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Cross-Cultural Analysis of Student Writing

Beyond Discourses of Difference

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Text analysis traditions in France and the United States include discourse analysis, critical linguistics, French functional linguistics, Bakhtinian dialogics, and "generous reading." These frames have not been used, however, in cross-cultural analysis of university student writing. The author presents a study of 250 student texts from French and U.S. introductory university courses, using a methodology for cross-cultural analysis that draws on other French and U.S. methodologies, particularly those using the dialogic utterance as a unit of analysis, but extended by the tools of *reprise-modification* and textual movement. The results provide a complex picture of university students' writing as a site of social-textual dynamics, resisting more traditional contrastive approaches while reintroducing a focus on the text. The interpretive analysis brought out more commonality than difference; the author hypothesizes that students entering the university share a discourse of learning and negotiation across cultural contexts. The methodology supports cross-cultural analysis beyond "discourses of difference."

Keywords: *reprise-modification; dialogics; textual movement; discourse analysis; university student writing; cultural comparison*

Written texts have long been the object of a variety of analytic projects in France and the United States, in the disciplines of writing studies, composition, contrastive rhetoric, and discourse analysis. Some of this analytic work has focused specifically on university student texts; some has pursued textual analysis across national-cultural borders. Much of the comparative work, whether of student writing or of other forms of writing, emphasizes difference and "othering" of the object analyzed. In addition, the methods used in each national context and discipline are not often shared across borders, in particular when the analytic object is student writing.

Cross-cultural research needs a broader cross-cultural methodological base. Although both U.S. and French schools of thought prove useful in making a case for comparative work, each of these fields also has its own blind spots. French readings of student work have rarely invoked “social” perspectives, in the U.S. understanding of that term, whereas U.S. readings have often lacked sustained linguistic-discursive analysis of student writing. There is certainly work focused on some features of students’ texts, often in the field of contrastive rhetoric, but most cross-cultural work elides deep comparisons that might look beyond isolated features of identically situated texts.

In this essay, I argue for a methodology that addresses the question of cross-cultural analysis, building from other methodologies currently in use in both the United States and France, in particular those using the dialogic Bakhtinian utterance as a unit of analysis, but here sharpened into focus and operationalized through the French linguistic tools of *reprise-modification* and textual movement. This methodology was used in a study of 250 student essays written in the 1st year of postsecondary in France and the United States; the students were in writing classes in most cases but in introductory-level education or literature classes in a few cases. The study’s purpose was to understand and compare student work in the two national-cultural contexts. The results indicated that the institution, the assignment given, the student’s level in school, and the texts read for the assignment were more powerful factors than the influence of a particular national setting, and that the student texts studied were complex, rich, negotiating discursive acts; their shared ways of working were stronger across different situations than their differences, suggesting that students might be inhabiting a shared “discourse of academic learning.” This second result is the focus of this article.

I describe the study’s theoretical framing and its procedures; offer examples of what it enables writing researchers to see, both about student writing in different cultural settings and about the methodology used; and call for increased study of student writing in cross-national contexts using the methodology. Although I argue here for an analytic-interpretive approach that is particularly useful for reading and understanding a discourse of academic learning and negotiation in student texts across cultures, the method simultaneously draws out useful insights for studying writing within any particular context. The connections in perspective and the complementary methodologies across French and U.S. research cultures will offer writing scholars a different analytic register and different axes of comparison for a systematic generous reading of student texts both within and across contexts, contributing to U.S. and French writing research agendas.

I. Background: Studying Written Language-in-Use in France and the United States

The United States and France have several strong traditions in the study of writing. Some of these traditions specifically inform the conceptual framework and methodology to be detailed later in this article. I sketch the main lines of these traditions here, including French functional and enunciative linguistics, discourse analysis in both French and U.S. forms, dialogic linguistics, generous reading, and critical linguistics, to prepare the ground for supporting a methodology that draws partly from these traditions.

The field of functional linguistics in its French forms is not widely known to U.S. composition theorists. This field, today sharing some aspects of pragmatic linguistics and discursive semiology, was initially in part a response by André Martinet (1962) and his contemporaries to Saussurean linguistics, but has evolved quite differently as a set of theories focused on language-in-use, written or spoken, as the source of language models rather than looking first to structures and then to their manifestations. "If we speak of a linguistic structure or recurring modes of text structure," writes linguist Anne Salazar-Orvig (1999), "it is because of speaker/writer productions of actual utterances, practices—the ways that speakers-writers produce and reprise discourses, rather than abstract structures that take on life through language production" (p. 8). Among these, Salazar Orvig notes, Émile Benveniste is considered the originator of enunciative linguistics, and his initial division of all utterances into *discours* and *récit* continues to influence French analyses today.

The approaches described contribute to methods of detailed discourse analysis, proclaimed by Elisabeth Bautier to be uniquely French. Although in the United States, Bazerman and Prior (2004) suggest that discourse analysis has only recently begun to take writing as its object, French linguists have been doing so for decades in a variety of linguistic schools. D. Maingeneau (1991, 2002, 2007) has developed and defined many of the tools frequently introduced in France today as basic analytic indicators, including verb tenses, shifters (deictics), and pragmatic oppositions; de Nuchèze (1998) studies the traces of interaction found in successful intercultural discourses; Bautier (1995) explores the enunciative postures taken up by students from lower socioeconomic brackets in school writing and questions the motives of international writing tests such as the Programme for International Student Assessment exam for their socioeconomic biases.

And yet even with these powerful tools, until recently in France, little attention has been paid to critical pedagogies of writing in higher education or concepts of university academic literacies, and French research about writing has not traditionally treated postsecondary writing as an analytic object. It has, however, fine-tuned empirical quantitative and qualitative methods for the analysis of students' writing in elementary and secondary schools. This work has been framed variously by proponents of cognitive, discourse community, literary, and genre models of learning to write. In addition, theoretically grounded discussions of college writing and students' positions in the college context have developed in the past 15 years, producing groundbreaking work on intertextuality and polyphony in source management and voice in students' college work (see, e.g., Boch & Grossman, 2001; Reuter, 2001; Delcambre, 2001; Pollet & Piette, 2002). Bakhtinian frames of polyphonic voicing have heavily influenced this work. In particular, Bakhtin's (1986) *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* presents the utterance as the completed unit of discourse, short or long, simple or complex, always a link in a particular chain, always oriented to a future response. That utterance, in French *l'énoncé*, is for Bakhtin always multivoiced, polyphonic. Rabatel (2006) suggests that dialogism and polyphony are the complementary facets of enunciative heterogeneity, the first studied by linguists and the second by scholars focused on anthropological and aesthetic interests. Both of these strands have influenced analysis of textual function.

Bakhtin's influence is felt as well in the study of genre in francophone research discussions, in particular his distinction between primary and secondary genres, although this has often been useful in studying writing before the university (see, e.g., Bernié, Jaubert, & Rebière, 2004; Bronckart, 1996a, 1996b; Dolz 1996). Some of the broader collection of work on university students' writing has focused on mastery of various parts of academic texts (introductions, conclusions, research questions) and various genres (long essays, exam questions, science reports, etc.) (Delcambre, 2008). Finally, research in writing has supported the idea that writing difficulties cannot be considered simple technical difficulties but are tightly linked to writers' representations (their representations of writing and of themselves as writers, of academic expectations about the writing to be produced, etc.), to the expected text genres, and to the frames these genres propose for written production, in particular with respect to discourse content and types of knowledge, and finally to the forms of support and evaluation that accompany the learners' writing, forms that are themselves based on university teachers' representations of writing and learning (Delcambre & Boch 2006).

