are based are reexamined. The courses tend to promote writing for a general educated audience, yet the well-rounded graduate is expected to be able to write for general, public audiences as well as disciplinary and/or professional audiences. Assisting students to meet those expectations will necessitate the institution's moving beyond merely enlisting writing or continuing to promote the myth of transience and the rhetoric of transparent disciplinarity. That kind of provision will be dependent on a progressive way to view writing as visible rhetoric, involving writing for development in the plural academy that promotes equity in an atmosphere of excellence aided by instruction for enabling learning. And it will require a rhetorical stance on writing in both general writing courses and discipline-specific writing instruction, as well as responsiveness to the country's distinctive social issues. The question, then, is "How can the UWI, Mona, assist students in enhancing their writing abilities to realize those complementary goals?"

Rearticulating Writing: Making Rhetoric Visible in Disciplines

Faculty can help assure Jamaican students' development by ceasing to promote separation between knowledge creation and acquisition, writing, and learning, and by beginning to acknowledge the plural nature of the academy. Crucial to their acknowledgment is engagement of a two-fold rhetorical perspective on writing: acknowledgement of the suasive nature of writing in disciplines and attention to rhetoric's aides – purpose, context, and audience – to determine appropriateness of modes of writing. Important, too, is “content” faculty's understanding that their engagement will determine the extent of students' writing development. In other words, there is need for students' writing development to become the acknowledged responsibility of every faculty member – a better understanding of writing instruction than the misconception at the secondary level that *anybody can teach English*.

The history of writing instruction at UWI, revealing continued separation of writing and learning and disregard of the country's linguistic realities, suggests that faculty need to change the terms in which writing is discussed and develop a shared vocabulary and better articulation of writing. If the “writing”/“English” problem is to be addressed in the high school as Chevannes and others say, what will “content” faculty at UWI do to help high school teachers? Sometimes, academics' saying that the high school should prepare students could well be the problem. Some schools are now trying to complete the UWI curriculum instead of teaching students “the basics.” Further, what makes the Jamaican situation interesting is not only that the rhetoric of transparent disciplinarity and the myth of transience are perpetuated there, but also that when

academics transfer the responsibility for students' writing development to teachers at the secondary level, they are transferring their challenge into an already knotty situation. As discussed in Chapter 2, language was for a very long time rather ill-defined and consistent with colonial policies that have yielded little success in terms of students' acquisition or mastery of English. Predominantly Creole speakers continue to fail at alarming (though really unsurprising) rates in English examinations, and employers and other members of the public do not judge such students' language abilities favorably. Thanks to the democratization of education after the 1970s, far more students than before from Creole-speaking backgrounds have accessed post-elementary education. However, the reality is, as Celia Brown and Kathleen Drayton writing in different decades propose, that monolingual Creole-speaking students who got the opportunity to access secondary and postsecondary education have probably transformed the school system more than it has transformed their language usage. Monica Taylor confirmed this suspicion in her recent study of the verbal encounters in a range of schools from Grade 2 at the primary level to the university level. Taylor discovered "widespread and unselfconscious use of Creole and concomitant absence of English" ("Towards" 235). The classrooms she observed were "in various stages of surrender or accommodation to the dissolution of the hegemony of English" (238). This situation parallels what school inspectors observed in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Jamaica, and what has happened in the wider society where Creole is now openly used in public places that were once considered formal and reserved for English. Academics cannot afford to ignore these social realities when planning for student development in higher education.

Other questions that academics should consider include the following. What do we mean by *being prepared before* university? What do students learn before coming to the university? Should we be thinking about what each student may need, based on Faculty and future employment/profession? What will the student entering Engineering or Computer Science need as opposed to one going into History? The responses to these questions should inform plans for what students will learn in the academy. However, the institution has also to engage with what students will do with their learning in professions after they graduate. As Devonish emphasizes in a paper presented to the Board for Undergraduate Studies regarding developments in testing and language courses, what will graduates need in their professional fields? What should “the exit level [writing] competences of UWI graduates ...be?” (“The English Language” 2). To adequately address these questions, writing specialists and other faculty throughout the university need to develop a shared vocabulary for talking about writing – a vocabulary that goes beyond basic/minor *skills* to discussion of writing *abilities* and disciplinary ways of knowing, doing, and writing. Ultimately, better articulation of writing instruction is needed throughout the education system to coordinate what students learn in pre-university settings, what they should learn in the academy, and what they are likely to do with that learning beyond the academy.

Important to such articulation will be “content” faculty’s helping students to develop necessary rhetorical abilities. Such assistance is tied to “content” faculty’s understanding of how students make sense of their discipline’s concepts through writing as well as “content” faculty’s emphasis on the rhetorical nature of their work. “Content”

faculty's involvement in teaching writing can help students become aware of the extent to which disciplines are language communities whose approaches and practices are shaped by language. General first-year writing courses may introduce students to forms of writing and thinking found in a discipline, but not to the actual writing and thinking of the specific discipline. The reality is that often what is taught in a first-year writing course will reflect where the writing program is based. Very often the focus is literary or linguistic analysis because the program is located in the humanities, and specifically in an English or Linguistics department. Because writing is context-bound, "a collaborative process of negotiating situational exigencies" (Merrill and Miller 24), teaching it only in a general writing course can pose problems for instructors and students. "Content" faculty's involvement in writing instruction can help students understand the concept that effective writing is suitable for its purpose, context, and audience. In other words, whereas the general writing instructor may not fully appreciate an effective piece of writing directed to physicists, for example, because that appreciation is dependent on certain shared facts, procedures, and interpretative practices, other content faculty can help students understand the context-bound nature of "good" writing. To successfully join their respective disciplines, students need initiation into their discipline's language practices. Learning to write and writing to learn in the discipline can facilitate such initiation and students' eventual development in the disciplinary community.

To successfully assist in students' initiation into their disciplines and development in writing, "content" faculty will also have to break out of "the habit of disciplines to make their rhetoric invisible in the service of epistemic authority" (Bazerman,

“Response” 259). As explained in Chapter 1, often faculty do not articulate their disciplinary conventions because of the gradual way in which they learn them, because there is little reward for engaging in such articulation, and because if disciplinary conventions remain tacit, disciplines and their adherents remain competitive in the academy. It seems commonsensical, however, that students will more readily or effectively learn a discipline’s discursive practices if faculty make them visible to students. After all, the reality is that if fewer students are conscious of effective disciplinary writing practices, fewer students will succeed in the discipline and even fewer in the larger professional community. Only the few who are succeeding are likely to be in the community’s inner circle and lauded for their accomplishments, as happens with faculty who are consistently publishing research. This can be a frightening situation – and academics do not seem to make the connection to their own writing development. This connection is certainly not readily discussed at UWI, Mona, except among graduate students who may complain about limited help with writing from supervisors or lack of encouragement or support to publish findings. Russell identifies the dilemma elsewhere when he writes,

If the educational system teaches greater numbers of students to enter academic discourse communities, and through them, coveted professional roles, there may be increased competition, economic dislocation, and political conflict. If, however, the system frankly acknowledges that it is excluding students from professional communities on the basis of their language rather than committing its resources to teaching the linguistic forms of those communities to those students, the results might also be painful. (*Writing* 306)

Beyond promoting transparency in writing as a way to remain competitive in the academy, “content” faculty may want to deny the rhetorical/persuasive aspects of their

disciplinary writing practices because of rhetoric's association with the probable – that which is like truth – rather than with Truth. Faculty often claim to be doing disinterested, objective writing, but such a claim is challenged by the very fact that they aim to publish what they write, which means attempting to convince readers to accept the way that they recount their experiences in writing. However, since all texts aim to influence, that is, persuade readers to adjust their feelings, attitudes, beliefs, or actions, all texts may be said to be *suasive*. In other words, all texts reflect persuasion, what Carolyn Miller and Davida Charney rightly call “the underlying essence of human communicative language use” (594). Even if faculty were to disagree that all writing is informed by rhetoric and its attention to context, audience, and purpose, that is, if they were to believe that there are nonpersuasive types of writing as narrative, descriptive, and expository writing are thought to be, students would still need help with producing such writing *in* specific disciplines.

