

Breaking the Boundaries

A One-World Approach to Planning Education

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Language and Power: Teaching Writing to Third World Graduate Students

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"Language is not only an instrument of communication but also a structure of thinking."

"We need to decolonize the mind...A new thinking expressed in the colonizer's language goes nowhere."

"The dependent society is by definition a silent society. Its voice is not an authentic voice but merely an echo of the voice of the metropolis — in every way, the metropolis speaks, the dependent society listens."

"There are no neutral educators. What we educators need to know is the type of political philosophy we subscribe to and for whose interests we work."

Paulo Freire in *The Politics Of Education* (1985)

This chapter explores the questions that arise in teaching writing to Third World graduate students in US planning schools. If, as Paulo Freire suggests, our language is more than correct English grammar, if using it engages the very structure of our thinking and is integral to our ability to solve problems, then it is an important source of power. Why are we not more actively teaching the use of language — written and spoken — in the discipline of planning? If we were to do so, what would we be teaching? Is there a model for professional writing in the US? If so, is it one that can express "new thinking" for people from the Third World, or does it reinforce dependency and silence? What difficulties do students from Third World cultures have with our model, and why is it that US students experience so many of the same difficulties?

To answer these questions, I am dividing this chapter into six parts. The first will show how I became aware of the dilemma writing poses in the US planning schools. Next I will identify what I think we mean by clear, or good, writing in the United States. At the same time I will be suggesting how a contradiction in our model for writing may lie at the heart of the dilemma. Third, I will examine the five main difficulties I have found that Third World students have with what I take to be "good writing." All five seem rooted in particular Third World cultures these students come from, yet, as I will show in the fourth section, most of them find expression in US students' writing as well. Fifth, I will very briefly suggest what I see as some political causes for these difficulties, and finally — because this book is ultimately about teaching — I will suggest ways to open up the power of writing to both our First and Third World students.

APPROACHING THE PROBLEM AT MIT

In 1980 when I came to the MIT planning department as a writing specialist — some years before the current emphasis on developing countries — I was amazed to find a writing crisis in graduate professional education. At the same time that national studies were identifying writing as the primary work activity of practicing planners and the most important in determining effectiveness, our faculty was more and more disturbed by student writing that was rambling, verbose, and unclear. A literature on similar problems in other disciplines began to emerge as well (McCloskey, 1985; Becker, 1986). In our field, students were not using written language as an analytic tool and thus were not developing a powerful professional "voice." For their part, these students felt tremendous pressure, distress, and alienation over their writing, which, they told me, rarely expressed their true thinking. I had seen remarkably similar conditions in undergraduate liberal arts education — especially among students of the public, multi-ethnic urban university and the private white, suburban business college where I'd taught in the 70s — but I hadn't expected to find the reluctance, confusion, and lack of power to express what Freire calls the "culture of silence" here in one of the world's elite graduate schools.

I've had eight years now to look at the planning profession, read its texts, and talk to its practitioners — many of them my students — and try to figure out why such a situation exists and what we can do about it. During this same period, our numbers of Masters and Doctoral students from abroad have increased — their more obvious difficulties giving me a valuable perspective on the problem. Throughout this period I've read the initial papers written by all students entering our graduate programs and have taught and consulted in two other US planning departments (and given seminars for faculty from 15 others). I've had a good opportunity to look for patterns in student work and to see how Third World students stand in relation to the ongoing problems faced by native speakers in our field.

What I've found grows out of general observations but also out of a closer connection with students' ways of thinking, feeling, and working. In these same eight years I've taught over 20 versions of an intimate six-week course in which people write four drafts of some paper of their own choice. About 25 per cent of those I've taught have been international students, representing some 38 African, Asian, and Latin American countries. I've been close to these students' thinking as they wrote; I've watched them work in feedback groups with First World students, listened to their stories in personal conferences, and read their informal journals. While I cannot claim to share their perspectives on language and culture, I think I do understand them. To some extent we have worked collaboratively to develop the ideas I express in this paper, and I have used my students' words and stories here wherever possible.

While the primary focus of this chapter is the writing of Third World students, I insist that we cannot really understand their difficulties without also looking at those of native speakers. Times have changed since Sartre wrote his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*. There he spoke of people who left the Third World for education in the colonial master countries and returned with hollow voices. It was those of the First World who "had the Word," as he put it: the others had only "the use of it," not its real power (Fanon, 1968). "The Word," in this case was not only a mode of communicating but the entire Western way of thinking — the power to shape ideas and events. In our time, the problem (or perhaps our sensitivity to it) has expanded: as I have learned in my teaching, more and more First Worlders are now finding they do not have the clarity and power of "the Word" and that they share this dilemma with Third Worlders. All are part of a writing crisis that permeates our entire profession, and much of the professional First World.

It actually helps to think of this crisis in terms of "First and Third World" because the colonial history these designations evoke suggests an important dimension of the problem. Like Freire and Marx, I like to look at language as both resulting from and expressing historical, material conditions. So, of course, the crisis of language reflects a deeper political crisis which is, I believe, the same "global crisis" that has instigated this book. While we call this a "common" crisis in the sense that it implicates both rich and poor nations, we can hardly say that responsibility for causing it is equally shared. Rich and poor, north and south, developed and so-called developing countries are linked, but it is the terms "First and Third World" that point to the power relations of this linkage (which is why I prefer and use them in this chapter). But Third and First World can share the cure, if not the cause, of the writing crisis. And this has already begun to happen in my classes where Third Worlders have often led the way to clarity. In my experience, cultural and political differences do not preclude a unified solution to the growing "culture of silence." The one I will propose is to restore the critical voice to users of language from both worlds.

Until recently, I didn't think of my approach as a research methodology; I was merely struggling to solve a problem I faced as a teacher. The invitation to

write for this book led me to more careful formulations, but these, in turn, call for other thinkers to join in discussion and research. We need to know more about the analytical processes as well as the forms of communication that are effective for planners — and how they do and don't vary from culture to culture. We also need to share the responsibility for teaching these essential skills.

