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SUMMARY

The chapter presents alternative perspectives to a deficit approach to students' identities and academic ability at the same time as foregrounding discriminatory institutional practices. My ethnographic research found evidence of repeated Othering of a small group of students with diasporic connections studying at a London university. Consequently, I suggest successful exposure to academic culture, which includes reading writing and knowledge-making, can only occur *after* engagement and participation is made possible for *all* students. In practice this means that, rather than kettling students into language support units for additional help, there should be a sensitive approach to language and literacy development where attendance remains voluntary. I remain uncomfortable with monolithic interventions at institutional level as they can feed into native-speakerist discourses which can demonise the 'non-western', 'non traditional' Other. Student-centred and contextually-sensitive approaches to academic writing development can create opportunities within the university curriculum for the 'non-traditional', 'non-native' students' experiences to be valorised through writing and assessment practices which contribute to the suspension of cultural disbelief.

INTRODUCTION

Inherent to native-speakerist ideology is what Holliday terms 'cultural disbelief' (Holliday 2013: 17: this volume), that is, the view that '"non-western" cultural realities are deficient. This chapter applies Holliday's (2011; 2013) thinking around cultural disbelief in the abilities of the Other to discourses surrounding the ability to perform in an academic culture. In doing so, the chapter explores alternative ways of conceptualising people from cultural backgrounds which may be different to those who traditionally take up places at British universities.

> While *cultural disbelief* finds the cultural background of 'non-native speaker' teachers, *and indeed students*, [italics added] deficient and problematic, *cultural belief* perceives the cultural background of any teacher or student to be resource. (Holliday 2013: 21)

The chapter contributes to discussions of non-native speaker teachers and students to include multilingual university students with diasporic connections. That is, first generation immigrants resident in Britain originating from different parts of Africa with 'transnational linkages' (Okpwho 2009: 19).

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BACKGROUND AND THE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

I taught academic writing at a university located in culturally-diverse London where I first became aware of labels such as 'native-speaker' and 'non-native-speaker' as they were used in institutional publicity by the university language support unit in which I worked. However, I felt this dichotomised view of students to be unhelpful, in part, as it ignored the rich linguistic repertoires of many of the multilingual speakers who sought to develop their academic writing. Indeed, labels of this kind are commonly used in English language teaching contexts in the United Kingdom (UK), despite being problematised by Nero (2005) in the United States (US) and through Holliday's (2006; 2013) discussions of native-speakerism.

A sense of dissatisfaction

This chapter emerged from doctoral research originating from dissatisfaction as an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) practitioner due to some of the ways in which I observed EAP approaches had been applied to develop academic language and literacy for the culturally and linguistically mixed profile of students I encountered at the university in which I worked. The way in which EAP was implemented seemed rather uncritical of its own aims, methods and teaching context (see Benesch 2001; Harwood & Hadley 2004; Pennycook 2001). This was intensively felt particularly amongst practitioners who were, like me, teaching EAP to what was often, although not exclusively, a post-colonial audience speaking not only a range of first and additional languages but also a range of varieties of English. On this topic, Benesch (2001) refers to a 'domesticity' of EAP methodologies, which have the tendency to serve the dominant institutional cultures and not the students. I do not wish to claim that EAP, or teachers of EAP, are inherently deficient in any way, rather that EAP methodologies may not be the best institutional intervention for culturally and linguistically diverse student bodies. Indeed, many of the students I taught would not describe themselves as language learners at all, even though they possessed a desire and motivation to develop their academic English whilst at university, in addition to speaking English as a second, third or additional language, terms I acknowledge are ideologically-loaded.

Probematising labels

The students I worked with were also frequently referred to as 'non-traditional' institutionally. Following Lillis (2001), 'non-traditional' students can be described as those

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students from social groups previously excluded from Higher Education; that is, working class and black students, students older than eighteen at the start of their course and those with a range of cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds previously excluded from post-compulsory education including universities. The term is extremely useful in foregrounding under-represented groups of students even though there is potential to view all students within a distinct category as the same, which I want to avoid. 'Non-traditional' university students who encounter difficulties with writing and thinking have been described as having a 'literacy gap'. Although conceptualised as a gap between student and faculty expectations (e.g., Ganobcsik-Williams 2006; Lillis 2001; Street 2004), I suggest gaps and lacks in awareness associated with particular groups of students can contribute to a discourse of cultural disbelief (that is to say a lack of belief in the ability of the Other) surrounding some students' abilities and willingness to adapt to university culture.