In the United States, on the other hand, the broad field of composition theory, focused on writing research and the teaching and learning of writing in higher education, has a 45-year history that encompasses a wide variety of perspectives, objectives, priorities, and approaches but has focused somewhat less on empirical research. Certainly, the general tracks of cognitive, social, and expressivist theories (each of these internally heterogeneous) have been documented in numerous collections seeking to impose a history on the field. Postprocess theories, genre and activity system theories, and studies of knowledge transfer have dominated more recently as well.

U.S. researchers grounded in a range of perspectives have also created a foundation for specific analytic attention to different kinds of texts. Just a few examples show these diverse perspectives. Faigley's (1992) critical linguistic analysis of official school documents in *Fragments of Rationality*, Johanek's (2000) development of complementary qualitative-quantitative relationships, Barton's (2004) detailed development of rich feature analysis, and Haswell's detailed studies of grammatical and syntactic features of student and professional writing (Haswell, 1991) and of student writing over time (Haswell, 2000) all offer ways to focus on particular linguistic or discursive features and to read them in larger social or political situations. Both Bakhtin and Volosinov have informed more recent analysis of texts in social contexts by U.S. writing scholars; consider, for example, Bazerman's analysis of intertextuality through the examples of the modern check as literate instrument (Bazerman, 2006) or the multiple systems of meaning constructed by, with, and about Thomas Edison's work (Bazerman, 1999), or Prior and Shipka's (2003) studies of the "dispersed and fluid chains of places, times, people and artifacts that come to be tied together in trajectories of literate action" (p. 181), using chronotopic lamination as an analytic frame to expose the dialogic resources in words, phrases, sentences, or utterances. Prior's (2001, p. 7) attention to how he locates the phrases he studies and what they index to his own communicative history is a reflection of his internalization of the responsive understanding evoked by Bakhtin. Attention to students' texts has also been developed through a strong focus by some composition scholars on "generous reading," the reading of student work *as writing*, that is, as legitimate text, with the assumption that it does make sense, carries its own internal logic, is justifiably studied as any other text, literary or expository.

Although the two traditions just described within the broader fields of French writing research and U.S. composition theory are richly developed, they have not been used for extensive analysis of student work across national-cultural contexts. They serve as horizon here to considering a methodology for studying student writing across these different cultural contexts. The particular areas of work that have fostered my understanding of textual analysis in a North American frame, and from which some specific tools are drawn for the study presented here, include

- the dialogic linguistic perspectives introduced through translations of Bakhtin and Volosinov and taken up by scholars including Bazerman and Prior (2004) and Bazerman (2004);
- the "generous reading" approaches sponsored by Bartholomae (1986), Slevin (2001), and Wall (1992); and
- discourse analysis as proposed by scholars including Barton (2004).

In the generous reading tradition, I believe that student texts should be read as any text would be, as textual works, created in a particular context to be sure, but studied with the same tools that help in identifying and localizing the movements scholars try to understand in any text.

The areas of French work that are initial resources for the textual analysis proposed here include

- discourse analysis in Bakhtinian dialogic perspective,
- the further specific developments of these in French linguistics, complemented by
- literary criticism in the tradition of Gerard Genette and Jean Starobinski.

French discourse analysis, informed by functional linguistics, enables us to study rhetorical, linguistic, syntactic, generic, and discursive movements that, layered over one another, offer a complex reading.

II. The Conceptual Framework for the Cross-Cultural Method

Although the work cited above has created fertile ground, it is the synthesis of these various perspectives through the particular operationalizing frame of French linguist Frédéric François that is, I believe, necessary and most productive for the cross-cultural analysis of university student writing. That frame includes specific perspectives on discourse and text as objects of analysis. It considers the static effects of constituting a corpus and opposes those with the dynamic units of analysis that are reprise-modification and textual movement, to be developed here.

A discourse is, for François (1998), a written or spoken utterance addressed to others or oneself in a situation, taken directly out of a communicative circuit. A text is discourse-in-action but outside of its initial relationship of exchange, as in reported speech, discourse analyzed by a third party, discourse read by the same interlocutor at different times, and so on (François, 1998). This definition admittedly favors writing as a candidate for "text," but certainly, not all texts are written. A corpus is a set of texts taken at a point in time and analyzed or studied. The "data" in texts are never stable objects; at each new reading, the object is no longer the same object. A corpus fixes data in a particular study at a particular time, temporarily stopping a text's functioning to take a particular look. "Discourse is always dynamic," suggests Salazar Orvig (1999);

> while we study words, phrases, etc., "stopped" in front of us, they must be understood in terms of . . . how they complete, modify, inflect a discursive space; the way in which utterances construct a progression of the said and the changes it introduces. (p. 9)

A text, produced for and by discursive spheres of activity, functions as a negotiation through reprise-modification, literally, re-taking-up-modifying as one interdependent event that is the essence of all discursive function. The term, introduced by François (1994), is a way to operationalize and further develop Bakhtin's notion of dialogics as an analytic term, encompassing every textual feature from the broadest discourse to syntax to the single word, and in fact reaching beyond utterances to ways of being in the world, to looks and gestures and physical postures and atmospheres.

Of course, some reprises are highly normed, for example, some linguistic-structural reprises, such as the reuse of *the* in front of *apple* in English or adjectival order conventions in French. But the reprises-modifications that interest me are the less normed particular ways of putting things into words, reinvesting notions, styles, abstract choices or ways of organizing thoughts and expressions, re-elaborations of a shared pool. The generic is reorganized and reused through the individual (François, 1998): A given utterance calls on the history of its uses but also its lateral intertextuality in the moment and its levels of appropriation by the user. The student who says "Combien de conflits résultent de l'incompréhension de l'autre? Tous!" ("How many conflicts result from incomprehension of the other? All!") taps the discourses of generations in literature and politics, the current references to openness to others and a pluralistic society, the local texts of the assignment and the Emile Zola source text he or she read, and his or her own situated sense of any individual word in the phrase, this particular combination of words, and the oratorical style of calls to action—just to mention a few of the many factors at play in this one sentence.

Reprises-modifications are interesting because they are *displacing* movements; a reprise-modification necessarily displaces the already-said. Although students' texts are often described as "taking positions," placing students into the academic conversation, the dialogic perspective implies a displacing, and students' work might thus be seen as a management of existing discursive roles rather than a creation of "original" ones.

These reprises-modifications, units of discourse construction, knit what François and Salazar Orvig call textual movements, factors of the text's "progression." Because they emphasize the dynamic activity of using-modifying, they move beyond the study of fixed textual structures or static linguistic features. The dynamic is not "in" the utterance or the particular feature studied (connectors, for example, or parallel structures or repeated themes, etc.) but in the interaction among features and with the subject-using-language: a subject-as-text producer or a subject-as-text recipient. François suggests that the movement is in fact another name for the interpretation carried out and the text-interpreter relationship: what the text does for the reader-interpreter through foregrounding of interactions among features normally separated by analysis into distinct linguistic units. The reader-interpreter is not the idealized Reader of earlier explorations of both literacy and literary constructions but the generic-specific polyphonic recipient of the words provided in the text; located, as Prior mentioned, in the phrases studied and the way they index the reader-analyst's discursive-existential history. Characterizing a text's movements implies that different figures of modes of utterance, of theme, of genre can be distinguished, all the while accepting that these can never be fixed elements (neither semantically nor functionally) and that interpreters need to underscore their ways of moving forward the text and its point of view for a particular reader or group of readers. These movements are not the stock of repeated uses and structures, strategic structuring steps identified by Swales (1990) as "moves," but an open-ended inventory identified through systematic, accounted-for but always open to questioning explorations.