CRITICAL VERSUS NEUTRAL WRITING: A MIXED MODEL IN THE US

It may be that we are not consistent in what we expect of writing. We usually say that good writing is analytical or "critical" writing — with "critical" suggesting not evaluation or censure (as it now does in everyday usage) but *careful or reasoned opinion*. The Greek roots of the term lie in the verb *krinein*, meaning to "discern," "separate," or "discriminate" — the root activity of scientific inquiry. We mean that we value not so much correctness of language as the way a writer fits thoughts together, discerns or identifies new concepts, and turns information into evidence to support a position. Examples range from path-breaking books, to brief in-house memos showing how to interpret data. They also express different degrees of advocacy — from that of a guest newspaper editorial or "op ed" column to that of a scientific evaluation of groundwater quality. What these diverse forms of writing have in common is that the writer has worked through information, to develop a critical position on it — what we sometimes call an "argument" — and has made this position intelligible, credible, and interesting to us as readers.

But, in fact, much of what planning students read and write does not follow this critical model. For example, Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) have been accused of being long-winded, unclear, and "encyclopedic" rather than "analytic." These and many memos, reports, and even books in the literature of professional decision-making follow another model of expression in the US that I will call the "neutral model."

"Neutral writing" attempts to present information in and of itself, without "discriminating." A critical position, many think, interferes with "scientific objectivity," and it is this "objectivity" that most EIS writers will tell you they are trying to achieve with their sprawling compendia of information. Students at all levels in the university will make the same claim for writing that is crippled by a lack of conceptualization. Of course, "neutral writing" is easy and quick — the path of least resistance for the inexperienced writer — but it is also deliberately taught. Almost all US graduate students remember learning to write research papers in high school by accurately copying passages from the encyclopedia, and I have seen reports by consulting firms that do the equivalent. Writing on the job may involve "cutting and pasting other cities' housing policies" (a practice considered not plagiarism but "research" by the former supervisor of one of my students) or "just writing up information so that my boss could decide what it meant."

The sad thing about the "neutral model" — in school or at work — is that it suppresses thinking. Language becomes a mechanism for passing on the ideas of others; a routine replaces the critical act of conceptualization. Neutral writing reinforces the dependency and "silence" that Freire speaks of, allowing others — the "metropolis" or the supervisors — to define the voice, the language, and the very structure of thinking. Gradually, particular acts of silence create a habit of silence — as those who have returned from bureaucratic jobs to graduate school have often told me. Because neutral writing cannot develop critical insight or power, it will always reaffirm the status quo as defined by those who are more powerful. It does not lead to the social change that motivates most planners nor will it contribute to the new understanding of global crisis and the new progressive and democratic local solutions that authors of the present volume seek.

If this formulation sounds extreme, I have made it so because of my perspective as a teacher. Of course I realize that, at times, even the most progressive planners must operate within political constraints to produce "neutral" reports. But surely, power in these situations lies in knowing how to do *both* critical and neutral writing as well as when to employ one or the other. Somewhere on the continuum between the two extremes there may be writing that is "objectively critical," but it is the person with training in the critical, not the neutral, model who will be able to do this kind of writing.

While many of us practice and teach critical writing, many others, and a good deal of what we see in print, reinforce the neutral model. As long as we do not acknowledge the essential differences between the two and affirm our commitment to the critical, we perpetuate a serious contradiction. On the one hand, we expect a professional's writing to represent critical thinking and to be conceptual; on the other, we expect it to be neutral and "objective." The resulting mixed message is bound to affect students, whether from the United States or abroad.

THIRD WORLD STUDENTS' WRITING: FIVE TRENDS

International students naturally give high priority to the challenge of English grammar and vocabulary, yet it is not grammatical errors that are likely to trouble US readers so much as a vague, undefined sense that the organization of the ideas is "foreign." Insofar as there is an accepted model of professional or academic writing in the United States — and insofar as it is the critical, not the neutral model — I see five main ways that Third World student writing tends to diverge. These include different approaches to conceptualizing, to using information, and to structuring presentations, as well as a tendency to hide key ideas and to overuse the bureaucratic style. In each case the divergence means writing that is less critical and less powerful in developing ideas, not to mention the "new thinking" Freire calls for. The "neutral" writing tendencies of many Third World students in our universities, I argue, inhibit learning and problem-solving and encourage acceptance of status quo thinking.

The First Trend: Conceptual Dissonance

All of us who have taught students from other cultures have experienced the shock of giving an assignment we thought clear and then receiving papers — often in flawless English sentences — that seemed to be about something completely different. We may not realize that our question does not mean the same thing to our students as it means to us but requires some kind of cultural translation. If we do not provide this, people who don't understand our conceptual framework will substitute one they do understand. This trend often seems so baffling that it upstages the four others; it may also *include* them.

One year in Berkeley I was asked to assist when the ten international students in a class of 45 all failed their first exam. Knowing them to be good thinkers, their teaching assistants found the answers incomprehensible. Here is a typical question worth a half-page essay and 20 points.

From the J.A. Peterson article, "The Impact of Sanitary Reform upon American Urban Planning, 1840-1890," can we say that there was a planning process involved with planning for public health? What was it?

This question typifies the US essay exam, which is after all one of the ways universities train students in "critical thinking." Adept US students will create a nearly formulaic answer whether or not they are aware of the formula they are following. Such an answer focuses on the *concept* ("planning process") posed by the question and asserts a *position* on it, then critically separates the assertion into components that can be substantiated with the specific information at hand, and quickly does so. Despite being formulaic, the process of putting such an answer together constitutes a cognitively demanding set of maneuvers for any graduate student, especially under time pressure and with new information. Hence its value as training.

In this case successful answers all said "Yes, there was a planning process" and then pulled that assertion apart to support it with concrete details from Peterson's article, usually illustrating some number of stages. (Peterson had mentioned three, the lectures eight, so the number varied.) Because of the slightly ironic tone of "can we say that there was...", the question also invited some challenge or critique of the "planning process" concept as it applied to sanitary reform. Accordingly, the full-credit answers noted either that the process was not as complete as the eight stage model studied in class, or that it was based on an incorrect formulation of the problem, or that it set a pattern that would make comprehensive, multi-issue planning difficult in the future. These insights usually came at the end of an answer, with the earlier part following the structure of assertion and proof.

What had the Asian students done instead? First, none of the ten had focused on the question's key concept — "planning process," although some mentioned the

term or implied an alternative focus, giving a history of sanitation planning in the US or describing particular reforms. Second, with no focus, there was no assertion and thus no recognizable structure to the essay — no "formula" of parts and supporting details. The sentences seemed to float loosely, sometimes around an implicit theme, but more often entirely free of critical purpose so far as US readers could see. A sobering example of neutral writing.