The students I worked with during my ethnographic study were multilingual and with rich diasporic profiles, thus resisting easy categorisation. Some, but not all, were 'non-native speakers', yet institutionally were often described as such. As a consequence, I use the term 'non-native speaker' to apply to multilingual students who are 'native-*like*' speakers of English, yet denied the status of 'native speaker' due to the politics of accent, or simply having the 'wrong' kind of accent (Lippi-Green 1997). This latter point relates to their diasporic identities as, even though students were often fluent speakers of English commensurate with the length of time spent in the UK, and in some cases had been schooled in English, they were routinely sent to language support to get 'help with English' for remediation purposes.

Ideologies promote the needs and interests of dominant groups at the expense of marginalised groups and ideologies which penetrate discourses surrounding 'non-traditional' and 'non-native' students' abilities are evident in debates surrounding standards of literacy within universities in the UK (see Lillis & Scott 2007; Orr & Blythman 2003). Therefore, one way of suspending disbelief in the abilities of the 'non-traditional' Other is to problematise '… the ongoing predominance of an essentialised 'deficit' model which focuses on the 'gaps' that individual 'disadvantaged' students are seen to have' (Marshall & Case, 2010: 492). I suggest the image of the 'non-traditional' students, which emerges from cultural disbelief in their abilities, shares features with discourses surrounding 'non-native' speaking' learners.

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Discourses of this kind characterise people as culturally deficient as they are seen as lacking the skills or expertise commensurate with university attendance and success.

Setting the scene further

A second source of dissatisfaction stems from the way in which culturally diverse students are welcomed to university yet, at the same time, institutional structures and practices do not always successfully support participation and engagement as much as they do recruitment and access. Bhabba (1990) is critical of a position which encourages cultural diversity alone as he argues difference cannot be accommodated as readily, which is why inequalities persist. Of relevance to the complex profile of students I worked with and my professional role as academic writing practitioner is Matsuda's (2010: 82) critique of institutional responses to linguistic difference where 'weaker' matters of convention, genre and style are tolerated while 'stronger' forms of language difference are not. I suggest the approach to language matters outlined displays native-speakerist attitudes as such practices affect people who did not grow up speaking privileged varieties of English disproportionately, as well as disproportionately affecting students who are functional bilinguals. In the university I worked for, many individuals fitting this complex student profile were routinely sent to language support, writing classes or placed in non-credit 'remedial' courses. Such policies of 'linguistic containment' (Matsuda, 2010; 85) aimed to help individual students but at the same time were perceived as stigmatising, even humiliating, and failed to address issues of inequalities.

The next section draws on data from my doctoral research in order to highlight how some of the students I worked with were judged in unfavourable ways reflecting native-speakerist beliefs. To achieve this, I foreground my observations of literacy-related classroom practices surrounding seminar presentations while, as far as possible, remaining sensitive to the students' complex backgrounds.

METHODOLOGY

Methods

Interviews and class observation were used as part of a mixed methods approach during sustained time in the field. The approach I adopted has a degree of overlap with language and literacy research adopting ethnographic approaches in university settings (Canagarajah 1997;

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Harris & Thorp, 1999; Lillis, 2001). Methods were selected as such interventions were more likely to be perceived as part of the day-to-day lived experiences of participants and of those around them. I also attempted to build on models of empowering research (Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton & Richardson, 1992) by incorporating participant validation into the research strategy. After initial interviews took place, I transcribed, retold and reconstructed participants' stories in response to the initial prompt question: *'Who are you and where have you come from?'* Participants were invited for a second interview during which they were invited to comment on the written account of the initial interview.

Who I worked with

I observed a class of 30 first year undergraduate applied social science students in a core module for four months as part of my doctoral research. Additionally, I interviewed 11 of the class of 30.   My criteria for selection was that participants had to be over 21 and classified by the university as a home rather than an international student, thus fulfilling the 'non-traditional' student profile. The majority of the class were members of London's 'visible minorities' (Harris 2006:1), multilingual speakers *and* home students which means that they were long-term or permanent British residents. Cultural, linguistic and social background was mixed echoing the complex profile of students attending the university. However, although not anticipated or sought specifically, students who presented for interview identified as members of London's African diasporic community in some way, even though their cultural identification and diasporic connections were experienced differently reflecting the inherent heterogeneity of any group.