Besides ignoring the contingency involved in writing in all disciplines, faculty may also want to avoid involvement in writing instruction because of writing's power in making learning visible. As Merrill and Miller remind writing program administrators, “writing can make learning visible in ways that can disorient ‘content’ faculty” because when students present their writing, faculty realize “they can no longer assume that what they teach is what students learn” (205). That writing makes learning visible leads to unease among faculty when writing reveals that the students learned neither the content nor the language for conveying the content. For faculty to meaningfully address this situation, they have to “recognize that courses are co-authored with students” (Merrill

and Miller 205). Such co-authoring yields success when newcomers are appropriately initiated into a discipline's rhetorical perspectives, that is, how the discipline works. Unfortunately, however, faculty often persist in critiquing the student learning (or lack thereof) that is made visible through writing, rather than begin to exploit writing's potential beyond demonstrating learning. In other words, they continue to consider writing, as Merrill and Miller say, as "an isolated skill" rather than as "a means of negotiating situational constraints to achieve shared purposes" (206). However, if faculty acknowledge that writing is more than a way to demonstrate or test learning, faculty can help students understand writing as a way to learn, to think, and to construct new knowledge.

If "content" faculty emphasize *processes* in developing writing, they can help students to appreciate both summative and formative writing, rather than just the former with which students and faculty are accustomed and whose revelatory nature can be discomfiting. Unfortunately, however, "content" faculty often resist a "process" approach to writing. Although they may acknowledge the processes for themselves, "content" faculty do not necessarily guide students through them. This assumption can be made on the basis that the focus is usually on the written product that is graded and returned to students or kept as university property for a specified period and then discarded. The various process stages such as planning, drafting, peer editing, and revising are not usually built into content syllabuses. This is probably the most glaring weakness in the recent WAC project at Mona: there is no evidence that "process" is being addressed to suggest how "content" faculty are assisting with students' development. What is clear is

an attempt to include *more writing* but not content-specific *writing instruction* that will include multi-drafting. By emphasizing processes in developing writing, “content” faculty can help students appreciate that writing is both a learning technology and an epistemic activity that is complex: “Learning to write is a complex process, both individual and social, that takes place over time with continued practice and informed guidance” (Council). It is a lifelong practice that shapes thinking, learning, and knowledge creation and distribution.

Omission of the process stages from syllabuses may be because “content” faculty often consider stages in writing preparation as transparent. As Russell and Foster remind, “Because writing is so deeply embedded in modern education in the form of lecture notes, exams, reports, journals, research papers, and countless others, it tends to be transparent, an element that in many systems cannot be separated from the larger work of learning. It often disappears, becomes unavailable as an object of discussion, as do discussions of its teaching” (“Rearticulating 33). It is to be noted, however, as Mary Jane Curry and Theresa Lillis highlight, that even if “content” faculty could assume that disciplinary rules and conventions were a part of students’ “‘common sense’ knowledge” when the higher education system was “small and predominantly homogenous,” that assumption is “no longer justified within current contexts where significant changes are affecting all aspects of teaching and learning, including student academic writing” (3). As Theresa Lillis observes in UK universities, “content” faculty cannot continue to view the writing conventions of their disciplines as “common sense” because many first-generation university students are often not familiar with those conventions. Lillis asserts

that the confusion such students experience in higher education indicates “an institutional practice of mystery” that is so “ideologically inscribed that it works against those least familiar with the conventions surrounding academic writing” (“Whose” 127). In the Jamaican context, faculty have to remember that the concern is increasing numbers of not only first-generation university students, but also predominantly Creole-speaking students. Addressing the diversity of such student populations implies, as Lillis and Turner write,

a need to cloud the discourse of transparency, to reflexively critique the assumptions and expectations that have their roots in a socio-culturally different historical period and look to the formation of new pedagogies that better engage with students, who are welcomed into the academy by the rhetoric of widening participation, but at the same time denied an adequate participation by taken-for-granted assumptions about academic conventions. (66)

If faculty expect students to enter and meaningfully contribute to the conversations in their discipline during or after studies, faculty cannot continue to rely on tacit assumptions that may be embedded in disciplinary reading and writing requirements. Faculty will have to teach students explicitly to transform their discipline in the same way that faculty attempt to do through their research and writing. Lillis recommends that for first-generation university students to succeed in academia, “content” faculty should consider more contact with them regarding writing, that is, more discussion of writing tasks and disciplinary writing conventions. What she advises in the UK is applicable to Jamaica: “Although this may be considered difficult, if not impossible to organize within the constraints of current resources, it is a price that has to be paid if widening access to higher education is our aim” (“Whose” 144). The reality is that the social cost of past policies in Jamaica is so great that although differentiated instruction – as in a basic

writing course or in extra consultation sessions with students in disciplines – may be costly, it may very well be useful if it is informed by what students’ writing teaches about the needs of current students. Teaching in “Writing in the Disciplines” (FD14A) suggests an attempt to provide differentiated instruction since that course is arguably similar to honors courses in the US. However, that course lacks its equivalent at the lower end – a course for writers with less developed abilities. Since administrators at UWI, Mona, are no longer educating a tiny elite but have opened up the institution to more students, they should consider how to provide writing instruction for all.

As the UWI, Mona, faces undeniable expansion in enrollment, “content” faculty can aid more students in realizing their academic, intellectual, and professional potential by explicitly initiating students into disciplinary writing practices. If “content” faculty do not provide explicit disciplinary writing instruction to address the issues of access and exclusion, the institution is not likely to realize the equality that is implied in the democratization of education in Jamaica. Additionally, administrators should not expect excellence when they admit students with less than the required writing competencies but neglect to provide appropriate writing resources for them. As Russell writes, “Our lives are linked by the written word in ways so pervasive and mundane that we forget sometimes how powerful writing is” (*Writing* 331). Writing is, indeed, “powerful, even when it seems transparent – and ... the problems of learning to write in new ways are not transient but a permanent condition of (post)modern life” (Russell, *Writing* 331). Faculty ought, therefore, to desist from associating weaknesses revealed in writing with any lack in students – what Merrill and Miller reject as some “personal inability to learn a natural

skill” (207) – when the issue may well be “the discipline’s failure to articulate its work” (Merrill and Miller 207) to neophytes so that they can “negotiate the situational contingencies in writing” (212).

“Content” faculty may be concerned about *what* they would teach were they to become involved in writing instruction. The suggestions in the Council for Writing Program Administrators’ *Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition* may be a good place for “content” and writing faculty to begin to plan a sequenced writing program. This statement proposes four major outcomes for writing instruction: rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and writing; processes; and knowledge of conventions. To help students develop “rhetorical knowledge,” faculty would help students learn the main features and uses of writing as well as readers’ expectations in their fields. With regard to “critical thinking, reading, and writing,” faculty could help students to learn the “uses of writing as a critical thinking method,” the “interactions among critical thinking, reading, and writing,” and the “relationships among language, knowledge, and power in their fields.” To help students understand “processes,” faculty could help students learn “to build final results in stages,” “review work-in-progress in collaborative peer groups for purposes other than editing,” “save extensive editing for later parts of the writing process,” and “apply the technologies commonly used to research and communicate within their fields.” Students can develop their “knowledge of conventions” if faculty help them learn the “conventions of usage, specialized vocabulary, format, and documentation in their fields” as well as “strategies through which better control of conventions can be achieved.”