The approach is without a doubt a way to explicate some specific uses of our common stock of words, expressions, stances, genres, and so on, by a particular student. It falls in a family of analytic perspectives: "intertextuality" in the broad way it is presented by, for example, Bazerman (2004), akin to recent discussions of remix and assemblage (see Johnson-Eilola & Selber, 2007), as well as paraphrase and heteroglossia; "uptake" in particular of generic features, although it is different from notions of "uptake" in its emphasis on not only re-taking-up but simultaneously and always, even with direct quotes, modifying. The intertext is located as much in a single word—a deictic, for example—as it is in a broad rhetorical allusion to an oratory or a quotation from a passage. The deictic *here* draws on the shared reference among readers and producers of a text, in both time and space and potentially in its reference to the rest of the text (as in "here [in this essay] . . ."). The broad rhetorical allusion of a student's essay to the essay he or she read in a class is equally intertextual, echoing larger syntactic and discursive structures such as the repetition of gerunds and the reiteration of moral responsibility punctuating the source text. Any number of gradations can be established between the smallest and largest of referential strategies.

In general, I study the relationships among texts read, assignments given, texts produced (the "textual context"), as well as parts of their larger national-cultural situatedness and their readers, to offer insights into the work these texts do, the textual aspects of negotiation in play.

Many scholars working in the domains relevant to analysis of student writing call for studying all writing as situated sociodiscursive activity, not just textual object. As Gee (1999) powerfully suggests, literacy *is* social practice and discourse is social transaction. But the text does not disappear in these transactions. As Salazar Orvig argues, the text is witness to its own production. It is a constructed object, and its negotiating acts can be traced. A focus on text is thus neither acontextual nor asocial. Here, I focus on one part of the larger method: I seek to bring out various specific locatable reprises-modifications that help us see how a student negotiates the textual context: What reprises-modifications manage the textual construction? It is this approach that will push cross-cultural assessment of students' texts into a different space.

Three clarifications, however: (a) In this article, the reception I am describing is my own, as systematic as it may be, but broader accounting for a given interpretive reading, in particular through simultaneous analysis of the interpreter, is always useful when there is space; (b) the report later in this article of some of the reprises-modifications studied is only a sampling; and (c) the choice of the word *negotiation* above is quite important, pushing on the tensions inherent to a cultural integration carried out through the text in which students are both dominated and dominating. This is clearly proposed by linguist Mary Louise Pratt (1990) in her depiction of discourse encounters in contact zones of human activity. For Pratt, all discourse takes place in contact zones, ethnographic spaces where groups meet and interact, in always uneven power distributions. Student writers indeed negotiate in contexts that are always somehow uneven, in which there is (fruitful) tension, in which they can fail (see also Lahanier-Reuter & Reuter, 2004; Reuter, 1996).

III. The Interpretive Analytic Methodological Procedure

If the framework just described is workable, the question then becomes how do reprises-modifications and textual movements operationalize Bakhtin in a way that enables a systematic generous reading of student work—and why is this approach particularly suited to cross-cultural reading? I answer these questions by describing the research process, the indicators used for analysis, and the phases of quantitative and qualitative analysis.

The methodology for the study presented here was initially developed for a study of students' writing as part of my doctoral work in 2000 in France. A more detailed exploration of it is featured in *Ecrire à l'Université: Analyse Comparee en France et aux États-Unis* (Donahue, 2008). The initial study compared the textual constructions of the "ordinary" (nonliterary) texts that students produced from the last year of high school and the 1st year of college in France and the United States, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches to get at the slippery elements that constitute a student text's dialogic ways of doing its work—to account for what, in a Pirsigian moment, might normally be seen only out of the corner of one's eye. Initially, the intent was to explore cultural differences and similarities, using student work from as similar a category and context as possible. The results of this analysis, and the learning accomplished by trying out the methodology, suggested avenues of cross-cultural inquiry, reflections back on researchers' inquiries, and methodological fine-tuning.

The corpus treated by the quantitative analysis involved 250 texts from France and the United States; a subset of 40 texts made up of duos and trios of interrelated texts around a particular prompt and set of readings was treated with extended qualitative readings. These texts were produced in 1st-year writing classes in both the United States and France (see the Appendix for an institutional list) during the academic years 1997 to 2000; the U.S. courses were all "composition" courses, while the French courses were sometimes dedicated writing courses and sometimes introductory courses in particular disciplines (literature, languages, or education). This difference was unavoidable, given institutional differences in French and United States higher education; I included the difference in the analysis. The texts analyzed received "average" grades, between a B and a C. They were about broad social topics such as "what are the needs of your generation," "what is the best way to educate students," "should we be in charge of our own lives," and "what is an independent life." Every assignment involved reading a text or two texts and then writing in response to a prompt, drawing explicitly on the text(s).

An analytic reading of student writing involves just that, analysis and reading, inspired partly by critical literary theory as relevant to all ordinary texts. The method uses, as do many such methods, both quantitative and qualitative data gathering and data interpretation. Johanek (2000) calls the quantitative-qualitative divide a false dichotomy, and I agree, but I nonetheless see the quantitative approach as in service of the qualitative—as a heuristic, as a first layer, as an indicator of interest. Huckin (2004) makes a case for "grounded qualitative" analysis using the quantitative for basic data gathering and the qualitative for interpretation, but even this meshing is only partial; both stages need both approaches.

In Bakhtinian logic, the utterance calls on a complex set of other utterances and their utterers; not the explicitly social, but the social embedded in language itself:

> As such, there are no "neutral" words and forms . . . language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents. For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. . . . Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. Contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic) are inevitable in the word. . . . As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 293)

To pull apart the utterance that is student writing, and trace some of the ways it is "shot through," I turn to the study of the reprises-modifications that constitute the text at its micro-, meso-, and macro-levels.

Phase 1

Preestablished criteria (e.g., coding lists) for such analyses have the advantage of appearing objective, but close down readings rather than opening them up. The method's first steps were drawn from the kind of reading proposed by Starobinski (1970) in *La Relation Critique*. For Starobinski, what begins as a naive open reading of the work, that is, an attentive contemplation, moves then to a distance-taking, a "putting into parentheses" of this first reading, in a step involving identifying the structures that awakened this response. The "complex system of internal relationships"

(p. 17) is used to “read” this world of the work, which is then re-placed into the broadened world in which it is situated (p. 19). This critical path that builds itself out of the text, the context, and the reader is at the heart of the method. On one hand, an attentive reading can bring us to a more rigorous analysis; on the other hand, “every attentive reading had already seen obscurely that which is now brought into broad daylight by the virtue of explanation” (p. 67). Starobinski highlights diverse aspects of a text’s workings as indissociably linked but points out that some aspects “speak” more than others in a particular text: “here, it will be a particular rhythm, dynamic, or breath, there it will be an ‘art of transition’ or a system of attenuation . . . or a systematic reliance on a particular type of figure” (p. 71).

The analysis reported here thus began with a first open, attentive reading of the corpus without a precreated set of indicators,[1] which brought to the surface patterns, emergent criteria that an analyst can choose to study systematically. None of this led to “the truth” or “the reading,” but to *a* reading that awakens possibilities in other reader-analysts. Future reuses of the method should lead to a body of readings—optimally, readings of the same set of texts by different readers, or at least readings with replicated methods. A list of possible indicators that might be worth studying has thus come out of the reading in the study presented here, but the possibility of other readings bringing out other aspects is always there.