THEMES EMERGING FROM THE DATA

I now present data which shows how native-speakerist discourses denigrate the abilities of the students I observed and interviewed. Three themes emerged from the data selected for this chapter and have been used as headings for the discussion that follows: Currying favour; Mistaken identity and The late ones.

Currying favour

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The first example stems from my observation of the first year social science class. At the end of a seminar, the lecturer and a group of students were trying to arrange a group presentation and I made the following notes on interaction between Hamdi (pseudonym) and the lecturer:

'Hamdi gets out a blue Filofax which has a blue leather cover. It looks a little like the Qur'an with Arabic writing on the front. It becomes apparent that there has been some error and overlap with allocation of presentations. The lecturer has made an error for which he apologises. The lecturer asks Hamdi to do it.

HAMDI: 'I'll do it, init, just to make it level?

LECTURER: Ah, you're, you're trying to curry favour?!

                 How many of them [co-presenters do]... you see?

HAMDI: I don't really see them, but I can call them.

                 Lecturer and Hamdi then arrange his tutorial.

                 (Odeniyi 2014: 121)

What struck me about this exchange was that the lecturer asked Hamdi for help and then accused him of currying favour when he agreed. This seemed unfair as rather than being thanked the student was accused of doing something rather dishonourable. At the time I felt the lecturer misrepresented Hamdi's intentions as he was, in my view, trying to alleviate the lecturer's predicament by 'making it level' in his words. The lecturer's verb choice 'to curry favour' is a further example of how 'non-traditional', 'non-native speaking' students are viewed as 'deficient and problematic' (Holliday 2013:13). I also suggest it indexes the importance of power relations in the exchange between student and lecturer. In contrast, I had previously observed Hamdi to be an articulate student who in class at least was engaged and contributed in seminars positively. This is reflected in these observation notes from an earlier seminar:

Let's not be naive here … it comes down to the same thing…' [He (*Hamdi*) talks about relativism and helping others. He (*Hamdi*) reads from the article more than once as a means of supporting his point of view] (Odeniyi 2014: 121).

In contrast, the lecturer's less than positive evaluation of Hamdi as someone motivated by self-interest and seeking additional favours has implications for patterns of engagement. He no longer attended (observation eleven) the classes I observed. I found it significant that this

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was the last time I saw or heard from this student and later on in the year I made reference to this fact:

> With the exception of Hamdi, who I have not seen since before Christmas.
>
> (Odeniyi 2014: 121).

I am not suggesting that the lecturers response to Hamdi's offer was the reason for his non-attendance; nor do not wish to claim that the way Hamdi was treated was intentional. That said, religious and ethnic difference as well as differences in age, status and clothing were striking. For example, the fact that the 'black' student wore traditional shalwa kameez[1] while the 'white' lecturer wore formal Western dress made his treatment all the more stark. Hamdi's compliance is less surprising given the lecturer's status and relative power, and the data selected highlights not only Hamdi's embarrassment and discomfort but also how individuals in less powerful positions are treated unfavourably. Delanty, Jones & Wodak (2008:13) suggest that racism is now 'less direct and more diffuse'. It is less likely to be expressed overtly in terms of hostility towards race or ethnic difference. I do not mean to imply that the lecturer was a racist. I observed the lecturer on 16 occasions and there was no evidence that this was the case. However, the data indicates that some evidence of neoracism where, rather than intentional Othering of non-dominant groups, the effects of certain behaviours and discourses disadvantage groups or individuals along racial lines.

Mistaken identity

A second example of cultural disbelief in the abilities of the Other to carry out academic matters efficiently and with integrity relates to two female students from the same class. I observed the same lecturer confuse two students for approximately three minutes when during the start of a class he asked who was presenting that day. Nancy was present but Mary had not yet arrived:

> There is also further confusion as the lecturer confuses Nancy with Mary. They are both Black African females. He is insistent and I find the exchange extremely uncomfortable:
>
> LECTURER: 'Well, why did you come to see me?'

---

[1] Traditional dress worn by men and women from India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

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	'…Yes, you came to see me.'[His face colours with emotion as he says it]
	[He means why did she come and see him about the presentation topic, if she is not in fact going to present on that topic]
NANCY:	'That was not me.' [shaking her head]
	[He is emphatic and now her face colours. The lecturer continues to insist for 2 or 3 seconds more, then realises his error and apologises, explaining that a few students came to see him about poverty, while Nancy came to see him about her PDP (Personal Development Plan). He had forgotten. The exchange is embarrassing and discomforting.
	9.47am Mary arrives late.
	(Odeniyi 2014: 122).