Why had the students not focused on the concept of "planning process"? Several said they had considered but rejected this focus as too obvious (the course title was "The Planning Process.") They were relieved, though embarrassed, to discover that the question asked something more trivial (in their view) than what they had set out to do. I saw several explanations. For one, the question was indirectly worded, its concept-term, "planning process," buried in the unemphatic middle. Especially if prior schooling had tested their ability to "neutrally" recall information, the Asian students may not have recognized this question's call to critical thinking. Certainly they had not learned our essay exam "formulas." Faced with pressure in an extremely unfamiliar situation, they had simply not grasped what this question was asking and had tried instead to answer one that fit their own idea of an examination.

Do essay exams teach or trivialize critical thinking? Dissidents have claimed for years, that questions like this one artificially circumscribe thought. The concept and material are given and not particularly challenging, and professorial irony (the indirect question) hints at a "right answer" while ostensibly asking for original thought. The typical essay exam tests the mechanics of critical thinking without giving the essential freedom to explore or develop "new thinking" or one's own "voice." Nevertheless many of us who are free and critical thinkers once trained our minds on these sorts of questions, then learned to apply the skill to more genuine situations like responding to challenges in a meeting. In my view these exercises are essential (I myself once gained tremendously from them), but they must be combined with more open challenges to creative thought. Most importantly, we must make sure that students know why we ask such questions and how we expect them to apply this skill to real world problem solving.

The Second Trend: "Global Swingers" and Encyclopedists

Most of the exam answers had been written at a fairly abstract and general level, which could have been the result of haste or imperfect memory but is so common I am attributing it to another general trend — the view that abstract thinking is the most highly valued in graduate studies and that detail or empirical evidence to support the thinking is somehow mundane and unworthy, that the abstract is more important than the concrete. The opposite view also seems to exist, though it is less common: that only facts stripped of interpretation are valid, that the concrete is more important than the abstract.

A student from Indonesia once helped me name this trend. "In my country," she told me, "there are two kinds of thinkers — 'the global swingers' and the ones who are only interested in facts." The first group, she explained, loves to make sweeping statements about great truths; the second does nothing but compile information. Her "global swingers" are familiar from my earliest experiences with planning students from other cultures. When we give an open-ended writing assignment such as "What is Planning?" to new international students at MIT, 90 per cent respond with a collection of grand, abstract, and often conflicting ideas about income distribution, implementation strategies, and infrastructure — yesterday's "ideas in good currency." Even when asked to provide concrete illustrations for the points they will make, most students avoid including any specific information in these papers. On the other hand, a few unusual papers will concentrate on lengthy, minute descriptions of particular projects or agencies but without showing their significance in a larger argument.

Ironically, both the encyclopedists and the swingers are producing neutral writing. Like the text of a telephone book, the concrete information of the encyclopedists lacks the critical structuring force of abstraction. In critical writing, no piece of information in itself has significance until it becomes illustration or evidence for an idea. The details of mud and thatch in indigenous adaptive housing for several climatic zones of a particular country take their meaning from an author's — or reader's — idea that these designs should or could be useful to emulate in formal programs or that some are more effective than others.

On the other hand the abstract ideas of the swingers lack critical force by themselves. Critical thinking about concepts like income distribution, racism, or even growth poles requires the root activity of discrimination — pulling the abstraction apart and looking at how and whether actual phenomena bear it out. We want students to apply this form of critical thinking even — or *especially* — to the ideas we tend to favor in a particular era. For instance, we know that we must critically and specifically question what we actually mean by "participatory institutions," if we ever want to create any. Unfortunately, our tendency to enshrine such ideas — which colleagues tell me is more pronounced in developing country settings — gives the message that they are always "right" (and others "wrong") with or without examination. If we can convey in our teaching that *all* ideas require the support of reasoning and evidence, we will come closer to teaching critical thinking, and provide an alternative to any "swingers" who think that planning can be accomplished by simply uttering the magic word "growth pole."

The Third Trend: Indigenous Discourse Patterns — The Arabic Zigzag, The Hispanic Meander, and the Asian Spiral

The apparently circular structure of the Asian students' exams and the wandering generalities of "global swingers" are likely to be expressions of a third interesting divergence from the US model of "critical writing." This difference reminds us that

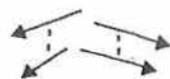
language affects how we think and raises fascinating questions about cultural diversity. Linguists and language teachers acknowledge that different languages prefer different patterns or structures of communication. This means that the ideal arrangement of ideas and information in a unit of discourse will vary from culture to culture.

The English of academic and professional writing generally favors a straightforward, hierarchical ordering of thought — with a main or primary idea identified in advance so that the significance of the information that follows can be understood fully as one reads. Cognitive theory holds that the mind needs the key — usually an idea of a higher order of abstraction — before it can interpret detail (Flower, 1986; Samuels, 1988). A paragraph or a chapter will thus begin with its main linking or integrating idea and then identify the branches or parts of that idea, giving the details necessary for illustration or proof. Links between related ideas and between an idea and an example are very important and are articulated in transitions. Although this hierarchical pattern is not the only one we use in the US and is not an easy one to create in the inevitable ferment of thinking through a problem, it is especially effective in helping readers understand complex material, grasp difficult connections, or accept controversial arguments. While poets, fiction-writers, and those whose writing appeals to subtle psychological processes may not find it useful, this pattern is the mainstay of academic and professional — of "critical" — writing.

Theorists stress, by the way, that this typical pattern is not to be confused with the path of thinking the writer actually follows. Writers, who are generally discovering their meaning as they go, usually follow a sequence that works much less directly, if not in reverse order — from scattered evidence toward an integrating main idea. Experienced writers labor at revision to transform the initial, scattered versions of the ideas into ordered intelligible units with explicit transitions. State-of-the-art textbooks warn against substituting a structure based on the writer's cognitive process (a "writer-based" sequence that may be idiosyncratic) for one that is "reader based" (Elbow, 1981; Flower, 1986; Anderson, 1987; Samuels, 1988). A good deal of time, craft, and self-consciousness goes into refining the hierarchical structure of ideas we see in critical writing in English, and this, I would argue, strengthens the process of critical thinking.

We learn from those who teach English as a second language, however, that the hierarchical pattern is not universal. In fact it is alien to many speakers of other languages and may be difficult to learn. Teachers of English as a second language have had to acknowledge the rich repertoire of preferred patterns which may interfere. While it is culture — including economic, status, and development factors — that ultimately determines these patterns, we can generalize them by language and even language group because languages change fairly slowly. For example, Semitic languages, including Arabic, prefer a pattern of parallel points without explicit connections, which are considered unnecessary or even rude. Romance, especially Hispanic, languages rely on a pattern that involves a number of parallel points which are connected, often in elaborate ways that are highly

valued. Languages of the Indo-Chinese group are said to favor a circular or spiral pattern with the main point alluded to, usually in the middle of the paragraph, but never stated explicitly — which would be rude.