Faculty development programs would have to be considered, however. Writing Across the Curriculum training, for example, could be included during the annual new staff orientation in the summer and in sessions presented by the Instructional Development Unit during or between semesters. Faculty preparation is important because of the unfortunate association of grammar teaching with writing instruction. As veteran writing teacher and assessment specialist Edward White notes, the only experience with writing instruction that many faculty members have is the first-year course that they took as students. Faculty often feel that “the teaching of writing means only endless re-marking of student writing products, with an emphasis on mechanics” (*Developing* 149). Some faculty members who studied in pre-process times will probably expect one draft writing from students although a little reflection would remind them of the kinds of revision in which they engage before publishing their own writing. For “content” faculty to effectively participate in a writing program that is engaged in more than mechanics and one draft writing, they may require introduction to current writing theory and research in general and to the language to talk about rhetorical strategies in particular.

Because what writing specialists teach are the metacognitive aspects of writing, particularly the processes and choices involved in writing, “content” faculty may argue for transfer of knowledge from first-year writing to discipline-specific writing. However, as Downs and Wardle argue, although transfer of knowledge is almost a given in education, transfer is not necessarily explicitly taught in a writing course (557). In the Jamaican context, the volume of work that is often covered in first-year writing prevents the required explicit teaching of transfer. First-year writing courses are typically

overburdened. The Dean of Humanities and Education asserts that the courses “provide students with what we identify as the essential skills that they need in order to pursue successfully their undergraduate studies” (“Memo” 1). Course descriptions suggest that these “essential skills” are many: thinking critically, thinking about rhetorical contexts, varying writing, improving grammar, preparing and delivering oral presentations, understanding and using specific documentation styles, working in teams, and observing deadlines *inter alia*. What John Trimbur says of the US composition course is also true of first-year writing in Jamaica: “The first-year course is, without doubt, . . . the performative space where we enact our imagined orientations toward literacy” (11). The result is over saturation of the course. As Trimbur sees it, “the required first-year course has acquired a surplus of meanings and purposes” (14). It has been “charged to do everything from ensuring students’ academic success to fostering their personal development as individuals to guaranteeing they will get a job when they graduate” (14). Also, as David Foster writes of US composition teachers, teachers of general writing courses, “juggle two pedagogical goals: they must teach writing as specific mastery in [writing courses] while recognizing that students must learn to write as knowledge-makers in specific fields beyond [the writing course]” (11).

One reason so much responsibility is put on writing teachers is that English/writing remains an interdisciplinary discipline. It informs teaching and learning; it is central to evaluation; and it draws on theory from other disciplines. However, more may be realized if that responsibility is shared. The general writing course should enable students to be mindful of, and respond to, the exigency that calls forth a writing

situation/task. However, as David Smit reminds readers in his study of the developments in composition regarding its core mission of teaching writing, it would be foolish to believe that students are going to learn to write for the academy in a matter of one or two semesters. As Smit writes,

people learn to write by being immersed in various discourse communities, and they learn the discourse practices of those communities by a process of assimilation, which can be aided by appropriate scaffolding, forms of overt instruction that make them self-consciously aware of the genre conventions used in the discourse of the community and the social practice those conventions embody and codify. (206)

“Content” faculty have, therefore, to help neophytes to study discourse practices, write the community’s genres, and also critique them for personal development and development of the discourse community throughout the duration of students’ studies.

Re-enlisting First-Year Writing in Sequential Writing

Identifying the burden on first year writing courses and calling for the involvement of “content” faculty is not an indication that I wish to abandon Mona’s first-year writing courses. On the contrary, I am arguing that they be kept as the *first stage* in a sequenced program for writing development. What I proposed above are ways for “content” faculty to become involved in students’ development in disciplinary writing in ways that do not appear to be mere interference in the discipline of writing – as was the case in the 1970s and 1980s. In this section, I wish to emphasize the value of the current courses and programs, address needed changes in them, and argue for sequential writing. Should a writing studies program be developed, writing teachers could focus both on teaching about writing and their other content areas, and graduate students in various

disciplines could be recruited to assist with initiating neophytes into the specialized discourse of their disciplines. With teachers' passing on disciplinary expertise as they teach about writing, the foundation program could more obviously reflect writing as a field of scholarly inquiry as faculty courses do. My proposal is, therefore, different from Russell's for Russell argues against general writing courses and for writing in the disciplines, as I explain in Chapter 1. It is also different from Downs and Wardle's, for the two compositionists are also against a general course that teaches writing and instead promote a course that teaches *about* writing. While I agree with them that general writing courses can foster misconceptions about writing, I am also emphasizing the ways in which a truly rhetorically-driven course can help to eliminate the misconceptions that I highlight. My proposal is also different from the suggestions made in the WRITE symposium discussed in Chapter 5. Those recommendations suggest a disparate set of courses taught at each level of the undergraduate program. They also speak to "content" faculty's support of, rather than explicit engagement in, writing instruction. I promote sequenced writing courses because my stated concern in Chapter 1 is not so much with actual improvements in writing which are very often concerned with formalism; rather, my concern is more with attitudes to writing and how it works. If academics' attitudes change in regard to disciplinary writing instruction, general writing instruction, and introduction to what one of Downs and Wardle's critics calls "what we now know of the nature of writing" (Kutney 279), institutions are likely to implement measures that reflect changed attitudes and *eventually* yield improvements in writing.

I am arguing to retain first-year writing courses because of their usefulness especially to newcomers to the academy. It is in first-year writing courses that such students have the opportunity to reflect on the changes that they are experiencing, how their university experiences may be affecting their identity, how they can participate in professional discourses, and how their university experience is likely to shape their future. In other words, the “first year writing course has often served as precisely a place that introduces students to the critical reflective discourse that provides the medium for the undergraduate experience” (Bazerman, “Response” 256). As Charles Bazerman says in his response to individuals who advocate abolishing first-year composition in the US, “[s]tudents reflect on themselves as students in the language of students, as they engage with disciplines in the role of students” (254). In this way, the course is “precisely an introduction into the literacy practices of being a university student” (254). Whereas in the US, such courses allow for students’ transition into professional discourses, in Jamaica they can serve the same function primarily for those students who do not have the experience of exposure to some form of disciplinary writing in the Sixth Form. For past Sixth Formers, the writing courses serve as a pause for students to reflect on the expectations of high school writing versus those of university writing. For all students, the first-year writing courses seem the most likely places in the institution where they can be *introduced* to writing for a variety of purposes and audiences, including personal, public, and academic or professional. All students bring with them “funds of knowledge” (see González, Moll, and Amanti) – their interpretive strategies, cultural assumptions, and collaborative networks – that first-year writing courses can connect with in ways that

writing in their disciplines may not. First-year writing courses provide spaces where, as cross-cultural writing researcher Anne-Marie Hall writes, “students develop both the craft to represent themselves and their ideas in language and also the reflective ability and the vocabulary to talk and think about writing” (463). What is important is that in addition to acknowledging and exploiting students’ “funds of knowledge,” instructors of first-year writing courses introduce students to a range of literate activities that are found in the university. Instructors should also avoid foisting one set of discursive strategies on to students, for to do otherwise only incorrectly suggests that what obtains in one discipline is appropriate in all others. In other words, writing teachers should avoid what Bazerman calls the “discursive chauvinism” (“Response” 257) that some faculty and students exhibit in academia. Writing specialists should instead, “make visible and real over the period of a student’s evaluation a variety of discourses, so that the students can reorient to and evaluate new discourses as they become visible and relevant” (257). In this way, students can appreciate their own strategies as well as begin to exploit strategies that are indispensable in new or unfamiliar rhetorical situations.