Although this exchange in the classroom was between Nancy and the lecturer, it suggests he did not recognise either Mary or Nancy, two women of African appearance and accent, half way through their first year. This oversight is despite separate appointments with him on different topics. I was aware that Mary had met the lecturer (Odeniyi 2014: 122). Not only does the exchange cause embarrassment for Nancy and the lecturer due to the intensity of the situation but I, along with other students present, also experienced a degree of discomfort as onlookers. The two students' 'blackness' and the lecturer's 'whiteness' added to the intensity of the situation. The identities of these two women did not seem important despite the considerable level of investment reported. For example, during an interview Nancy expresses her views on being a mature student with familial responsibility:

> Some subjects [lecturers] forget our responsibilities as mature students and they treat us the same. For example I've got three kids. I must work with them, do their homework and once I've finished with them I do my own. (Odeniyi 2014: 122)

The comment on the challenges of being a student with additional responsibilities echoes Norton (2000) findings which point to a significant degree of investment made by migrant learners of English. The extract reveals that significant time and energy is invested into her family's education in addition to her own education. Once again it was difficult to ignore differences of race and gender, which seemed to intensify as Nancy was accused of lacking an ability to prepare an appropriate and timely, echoing native-speakerist attitudes.

The late ones

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The final example explores how the lecturer ascribes a number of the students in his class with the essential label 'late'. Over the four months I observed the class, there was continual confusion and lack of clarity over the administration of group presentation topics and schedules which dominated class proceedings. As a result it can be useful to think of the discussions surrounding the group presentations as forming part of the every day practice which informed and influenced the group:

NANCY:	'Have you changed the topic for the presentation?'
LECTURER:	'Well, we need to work this out as a group [Hesitantly]. [Mary looks confused as the lecturer continues to address the whole group. Mary tries to get his attention once more...]
MARY:	'Which topic?'
	[The lecturer goes over to Mary finally and they discuss the topic which it turns out is a duplication of today's presentation.]
LECTURER:	'I remember now, you were one of the late ones turning up.'
	(Odeniyi 2014: 146)

'The late ones' was ascribed to those students who were late starting the programme and the phrase was articulated many times as the lecturer struggled to organise the group and maintain control of the course. Out of context the word 'late' may seem benign but I suggest it reflects a deficient image of these 'non-native speakers' as unable to work autonomously and collaboratively, skills idealised in 'Western' higher education. The practice of ascribing the identity of students as 'late' was not restricted to Mary or Nancy as we can see from the next example of Mustafa, a 'non-traditional' student with diasporic connections:

'Lecturer goes on to house keeping matters of who presented today and who is presenting the following week. …

LECTURER:	'Right, that's group 6 sorted out'
	' …. Group 7, I didn't even know I had Group 7!?'
	[Jokingly]
MUSTAFA RETORTS:	'You made it!'
LECTURER:	'Yes, I remember you were very late.'
	(Odeniyi 2014: 130)

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Mustafa attempted to challenge the lecturer, but he was essentialised as late. The students appear to be blamed for the challenges encountered. One reason for the problem of assigning topics and students arose as a proportion of the class was not present at the very start of the semester which presented significant problems for the lecturer. However, it seems to me that the complex and challenging organisational matters were partly a result of the course design with weekly presentation allocations rather than being caused by 'the late arrivals' (Odeniyi 2014: 131) alone. The continual reference to students starting late was powerful not only because of the high proportion of participants ascribed this essential and deficit label, but because I did not see the lecturer take responsibility, publically at least, for the difficulties and challenges encountered. There is no doubt that lateness caused additional logistical challenges but it seems unfair to blame the individual students. The lecturer referred to Mary more than once as 'one of the latecomers' who cause problems for themselves because they joined the module late (Odeniyi 2014: 131). This view contrasts starkly with the lecturer who stated any challenges or difficulties were personal and brought about by the individual (Odeniyi 2014: 131).

This suggests that difficulties arising are seen as a 'result of individual choices or circumstances rather than from structural or systematic forces' (Lewis & Ketter, 2011: 135). Logistical problems become problems associated with the individual. Indeed, the data reveals power relations at work at particular moments in the university classroom and how Othering of this kind surrounding the organisation of class presentations became routinised discourse practice. Rather than being supported Nancy, like Hamdi, seems to have been accused of something she did not do nor had intended to do. The reality is that Mary talked to the lecturer the previous week but he had forgotten and Nancy did not correct him.