Arabic Zigzag



Hispanic Meander



Asian Spiral

I felt uneasy about the simplicity of this scheme when I first encountered it. Why should Third World practices seem so "different"? And what about the many other languages of the world? African languages for instance? And weren't status and cultural differences within language groups also important? Wasn't this the very sort of stereotyping of students' minds that we should avoid? For a teacher to *expect* the patterns might be racist, or at least ethnocentric. But testing them carefully in my conversations with students I found, somewhat to my surprise, that they are accurate tools of analysis for me as well as valuable points of reference for students.

The Arabic Zigzag. I remember the uneasiness I felt when I first discussed this pattern with an architect from Egypt who had just written her first paper in our master's program. Having done bilingual professional work with British planners in her country for many years, she had an excellent English vocabulary and knowledge of her subject, yet her paper was very difficult to understand and had received the lowest possible ranking in our writing evaluation. As assigned, she was analyzing Lawrence Livingston's classic critique of US planning and applying it to planning practice as she had observed it. By the end of the paper it became clear that her analysis focused on the difficulty of working within the framework of existing political conflicts. But the paper skipped back and forth between several ideas about Livingston and such issues as the debate about underground transit in Cairo and the design of new towns in the desert. The paper contained some facts and percentages but they were not arranged near concepts that lent them significance.

In ten places on the four-page paper, I had penciled comments about transitions. For instance, next to one paragraph, I had written: "What is the point here and how is it related to what you have just said?" I could just as well have asked about transitions between all but the second two sentences because the paragraph seemed to be a series of unrelated thoughts (as my slashes emphasize).

My most recent experience was in a new town development in the desert./ The study is divided into three main phases. The first phase

concerns the choice of location for this town after which a master plan is prepared and implementation follows./ The whole idea of new towns in Egypt is a very recent experience upon which many social and economic changes are expected./ Ninety-six per cent of the Egyptian population lives on four per cent of the area of Egypt.

The interesting thing was that I could see there *were* very powerful connections between the ideas in this apparently random collection and other themes and ideas in the paper, but none of them were expressed.

After talking to the writer about the potential of the paper, I showed her the zigzag diagram. I said maybe it explained what was making the paper so difficult. As soon as I began to draw the little arrows pushing out from an invisible axis and then to dot in the implied connections, she began to laugh with relief. "Yes, of course. That's what we *try* to do. We wouldn't think of telling you why the percentages are there. If you're smart, you'll figure it out on the next page. Besides, at home we're all from the same culture and we think the same way. It would be insulting to explain the obvious."

Together we identified the different arguments she was making in the paper and figured out which bits of information fit with each one and articulated the connections to create a "critical" whole. I've done this countless times since with students from Arab countries, sometimes finding that the various bits didn't really fit, that there were no connections, or that various (Arabic) readers inferred different connections. I've also found that students benefit tremendously from systematic review of techniques for transition in English sentences (eg. Anderson 1987). Although they will not use the US pattern in their own culture (where people need to discover connections for themselves and resist being told how to interpret information) many Middle Eastern students acknowledge that the discipline of articulating connections enforces a more rigorous thinking. I think this is not because the zigzag structure is inherently less logical but because, unlike our pattern, it does not in itself force one to spell out the logic.

The Hispanic Meander. Hispanic language speakers arrange thoughts in a pattern that is leisurely and digressive rather than direct. Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking Latin Americans have helped me understand the cultural values behind this pattern, as have my own struggles to structure my thoughts in Spanish sentences.

The straightforward order of ideas that is the mainstay of US critical writing sounds blunt and crude to Latin Americans. To announce an idea, then move directly and relentlessly to its proof is to leave aside the richness, nuance, digression, and erudition that they consider proof of sensibility and even intelligence. However, to North Americans, Latin prose often sounds flowery and irrelevant. Within a Hispanic paragraph there may be as many as five or six digressions — discussing authors or theories or cities that may or may not be significant parts of the critical whole. I have noticed that this tendency is most pronounced in writing for academic, as opposed to professional or practical,

audiences; for academics, especially, an elegant display of learning seems to be the purpose. Its counterpart in political writing, as in speech-making, is the digressive display of passion.

Some years back a Salvadoran doctoral student in my class aimed to write an "op ed" article criticizing the current US policy toward his country. It was a project he felt very deeply about because of the long silence he had needed to maintain while working as a professional at home, but the constraints of our "op ed" format (brevity, conciseness, and tight structuring) were very trying to him. What he wanted to write — his first draft — was five times too long. The ideas were loosely connected and the article was carried forward by a series of burning and dramatic indictments. No one in the class fully understood this version, though many admired its passion. With much effort and restructuring, he came out with a very powerful piece showing three reasons why the policy was contradictory and unsound. Channeled into this structure the passion took a form that may very well have changed some people's understanding of the situation in El Salvador — both in our class and in the *Boston Globe*, where it was eventually published.

In changing a structure built from digressive nuances to one that is pointed and critical, students need to realize that they are not giving up subtlety or attention to detail but are translating this richness into a different form. I have had some fascinating conversations with Hispanic students about the many ways to subordinate the details of proof into a few well-structured English sentences when meaning is extremely complex.

The Asian Spiral. Had the Asian students' essays been focused on the topic of "planning process" rather than confused by a variety of misunderstandings, we might have been able to distinguish the spiral pattern of thought in them. This highly crafted pattern, too, relies heavily on nuance, on suggested meanings and connections that a reader must infer. Typically, the spiral consists of the introduction of an idea, development of one or several aspects of it, reintroduction of the idea with some heightened sense of its significance, more discussion of aspects, and a summing up of the idea. Although alluded to several times, the idea is rarely stated directly.

Termed, "a repetitive, yet developing, spiral" by a Canadian rhetorician and two colleagues from the People's Republic of China, this pattern has a history in Chinese and perhaps other Asian traditions (Coe, 1987). Coe and his co-researchers tell us this pattern was part of a deliberate mode of writing in China that began to lose its hold in the late nineteenth century but is still one of the options that writers draw from. They analyze an essay of the late Mao Ze-dong, for example, finding that three of its 17 paragraphs follow this pattern while the others more closely resemble the English paragraphs I described earlier in this section.