Other indicators were added by drawing from other studies and by surveying interested parties (faculty members in particular). Additional specific indicators were drawn from analyses of writing by Bautier and Bucheton (1997) on students’ postures, indicators of subject positions and stances; Rastier (1989) on isotopes of meaning that build a text’s coherence; François (1998) on thematic agency; Adam (1984, 1987) on connectors as classes of words or phrases connecting ideas; Haswell (1991) on syntactic construction; Ehlich (1989) on text deixis; and Grize (1996) on natural or everyday logic. In some cases, the feature was identified first in the naïve reading, followed by a theorization of its role on the basis of the existing scholarship.

Phase 2

The second analytic phase studied each indicator in its appearances in the text, both quantitatively and in its embedded textual context. During this analysis, I used these indicators to explore aspects of textual construction. The specific items below are categories for capturing reprises-modifications, of course with the understanding that this is not a comprehensive list of the indicators to pursue in general but a list relevant to the study described here. In addition, not all listed indicators are featured in the excerpts and examples from the analysis. These indicators are in some ways familiar to many kinds of analysis—of intertextuality, for example, or of genre or coherence—but this study seeks to consider these multiple factors in their interrelationships, in layers of function.

> *Macrostructure*: the length of the text; its formatting, indents, paragraphing, spacing (visual structure); its overall patterns of organization of information.
>
> *Coherence*: the frequency and use of explicit connectors (of many types, including additive, enumerative, chronological, etc.); the frequency and use of deixis, shifters that change their referents in relation to the speaker or reader and that often anchor the student writer's perspective with respect to the reader and imagined or real shared worlds (terms such as *today* or phrases such as "in our times"), which includes text deixis (shifters whose referents are in the text itself, such as "as I said earlier" and "see above") and "person deixis," pronouns such as *I* and *we* whose reference shifts; the underlying coherence macro-patterns, such as chronological order or comparison.
>
> *Subjectivity*: the explicit-implicit position of the textual Subject and its relation to other indicators, as identified through multiple indicators, including person deixis (personal pronouns, nouns as subjects, etc.), syntactic choices, modalizations (verb choices, modifiers, etc.), and voicing (see "intertextuality" and "coherence" as well); the tone and affect as created by the features listed above.
>
> *Argumentation*: the location of the essay's statement of guiding purpose, in particular at the beginning or end of the text; the thematic iterations and isotopes of meaning that carry through a text; the forms of logic, "natural" or "everyday" (as defined by Grize, 1996) or constructed with traditional rhetorical form.
>
> *Intertextuality*: the linguistic, discursive, rhetorical, and affective elements taken up from the textual context: the assignment and the texts read for the assignment; the role of genre: the diverse genres that participate in the construction of each essay; the microgeneric changes over the course of a text and the resulting textual heterogeneity; the global theme and the ways it is developed; the filling out or development of the guiding focus; the kinds of examples: literary, sociohistoric, personal, and so on; the local, dialogic movements: for example, the local forms of reprise-modification, explicit or not (quoting or paraphrasing, cited or not; allusions; tropes; commonplaces as distilled versions of cultural experiences, in the way explored by scholars including Ali Bouacha, 1993; Chauvin, 1993; Schnuerewegen & Tasmowski, 1993).

Each of these categories is necessary for the systematic collection of data, but each must be seen in relation to and overlapping with the others to weave the work of the text.

Phase 3

The third phase brought back together and synthesized the diverse patterns identified, to offer readers a recontextualized reading of the texts being studied, a "generous" reading in that it looks for the effective functioning of a text before looking for its lacks or flaws, and an overall reading that enables questioning or confirmation of features noticed in the first readings and the quantitative analysis. First person, for example, was identified as playing a variety of discursive roles: It can link to taking a stance, to creating (or avoiding) a "discursive authority"; it can act as a coherence agent or not, all depending on its placement, form, relationship to the course texts, institutional demands, and so on: nothing so simple as the tracing of its appearance or disappearance in successive texts to make claims about a student's progressive integration into a particular community. This phase of reading and analyzing allowed a rereading of the identified phenomena from the first reading and an accounting of other phenomena that are less easily treated with analyses of isolated features.

Different textual movements surfaced in relation to disciplinary and cultural spheres of activity, showing locatable ways in which the student is, at least partly, written by the academic discourse of a disciplinary, cultural, or institutional discourse. The style of a particular student's essay can reprise-modify the style of a text read for the assignment rather than adopting the style proposed by the assignment language itself, or can in fact reprise-modify the language or style of the assignment.

Phase 4

The detailed descriptions provided of each text by the qualitative interpretive analysis became a new object of study in the cross-cultural work at hand. Looking at the groups of detailed interpretations, I drew out the features that appeared across most or all of the texts and used these to understand the shared work the students' texts are doing, even as they are produced in clearly different institutional-cultural contexts. This contrasted with the quantitative broad-brush results of isolated elements.

Text Variety and the Tricky Question of Genre

The diversity of collected texts in cross-cultural work is, of course, considerable. I used a purely practical system of classification for just a first pass at organizing the corpus in question, but in the actual analysis, *genre* has been used as much as an indicator of types of text as it has been for exploring the heterogeneous construction of each text. In fact, “kind” might be more accurate for classification purposes (*sorte* in French), the “kinship” emphasized by Russell (2002); in the analysis itself, genre can be posited as social activity, specifically as a dynamic relationship between the writer and the reader-receiver (Donahue, in press). Each text studied can be classified in multiple ways depending on what is highlighted; each text studied functions differently depending on its social context and its reception. For the analysis, genre becomes one of the aspects to study in its relationship to the reader-analyst—not the rhetorical reader often evoked as targeted by a writer (the “audience”) but the generic-specific reader carrying out the analysis. Genre here is a social activity because it is that relationship; each text can be a different genre in a different context of reception, and each text can be constituted by multiple generic moments (for further illustration of genre-reception concepts, see also Culler, 1997; Eco, 1979; François, 1998; Jauss, 1978; Reuter, 2000; Russell, 1997; Starobinski, 1970). In the full study from which the current discussion is taken, the ways student texts worked through these relationships were studied, but this aspect is not included in the analysis excerpts presented here.

IV. A Sampling of Results

The complexity that is useful to cross-cultural analysis can be seen in the layers of results reported here. I offer a few results from the quantitative work, followed by examples of some passages read through the qualitative interpretive lens. The descriptions of individual texts or pairs of texts offered here are a sampling of the kinds of descriptions that can be reread to understand cross-cultural comparison.

Trends Identified Quantitatively

The French students’ essays in the study showed statistically significant frequency of

- the use of one of three organizational patterns (identified in the study, not proposed a priori): thesis-antithesis-synthesis, for/against, or yes/but;
- paragraph structures using the French *alinéa* (moving to a new line with each shift in ideas within a paragraph); and
- the presence of a hinge turning-point statement isolated in the middle of the essay, moving from “thesis” to “antithesis” or from “for” to “against.”

These essays used the multivalent pronoun *one* frequently, a usage clearly linked to the linguistic affordances of the language itself, and the pronoun *we* frequently as lead explicit subject positioner.

The U.S. students' essays in the study showed statistically significant frequency of

- a thesis clearly established from the beginning (84% of the time),
- paragraph structure created by indenting each new paragraph, and
- an organizational structure following five-paragraph-essay or comparison-contrast conventions.

These essays used the passive voice more frequently and the pronoun *I* as lead explicit subject positioner.

But overall, these cultural patterns were not stable features, in and of themselves, within or across the two contexts. In particular, these features could be destabilized simply by reorienting the statistical analysis to account for the questions of different assignments, different subject matter, or different source texts assigned to student writers.

