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What type of English is acceptable in academic writing?

Just as every situation requires different reaction and behaviors, each writing style depends on the context. Though everyone is allowed freedom of speech in America, academic writing has its own format, and a specific form of English (i.e. non-standard and standard) should used depending on the purpose and situation. In scientific papers, it is not appropriate to use non-standard English. However, it may be effective in a cultural paper or a memoir. Bias toward or removal of one may result in inefficient writing, where the point may not be delivered in a persuading manner, thus limiting a writer's range of influence. Using the unaccepted form in a situation may result in lowering status and credibility. Also, restricting non-standard form of English from writing would neglect the diversity present at the University of Washington, alienating some cultures and backgrounds. Through analysis of the form of English used in writings of Gloria Anzaldúa, Patricia Bizzell, and Amy Tan and support from the University of Washington's guidelines for English, reasons of why the two forms of English should be used and how it is beneficial in academic writing will be presented.

The University of Washington is a diverse school, 34.3% of the enrollment coming from outside the state of Washington and the United States and many students from various ethnicities and backgrounds (University). In order to apply, students must write a response to an essay prompt that asks how one can contribute to a community of students richly diverse in cultural backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints. Since it is a school that emphasizes variety, it should not restrict individual expression in classes; both standard and non-standard English should be accepted in the academic writings. The mix of the two forms not only embraces the UW's diversity but also enables students to tailor their writings to the specific purpose and audience, thus making it more effective.

Some argue that "wild tongues [or native language] can't be tamed", that a mix is necessary in order to keep identity (Anzaldúa 76). Yet, Amy Tan exhibits in her essay that a tamed, controlled tongue, flexible to switch between different forms of English, provides advantages. Her mother is restricted to her "limited English" (Tan 317). In many situations, such as calling a stockbroker about a missing check or requesting results at the doctor's office, the mother's form of English leaves an impression of lack of intelligence. Tan, on the other hand, adjusts her English in different situations in order to receive the response she wants. This may appear as an accommodation to others, which makes the tongue illegitimate (Anzaldúa 81), however, it simply demonstrates control of, rather than accommodation to, the situation. Just as Tan transitioned between Englishes, writers must change their approaches to their situation. At times, certain formats must be followed. For instance, abstracts for a scientific paper requires one to address aspects of the study. It is a concentrated version of the research manuscript; it must be not only detailed and precise but also condensed and general in order to capture the study. Therefore, use of non-standard forms of English, which is openly subjective, more informal, and includes cultural references (Bizzell 18), does not result in a good abstract since it requires objectivity, formal speech, and scientific references.

Logical papers also require forms of organization. Even though Bizzell advocates hybrid academic discourses, she utilizes the traditional academic discourse to clearly deliver her ideas. Rather than recounting personal experiences, she uses *Bootstraps* by Victor Villanueva to provide an example of hybrid academic discourse. Rather than "find[ing] the common ground" between the two discourses, she examines the two in an argumentative manner, addressing both sides in their own sections (Bizzell). This standard English writing is effective in informing readers of the different academic discourses and how each has their benefits. Non-traditional range of cultural references or "off-hand refutation" is more susceptible to personal interpretation than objective, careful writing, therefore non-standard English (i.e. hybrid academic discourse) would not have been effective in conveying information.

However, this does not imply that non-standard English should not be used in general. Without use of cultural references and Spanish, Anzaldúa's essay, 'How to Tame a Wild Tongue,' would not have been as convincing. Incorporation of Spanish in the text portrays her "stubborn and strong" tongue and her resistance to accommodation (Anzaldúa 75, 81). It enforces the fact that she is proud of her language and embraces her identity, opposing others who claim Chicano-Spanish to be "a bastard language" (80). Later in the text, when she describes the *mexicanos-Chicanos* as "*humildes* yet proud, *quietos* yet wild" (86), she not only depicts the people as ones of both languages but also emphasizes how she prefers to speak Spanglish, how she is not ashamed to speak in both, and how she has still retained her Chicano identity and is able to transition from one to the other with ease by mixing the language. By embodying her argument, she gains credibility and thus strengthens her argument. In cultural writings, such as "How to Tame a Wild Tongue", personal experience and cultural references assists the main argument. In these situations, objectivity would remove the readers and writer, obscuring why the topic is pertinent. Tan's use of anecdotes also allows readers to realize that the issues of racism against people who cannot speak "good English" exist and is relevant. By noting that Tan speaking for her mother is a routine (Tan 317), Tan implies and emphasizes that the issue continually occurs, putting importance on the issue. Without personal experiences, readers who are not of the multi-lingual culture would not be able to understand or relate to the racism she addresses; it enables those who do not have similar backgrounds to sympathize.