This team also compared the structure of ideas in Chinese and English newspaper editorials and again found spiraling. To develop each idea, Chinese writers used more phrases than their English counterparts, yet stayed at more or

less the same level of generality. This structure meant more redundancy and less specific or empirical detail to support ideas. The English editorials, on the other hand, moved directly, without repetition, from abstract ideas to actual, specific examples. Coe and his colleagues speculate that specificity is less convincing in Chinese thought than in a culture like ours, where empiricism and inductive reasoning are so important. They look for the roots of spiraling and deliberate redundancy in four aspects of Chinese literary tradition:

- that didactic reiteration was part of the ancient practice of composition as moral education for the writer;
- that frequent reiteration of an idea shows its importance to the writer;
- that ancient views of status presumed writers were superior and therefore not responsible for logically proving their ideas; and
- that where writer and reader held the same status, overly direct expression could lead to loss of face, thus loss of persuasiveness.

Such an analysis helps us appreciate the complex system of social organization that lies behind this non-Western discourse pattern. If we were to investigate the spiral pattern in European literature — poetry, story-telling, treatises, and sermons of the feudal Middle Ages, where it is very common — we would find a similar set of influences. Coe's analysis should also help us realize that a tremendous amount of training and craft may lie behind a paragraph which may seem disorganized, fragmentary, and intensely frustrating to the Western eye. On the other hand a spiral may well mask the writer's disorganization, as it often does in writing from our own culture.

All culturally determined patterns of discourse are more or less habitual; their users are rarely conscious of them as structures. With a few exceptions, most of us learn them by imitation, trial and error, not explicit instruction. For Chinese students, at least, there are alternatives. Coe and his colleagues say the spiral is only one of a repertoire of patterns in the tradition. With awareness born of some "contrastive analysis" in the classroom, they can more or less easily shift their thoughts into a different structure. All of us need to become more conscious of the patterns we use and whether they differ from those our audiences expect. We also need to understand how our discourse habits are rooted in social or scientific attitudes — preindustrial or modern — and to realize that there are always alternatives that can strengthen critical writing.

The Fourth Trend: Hidden Ideas and Self-censorship

All three of the indigenous structures I have discussed differ from those we use in the US in relying more heavily on nuance, on meaning that is not stated explicitly, on logic and connections that a reader must infer. The pressure of language and custom alone, then, may account for much of the fourth trend — Third World students have a tendency to hide, censor, or neutralize their own ideas. A literature on self-censorship by the Toronto Arts Group, 1983 covers writers' conscious

conforming of expression in countries with explicit censorship policies, but the inhibitions I am speaking of here are far more subtle.

One senses that a writer has a critical assertion to make, but this assertion remains obscure, jumbled, or hidden. There are subtle indications: a patch of vivid language hidden in dry, neutral prose; long, tortured apologies or an exceedingly confused sequence of ideas; ellipses or issues left unexplained; perhaps a conversation revealing feelings not expressed in the text page.

When I notice these hints, I have learned to ask "Is there something you are trying *not* to say here? What do you want to hide from your readers?" It will often turn out that the answer is and ought to be the main point of the piece — which, once stated openly, will clarify organization and expression. But the question can be deeply upsetting. If I ask it in the comfortable, trusting atmosphere of my office, I will usually see a very thoughtful look come into the writer's face, followed by a fascinating story of what I take to be the special stresses of critical thinking for a professional in the Third World.

For instance, a doctoral student from southeast Asia, who has studied on two continents and worked for a major world finance agency, has written half a dozen trial introductions to a research paper. They are elegantly phrased, but no one can yet figure out what she's saying about the sites and services projects she has studied. In conversation, it turns out she thinks the whole concept of sites and services is unworkable for some interesting reasons, but she doesn't want to say so (or why) because she thinks her professors respect the concept, and she keeps imagining how much credibility she would lose if her former colleagues knew what she was thinking. In fact she has spent a lot of energy crafting each draft to *conceal* her real conclusions, and also just worrying about the complex politics of the situation she is writing in. For her, self-silencing has been time-consuming and emotionally draining.

Another student, a Central American, cannot organize his thesis about housing and land tenure in his home country. Every idea branches out into three or four more, which somehow lose their relationship to the starting point, so that the writing process has become a torment to him. The one idea that might make order out of the chaos torments him even more: he cannot argue that all land policies short of full redistribution are futile because the professional dialogue in his country does not take place in such terms. To speak out for such an analysis would involve a major commitment in a part of the world where death squads threaten intellectuals who challenge the status quo.

Even in less dramatic situations, there is tremendous personal risk in Freire's "new thinking." In writing critically, we are structuring problems in ways that run counter to the voice of the metropolis, and it is extremely difficult, cognitively, to do this. For most people it is hard to think in ways that do not fit the existing, accepted, or habitual dialogue. Alienation, in the root psychological sense, always threatens — one feels a separation from one's own thoughts, a lack of

connectedness. Sometimes one cannot even finish a sentence. This internal cognitive dissonance may well be even more debilitating than the sense of external threat.

This dilemma is nearly universal as our thesis class found while reviewing another project on land tenure, this time in a Near Eastern country. The writer — a good critical thinker and the only Third World student to win our department's annual writing prize — was struggling to clarify his position. We asked him what was making this process so hard. He told us that, with all the factions and struggle at home, he and other Arab students have adopted an automatic self-censorship which has become so habitual they are hardly aware of how much it inhibits their thinking. His words touched some common chord; people who had grown up in Chicago, India, Lebanon, Wellesley, and South Africa began nodding their heads in acknowledgement. We agreed that the way to proceed would be to write a private draft for oneself and close mentors only. Write to think through the problem. Later, if need be, one can write for a more public and official audience.

The Fifth Trend: Grandiose or Bureaucratic Style

The final problematic trend in Third World students' writing, is inflated or overwritten language — things said in the longest, most elaborate way possible, a style that elevates words over ideas, thus obscuring critical thinking. Like other aspects of "good writing" in the US, the norms of style are contradictory: we *say* we favor the concise, succinct, straightforward writing described in the classic *Elements of Style* (Strunk and White, 1979), yet much US writing is stylistically complex and obscure. Despite many recent attempts at reform — for example, the "Plain English" movement in the legal profession — the writing style of many US professionals continues to be extremely difficult to read (Becker, 1986; EPA, 1981). Given the confusing models, I see three explanations for grandiose style in the work of Third World students: first, patterns in the language of origin; second, the mystification of technical language; and finally, the basic linguistic style of what we might call an international bureaucracy.