Like “content” faculty, then, writing specialists will benefit from adopting a rhetorical approach to writing instruction. This posture requires moving beyond the current concern in the WAC project at UWI that writing is not a generic skill and instead revealing to students writing’s place in negotiating generic disciplinary conventions. Instead of teaching the mythical universal academic writing because of a false assumption/promotion that the academy consists of one coherent discourse, faculty should promote the academy as polyglot (Harris 106) and teach writing as always already

rhetorical. By abandoning a formalist perspective and employing a rhetorical one in teaching writing, writing specialists may better assist students in developing writing abilities. Additionally, where differentiated writing instruction is offered, a rhetorical stance will ultimately enable writers of varying abilities to be introduced to the ways in which knowledge is made and conveyed in different domains. As for “content” faculty, the *WPA Outcomes Statement* may provide a useful starting point for first-year writing instructors, especially when the stated outcomes are used in combination with standards set by specific institutions or specific groups of institutions, as the Council recommends.

First, with regard to “rhetorical knowledge,” the courses should focus on rhetorical situations to enable students to address issues of purpose and audience and conventions of format and structure, voice, tone, level of formality and genres – as appropriate for those situations. This perspective means *working from purpose and audience to determine genre*, rather than having genre (almost always exposition) determine other writing moves that tend to descend into formalism, as I explained in Chapter 5. Second, if the courses are to foster development of students’ “critical thinking, reading, and writing” in readiness for application in their disciplines, then the courses should provide opportunities for students to “use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating.” This development will involve opportunities for students to take writing assignments through a series of tasks that include researching, evaluating, and synthesizing sources, as well as integrating their views and their sources’ – *after* their identified purpose leads them to a specific genre for writing. Such instruction should also help students “understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and

power” – issues that are particularly important in Caribbean societies where there is an oversupply of linguistic stigmata. Third, the courses should continue to introduce students to “processes” of writing by engaging them with multiple drafts that are usually a precondition for producing successful texts. Instruction should, however, help students “develop flexible strategies” for, and understand the recursive features of, considering, creating, developing, and polishing a text – rather than limit students to pages signed, or reference limits stipulated, by instructors. Increased opportunities for students to engage in balanced self- and peer-evaluation and address different audiences using varied technologies may enable them to understand the “collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.” Finally, to help students acquire “knowledge of conventions,” the first-year courses should include *substantial* teaching sessions to allow students to “learn common formats for different kinds of texts,” “develop knowledge of genre conventions, ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics,” “practice appropriate means of documenting their work,” and “control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling” (Council). As discussed in Chapter 5 based on King’s observations regarding plagiarism and instructors’ continued complaints about language problems in writing, instructors cannot continue to practice the policy that was evident since the 1960s when students were heavily penalized for surface errors that were not addressed in the Use of English course. Of course, the required instruction to keep students’ self-consciously aware of metacognitive contrasts in English and the oral Creole that many use should take place in the context of real writing that students are producing either in the first-year writing classroom or in their discipline.

Increasing writing instruction in the disciplines, without reverting to traditional models of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and adopting a rhetorical approach to writing are not the only changes that may be worthwhile in Mona's writing program. Teaching writing studies may also be useful. Writing instruction in a general (one-semester) first-year course only can convey the sense of writing as inoculation. Should a sequence of courses be developed to include disciplinary writing instruction and engaged rhetoric, instructors could see a change in the incorrect view that the writing courses are meant to inoculate students with grammar and punctuation of supposedly university-level strength. To my mind, one of the reasons "content" faculty (and students) may feel that writing courses are merely about mechanics, grammar, and syntax is that these courses involve a wide range of topics often about which writing instructors have only general knowledge. This situation leads to the misconception that writing has no content. Downs and Wardle rightly assert that "our field reinforces cultural misconceptions of writing" such as "writing is not a real subject [and] writing courses do not require expert instructors," because "we continue to pursue the goal of teaching students 'how to write in college' in one or two semesters – despite the fact that our field calls this possibility into question" (553). Downs and Wardle consider first year writing "the very course where misconceptions are born and/or reinforced" (553) and propose that writing instructors move "from acting as if writing is a basic, universal skill to acting as if writing studies is a discipline with content knowledge to which students should be introduced, thereby changing their understandings about writing and thus changing the ways they write" (553).

Teaching writing studies at Mona would mean having the first-year writing courses functioning as introduction to writing studies or as introduction to writing within disciplines in a vertical curriculum. Either approach would be worthwhile because each course at other levels could have a different, though connected, focus and really increase the visibility of rhetoric in writing. In other words, the first-year courses could continue to address the generalizable aspects of writing – what Downs and Wardle call the “transferable conceptions” (578) – while recognizing that writing is not a generic skill. A sequence of courses that would include modified versions of the upper level and graduate courses discussed in Chapter 5 would counter the universalist nature of one writing course that can generate students’ success in academia. Additionally, the first year courses could address the persuasive, subjective aspect of all writing; make visible the contingent/ context-bound/ specialized nature of writing; and emphasize the interconnectedness of reading, research, and writing. Because the courses in this sequence would use writing research and not only language or general topics as the course content, they would reveal writing as a field of scholarly inquiry and improve views about writing instruction and writing specialists. Such a program could help to disentangle “writing” from subject “English” – a consideration that seems crucial in Jamaica where students who are less than confident in English may feel equally diffident in knowledge acquisition and creation and its conveyance in writing. Teaching a sequence of writing courses in which students learn about language, oral and written literacy, and rhetoric, in the Jamaican context may recover some of the ground lost in teaching Creole-speaking students in English before they become literate in the Creole.

In an introductory course in the sequence, teachers could teach writing's disciplinary ways of knowing to better enable students to appreciate *other* disciplinary ways of knowing. In a word, students could learn the various cognitive and composing processes, rules, conventions, and rhetorical practices of other discursive worlds, so that they develop necessary cross-curricular aptitudes to succeed as they shuttle across disciplinary discourse communities. Such aptitudes could include understanding "how shared expectations and experiences become codified in the conventions that constitute domains of inquiry" (Merrill and Miller 206). After all, students need more than a one-shot-inoculation-type first-year course to enable them generally to succeed in understanding and producing written academic discourses and specifically to enter the professional discourse of their field. An introductory course to a curriculum in writing would also be a good way to avoid overlaps with the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) and instead focus on theories, discoveries, trends, and controversies in writing. It could lead to development of disciplinary writing courses, including courses that focus on writing for the public such as "Science/Geography/Economics for the Public." There could also be more co-teaching in certain subjects as already happens in "Language and Ethics" with participants from Philosophy and Language. Whatever the approach taken, faculty have to remember, as the *WPA Outcomes Statement* reminds, that as students progress through their studies their writing "abilities not only diversify along disciplinary and professional lines but also move into whole new levels where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge" (Council).

