

Identifying and Serving Generation 1.5 Writers at the University of Michigan

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What is “Generation 1.5”?

- “Generation 1.5”– Term first coined in 1988 to describe children of immigrant or refugee parents, often born in other countries but educated in the U.S.
- Existing college writing courses—may not be adequately addressing these students’ needs.

Generation 1.5 has been defined as: *U.S.-educated English Language Learners from diverse sociocultural, linguistic, and economic backgrounds.*

Research Questions

- **Who are the Generation 1.5 writers at U-M?**
What prior experiences do they bring to the writing classroom?
How do they understand their identities as students and as writers?
- **What is their experience of writing instruction at U-M?**
How do they navigate the U-M’s Directed Self-Placement (DSP) process?
Which courses have been most helpful / discouraging?
- **What needs do they have as writers, and how are they being met?**
Does this group have particular needs that may be invisible to instructors?
Does the current three-tiered system of initial writing courses provide adequate options for Gen 1.5 learners?
What other resources might help meet their needs?

Research Methods

PHASE ONE: Surveys of students and instructors, Fall 2010

STUDENT SURVEY: 681 students responded; 118 met our Generation 1.5 criteria. The survey asked students about their pre-college linguistic and educational backgrounds, their encounters with the DSP process, and their experiences in first-year writing courses.

INSTRUCTOR SURVEY: 50 first-year writing instructors responded (28.6% RR). The survey asked instructors about their perceptions of multilingual and English language learner students in their courses, and about how instructors identified these students and responded to their instructional needs.

We are currently collecting a second round of student and instructor survey responses with a slightly revised survey instrument.

PHASE TWO: Targeted interviews of Generation 1.5 students (15)

Qualitative analysis of interview transcripts will be completed in Summer 2011. (Completed)

PHASE THREE: Analysis of student writing (15 students)

Qualitative analysis of DSP essays (15) will be completed in Summer 2011.

Identifying Generation 1.5 Writers at U-M

For the purposes of identifying Generation 1.5 students among survey respondents, we applied the following three criteria:¹

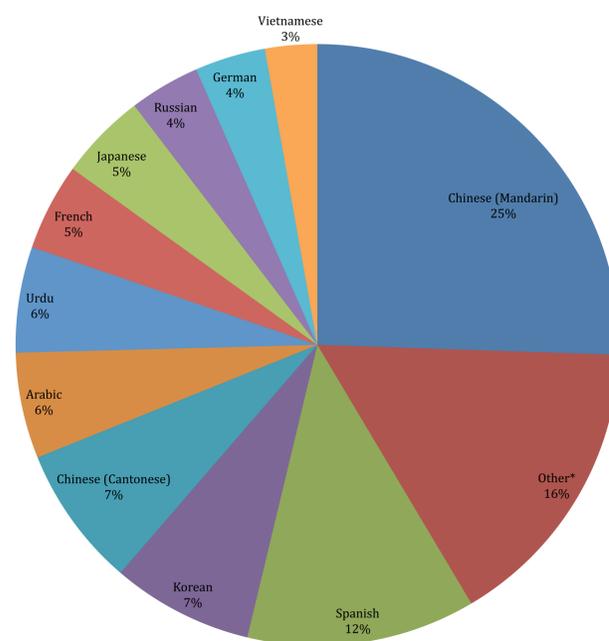
- Identified as “multilingual”
- Grew up speaking a language other than English—or a combination of English and another language—at home
- Did at least some of their K-12 schooling in the U.S.

Our student survey showed that:

- **Generation 1.5 students take a variety of writing courses at U-M**
- **Generation 1.5 students are extremely diverse in terms of language and educational background.**

¹ Based on interviews with students identified as Generation 1.5 we encountered some inadequacies in our survey wording, which we have refined for the next phase of our research.

U-M Gen 1.5 Students: First Language Backgrounds



*Other: includes Dutch, Portuguese, Ga, and Chaldean, as well as Bengali, Tamil, Malay, Telugu, and several other South and Southeast Asian languages.

INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS:

Design relevant training opportunities and resources for instructors of first-year writing courses and SCW 100 to help them identify and work with Generation 1.5 students in their courses. Comments on our survey of instructors suggested that there is interest in such training.

Major Findings

Who are the Gen 1.5 Writers at Michigan?

- 118 students met our criteria for “Generation 1.5.” These students came from a variety of language backgrounds (see chart).
- Location of K-12 education for Generation 1.5 students (N=118)**
- 61.9% did all K-12 schooling in the U.S.
 - 85.6% did all schooling from the age of 11 in the U.S.
 - 36.4% did at least some of their elementary education outside the U.S.

Results from Student Survey: Generation 1.5 Writing Experiences

Generation 1.5 students were significantly less likely than monolingual students to report that they had been asked to do the following in high school:

- Write a paper of more than 5 pages
- Express an opinion in writing
- Write personal narratives
- Work with peer feedback
- Conduct library research
- Compose and revise online
- Assemble a portfolio

Generation 1.5 survey respondents were significantly less likely than international students to report difficulty with word choice and vocabulary, register, articles, and punctuation.

Top Five Student-Reported Areas of Writing Difficulty (N=118)

- 39% Word choice and vocabulary
- 26% Transitions
- 25% Argumentative structure
- 22% Abstract/Indirect language
- 20% Paragraphs

25% of the Generation 1.5 respondents said they had no significant issues with their writing.

Top Five Instructor-Reported Areas of Writing Difficulties for “English Language Learners” (N=50)

- 44% Word choice and vocabulary
- 36% Use of articles
- 28% Verb tenses
- 20% Pronouns
- 16% Argumentative Structure

30% of instructors said that English Language Learner students had no significant issues with their writing.

Other Results from Instructor Survey

- 82% of surveyed instructors found out students were multilingual because students volunteered the information (instead of instructors asking).
- Among the instructors surveyed, those who have been teaching longer reported feeling more prepared to address the instructional needs of English Language Learners.

Next Steps

In Phase 2 of our research, we plan to ask: How can our research findings help us better serve the needs of Generation 1.5 writers at U-M (and elsewhere, if possible)?

RESEARCH: In the summer of 2011, we plan to:

- *Transcribe and analyze student interviews.* Students were asked to elaborate on specific survey responses to specific survey items, and to provide more detail about their linguistic and educational backgrounds and their writing experiences at U-M.
- *Analyze students’ DSP essays in relation to interview and survey findings.* This analysis will allow us to triangulate data from the students’ self-reports in the surveys and interviews and from instructor survey responses.

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