A certain amount of grandiosity comes from translating the style of one's native language into English sentences. The Hispanic meander, for instance, has its echo in the ornate digressiveness of Spanish sentences.

Notice the differences between a Latin American student's sentences and my shorter version:

Excessive concentration of political and economic power in the central government, namely Centralization, is an attribute typically associated with most Third World countries. Colombia is no exception to the rule.

Political and economic centralization typifies Third World countries, for example, Colombia.

In the Hispanic pattern, there are redundancies (repetitions of the same idea in different words); nominalizations (nouns we could state as verbs); and passive verb forms (which result in longer sentences and less direct thought structures).

I am not saying the shorter version is more beautiful, or even more precise or functional (the original served the writer's purposes fairly well), but it is less distracting. We have gotten used to the shortcuts in our language. Many English users mourn the longer more elegant sentences that were stylish in another era, just as many Latins revile "Spanglish," the incorporation of Anglo shortcuts into their language. But the complexity of technical thinking in an industrialized society makes decoratively complex sentences impractical. There is enough complexity in the ideas. For elaborateness of style we pay a price in efficiency and clarity (Lanham, 1981).

Sometimes the very fact of being in graduate school drives students to attempt the grandiose style (Becker, 1986). They claim that here they should write "formally." They aspire to be experts with technical or "intellectual" language. I explain that we value clear thinking, not complex language. As Einstein says, "Things should be as simple as possible but not more so." Consider the jargon, redundancy, and passive verbs which obscure the first version of the following idea:

The "image of production" revolves around the notion of the "production unit". Conventionally, attention is focussed on the functioning of individual entities and defining their production process in isolation. The total production has been implicitly assumed to be the sum of the individual units put together. This notion and approach toward understanding home-based production seems to be too simplistic and could lead to incorrect assumptions.

The conventional notion of a "production unit" functioning in isolation under one roof is too simple to explain home-based manufacturing in Delhi.

Einstein's conciseness is difficult for any writer. It involves knowing your material so well you know which words are unnecessary: it involves developing a free, honest, and direct "voice" that is not afraid to let the hidden ideas be known. Writing without embellishment also requires considerable self-esteem. It is difficult for those who do not have much power over their own circumstances to write directly and assertively for an audience that does hold this power. The disempowered usually include women, racial or ethnic minorities, foreigners and graduate students — and often Third World students are all of these at once. Sartre wrote of the distortion of Third World voices in Europe where they adopted "high-sounding phrases, grand glutinous words that stuck to their teeth" (Fanon, 1968). Then and now the "grand glutinous words" have the opposite of the effect intended:

they reveal that writers are not enough in command of their thinking to clarify it; they show a lack of power.

But there is a broader reason so many find themselves using the grandiose style — it has become part of a world-wide culture. Bills, government documents, laws, business letters, journal articles, office memos, reports and proposals — we hardly ever see one that is free of the bureaucratic style, and there is, I think, a reason for this. The passive verbs, nominalizations, jargon, and redundancies that characterize this style make it difficult to hold the writer responsible. This is "sponsored writing," and the sponsoring organization does not want to be too responsible. Working for such organizations, grooming oneself to do so, or even reading their material, sets habitual patterns so deep they are very difficult to shake. The patterns are often dysfunctional — for the very organizations that seem to insist on them — as when a government agency finds that it cannot understand its own interoffice memos. Here I am referring to First World bureaucracies because these are the ones I know about, but my guess is that in bureaucratic culture, there is not much difference between First and Third World.

Taking all five trends of Third World writers together, we can see that cultural differences, including habitual structures of thinking as well as the sentence-level patterns that mirror them, inhibit students severely. Without critical writing there will be no manifest critical thinking. Powerless thinking seems to demand complexified language — to fill the void with the jargon and code expressions of those in power. Because of their education and presumed status in the world and because of language patterns in their cultures, Third World students must work on critical writing if they are to develop the powerful new thinking Freire calls for.

US STUDENTS AND CRITICAL WRITING

But what about US students? As I have been suggesting, they are not much more successful at critical writing. While Third World students' problems are more noticeable — because they are associated with cultural assumptions and grammatical errors that seem exotic, the underlying similarities are striking. US students' work typically suffers from the same five difficulties with critical writing.

The problem I have called conceptual disjunction is so common in US undergraduate education that many universities provide services to assist students in interpreting essay exam questions (and teachers in clearly articulating them). When I did such work myself, I found that mainstream American students frequently focused on the neutral or merely factual potential of questions — just as the Asian students did in my example — rather than perceiving the question as an invitation to focused critical thinking. In the two colleges I knew best, subject area professors often "gave in" and awarded Cs or Bs to such answers (or even A minuses if the facts were accurately detailed), thus eliminating incentives to learn. Those few who insisted on critical writing had to develop special teaching styles. The problem is closely related to that of the "global swingers" and encyclopedists, among whom

we can count a great many of our First World students. About 90 per cent of the planning students whose writing I've evaluated in the past eight years would qualify as either swingers or encyclopedists, mostly swingers.

Even the "indigenous patterns" have some currency among US students. After all, the zigzag, the meander, and the spiral each have counterparts in various First World poetic and expressive forms: Shakespeare was good at zigzags and Toni Morrison's Pulitzer prize-winning novel *Beloved* is driven by spirals. However in students' work these forms mask unfinished thinking, vaguely connected nuances, and the failure to reorganize repetitive preliminary thinking. They represent not craft but haste.

Why US students are plagued with self-censorship and the bureaucratic style is worth an entire essay in itself, but these two difficulties do inhibit their critical voice. Graduate planning students worry about a range of threats — from professional blacklisting to the more subtle "second rate mind" stereotyping that can brand those whose thinking is not part of the mainstream in US graduate schools. A student I urged to be more assertive in evaluating a neighborhood revitalization plan told me that he had tried to remain neutral ever since an eighth grade history teacher failed him for criticizing Manifest Destiny. When one is trying to impress others without stating one's own ideas — or when one's critical voice is not engaged — all the features of bureaucratic style invade one's work. Evasive, awkward sentences filled with passives, nominalizations, pompous phrases, ambiguity, and redundancy neutralize whatever thought remains. Third World students do not have a monopoly on the "grand glutinous words."