Trends in the Interpretive Analytic Readings

What does "captured fluidity" or operationalized polyphony look like? And what does it teach us about cross-cultural work? The findings from the initial cross-cultural study inform us about both difference (specific to one or another context) and commonality (shared across contexts) in this particular set of texts. Given the complexity of the indicators, the excerpts of analysis that I introduce next offer a truly brief glimpse of only some of these movements in the student texts analyzed. Each feature is dependent on other features to do its work; the examples presented here are, as with the categories of indicators, illustrative. Each of these is a mode of reprise-modification that can be discussed as a textual movement, a mode of discursive progression. The examples focus on the following indicators of reprise-modification among all of the features explored in the larger study: diverse modes of creation of subject positions (introductions, pronoun use, pronoun slipping, text reprises), modes of reprise-modification of assignments or source texts (ways of paraphrastic appropriation, for example, or definitions), and coherence by underlying organization or structure, by deixis, or by thematic or stylistic echoing.

The excerpts of analysis provided here come from several different texts in the study. Each excerpt is chosen to show a few of the features analyzed in a given text. I then provide an overview of features identified overall through the close readings, before pointing to interpretations of the shared negotiating features identified across cultures.

Excerpt 1

> As perfect as this place appeared, there had to be something wrong with it. This skepticism prompted my hunt for hidden secrets about Disney World. To research the environment of Disney World I choose [*sic*] to use the Internet and go on-line for information.

The student in this example responded to a reading by M. Kadi, "The Internet is Four Inches Tall," and an assignment asking the students to explore a specific issue from the reading by carrying out a critical Internet exploration.

Essay conventions linked to this kind of 1st-year composition text can be found in its introduction: beginning an essay with a personal narrative that leads to generalizable or descriptive observations that then lead to a thesis. The text's writer, however, simultaneously appropriates the assignment by proposing the choice and the development of a common theme as though these two came from her as opposed to being required by the assignment. The story of memories of a trip to Disney World is followed by a micro-genre of apparently spontaneous autoreflection. The two sentences "This skepticism prompted my hunt" and "To research the environment of Disney World I choose [*sic*] to use the Internet" present what appear to be free-choice statements responding to her own personal desire to know more, and the Internet research is presented as well as an act of choice.

Excerpt 2

> Authenticity is what makes something genuine, unique and very original. People rely on authentic items like Levi's jeans or cars. It is more difficult to label and [*sic*] experience as authentic because what is authentic to one person may not be authentic to another. This is where we must learn to make our own assumptions and hypotheses this is done with sovereignty. We can't read a label on the back of an experience to tell us if it is authentic or not. We are left with the burden of figuring it out on our own.

This excerpt is from an essay in response to Walker Percy's "The Loss of the Creature" and an assignment asking students to analyze their own stories through the conceptual lens provided by Percy, a lens of authenticity, sovereignty, and genuineness unimpeded by media. The textual subject of this essay uses the *I* of a narrated past interwoven with generic assertions in the present and reprises from the source text to structure a subject position. She thus puts various selves into play: the self she was at 8 years old, the reflective self of today, the student self required to read and understand Percy. These diverse selves play out in a detailed description of an experience in which "authenticity," the subject of the essay and the assignment, is a natural subject: The story she tells takes place at Plimoth Plantation, a historical recreation of pilgrim settlers. In this context, the definitions offered by the text as general truth for terms such as *authenticity* create a distanced mode of interpretation side by side with the narrative of authentic experience.

The student is a "pluri-belonging" subject, a member of multiple groups, allied with different communities, speaking as member of one or another, shifting stance and location. Another feature is the use of *we*—"we are left with the burden," "if we as consumers continue to consider ourselves laymen then we will continue to make no progress"—slipping between a first *we* including other young people (based on the paragraph in which the first sentence appears) and a second *we* broadening to include people who accept the role of consumer in society, imagined readers interacting with the text.

Excerpt 3

> Holt believes that education can be paired with free will, in that free will one has the freedom of choice to do, act, or say whatever he/she pleases. Holt feels that education should be the same way, meaning that a student has the right to choose what form of education he/she wants, when or with whom will they be taught or even if they choose not to be involved in the education system at all. Postman, being more of a conservative, sees education as a duty not a choice. He feels that education should be enforced upon students, and to achieve the greatest results discipline, order, and conformity must be present.

In this essay, local choices of paraphrase and citation from two texts read for the assignment, "Order in the Classroom" (Neil Postman) and "The Right to Control One's Learning," (John Holt) structure the overall argument. Those choices are dissimulated ways to craft a point of view: In "Holt believes that education can be paired with free will, in that free will one has the freedom of choice to do, act, say . . ." the first phrase is a reprise-paraphrase of Holt, and the second phrase is a reformulation by the student writer, who defines *free will*. This is followed, in the next statement, by an explicit interpretation of Holt—"Holt feels . . . *meaning that*"—and an implicit interpretation of the second author—“Postman, *being more of a conservative*. . . .” This mediating reconstruction of points of view displaces the two authors by the student writer’s interpretation. She continues this work by playing citations from the two authors against each other in a later section:

> Holt feels that “Young people should have the right to control and direct their own learning . . .” (pg. 252). Postman, on the other hand, feels that school is “a special environment that requires the enforcement of certain traditional rules of controlled group interaction.” (pg. 216).

“On the other hand” indicates explicitly the opposition, but the actual themes are for the reader to identify in the quoted statements of the two authors, and the student writer’s interpretive role is more nuanced. That interpretive role is certainly not eliminated; for example, the verbs used to introduce each author relativize the nature of their proposals (*speaks of*, *believes*, *feels*, *agrees*, *finds*). This setting of the two authors throughout the student’s text makes her conclusion particularly striking: “In conclusion, one can see the major differences in Holt and Postman’s beliefs. . . .” The canonic introductory phrase followed by the only use in the text of *one* proposes that readers should agree: After what the text has shown, anyone should be able to see what the student sees. The “one” is both student and everyone, academic-generic and personal. It is followed by a second sentence in the conclusion that moves readers from this stance to a triply stated, explicitly personal perspective: “In my personal opinion, I believe. . . .” The contrast between the push toward a generic neutrality and the shift back to personal stance reprises the academic convention of distinguishing scientific truth-statements from personal opinions.

Excerpt 4

> I feel that both Holt and Postman argued some very good points. It is my thought, that perhaps we could find a median between the two, intergrade [*sic*] them. In doing this we just might find the solution they are so desperately seeking.

This conclusion, also from the Holt and Postman series of student essays, is rooted in the commonplace of compromise, of finding middle ground: “perhaps we could find a median between the two, intergrade [*sic*] them.” The statement right before this one, an assertion-appropriation, proclaims through its pronominal structure a setting-off from the ideas of the author read for the assignment: "It is my thought, that. . . ." The summary and paraphrasing of source text ideas is marked as distinct from the thoughts of the student-"I" as if to suggest that there is no interpretation in the reprises of the source text, only in the student's explicit statements.

Excerpt 5

> Marguerite Yourcenar démontre que chaque être humain est de nature seul [*sic*]. Cependant, grace à des exemples personnels précis, elle parvient à nous prouver que la solitude peut être rompue par la vie quotidienne. Mais la « culture » et la « classe » sembleraient être deux facteurs importants à cette communication dans notre société, contrairement à l'opinion de Yourcenar. En 1996, la culture favorise-t-elle cette échange entre êtres humains?

