

## Adopting a Comparative Cultural Studies Approach to Teaching Writing in the Global Classroom

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**Abstract :** Teaching writing within multicultural and multiethnic communities poses many unique challenges not the least of which is that of intercultural communication. When the writing is in English, pedagogical imperatives often encounter the universalizing tendencies of standardization of both language use and structural parameters which are often at odds with maintaining local practices which preserve cultural pluralism. English often becomes the contact zone within which individual identities of students play out against the standardization imperatives of the larger world. Writing classes can serve as places which become instruments of assimilation of ethnic minorities to a larger globalizing or nationalistic agenda. Hence, for those outside of the standard practices of writing English, adaptability towards a mastery of those practices valued as standard become the focus of teaching taking away from diversity of local English use and other modes of critical thinking. In a very multicultural and multiethnic context such as the US or Singapore, these dynamics become very important. This paper will argue that multiethnic writing classrooms can greatly benefit from taking up a cultural studies approach whereby the students' lived environments and experiences are analyzed as cultural texts to produce writing. Such an approach eliminates limitations of using both literary texts as foci of discussion as in traditional approaches to teaching writing and the current trend in teaching composition without using texts at all. By bringing in students' lived experiences into the classroom and analyzing them as cultural compositions stressing the ability to communicate across cultures, cultural competency is valued rather than adaptability while privileging pluralistic experiences as valuable even as universal shared experience are found. Specifically, while teaching writing in English in a multicultural classroom, a cultural studies approach makes both teacher and student aware of the diversity of the English language as it exists in our global context in the students' experience while making space for diversity in critical thinking, structure and organization of writing effective in an intercultural context.

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