NEUTRAL WRITING: A WORLDWIDE PARALYSIS

This chapter uncovers the reasons why the writings of Third World students in US graduate schools almost always lack critical voice. Because of their status at home and in the US, their prior training and work experience — as well as the differing cultural assumptions of their native languages — they do not find it easy to take positions on subjects and support them effectively. The neutral writing that results hinders not only their graduate work but also their development of the "new thinking" necessary to solve problems in their home countries. At first this problem appears to be part of the legacy of colonialism, to be instilled by schooling in the Third World and by the expectations or experiences of work in national or international development agencies. Words like "neocolonial" appear to explain the lack of critical assertion.

However, if First World students — even those in the more elite US planning schools — experience the same kinds of silencing, this analysis bears rethinking. Why should the colonizers be nearly as deprived of voice as the colonized?

For an answer, we need to look more closely at writing and language in their relationship to modes of production in First and Third World countries. Within the

vast global system of economic, political, and social relations which this volume considers in crisis, writing — or, in the jargon, "communicating technical information" — plays a crucial role. Its primary functions are managerial — reports on projects completed, effectiveness of money spent, criteria for evaluation of new projects — as is its primary form, which is standardized and usually involves bureaucratic language, and its process of creation, which is hierarchical. At all but the top levels of management where real decisions are made, writing up such reports requires essentially neutral writing.

For most planners working in these institutions, "new thinking" or change-oriented positions are virtually impossible. On the other hand, critical thinking and clear communication is needed at some point in the managerial process if policy-making is to be effective (Smart, 1985). This discrepancy, I think, is one of the famous contradictions of capitalism. To make the system work we need a lot of people doing neutral writing, yet we also need a few people doing critical writing. If too many practice critical writing (especially outside the higher level policy positions in the system), we will have too much new thinking, and thus instability of the system. However, if too few practice critical writing within it, the system will not be able to respond to changes and will also destabilize. My explanation for the writing crisis across the professions in the US is that the balance of critical writers is waning and that neutral writing — in many of the situations where people try to use it — does not work.

A society's educational system, including on-the-job training, prepares its workforce, and ours has enshrined the contradiction between critical and neutral writing. Although in the schools we say we intend to teach critical writing, our courses, from the earliest levels, teach or tolerate neutral writing. Our professional practice does the same — with bureaucratic style and neutral structure permeating nearly every example of writing that planning students see. In extending the influence of our institutions to the Third World, we have replicated this contradiction, which has intensified in the post-colonial atmosphere. The writing crisis in graduate schools — for First as well as Third World students — reflects a much broader crisis in how our institutions treat and use critical thinking.

PEDAGOGICAL CONCLUSIONS: WHAT GRADUATE SCHOOL TEACHERS CAN DO

Since the writing problem has broader origins, we cannot hope to solve it fully in graduate school. Yet if we do nothing we must remember Freire's warning, that educators are not neutral. In tolerating neutral writing, we are in fact supporting undemocratic political interests. Fortunately there is a great deal graduate school teachers can do to help students become better at critical writing. The following ideas emerge from my own practice, initiatives of other writing teachers, and dialogue and collaboration with planning colleagues. We should use them to stimulate further collaborative investigation.

Acknowledge the Problem

Let awareness of the writing crisis be a part of what you teach. Spend some small part of your time discussing the texts you are reading *as writing* and especially *as critical writing*. Acknowledge the prevalence of neutral writing, poorly structured writing, and the bureaucratic style in our profession, and let students know you expect something better from them — and why. Show them examples of your own and other students' critical writing so they will be able to imagine doing it themselves. (This might be a good place to do some "contrastive analysis," exploring differences between Chinese, Arabic, and US paragraphs.) Acknowledge that the writing crisis is political: almost everyone who has worked in a bureaucratic organization has a story to tell about critical thought silenced with neutral writing. Discuss your students' stories with them, and share your own. Show that you value the difficult struggle that lies behind a true, thoughtful, critical voice.

Assign More Writing

Rethink your course to see if you can assign more writing so people have to *do* critical thinking on their own, not just read, talk, or hear about it. Remember, most students, especially Third World students, haven't had practice at doing *any kind* of writing, much less critical writing. They need to get comfortable thinking on paper, so informal writing assignments — like tracking impressions in a journal — that will be read but not graded — are good for developing fluency (Fulwiler, 1986, 1987). For more focused critical writing assignments, there are two approaches. You can experiment with a series of short, self-contained but conceptually focused and demanding exercises — one teacher calls these one or two page efforts "microthemes" (Griffin, 1982). Or you can design longer research-style projects that allow for the full complexity of the writing process. You might want to "stage" and "chunk" such projects, having students complete components at specified times throughout the semester (Fulwiler, 1986). Whichever approach you take, the point is to provide feedback, time for reflection and revision — all the more important for international students. Courses that assign only a term paper due at the final class do not help develop critical writing.

Design More Effective Writing Assignments

The exam question I discussed earlier suggests how poorly designed assignments can lure students into neutral writing. There is a real craft to designing good assignments. Recent guidelines tell us to specify the task, the criteria of evaluation, and the audience students should aim for — if possible one outside the often-ambiguous classroom (Griffin, 1982). I would add three points. First, be clear with yourself about what kind of analytical thinking you want from students in a given assignment. An unclearly conceived task often elicits neutral description or "global swinging."

Second, evaluate each assignment to see whether you are really asking for critical writing. You don't want to perpetuate the problem by setting a task that could be interpreted as neutral. Make it clear that you want students to analyze, take a position, and support it. Many instructors try to help by spelling out what the "outline" of the paper should be. I think this tactic has the opposite effect from that intended. Students obediently strive to fill in the blanks rather than risking new, independent thinking. Finally, especially for international students, it is well to "pretest" an assignment, asking a sample of students what they think it means. We need feedback on how well we are communicating as teachers.

Respond More Effectively to Students' Writing

If you're reluctant to assign more writing because you feel it's your responsibility to copy edit, reconsider. Other ways to respond may be more productive for students as well as less demanding on your time (Griffin, 1982). While students are eager for your attention to their work, most experience close editing as hostile and intimidating. Feeling you are trying to impose your voice on them, or feeling inadequate to the task you have set, they may not even read the comments you have put so much work into (Becker, 1986). At the other extreme, they may accept corrections passively rather than reassessing alternatives and choosing the best one for the situation. Copy editing is empowering only in truly collaborative settings — where comments really are "suggestions" not "corrections" and where the writer still feels in control, can argue it out with an editor-mentor, and is motivated to apply the learning to future expression. Thus, editing is appropriate only for students you work closely with or only in one or two paragraphs out of a paper to indicate what to strive for. The kind of feedback that helps students most — and is most productive of better writing — is feedback on ideas, organization, and whether explanations are adequate. It requires some hard thinking about a writer's intentions to give this kind of feedback, but it will not be as time-consuming as close editing.