This example is from a series of students' texts on Marguerite Yourcenar. In an introductory paragraph, the student here establishes a double movement of contrast, more closely based on Yourcenar's text. The first opposition appears in the statement "Marguerite Yourcenar shows that each human being is by nature alone. However . . . she manages to prove to us that solitude can be broken by daily life." This first opposition is then developed according to a second qualifying statement: "Contrary to Yourcenar's opinion, 'culture' and 'class' would seem to be two important factors in this kind of communication in our society. . . ." "Seem to be" mediates the student's opposition to the famous author's stance, and the central point of view becomes "Yourcenar has her perspective, others (left indeterminate) think differently; Yourcenar has her legitimate reasons but they may not be sufficient for those others." This transculturative movement negotiates between respect for Yourcenar and opposition to her stance.

Excerpt 6

In this excerpt, the students responded to a text by Emile Zola, *La Vérité en Marche*. They were asked to consider the needs of their own generation after reading Zola's call to the youth of his times. The student in this excerpt sketches a subject position across a few paragraphs based in several movements among

- a metadiscursive *we* that is actually an *I*: "nous allons discerner" ("we will discern [in the text]"), "nous allons analyser" ("we will analyze"), and "nous pouvons citer" ("we can cite");

- a *we* that is "you-reader and me": "les solutions s'offrent à nous" ("solutions are offered to us [in the world]") and "nous avons reproduit" ("we have reproduced"); and
- the modality of truth-certainty found in statements such as "il existe" ("there exist"), "il est vrai que" ("it is true that"), and "il est certain" ("it is certain"), adding to the polemic atmosphere of the text.

This construction is further complicated by the use of the French pronoun *on* ("one") which alternatively slips among and stands in for *I* ("on peut citer" ["one can cite"], but even here, the implication is that I am not the only one to think this way), for *we*, or for *people* ("on peut s'apercevoir" ["one {we} can see"], "il faut bien admettre que l'on attend pas" ["it must be admitted that one does not {we do not} expect"]) and the "one" of the other, those who make stupid mistakes or are alien to "us" ("C'est ainsi que l'ont [*sic*] arrive à des déclarations racistes sur l'inégalité des races" ["This is how one {some people} end up making racist declarations about the inequality of races"]). The introduction is equally carried along by a narrative chronology ("I will tell you a story about why Zola is relevant today") picked up in the second paragraph with two deictic phrases: "au début du siècle" ("at the beginning of the century") and "notre société actuelle" ("in society today"). Heterogeneity in the textual construction at this pronominal and micro-referential level is doubled by broader thematic movements; for example, the isotopes carried through the text include altruism/egoism, political ideologies, individual attitudes, educational values, and recognition of the importance of helping those in trouble in society. These are built from commonplaces, as identified in the student texts read: global change begins with local action; education informs and sensitizes in ways that allow better understanding of others, and so on.

The text that students read was an exhortation, a powerful speech calling the people of Zola's time to action. Students echoed the tone, word choice, and style of Zola's piece in their own texts. This student's essay, for example, reprised-modified the language, tone, and style of the source text:

- repetition of phrases ("notre société connaît un grand malaise dû à un *oubli. L'oubli* d'une grande valeur" or "nous détournons le regard *par honte*. Eh bien, *ayons honte*!");
- rhythm of repeated modalities, as in *osons* . . . *soyons* . . . *cessons*;
- question-response format ("Combien de conflits résultent de l'incompréhension de l'autre? Tous!").[2]

Excerpt 7

> Experts are supposedly supposed to be educated people. People such as teachers and doctors are the experts in society. And because of education, they have more sovereignty over the uneducated or the layman. . . . Then there are the highly sovereign who take matters into their own hands and self educate by reading up at the library.

In this fairly typical text about Percy's "The Loss of the Creature," the progression is as follows: We imagine experts to be educated; teachers and doctors are by nature experts (an assertion the typical reader would accept); because of education (with the implied fact that as professionals they must be educated), they are in a sovereign position over those who are not educated; however, the truly sovereign are a different class, those who take matters into their own hands. In short, the paragraph argues that educated people are sovereign knowers (a tip of the hat to the teacher, as well), but the self-educated are even more so (note also the "experts are *supposedly supposed* to be"). Anyone who has read Percy's essay will recognize this as an accurate rendering of his point about sovereignty. What is interesting about it for a student essay is its implied critique of the very institution—and teacher—for which the student is producing an essay. Seeing this as reprise-modification leads me to suggest that the critique might be possible because Percy is in fact the shadow speaker here, and not the student "as student." The student, that is, although still a student, "voices" Percy.

Excerpt 8

Two French texts respond to a reading from Margeurite Yourcenar about issues of class in human relationships. They both show an awareness of the role of school in establishing questions of class and cultural status, and of the link between education, bourgeois values that are more implicitly acceptable in school settings, and school's role in inculcating these values: For one, the lower class "tente . . . d'intérioriser les normes et les valeurs de ce milieu [bourgeois] notament [*sic*] grâce à l'école qui copie aujourd'hui ce milieu pour éduquer les enfants" ("tries . . . to internalize the norms and values of the middle class in particular through school, that copies today the middle class milieu in order to educate children"). For another, "une classe sociale élevée pousse les individus y appartenant à avoir une culture plus sérieuse et complète contrairement aux défavorisés" ("a higher social class pushes individuals that belong to it to have a more serious and complete level of culture, as compared to the disadvantaged"). Although students might be able to talk about these issues on their own, it is difficult for a student to critique the values provided by schooling; Yourcenar's text and voice offer a way to voice commentary that is both distanced and personal to the students.

Redrawing the Lines

The point of each of the excerpts is to offer glimpses of the multiple elements at work in the construction of students' texts, elements that are all forms of reprise-modification. Another way to illustrate the features of textual construction is by type of indicator rather than single textual excerpt: subject positions, themes, argument construction, commonplaces, and coherence. For example, the way students develop subject positions through pronoun use reprised-modified from source texts and linguistic availability could be traced through several texts. The students asked "what is the great need of your generation" after reading Emile Zola's *La Vérité en Marche* were more likely to respond with a "we" that crafted a perspective shared by their peers:

- "[we need to] stop hiding behind our pride . . .";
- "Our generation, our society . . .";
- "We must fight to preserve the values of our ancestors . . .";
- "We, youth and adolescents who will begin in this 21st century, will have to confront . . .";
- "We . . . must show the way. . . ."

In the quantitative analysis, one regular difference was indeed the higher frequency of *we* in French texts, but the interpretive analysis regularly established that it is a difference that evolves out of different subjects and assignments. For example, because Zola used the *we* construction frequently, it appeared to be echoed in students' constructions. The study suggests this might also be related to a linguistic difference: French offers *nous* ("we") or *on*, a polyvalent pronoun that can stand in for almost anything. I have heard French speakers say "nous, on va" ("We, one will go"), a feature studied extensively in French scholarship (see, e.g., Léon & Perron, 1985). Does the existence of that pronoun make a slide to "we" easier? Perhaps. In the method used, we can keep adding analytic layers to this questioning.

V. Reflections About Cross-Cultural Commonalities

It would be possible to draw, from the analyses effected, scenarios such as this: Students assigned to recount personal experiences that affected them constructed essays that featured *I* in a dominant position, a narrative-chronological structure, and a thesis near the conclusion; students assigned an essay that asked for the evolution of marriage laws in the United States used a similar chronological structure but included citations, avoided *I*, and used argumentative transitions; the thesis most often appeared in the first paragraph.

Leaving aside the "obviousness" of these features, however, such cataloguing is a very partial understanding of students' texts—and an even more partial understanding of the writing-context relationship (as in "these are the features of scientific writing/French student writing/technical school writing," etc.). The cataloguing approach often establishes frequencies without establishing approved or normed patterns: Many students do it—so it is a feature of their writing—but is it a desirable feature? It establishes frequencies as well without context, without association to other words around the word studied (was the *I* established as appearing frequently an "I saw," "I believe," "I will now argue that"?).