Depth of life experiences and untapped resources

I now return to Mustafa, one of 'the late ones', in order to provide an illustrative example of the rich life experiences the participants I worked with brought to the academy:

> Mustafa is originally from Congo but spent most of his childhood in France where most of his schooling took place. As a child he travelled at lot, mainly to French speaking West African countries such as Ivory Coast, Togo and Gabon. He left Congo when he was four. He comes from a diplomatic family: his father works for the UN and his mother used to be an Ambassador. They changed countries according to the appointments his family received. Mustapha now lives in xxx and drops his son off at school before he commutes to xxx four days a week. Mustapha originally

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> elected to take Development with French as he felt he needed to continue with French. Soon after, he realised that he needed to try something else. Mustapha started xxx module in week 6, ...'

> (Odeniyi 2014: 131)

We can see from this extended data example that Mustafa had had a rich and varied life before starting university, and from what he reported appears to be reasonably accustomed to changing environments and cultures. In contrast, the students I observed were constructed as self-interested, disorganised and late. Mustafa's diplomatic family background is a vivid reminder of how unfavourable identity categories such as 'late/not late' masks the complexity of life before university, which in this case impacted on disciplinary choice.

Mary a second student identified in the excerpts above, identified as a recovering alcoholic (Odeniyi 2014: 142) and her life before and during her time at university was equally rich, reflected in a powerful research narrative:

> She is originally from Rwanda but was forced to leave as a result of the genocide. She was privileged to be able to study in Kenya. Mary had a varied professional career in Rwanda, working mainly in the field as, for example, an insurance company and for an HIV AIDS organisation. As a consequence of this fieldwork she speaks a range of languages which include English, French, Swahili, Yerwanda, Luganda and a number of local languages. She describes herself as a linguist and she had to learn the languages of local people to be to carry out her work as a counsellor effectively. However, it was because of this work that she had to leave her home. (Odeniyi 2014: 141-142)

Mary's multilingual repertoire is notable and data suggest that neither Mustafa nor Mary fit easily into 'native' or 'non-native' categories. It is also worth noting that although black and over 21 at the start of the degree programme it is questionable whether either Mary or Mustapha identified as working class suggesting that these individuals do not fit definitions of 'non-traditional' home students comfortably either. Additionally, Mary reported financial worries and eviction. Interview data reveals compelling reasons for late arrival onto the course:

> She used to live in North East London in a two-bedroomed flat but felt that she had to move away and put everything behind her. It was mainly for the sake of her five year old daughter. Mary moved … with her daughter in September 2008. Financially, the move has been very hard as, for example, at one stage she and her daughter were evicted. They ended up living in a single room for several weeks. This took place while Mary should have been attending xxx as the academic year began the third week of September … (Odeniyi 2014: 142).

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One interpretation is that Mary brought about her own housing issues motivated by a desire to start afresh.

 I suggest the narratives help to construct an alternative image of the 'non-native', 'non-traditional' undergraduate and the potential resources they have. Marshall & Case (2008) found that coping strategies developed in a 'disadvantaged' social background could be productively used for successful navigation of the higher education context students enter, thus promoting alternatives to deficit discourses. Instead we have seen indirect Othering through unfavourable assessment of these individuals as seeking advantage over others as well as being disorganised and ill prepared. In Burr's words: 'To define the world or a person in a way that allows you to do the things you want is to exercise power …' (1995: 64). Problems are associated with the Other and not the Self. 'Non-traditional' students from a range of linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds deserve to be treated with respect and one way of respecting difference is to unpack essential labels. This section has shown how sustained time in the field provided significant insight into the depth and complexity of students' experiences during the first year of university study.

DISCUSSION

Deficit discourses at work

There was evidence of repeated Othering, which suggests that these particular students were viewed as problematic. The lecturer in the examples above appeared to have generated cultural disbelief in the Other rather than suspend belief in his own abilities. More specifically, cultural disbelief became normalised in the classes I observed as students were labelled and essentialised in terms of lateness and other undesirable attributes such as attempts to gain unfair advantage. Data support the view that some groups of people are constructed as less able.'… to think critically, be autonomous, to speak out, and to plan and manage' (Holliday 2011: 77), cited frequently as essential 'graduate' skills by universities (Canterbury Christchurch University website, 2014). Indeed, 'Colonial constructions of [superior] Self and [inferior] Other, combined with factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, class, language, and others' (Shin 2006: 147) continue to be reproduced through deficit discourses. That said, I do not wish to reproduce fixed notions of race, ethnic identities and accent, thus reinforcing disbelief (Kubota 2003) particularly as '… [a]cademic culture is not

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uniformly accessed or experienced' (Read et al. 2003: 261). Constructions of an inferior Other when reproduced in university classrooms may result in participation in academic culture to be more challenging for some people than others.