It is also possible — and indeed very beneficial — to share the task of commenting. I ask my teaching assistants (currently both are from developing countries) to make three kinds of comments in the margins of student papers:

- This is interesting (and why);
- This is not clear, or raises a question (and why);
- Suggestions for reorganization or sharpening the argument.

Without teaching assistants, you can arrange to have peer comments supplement yours. An obvious strategy is having students exchange and comment on papers before final drafts are due. A very popular variation on this is the "writing response group" (Elbow, 1981; Fulwiler, 1986), a structured method for

group feedback which I have used with students and colleagues. These groups encourage cross-cultural communication between Third and First World students and help individual writers see what it is about their organization, style, and thinking that has power with readers. They also foster collaboration and synergy.

Treat Grammar as Symptom not Problem

I have taken the position that grammatical errors are superficial in comparison with what we might call "the grammar of the whole" — the larger patterns and structures of thought in a piece of writing. I do this because our educational system has generally done the reverse — that is, focused on rule-based determinations of whether sentences are correctly formulated rather than on whether they are carefully thought out (thus alienating students even further from the power of their own voices). In separating grammar from thinking, conventional teaching has ignored the power of Freire's language as "structure of thinking" and has opened the doors to neutral writing. If we respond by emphasizing "correctness" and grammar, we play into this destructive trend.

I have found that I can only recapture the right connection between the grammar of sentences and the grammar of the whole by addressing grammatical ambiguities not as "errors" but as symptoms of unfinished thinking or a writer's lack of concern for readers. When students take time to think through an idea and put it in their own words, their grammar will usually be acceptable. While clarity is evolving, I use wavy lines in my commentary on papers — to indicate that something is imprecise or ambiguous about the phrasing. After I know a student, I select a few characteristic sentences to discuss in conference. Usually the conversation leads from the grammar of sentences to profound reconstruction of the ideas of the whole. Again, a short time spent this way seems to go much farther than hours of copy editing.

The same principle holds for students from the Third World. Try to look at and respond to their ideas first, giving the message that these are the most important. Where simple errors — with prepositions, articles, verb forms or endings — inhibit your reading, indicate with wavy lines. Generally people learning a language can, themselves, correct what you identify (learning far more than if you do it for them). Where an entire thought seems tangled, identify this also. Again, a few minutes in conference will not only untangle particular sentences but open up new ways of thinking about structure and vocabulary. Suggest international students exchange papers with native speakers before making final changes. Since unclear sentences often result from struggles with vocabulary, urge international students to use an English to English dictionary; the bilingual ones they bring from home are often inaccurate.

Militantly Discourage the Bureaucratic Style

There are so many counter precedents in both academic and professional practice, that good teachers need to take a firm stand against bureaucratic writing as described earlier. This means making sure students understand why you take this stand and how to make their writing (and thinking) more straightforward. While the diagnosis and cure may differ slightly between academic (Becker, 1986) and professional styles (EPA, 1981; McElroy, 1988), the underlying principles are the same. To be effective, we need to examine our own writing styles as well.

Pursue Self-development

Any of the above alternatives will require you to think and learn more about a skill that is close to, but different from, your own. In my department we now have a weekly faculty writing group organized along the lines described above (Elbow, 1981) to help us reflect on and improve our own writing. Many universities now have excellent "Writing Across the Curriculum" programs where faculty from other disciplines work with writing teachers to develop ways to strengthen both student writing and substantive learning. Some excellent theory and research and very useful teaching techniques have emerged from these efforts (Griffin, 1982; Fulwiler, 1986). Teachers from English, Rhetoric, or Technical Writing may be helpful to talk with — if they share your understanding of "critical writing," which not all do. You may also find a collaborator in an ESL (English as a Second Language) program, a writing (tutorial) center, or a Dean's office that counsels international students. Any of these may also be able to provide individualized or group tutorial sessions especially for your students. There are literally hundreds of writing textbooks and guides — which is more indicative of the crisis than helpful, since many of them are mechanistic and neutral. I recommend beginning with those on my reference list.

Work at the Department Level

Your department can offer a course like mine to teach critical writing in academic discourse as well as professional memos, proposals, and reports. You may want to collaborate on teaching techniques or to designate particular courses as "writing intensive" — where teaching will involve more (and more carefully assigned and read) writing. Consider establishing incentives for those who teach such courses. Consider also providing training for graduate students to assist in them; such training will prepare them to supervise others' writing in the workplace — often a very tricky task. And by all means hold an orientation for entering international students, setting aside an afternoon or a Saturday to explain the expectations for writing in US universities. Be sure to provide examples and time for hands on work. The whole point is that people need to practice critical writing rather than hear exhortations about it.

CONCLUSION

From the very beginning of this project, I have asked myself whether there isn't something very ethnocentric about teaching critical writing in English to students from the Third World. A public television documentary in 1986 showed the English language — the common tongue of Westernization and new technology in the Third World — displacing or warping indigenous languages and thinking. How could this possibly be a language that will help Third World peoples to regain their voices or develop the powerful "new thinking" Freire calls for?

Working through the ideas of this chapter and seeing the reactions of my coauthors, has calmed my conscience. The documentary's examples — such as the English used by aviators the world over and the English that links the Indian subcontinent — are technical and bureaucratic versions of the language. Pilots are literally using English as an "instrument of communication," and bureaucrats, too, use the language instrumentally. We are "colonizing the mind" only when we impose bureaucratic English or attempt to teach the language instrumentally. Teaching language as critical thinking actually counters these trends. If we are brave enough to practice it ourselves, we will contribute to the new critical thinking of disempowered students from both Third and First World.

On the other hand, it *would* be ethnocentric to assume that the few US educators who are talking about it have the final word on critical thinking or critical writing. The traditions of Western universities are not the only or the best ones, even for the West. Thinkers from First, Second, Third and Fourth worlds need to come together to explore their rich traditions of analytical thinking. What can we learn, for instance, from a South African language whose word for "explaining" also means "preparing to eat a mango"? How much can (or should) a language adapt to the burden of technical communication, and how can we ensure that the technical does not obscure the critical? Together we must find ways to liberate the powerful voices that have been trapped on all the continents by the great international bureaucracy and its school systems.

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