More generally, it is not the excerpts or analyses provided here in themselves that matter as much as what they open up in terms of cross-cultural analysis. These brief examples are part of a larger pattern in the study that establishes, not "French" and "U.S." texts, but texts with different ways of working in different institutional or course-based contexts or because of different common pools from which they drew and from individual stylistic choices (if style can be considered as the lived relationship between the common pool of available resources and the specific use, another way to describe "movement"). Recalling that reprise-modification is the dynamic re-taking-up-*modifying* inherent in all language in use at every level and across types (lexical, morphological, syntactic, discursive, etc.), the excerpts first show some of the types of reprise-modification at work; as Bakhtinian scholars suggest, students work with available words, generic forms, rhetorical strategies, but they do not just reproduce them. They are modifying as they use, in dialogue with all the utterance is and carries, its history and existence as social crossroads.

Students' texts show strong influence from the course work, the readings, the assignments; this is some of the more traceable material they reformulate and reorganize. But the readings are no longer in their own place, they are interpreted, and the student's point of view is constructed partly by the choices of content and modality in the reprise. Is the source text's perspective retained? Represented through citation? Chronologically narrated? Repositioned? How the student encounters the source text is one segment of the reprises-modifications that construct the progressive development, the "moving forward" of the text. The particular utterance is a realization of different discursive ways to do work, neither completely regulated by norms nor completely original, with no clear frontier between the two. As Bakhtin (1986) suggests, “the problem of what, in language, comes from current usage and from the individual is the essential problem of the utterance” (p. 269).

Certainly, the notion of reprise-modification is akin to Bakhtinian notions of double-voicing and recalls Dore’s (1989) applications of this notion to babies’ language development as they acquire language (in the broad discursive sense) through a continual partial reproduction and partial transformation of the utterances they exchange with others (cited in Prior, 2001). But reprise-modification emphasizes simultaneously the huge diversity and broad manifestations of locatable moments of polyphony-intertextuality, the value of locating moments to reweave them into a whole interpretation, and the necessarily transformatory nature of every single utterance. It thus emphasizes different aspects than those often taken up by scholars applying Bakhtin.

Although double-voicing, as Schuster (1985) points out, is “one of the clearest instances of the dialogic,” it is also often represented as the coexistence of two voices, two senses—a previous one and the one brought by the current utterer. “All speakers must grasp words and learn to possess them because these same words already belong to another. . . . All individuals struggle to replace alien meanings with their own,” suggests Schuster (p. 596) in interpreting Bakhtin, while I would argue that the “dia-” of the dialogics so often cited in U.S. scholarship is indeed the “poly-” of the more frequently used polyphony in France. The notion of reprise-modification is a flexible *extension* of Bakhtin.

Of course, here as well the possibilities shift with the example studied. As much as language users do not find words’ meanings in the dictionary, they do not either replace *an* existing meaning with another (and that other is never wholly their own); the existing meanings are never fully alien (if they were, they would be Pratt’s “dead letters” of the contact zone or Gardin’s (1990) positing of an absence of communication when there is total dissimilarity of discourse); to a greater or lesser degree, the already inhabited word has senses from other discursive uses, known and unknown, produced by the horizon and uses of the recipient as well, but also from other life experiences, affective overtones, aesthetic experiences—all forms of meaning, of course. The term *reprise-modification* is thus designed to open analysis of the discursive or textual functioning to these layered aspects.

According to this entire dialogic perspective, then, as I have suggested elsewhere, written text production cannot be operationalized as the acquisition of the set of static conventions shaping meaning in texts but “as a dynamic negotiation that involves the writer in the process of moving with and against given resources, adopting, bending, and diverting available textual patterns and resources to attain his/her communicative ends" (Donahue, 2004, p. 143). This process is a factor in the evolution of convention itself; rather than showing a "smooth progression towards possession" of academic discourse, student texts show diverse forms of negotiation (Donahue, 2002; Ivanic, 1998, p. 52). In an act of reprise-modification, perhaps a particular student only partly "possesses" the language in question; for another, perhaps "possession" is a multifaceted act.

In this framing, the shared ways of working of the two sets of texts studied here, from two different cultural settings, were stronger than the differences. Certainly no general academic discourse associated with each country turned up, as an object or a set of features, although interesting isolated contrasts showed up in the quantitative analysis, and some patterns of difference were identified in the qualitative work as well.

Instead, I find shared features, including the shared movements of surface or structural differences used to the same rhetorical ends, such as the passive voice and *one*; tight relationships to texts read; relationships to cultural tropes, to evenhanded balancing acts; discursive negotiating and appropriation; layered organization through two or three levels of superimposed structure; no wildly controversial ideas; safe, reasonable perspectives; close work with the already-said, the said now, the to-be-said. The excerpts provided show some of these shared movements.

Shared Movements

Features such as the echoing phenomenon mentioned earlier were repeated in many of the texts I studied from both countries. Students' texts also shared voicing of cultural commonplaces, those culturally reproduced distillations of experience, absorbed by the readymade forms of discourse available, "written by" that discourse. And yet, students often negotiated or resisted. Their texts could be placed on a continuum of degree: writing ↔ written by. Using that classification would give an overall grouping of student texts in a corpus that might look quite different: not French ↔ U.S. but degree of commonplacing in managing a text. This redrawing of comparative axes works with most of the features identified in the study.

One of the most powerful results of the initial study, traced throughout and so not easy to summarize here, was in fact that across all of the students' texts studied, stances were always "safe" commonplaces: Education improves us, compromise is good, can't we all just get along, and so on. Student work on similar themes across contexts supplanted cultural difference.

French university essays about "managing one's life" and U.S. essays about sovereignty over one's life shared a dominant set of commonplaces about independence and control over our own destinies, although the French texts did more often tend toward creating a point of view that tried to not be too obviously personal, less easily attributed to an "I." The commonplaces that were traced throughout the texts studied are particularly powerful lenses for understanding a different kind of subject position in the dialogic nature of the texts, their construction as reprises-modifications of broader cultural themes.

In addition, the way students across the two cultures develop arguments, or what François calls "motivated points of view," showed the role of the new rhetoric's natural or "everyday" logic rather than traditionally constructed rhetorical logic in the work of all of the texts. The arguments in the students' texts from both contexts relied on reprise-modification of shared assumptions and doxic values. Texts often called on shared values and the transformation trope of "before/after" to craft the argument. The U.S. student text referred to in Excerpt 1 worked with a critique of Disney World, narrating simultaneously her experience at Disney World and her experience discovering on the Internet the "behind the scenes truth" about the park. The commonplace of "before I was innocent" (when visiting the park as a child) and "now I know better" (after research), along with the commonplace "any good thing is probably too good to be true," guided the text as a negotiation between the student's direct experiences and their broader cultural interpretation.

Paraphrastic appropriation, in which the author's words were presented in the students' mouths (a definition, for example, presented in the source text but reproduced in the student's text as his or her own: "By this, *I* mean," says a student, offering Percy's definition), was a frequent shared feature in the student texts studied, both French and U.S. The texts shared the use of conceptual anaphoric deictics to clarify content and links among ideas in essays: "this conception; this desire; these events; this need." A different deictic marker, the "text deictic," was prevalent across student work. This metadeictic creates coherence by referring internally to other elements of the text ("as we've just seen," "to answer the second question," "now we will," etc.), the *now* in question in the last phrase, for example, acting as internal text reference to the ideas the student is covering, not temporal reference. Deixis wove references to the present in which the student work was created, situating the work in time ("across the years," "in our generation," "in today's society," "in our day and age," etc.), metanarrating textual progression. These movements can be quite complex and polyvalent: The student who said "Now that I look back on it" created a narrative thread (the reflective perspective of the I-narrator), a global structure of past-present that signposts both the coming content and the interpretation (we were talking about my experience, now we will interpret it and see why I am in a better position of understanding today), and a text deictic with the reader as both writer and reader are assumed to share the "now."