If Mona's writing courses were reconceived to include an introductory course to writing within disciplines or even a writing major, more realistic conceptions of writing would be possible rather than the mere consideration of writing as being without content. Such a course could be seen as some other introductory courses in the academy. It could point out the shared features of writing which include taking a stance, developing paragraphs, using jargon, citation and documentation, research writing as advancing disciplinary conversation, writing moves in different parts of a piece of writing, and writing to be rhetorically effective based on purpose, situation, and audience. It would, however, emphasize that these concepts are best understood in specific disciplinary contexts because disciplines understand these common features in different ways. As stated, "writing is neither basic nor universal but content- and context-contingent and irreducibly complex" (Downs and Wardle 558). This course would enable students to explore such questions as Downs and Wardle ask, "How does writing work? How do people use writing? What are the problems related to writing and reading and how can they be solved?" (558). Such a course would promote writing as "a subject of scholarly inquiry" and "a researchable activity rather than a mysterious talent" (Downs and Wardle 560). As John Trimbur proposes, this introductory writing course could "name names, identify contributions, chart trends, describe controversies, and otherwise introduce students to the intellectual life" of the field of writing (12). Additionally, the upper level courses would build on each other by reinforcing concepts addressed in earlier courses as well as introduce new ones. Since all courses in the sequence would be rhetorically-oriented, they would not need to be separated in terms of genres – an unfortunate

arrangement that means many students leave Mona without exposure to argument.

Overall, a sequence would make first year writing courses less oversaturated than they are now. This would help first-year writing courses to shed their “ambiguous identity on the border between [high] school and [university]” (Trimbur 17).

The rhetorically-informed introductory writing course in a sequenced program could also teach students to develop and maintain an inquiring stance to language, research, and writing. Based on their research, Downs and Wardle conclude, “Teaching students what we know about writing and asking them to research their own writing and the writing of others encourages ... self-reflection and mindfulness, thereby improving the possibility that students will maintain a stance of inquiry toward writing as they write in other disciplinary systems” (577). In the Jamaican context, such a course may also help students to engage critically with issues of language, knowledge, and power. It could help them to engage critically with language and the way it positions Jamaicans in social classes as well as with the values and practices of the various disciplinary discourses to which they will be introduced in the academy. Since, increasingly, students will shuttle between various discourse communities, it is important that they are not only assisted in learning (about) new discourse domains but also taught how to shuttle between these domains. Teaching a sequence of writing courses in which students learn about language, oral and written literacy, knowledge, and power in the Jamaican context may help predominantly Creole-speaking students to understand the interpretive strategies and codified conventions that obtain in different discourse domains. As “an ability, in each ... case, to see the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle 37), and with its attention to

situation, purpose, and audience, *rhetoric* may help faculty and students make the connections in writing between their different ways of reading and re-making the world.

Coda: How Writing Works

As I indicated in the introductory chapter, my study focused mainly on courses and programs offered through the Language Unit in the Department of Language, Linguistics & Philosophy at the UWI, Mona. I am also concerned with promoting an understanding of writing as revelatory of learning and as enabling learning when considered from a rhetorical rather than formalist perspective. I have, therefore, not treated a course such as “SY69C – Technical Writing” which Paul Martin has taught to graduate students in the Social Sciences since Summer 2005, and which was scheduled to be offered for the first time during the regular academic year in 2007/2008. Martin informed me in a personal communication that the Department of Sociology, Psychology and Social Work introduced this course to “help students to minimize and even eliminate continuing problems in writing at the graduate level.” The course addresses such writing concerns as plagiarism, citation, summarizing, and paraphrasing that Martin says are “grounded in a strong research orientation.” Before summer 2007, the course was taught in the “advanced stages” of the programs of students pursuing a Masters degree in Psychology, Sociology, Demography and Anthropology; however, it is now being taught “earlier so that the effects of the training [can] be more evident during their programmes.” My study also excludes the social writing that is taught in Media and Communications as well as the voices of other content faculty who may treat writing

instruction in their disciplines. A significant course that my study does not treat is “LITS1007 (E10G) – Reading and Writing about Literature” – which was introduced in 2000 in the Department of Literatures in English. I wish, however, to mention aspects of this course here because it provides an attempt at disciplinary writing instruction and conveys pitfalls that can be expected.

The “LITS1007 (E10G) – Reading and Writing about Literature” website informs students that “[g]uidance and practice are provided in ... how to read the literary genres of prose fiction, drama and autobiography; how to write literary essays using basic principles of argumentation and paragraph organisation; and how to evaluate the critics and use them discriminately. ... Guidance is also provided in the general management of learning and study activities.” This course developed out of a series of essay-writing workshops that one lecturer, Curdella Forbes, used to hold for students taking a course in Shakespeare in the late 1990s. Forbes informed me in a personal communication that she started the workshops because students “seemed to have no idea how to read a literary work” and demonstrated weaknesses in organizational and analytical skills in writing. She addressed those issues and focused on “basic things like the necessity of analyzing an essay question to ensure what it required [and] what ... words such as ‘discuss,’ ‘evaluate,’ [and] ‘comment on’ mean.” She developed the course after promptings from the students, many of whom, she reports, “improved quite significantly.” Forbes was hoping to have her faculty colleagues team teach in the course; however, that vision was not realized due to “the stigma of remediality” that faculty attached to the course. Forbes recalls that her colleagues felt the course involved “teaching remedial English.” They

“decided” that the course would be useful for students who had not taken the ‘A’ levels even though Forbes pointed out that students with ‘A’ and ‘O’ levels were producing “horribly bad essays” and both groups were benefiting from the workshops. Consequently, the course was not compulsory. As well, initially only part-timers taught in it, and in 2007-2008, only one person was teaching in it.

I do not agree that evaluation terms and comprehension of essay questions are “basic things” for first-generation university students. Indeed, that is one of the main points that this dissertation makes. I am therefore questioning the assumptions on which this course was developed while simultaneously lauding the Department of Literatures in English for offering it. If, indeed, this course works to make visible to students literary writing practices, it may well serve as a model that other disciplines could adopt. Like Forbes, researchers in various disciplines in other countries have begun to study and document the writing practices of their discipline. Bazerman and Rogers, for example, give a synopsis of findings in anthropology, economics, and history elsewhere (171). The challenge and excitement for UWI faculty is to study their writing practices and regional influences that they may have introduced into international publications. This challenge for “content” faculty in helping students understand disciplinary writing practices – from a rhetorical stance – extends to electronic environments with the images and other visuals included in contemporary electronic texts.

Although, as Forbes envisaged, ideally successful “content” faculty would have more to offer neophytes, I believe that graduate students could be included in this type of research and teaching. I make this proposal even at the risk of seeming to marginalize the

courses by suggesting graduate students could teach them because such students are likely to be in need of such explicit instruction themselves. Graduates' preparation for teaching could involve a course in writing theory and praxis with their semester project being a study of some aspect of writing in their discipline. Indeed an "Advanced Disciplinary Writing" course – separate from a course in research methods and methodology – in the sequence that I propose could be a core course for all research graduate students or those who are considering teaching/academe as their profession. I recommend graduate students over part-time tutors because graduate students are more likely to have an immediate intimate connection with the writing practices of the discipline that they are trying to "write themselves into" than would part-timers who may be consumed with teaching at the secondary level.

Finally, although the stated focus of my dissertation is writing and its instruction and development in the academy, my study embraces the interconnections of language use in the society, language teaching in schools, and writing in higher education in Jamaica. It establishes the importance of paying attention to schools, but not in the naïve way of suggesting that when they prepare students better the academy can abandon writing programs. Rather, the development of schools in Jamaica and students' linguistic and cultural experiences suggest a need to address schools to help faculty to determine what "funds of knowledge" students bring to university (writing) class/lecture rooms. It seems unwise to ignore the fact that faculty are dealing with monolingual education policies in a society that is not monolingual and where the language imposed in education is not that of the demographic majority. A concern expressed by Forbes that essays that

she received in Fall 2007 “show such a faint and distant acquaintanceship with the [English] language” that she recommends “go[ing] back to basics” reminds me of the attitudes to language and language teaching that have contributed to writing challenges that so far seem intractable. I would like to agree with individuals who are suggesting “basics,” but only if there is recognition that these basics involve helping primarily Creole-speaking students to become *biliterate* rather than merely *bilingual*. Clearly the attempts to *teach English* only or to make Creole-speaking children bilingual have not worked. It may, therefore, be prudent for the country to consider helping Creole-speaking children to first become literate in Creole. Thereafter, educators may want to revisit some of the methods, such as parsing, that were abandoned in the past – indeed, which had to be abandoned because they could not work with individuals who were not literate in any language and were being frustrated by English impositions.