One must, at times, use different approaches in order to best deliver his or her message. If one needs sympathy, non-standard form of English should be used. If one needs logic, standard form of English should be used. Students will be faced with situations which sympathy or logic is desired. Thus, eventually, both forms of English will need to be used. Since students will be faced with various situations which require the forms of English, they must be prepared to use and skilled in using both. The University of Washington, with its English Language Proficiency Requirement (ELPR) and Academic English Program (AEP), provides students with resources to develop and tame their tongues. Various English classes and courses which require texts also serve as situations where students can hone their proficiency in the two forms of English. The ELPR sets minimum standardized test scores students must pass. Otherwise, they must have a qualifying WA associates degree. If requirements are not met or the student is not native, the AEP is mandatory (Office). The Program "helps improve academic language proficiency and literacy" with its two course track, consisting of academic reading, writing, listening, and speaking (International). Those lacking proficiency have the opportunity to learn how to write with standard form of English. Through the programs and experience in various classes offered on campus, students with different backgrounds are able to learn language-using abilities that can help them "succeed in college and in whatever work in the world they choose to do" (Bizzell 8) that require a standard form of English. Success, in this case, encompasses avoiding the discrimination faced by people like Amy Tan's mother.

Standard form of English, as the word's definition implies, is the form commonly used in traditional academic discourses. Requiring each student to be proficient in standard form of English could be viewed as cultural assimilation, combining people with different backgrounds and making them conform to one style of writing. Since the classes, such as those through the AEP and science courses, emphasize this traditional academic discourse, people like Anzaldúa can disapprove of the system, arguing that it creates shame in one's culture, a low estimation of self (Anzaldúa 80). In other words, stressing the mastery of the standard form of English minimizes the importance of non-standard form of English, implying that the standard form is inferior and leading people who are not comfortable with the standard form develop low self-esteem. However, those must consider the diversity offered at the University of Washington. Humanities and English courses can encourage non-traditional writing, calling for memoirs, papers reflecting opinions, short stories, etc.. Also, because every person has their unique background that contributes to the diverse background, each has his or her own style. This diverse academic population contributes to the growth of hybrid academic discourses, or non-standard English (Bizzell 13). Combination of the two forms should be kept in the University of Washington in order to not only prevent people from shaming their backgrounds but also retain everyone's diverse backgrounds, thus maintaining the UW's stance on the promotion of diversity.

One may dispute for either extremes: eliminate either standard or non-standard form of English. For standard form of English, arguments could follow the thought that logic is necessary to defend a point and reason that students must conform to the academic. On the other hand, the case for non-standard form of English could follow the thought that identity must be upheld. Like Anzaldúa, one could hold that an attempt to conform everyone to the standard form of English is the same as "getting rid of our accents" (Anzaldúa 75), an attempt to label non-standard forms of English as deficient or illegitimate writing. However, continuing with either of the extremes places students at a disadvantage. Without non-standard form of English, students are deprived of their identity, whereas without standard form of English, students lose a sense of formality, breaking established rules, forms, and conventions, required for some genres of text. Being experts on one but ignorant to the other would lead to a situation where students are restricted to one method of expression, limiting the range of audience they could target and influence.

Neither form of English is superior to the other. Both are equally important, and therefore must be equally taught and encouraged. Knowledge on one confines students to an area and may result rejection in situations where their form is not accepted, just as Amy Tan's mother's "broken" English was not well received. Through courses and experience, students will learn when to use each form, and thus reach a level where they can easily transition from one to the other, where understanding of both will lead to a freedom of expression. In different contexts, such as journals, research papers, commentaries, etc., students will be able to appropriately respond. Familiarity with both of the forms allow not only the writers to express themselves in an appealing manner but also communities to maintain a diverse background. Thus, an emphasis on developing both forms should be enforced for the overall benefit.

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