I have illustrated how visible markers of difference such as race, gender and 'non-Western' dress are bound up with the workings of power and difference (Aykaç 2008; Delanty et al. 2008; Kubota 2003). Neoracism is subtle and encompasses linguistic and cultural discrimination in addition to physical features associated with 'old' racism. Indeed, Spears (1999) defines racism as both direct and indirect behaviour which supports unequal hierarchies along racial lines, where being 'white' takes a primary position.

Responding to complexity and difference

I suggest successful exposure to academic culture, which includes reading, writing and knowledge-making, can only occur *after* engagement and participation is made possible for all students. One way to achieve this is to draw on life experiences and students' cultural and linguistic repertoire, and in doing so acknowledging the potential value of post-colonial audiences.

The research narrative extracts indicate the importance of life before the UK, despite long-term residency. It would therefore seem appropriate for the students I worked with to identify and engage in academic culture while not having to renounce the cultures with which they identify, however marginal or peripheral to the university. Zeleza (2009) wrote that diaspora involves a sense of culture, which is often characterised by marginalisation and a sense of belonging to a nation or place that is different to those referred to as the majority, traditional or mainstream. Complexity and difference can be looked upon as a resource, thus suspending cultural disbelief. This is significant for two reasons. The complexity of experience masked by the label 'non-traditional' is given institutional exposure. In turn, exposure might help to unearth 'a creative diasporic space' (Lavia 2010:41) for learning and engagement with academic writing.

Discourses surrounding academic writing intervention, highlighted by Orr and Blythman (2003), are infected with cultural disbelief and have a tendency to construct individual students in terms of a lack of preparedness for university. It is important that students'

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complex linguistic repertoires are better understood. Here I include less privileged native varieties of English, in addition to more and less privileged non-native varieties.

Responding to diversity

The need to respond to an educationally, culturally and linguistically diverse student body remains important. I would like to return to the issue of language and literacy development, possible alternatives to EAP pedagogies and what this provision might mean for 'non-traditional' home students with diverse diasporic connections. Institutional policies of 'linguistic containment' documented extensively by Matsuda (2010:85) should be resisted. In practice this means that rather than kettling students into language support units there should be a sensitive approach to language and literacy development where attendance remains voluntary. One solution would be to insist that 'non-traditional' students continue to seek help from language support units and academic writing centres. However, I remain uncomfortable with this as a monolithic intervention at institutional level as it feeds into native-speakerist discourses where the 'non-western', 'non traditional' student is Othered and solutions to the academic writing challenges encountered are seen lying with the individual.

An alternative approach to the more traditional forms of generic academic language support, which scaffolds and embeds the development of academically literate practices within specific degree programmes (Bernaschina & Smith, 2012; Lazar & Ellis 2010), is useful in three ways. Responsibility for the 'remediation' of student literacy continues to be the domain of English language support units as well as the individual student. Writing and language development remains a site of struggle for the individual, but an increase in visible, shared responsibility for academic text production may reduce feelings of stigmatization. Finally, this contextually sensitive approach can create opportunities within the university curriculum for the 'non-traditional', 'non-native' students' experiences to be valorised through writing and assessment practices, which contributes to the suspension of cultural disbelief.

Final comments

Scepticism towards students' abilities and willingness to adapt to university life and faculty expectation needs to be challenged. Students essentialised as 'non-native' and 'non-traditional' have just as much to offer their institutions as those labelled 'native' and

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'traditional'. This chapter attempts to move beyond merely quantifying and celebrating a diverse student body towards revealing the complexity of student experiences with regard to their diasporic identities. I have shown how native-speakerist discourses serve the more powerful within the academy at the expense of the more marginal. To return to the title, the politics of remediation centres on perceptions that the academy has remained the same, according to Soliday (2002), and it is the students alone, who have changed. Yet, academic communities of practice are no more fixed or homogeneous than any other. We need to create new discourses which are 'decolonising in intent' (Lavia 2010: 28) in that they seek to disrupt neoracist discourses.

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