I believe, as Creole linguist Lawrence Carrington wrote in the 1980s, that the Creole should be used as a medium of instruction as “a tactical device for assuring literacy in the language which the learner knows best. It does not relieve the school systems of the necessity for teaching English for as long as it remains the official language. ... However, the teaching of English would ... be an exercise in teaching a new language to an already literate individual” (*Literacy* 187). I, therefore, anticipate the results of a bilingual project that signals recognition of problems in literacy teaching in Jamaica. This project is being spearheaded by the Jamaican Language Unit (JLU) in Grades 1 to 4 of three primary schools. However, I recognize, as Carrington writes that were the Creole to be used as a medium of instruction in schools, campaigns would have

to be launched to teach the public about the legitimacy of the Creole (188). The initial report on the JLU's bilingual project in 2006 was followed by a largely unfavorable response on radio and in the print media. Articles and letters published in *The Jamaica Observer* in February 2006 embody lay practitioners' fear of increased incompetence in English or mental strain since being biliterate means students have to learn two orthographies. Such reactions remind advocates of biliteracy measures in Jamaica of the need for widely publicizing and advocating linguistic discoveries. As anthropologist Marcyliena Morgan writes, "[w]hile the linguist needs proof that a creole is unique to the extent that it is a separate language, the citizen needs proof of its historical and social resiliency, irrespective of competing language standards and varieties" (2). There is also the consideration that varieties continue to develop along the Creole-English continuum to the extent that Jamaican Creole may defy standardization and be problematic as a medium for instruction. As Simmons-McDonald and Ian Robertson observed in 2006, "Creole languages continue to defy definition, to the point where their very existence as a category of languages may be questioned" (xiv). As well, any push to implement Jamaican Creole as a medium of instruction is likely to struggle since nationalist movements have waned. History reveals that such movements usually spur various advocates to promote the national language and encourage citizens to become literate in it.

Perhaps, as political ideologies merge and as Creole varieties increase, educators could cautiously consider a strategy such as *code meshing* (as opposed to code mixing and strict code switching) that Vershawn Young proposes for use with African

Americans and A. Suresh Canagarajah has attempted with various minority groups in the US. Young opines that the differences between what he calls White English Vernacular (WEV) and Black English Vernacular (BEV) are exaggerated, resulting in limited numbers of African Americans' mastering the standard language (134). He argues for educators to allow students to use "a thorough, seamless mixture" (106) of their vernacular and the standard – that is, to code mesh – as they do in informal situations. The result, he believes, will "extend beyond producing better papers" and have an affective value because teachers will stop considering students' "linguistic habits as subliterate, fundamentally incompatible with what's considered standard" (106). I recommend a *careful* consideration of this strategy because Young's criticism of Canagarajah's attempts to employ the strategy in college classrooms indicates that it is still largely ill-defined (119-122). Young's discussion of the strategy also reflects a current concern with ideology rather than also with praxis (xvi; 106). Additionally, the variables in Jamaica and the US are different. First, although there is a continuation of *race in class* in Jamaica, the issue there is more with class and less with race, which is the primary concern in the US (see Young, 142). Second, Creole speakers constitute the demographic majority in Jamaica, unlike African Americans who comprise a "minority" group in the US. Third, as explained in Chapter 2, many varieties of Creole and English are mutually unintelligible because two different languages are concerned. However, as Simmons-McDonald and Ian Robertson have observed, a few Creole varieties are becoming anglicized/decreolized, and therefore sharing more similarities with English than those at the other end of the continuum – if one subscribes to the view of a Creole-

English continuum. These varieties are usually used in urban centers (see Patrick). These developments confirm that the linguistic paradigms in Jamaica have been and are becoming increasingly complex. Despite the new developments, *differences in worldview* remain between English and Creole – a distinction that Young does not address in his treatment of WEV and BEV.

The approach that Jamaican educators take should involve strategies that recognize the legitimacy of Creole (rather than English, strictly defined) in sustaining communication among Creole speakers. Such provisions can help change attitudes to language and writing that usually only serve to rigidify existing power structures that disenfranchise predominantly Creole speakers. I am, therefore, proposing a transcultural approach that may help to yield the kinds of development desired in Jamaica. I explained in Chapter 2 how Jamaican Creole epitomizes transculturation. Simmons-McDonald and Robertson's observations confirm this ongoing process of selection and reinvention that takes place when cultures/languages come in contact. Bearing in mind this natural process that occurs in interactions in society, educators can consider how they may usefully employ it in classrooms to help bridge divides between Creole and English, between students' ways of knowing and doing and the school's requirements. A transcultural approach will include educators' acknowledgement of the different varieties of language that obtain in the society and the different discourse communities that constitute educational institutions. This means educators would adopt transcultural rhetoric that, as Louise Rodriguez Connal writes, "expresses the sensibilities of people whose cultures are hybridized – people who affiliate with two or more cultures,

languages, or dialects” (321). In higher education, a transcultural rhetoric of writing would focus on crossing and bridging divides to include the diversity that necessarily attends expansions in education.

Ultimately, my recommendation is that faculty move away from colonial conceptions that focused on *grammatical English* to invoke rhetoric and accept the way English becomes diffracted in different disciplines, and that faculty assist in initiating students into those disciplines’ ways of knowing, doing, and writing rather than merely transmit some archaic view of English culture and values and formalist conventions. Faculty’s focus should be not so much on teaching “English” with all the monolingual monolithic monopoly that the term implies but more on empowering students through instruction in writing for both general and disciplinary purposes. Faculty can achieve this shift in focus if they/we take a rhetorical stance on writing, which focuses not on formal conventions but on interpretive and problem-solving strategies that everyone can use in varied situations. As Merrill and Miller remind, “task forces and ad hoc committees [often] make institutional changes without bothering to do the sort of research that is required in any other form of scholarly activity” (215). Instead of relying on such structures, Mona’s writing specialists should reveal their/our awareness that “[h]elping students demonstrate appropriate writing outcomes requires expert understanding of how students actually learn to write” (Council). Writing specialists may increase their/our contribution to students’ development by helping academics and the concerned public to understand that writing is a lifelong practice, and that it simultaneously makes learning visible and reveals and aids acquisition of disciplinary practices.

Questions regarding what to do when these suggestions meet budgetary constraints may be answered through further research into understandings of and instruction in writing at UWI, Mona, and elsewhere in Jamaica. Other questions that would be worthwhile to explore include the following:

- What were students writing in different decades at UWI, and how does the writing represent course focus? What kind of writing is/was being done in other post-secondary institutions such as teachers' colleges and community colleges?
- What role do the first-year writing courses play in the lives of first-year students? How do students perceive the courses while they are taking them, during the rest of their studies, and after completing studies?
- What kind of writing do students do in their faculty courses/after completing first-year writing? How much writing are students producing in their faculty courses? What are students' views about courses with extended writing versus courses without extended writing?
- In what ways are "the compositional motives, choices, and processes of students ... influenced by their extracurricular work, financial aid, living group, study environment, concurrent coursework, peer support outside of classes, continued involvement with family, and ... other dynamics of their academic surround" (Haswell 342)?
- What differences obtain in the writing and attitudes to writing of first-generation and continuing-generation Jamaican university students?