The coherence of each text was inextricably linked to the point of view, the chosen modalities of representation, and the person deixis. Students were written by assignments differently, in particular assignments that didn't offer a recognizable position, those that did not present a point of view to which the student could attach himself or herself, those that appeared to require a subjectivity subsumed into the collective. The coherence found in students' texts can be subdivided into three broad types: macro-, meso-, and micro-coherence. Sometimes the simplest factors at the macro-level determined multiple other features: Length, for example, was highly relevant to types of connectors used and dominant patterns of organization. Here again, any one feature of coherence is a site of connection, a crossroads of reference, reprise, and intertext (in the broadest social sense of that term).

These brief examples of shared features point to the possibility of a discourse of negotiation specific to the beginning university student, a shared cross-cultural "discourse of academic learning," typified by its negotiating reprises-modifications. This discourse would be characterized by its inherent plurality, its diversity, not an immature approximation of other discourses but a discourse fully owned by the students who develop it. The texts studied, as examples of relatively successful texts by normed standards, take discursive positions and construct voices that can be heard. The texts studied did not appear to be entering a discourse community at whose door they were knocking; they presented, in fact, textual expertise in a discourse we, researchers or university teachers, could not ourselves produce. Students are neither entirely beginners nor full experts in academic discourses, across cultures, and this in spite of the fact that they can be often more beginner or more expert than teachers and than each other in multiple ways.

It is difficult to capture in a few instances the overall complex picture of this discourse. "Features" are moving targets embedded in relationships. The deictic, a small powerful unit, is linked to creating coherence but situates subject positions and indexes genre; commonplaces are subjectivities in a different way than first-person pronouns and affect judgments of style; the argumentative stance functions not only by the features mentioned but by its relationship to myriad other factors, including the way an introduction sets up a stance and limits what follows, the cited support, the subject. Only by exposing all interlayered factors can the work of a single text (as a reuse of, appropriation of, negotiating with the available) be foregrounded, enabling a different level of understanding of texts across cultural settings.

I hope this layered look will allow resistance to the prevailing discourse of difference while reintroducing a focus on the text as "witness to its own construction" in cross-cultural context. This cross-cultural research also suggests possibilities for studying writing within U.S. contexts. Bazerman and Prior (2004) offer a carefully detailed collection of articles about how analysts might work with texts—not with their meaning, Bazerman and Prior emphasize, but with their functioning: *what* texts *do* and *how* texts *mean*. This is a form of discourse analysis. Barton and Stygall (2002, p. 2) point out that composition theorists and discourse analysts rarely cross paths, despite a potentially shared socioepistemic framework. They recall the composition field's accusations of "scientism" toward linguistic analyses. Certainly that has often been true, or at least linguistic analysis has been less easily contextualized in terms of U.S. practices.

The need for a body of research that evolves over time and allows this kind of study to be built on each other, reusing particular methods or studying anew a shared corpus, has been brought recently to the fore by Haswell (2005) when he makes the case for the need for publication of replicable, aggregable data. In addition, France and the United States are not the most distant of countries in some ways; multiple studies using the method described here would sketch a more comprehensive picture of broader cross-cultural work and encourage more testing of hypotheses across broader sets of data.

VI. Conclusions

When university students' texts are the focus of cross-cultural work, writing researchers need to offer systematic insights into writing in different cultural situations without distilling complex cultural writing phenomena into generalized representations based on particular features identified in a specific context, a move that tends to foster discourses of difference. Contrastive rhetoric, for example, a field alternatively developed in contexts outside the United States or in various English-as-a-second-language contexts within the United States, assumes that "languages differ not only in phonological, morphological, and grammatical features, but in the kinds of genres available to their speakers for the organizing of discourse and in the rhetorical (and syntactic) features that co-occur with those genres" (Kaplan, 2001, p. viii). Multiple studies carried out from the 1970s to the 1990s targeted cultural differences in specific linguistic and textual features, different expectations among readers, and different discursive objectives of student writers in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, German, Finnish, and Czech, for example (Connor, 1996), or the contours and features of academic writing in other cultural contexts: studies of textual specificities of aboriginal Australian, Chicano, Chichewa, French, Hebrew, Hindi, Marathi, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Thai, Urdu, and Vietnamese, for example (Kaplan, 2001).[3]

Complex ethnographic or case-study-based work has brought other insights to student writing in different cultures, as in Foster's (2006) *Writing With Authority: Students' Roles as Writers in Cross-National Perspective*. But this kind of ethnographic work, although rich and highly valuable, has tended not to focus on textual analysis in detailed applications in the way contrastive rhetoric has done. Scholars seeking to ease the transition of students from other cultural contexts into mainstream U.S. higher education, for example J. Swales or H. Fox, or to foreground the impacts of internationalization, student and faculty mobility, world Englishes, and various colonialist or ideological patterns (see Canagarajah, 2002; Donahue, 2004; Horner & Trimbur, 2002; Lu, 1994; Zawacki, Hajabbasi, Habib, Antram, & Das, 2007), have rounded out the cross-cultural attention paid to students' writing.

Each of these strands has brought an essential piece to the study of writing across cultures; no one strand has a corner on this work. Scholars already know that student writing is always embedded in cultural, institutional, disciplinary contexts, and does its work in particular ways in those local contexts. Certainly the cultural differences exist. Examples of student work from different cultures, different assignments and requirements, lead to expectations that the writing should be quite different. But across the texts from two cultures that I studied, students negotiated using many of the same "deep" strategies of transculturation (Pratt, 1990), appropriation, resistance—negotiation, in short. The methodology described here is relevant for studying university writing across contexts in a way that captures complex variables in fluid dynamics, while remaining rigorous and enabling cross-cultural work that this first study suggests is a complementary addition to existing work. The future of U.S. writing studies is bound up in both international cross-pollination and attention to research; this is a research agenda I invite others interested in cross-cultural work to take up in order to build a deep body of results that can further develop understanding of the nature of students' university writing across cultural contexts.

Appendix

U.S. institutions at which the student essays were produced:

- Northeastern University, Boston (students in the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Criminal Justice, the College of Engineering, and the College of Nursing)
- University of Maine Farmington

French institutions at which the student essays were produced:

- Université de Picardie, Beauvais (students in applied languages)
- Université de Paris XII (students in education)
- Lycée Aristide Briand, Ecole Préparatoire program (postsecondary): introductory writing course
- Institution Charles Péguy (postsecondary): introductory writing course

Notes

1. I do not mean to naively suggest that any indicators chosen are ahistorical or not heavily influenced by a researcher's frame, past, discipline, readings, and so on. This is an aspect that needs to be explored in any study but is particularly interesting to consider in a Bakhtinian perspective.

2. See Donahue (2004) for a detailed treatment of this particular aspect of reprise-modification.

3. Both Kaplan (2001) and Connor (2001), in the collection *Contrastive Rhetoric Revisited and Redefined*, suggest that the field and its pedagogical applications have been broadening to include issues faced by various groups within a particular "culture," including African American, queer, and feminist communities (Connor, 2001, pp. 76-77). In addition, Connor has recently argued for replacing *contrastive rhetoric* with *intercultural rhetoric*.

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