- How do “content” faculty handle course work assignments and response to or evaluation of such assignments? Do faculty provide clear descriptions of the nature and purpose of the assignment and the evaluation criteria that noted assessment specialist Edward White suggests is useful to teaching and evaluation (*Assigning 5*)?
- In their cross national study, Russell and Foster say that “because the epistemologies of various disciplines are often radically different, students must develop a chameleon rhetorical capacity to move from one to another, to converse differently in different networks of people through their written response to specialist reading and talk” (42-43). Is this the experience of Jamaican students? What challenges do Jamaican students encounter as they write in different disciplines, with regard to “handling intertextuality – citation, synthesis, and plagiarism” (42), for example? How can their experiences be related to the approaches in first-year writing courses?
- How are teachers prepared in college/teacher education departments to teach *writing* (as opposed to *English Language*) in schools? What do writing and writing instruction at the secondary and pre-secondary levels reveal about student preparation for university? How does the university curriculum affect curricula at pre-university levels? In other words, how is writing instruction articulated throughout Jamaica?

Engagement with these questions may help to reinforce my argument that by attending to writing from a rhetorical perspective, students, faculty, and institutions can

better reflect on and address writing challenges. More important, it will help critics understand *how writing works*. As I have established, critics have complained about student writing in higher education in Jamaica in every decade since the establishment of the University College of the West Indies (UCWI). While a few of these complaints address weaknesses in logic and reasoning, most of them have stressed errors in English grammar and mechanics. When critics complain about quantifiable errors in writing, they usually highlight weaknesses in lower levels of education. Consequently, they tend to suggest that when problems in those sectors are remedied, higher education will not have to contend with them. In essence, the complaints and accompanying suggestions often reflect the myth of transience. More recent critics, particularly journalists, tend to present the problems as if they are new. The first groups of students at UCWI shared similarities in social background and academic preparation (V. Roberts 28), but early documents suggest that it is time for commentators to recognize that they cannot really speak of any lost halcyon day of good writing in the university. Additionally the country's history of education suggests that locating remedies for problems in higher education requires careful reflection. Such reflection should mobilize academics and the concerned public to consider that writing is central to learning and to most forms of evaluation, and think about how students make sense of a discipline's concepts through writing – and writing in a language situation in which many are largely orphaned.

Bearing in mind the persistence of the complaints about student writing and the inherent weaknesses in the suggestions to address the problem, I recalled the country's colonial history of education and the imposition of “grammatical English” on a largely

Creole-speaking population to demonstrate the following points. First, the imposition of English as the medium of instruction was informed by the view that learners (at the elementary level) use language in speaking and writing based on an assumed instinct. Second, the problems that emerged at the elementary level as a consequence of that language policy have largely been ignored since mention of high failure rates has not been followed by significant changes in pedagogy. Third, the same myth about writing instinctively abounded in the university in its first decade and later in the promotion of knowledge acquisition and creation without initiation of students into disciplinary writing practices and conventions. In other words, the separation of students from their first language and the separation of language and learning since the beginnings of public education in Jamaica would be evident in higher education. Fourth, the problems inspiring the complaints are a signal that commentators should not assume that learning to write in one context will necessarily transfer to writing in other genres in other contexts. In other words, writing is not learned once and for all, but is learned and relearned in new contexts. Writing is, indeed as Chevannes describes education (306), a marathon and not a sprint event.

The continued complaints about student writing also suggest that some people continue to focus on English grammar and mechanics – the conventions of the code, which constitute only one element of writing. Exclusive focus on the code means that other aspects of (the) writing (process) are being ignored. However, writing instruction has to be understood as more than enforcement of standards of grammatical and mechanical correctness. Jamaica tends to be error obsessed where writing is concerned.

The correlate is error avoidance and fear on the part of students. I am not suggesting that the academy should ignore what Geneva Smitherman refers to in the US as the national “mania for correctness” (*Talkin* 130), but I feel that writing specialists should avoid being defined by it, and instead attempt to consider what students have to say rather than reduce evaluation and discussions of writing to a grammatical/mechanical error hunt. As H. G. Widdowson asserted in his plenary address at the TESOL Convention in 1993, custodians of language are often disturbed by deviances in spelling and grammar because such deviances signal that outsiders are entering a previously excluded domain – “the community.” As explained in Chapter 1, and as Widdowson asserted, “It is not that [spelling] greatly interferes with communication: It is usually not difficult to identify words through their unorthodox appearance. What seems to be more crucial is that good spelling represents conformity to convention and so serves to maintain institutional stability” (380). Of grammar, Widdowson notes, “Because language has built-in redundancy, grammatical conformity is actually not particularly crucial for many kinds of communicative transaction. . . . If the reason for insisting on standard English is because it guarantees effective communication, then the emphasis should logically be on vocabulary rather than grammar” (380-81). In sum, “it tends to be the communal rather than the communicative features of Standard English that are most jealously protected: its grammar and spelling” (381). While it is important for those wishing to gain access and be respected in academic communities to realize that deviations are likely to lead to perpetual exclusion from them, those within ought also to be aware that they send contradictory messages when on the one hand they speak of increasing access but on the

other refuse to initiate neophytes into both the identitarian (communal) and interactive (communicative) aspects of the discipline.

I am also not ignoring the fact that many “content” faculty seem to have been focusing on content for a long time, that is, they have been grading on content only. Such “content” faculty demonstrate hypocrisy when they complain in meetings about students’ writing deficiencies but award very high grades to such writing. Often, they excuse that contradiction by saying that they are not writing teachers and the English/writing teacher or high schools should provide the required instruction for students. The result is that some aspects of writing are still ignored. What I am calling for is a balanced, responsible approach to writing development. Perhaps, it is “content” faculty who will best indicate to students how errors of whatever kind can affect a writer’s ethos, and how other aspects of writing should also be addressed.

Critics’ focus on skills is also informed by the view that there is a uniform Standard English that has been isolated and reduced to teachable rules. However, rather than reify writing, academics should acknowledge its protean, heterogeneous nature – a competence and a medium that will be redefined in different disciplines. As Rose recommends, “If the skills designation proves to be resistant to change, then we must insist that writing is a very unique skill, not really a tool but an ability fundamental to academic inquiry, an ability whose development is not fixed but ongoing” (358). Faculty have, too, to recognize that academic discourse is, as Sharon Crowley observes, “a mythical genre” (233). This persistent myth has unfortunately fostered and supported the belief that universal standards of literacy exist. However, it is time for academics to

acknowledge, and the concerned public to understand, a social perspective on writing: “As a social activity, writing is inevitably embedded in and conditioned by a community. By its very nature it is local, context specific, dependent on a community for its existence and meaning. *Literacy* is thus a function of the specific community in which certain kinds of reading and writing activities take place” (Russell, *Writing* 12). Understanding the complexity of writing may help critics avoid using alarmist rhetoric in relation to students’ writing and instead channel energies into identifying ways to enhance the writing development of all students, and especially those Creole-speaking first-generation university students who are most likely to be disenfranchised because of having to disregard their first language and learn to write in English – a language that is really not their own.

“Content” faculty should recognize that the errors that journalists and academics often identify speak to language difficulties of students whose problems are compounded by the academy’s requirements. Indeed, there is a need for recognition of probable weaknesses in students’ English language acquisition without faculty’s abdication of their responsibilities for students’ writing development, especially as regards helping students to navigate the situational contingencies that are inherent in writing in different disciplines. If our concern is widening participation, then we have to be prepared to use the resources that those invited bring to the learning situation. If we desire knowledge production (rather than merely reproduction), and by extension personal, institutional, and national development, then all stakeholders have to be involved in students’ writing development. The *institution* has to recognize writing as visible rhetoric rather than as

transparent recording of reality affected only by one's ability to master English grammar and mechanics. "*Content*" faculty have to acknowledge the rhetorical nature of their work and assist students in understanding how knowledge is rhetorically constructed. "Content" faculty should also be reminded of the various discourses that exist in the academy and assist in initiating neophytes into their disciplinary conventions. *Writing specialists* need, too, to remain aware of such varied discourse communities and engage rhetoric's aides to emphasize such differences in teaching so that *students* will learn to transfer strategies and learn new ones as situations demand. A rhetorical perspective on writing – in general writing courses, courses about writing, and courses in other disciplines – is important to reducing the alarmist rhetoric that some academics and lay practitioners associate with problems in writing because of their lack of acknowledgment or unawareness of how writing works.

APPENDIX A: PAST LECTURERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

I. BACKGROUND

A. Past Lecturer

1. Would you like to be identified by name in a history of the teaching of (English Language) academic writing at The University of the West Indies (UWI)?
2. How long were you involved with the teaching of (English Language) academic writing courses at UWI?
3. What was your involvement in the teaching of (English Language) academic writing courses at UWI?
4. What training and experience do you have?
5. How did you and the other persons who were involved in the course continue to learn new ways of teaching (academic) writing?

B. The Course

1. Who are the individuals who were involved in introducing the first (English Language) academic writing course at UWI?
2. How was the course funded?
3. What was the governing structure of the department or administrative unit that housed the course and the instructors?
4. What committees relevant to the teaching of writing existed?
5. For what reasons was the first (English Language) academic writing course introduced at UWI?

II. CURRICULUM

A. Philosophy, Syllabus

1. What English/language/writing theories informed the development of the course and teaching in the course?
2. What English/ language/ writing skills were students believed to bring to the course?
3. Who was believed to possess the language/writing skills that students were expected to acquire in the course?

4. What role were the language/ writing skills acquired in the course believed to play in students' future?
5. How did the course introduce students to academic culture?
6. Did the course enable/encourage students to contest the norms of academic culture? If yes, how? If no, why not?
7. What tests and testing procedures were used for placement and exemption of students?

B. Instruction

1. How did you (and the other instructors) teach students to write in this course? Did you adopt a process approach to writing? If yes, what were the stages in that process? If no, what model(s) of teaching writing did you use?
2. What texts were used and why?
3. What instructional materials and media were used other than textbooks?
4. Was student writing incorporated into the instructional materials? If yes, how? If no, why not?
5. How were the topics on which students wrote determined in the course?
6. How were students taught to address the relationship between the writer, the reader, the subject, and the purpose for writing?
7. How were students taught to address writing concerns such as idea generation, development, organization, voice, documentation, and audience expectations?
8. Did students in the course take ownership of their writing? If yes, how? If no, what constrained them?

C. Evaluation (= Responses to and Assessment of Student Writing)

1. What did the course promote as the most important features of good writing?
2. What criteria and procedures were used to evaluate (= respond to and assess) student writing in the course?

3. How were grades determined in the course?
4. What role did revision play in the course?
5. How would you describe student performance (on tests and examinations) in the course?
6. What were some patterns and/or persistent problems that you observed in students' writing in the course?
7. How were the problems that you identified normally addressed in the course?

III. CONNECTIONS AND PROJECTIONS

A. Global

1. What connections, if any, did you perceive between teaching academic writing at UWI and teaching academic writing courses in England, North America, or elsewhere?
2. How did developments in teaching writing in those places influence teaching writing in the course?
3. How do you feel about such influences?

B. Local

1. How did Jamaica's/the Caribbean's language situation influence what was done in the course?
2. What was the connection between the course and writing done in the schools in Jamaica/the Caribbean?
3. What was the general campus climate for writing at UWI?
4. What changes were made to the course during the periods that you were involved with it and for what reasons were they made?
5. What was your experience with the (English Language) academic writing courses that were introduced later at UWI?

APPENDIX B: CURRENT INSTRUCTORS' QUESTIONNAIRE

I. BACKGROUND

A. The Instructor

1. Would you like to be identified by name in a history of the teaching of (English Language) academic writing at the University of the West Indies (UWI)?
2. How long have you been involved in the teaching of (English Language) academic writing at UWI?
3. In what ways have you been involved in the teaching of (English Language) academic writing at UWI?
4. What training and experience do you have?
5. How do you continue to learn new ways of teaching (academic) writing?

B. Courses

1. Which of the English language (academic writing) courses have you taught at The University of the West Indies (UWI)? Please give course name(s) and code(s).
2. Which course do you currently teach? Please give course name and code.
3. In the periods that you have been involved in teaching academic writing at UWI, what changes have you observed in such courses?
4. What specific changes have been made to the course that you currently teach?

II. CURRICULUM

A. Philosophy

1. How do you define (academic) writing?
2. What would you say is the philosophy/ are the principles of the Language Unit in which you work at UWI?
3. What purposes does the course that you currently teach serve?
4. What English/ language/ writing theories inform your teaching of writing?

5. What English/ language/ writing skills do students usually bring to the course?
6. Who do you believe possesses the language/writing skills that students (are expected to) acquire in the course?
7. What purposes do you believe that the language/ writing skills acquired in the course serve in students' future?
8. How does the course you teach introduce students to academic culture?
9. Does the course you teach enable/ encourage students to contest the norms of academic culture? If yes, how? If no, why not?

B. Instruction

1. What is your own theory about how students learn to write?
2. How do you teach students to write in this course? Do you adopt a process approach to writing? If yes, how do you define the stages in that process? If no, what model(s) of teaching writing do you use?
3. What instructional materials and media do you use other than the course textbooks?
4. Do you incorporate student writing into the instructional materials? If yes, how? If no, why not?
5. How are the topics on which students write determined in the course?
6. How do you teach students in the course to address the relationship between the writer, the reader, the subject, and the purpose for writing?
7. How do you teach students in the course to address writing concerns such as idea generation, development, organization, voice, documentation, and audience expectations?
8. Do your students take ownership of their writing? If yes, how? If no, what constrains them?
9. How do departmental hierarchies affect the way(s) in which you teach writing in the course?

C. Evaluation (= Responses to and Assessment of Student Writing)

1. What do you consider the most important features of good writing?
2. What criteria and procedures do you use to evaluate (= respond to and assess) student writing?
3. What role does revision play in your teaching?
4. What are some patterns and/or persistent problems that you have observed in students' writing in the course?
5. How are the problems that you have identified normally addressed in the course?

III. CONNECTIONS AND PROJECTIONS

A. Global

1. What connections, if any, do you perceive between teaching (English Language) academic writing courses at UWI and teaching academic writing courses in England, North America, or elsewhere?
2. How have/do developments in teaching writing in those places influenced/influence teaching writing in the course that you teach?
3. What are your reactions to such influences?

B. Local

1. How does Jamaica's language situation influence what you do in teaching writing?
2. What is the connection between the course that you teach and teaching writing in schools in Jamaica/the Caribbean?
3. What is the connection between the course you teach and the Writing Centre?
4. How do administrators and lecturers in other departments and faculties perceive the course that you teach?
5. How do you feel about the provisions the university makes for teaching (English Language) academic writing courses to students?
6. What changes would you like to see made to teaching (English Language) academic writing (courses) at UWI?

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