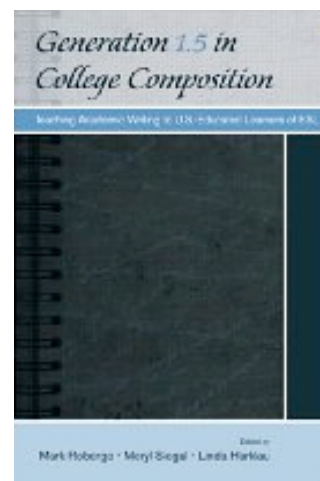


March 2010 — Volume 13, Number 4

Generation 1.5 in College Composition: Teaching Academic Writing to U.S.-educated Learners of ESL		
Author:	Roberge, M., Siegal, M., & Harklau, L. (Eds.) (2009)	
Publisher:	New York, NY: Routledge	
Pages	ISBN	Price
Pp. ix + 273	978-0-8058-6443-4 (paper)	\$48.95 U.S.



Generation 1.5 in College Composition by Roberge, Siegal, and Harklau (2009) has been published one decade after *Generation 1.5* writing research gained widespread attention with a publication by Harklau, Losey, and Siegal (1999). Building on the momentum of interest in *Generation 1.5* writing research over the last decade, Roberge et al. have further expanded our understanding of *Generation 1.5* students and the writing they produce. The central theme of this edited edition is that *Generation 1.5* writers may have a unique set of language learner issues—specifically, difficulty with academic writing—in relation to more traditional second language (L2) of English students (e.g., international students or recently arrived immigrants) and first language (L1) of English students. For teachers and administrators in tertiary education who work extensively with long-term, U.S.-educated language learners, this publication represents an important recognition of a different—though not new—group of L2 students than is typically the focus of professional ESL or composition discussions.

Definitions of a *Generation 1.5* student are extremely variable within this publication (and *Generation 1.5* research at large), but Roberge et al. in the preface refer to a *Generation 1.5* student as one who (a) is an English Language Learner, (b) arrived in the U.S.A. during childhood years, (c) has been educated extensively in the U.S. educational system, and (d) has entered tertiary education with “patterns of language literacy” that deviate from traditional formal English. Yet, most authors in this book

are reluctant to define this group, instead emphasizing the huge variation in learner profiles within Generation 1.5 students. Applying the title of Generation 1.5 while also stressing the diversity within the group at times provides the sense that this is a group but that it is not a group.

Each section, or “part,” of this edited book includes 5-6 chapters. Part 1, entitled “Frameworks,” effectively introduces the need for Generation 1.5 research by highlighting the growing numbers of Generation 1.5 students in tertiary education. The first three chapters focus extensively on the social/circumstantial characteristics associated with this population. These first three chapters form a subgroup, presenting the sociological factors, policy-related issues, and historical trends of Generation 1.5 students in U.S. education. Part 1 also includes chapters by Matsuda and Matsuda, and Benesch that are critical of the term Generation 1.5. They have concerns about the dangers of essentializing students under a single broad label, objecting to the codification of this group of language learners from modernist and post-modernist perspectives.

Perhaps the most intriguing analysis in this section was written by Roberge. Though this article, and arguably the book as a whole, less effectively addresses how Generation 1.5 *writing* is different or unique from L1 and other L2 writing, he presents with great detail and clarity the socio-cultural, historical, and educational pathways common to the Generation 1.5 student experience. Roberge crafts a persuasive argument that the Generation 1.5 students’ range of social experiences may lead to educational challenges that are distinct from L1 and more traditional L2 students.

As a teacher and researcher interested in Generation 1.5 writing issues, I found Part 2, entitled “Student Characteristics, and Schooling Paths,” to be the most important section in this book. The five chapters in Part 2 attempt to establish research that targets Generation 1.5 students in classroom settings and expand our knowledge of these students and their writing. Unfortunately, very few of the chapters in this section analyzed Generation 1.5 writing. Many of the chapters in this section are less effective than they could be either because they have (a) vaguely defined Generation 1.5 students, or (b) because it is unclear that the issues these supposed Generation 1.5 students are encountering are not typical of all L2 and/or L1 developmental writers. Of the five chapters, two of them strongly advance our understanding of Generation 1.5 learners and their writing.

The chapter by Frodesen stands apart from all other chapters in this book for its use of linguistic and writing terminology to describe the longitudinal writing development of one Generation 1.5 student. Of course, because this was only one student, the characteristics particular to this writer cannot be generalized; however, the use of specific terminology is valuable for researchers in building hypotheses to test on larger numbers of Generation 1.5 students, and for teachers as they look to compare the writing produced by their students with the perception and analysis of Frodesen.

The final chapter of Part 2 involves a large-scale empirical study conducted by Patthey, Thomas-Spiegel, and Dillon, that looks to compare institutionally collected data from nine community colleges and two universities. Demographic criteria were used to compare Generation 1.5 students (N = 43,964) to their classmates (N = 238,032). Some of the measures reported involved (a) where students were placed in writing programs (e.g., ESL classes, developmental classes, transfer level classes), (b) GPAs achieved in writing classes, and (c) their progression through one or multiple classes in the writing program. This unprecedented large-scale Generation 1.5 study serves as a model for programs around the nation interested in tracking the learning outcomes of their students by demographic factors. One important caution for this chapter however, is that writing proficiency is not measured and probably should not be inferred from GPA or number of writing classes completed. Nevertheless, the data collected in this study are tremendously useful for teachers, programs, and institutions looking to understand Generation 1.5 students' path through writing courses.

Part 3, "Curricular and Pedagogical Approaches," is the final section of this book. This section includes three chapters that describe courses established for Generation 1.5 writers. While the chapter by Dudley, Bae, and Wilson involves adapting ESL courses to accommodate Generation 1.5 students, Murie and Fitzpatrick, and Holten are both theoretically grounded and methodically constructed attempts to develop Generation 1.5 writing courses. The chapters by Johns and Schleppegrell serve as two well-known and well-respected voices in L2 pedagogy, rethinking their respective specialties (Genre analysis, and Systemic Functional Linguistics) to a specific L2 population. Though these chapters do not differ noticeably from the L2 pedagogy they have advocated for other L2 populations, these chapters still hold broad appeal.

The final chapter of this section, written by Goen-Salter, Porter, and Vandommelen, is the most practical chapter in the book for classroom purposes. Instructional principles help guide the 19 activities that are presented in detail. While some of these activities would likely appeal to all L2 populations, a reasonable number of these activities have been created specifically for Generation 1.5 students. In Goen et al., as with Murie and Fitzpatrick, and Holten, we find a systematic approach to Generation 1.5 writing instruction, informed by instructors accustomed to Generation 1.5 writing issues and guided by principled learning objectives.

This is a timely publication and an important topic for many educators in secondary and tertiary settings. Overall, this book deserves a very positive review, though some general criticisms should be noted. Serious criticisms of this publication would be the continued vagueness in defining Generation 1.5, the lack of empirical evidence of writing deficiencies despite the assumption of writing challenges faced by Generation 1.5 students, and the avoidance of how Generation 1.5 writing is distinct from L1 and more traditional L2 populations. Nevertheless, this book clearly establishes that there are growing numbers of Generation 1.5 writers in higher education, and provides some excellent examples documenting Generation 1.5 experiences. Also, socio-cultural factors and issues of identity associated with Generation 1.5 students are thoroughly addressed in this publication. Finally, this book demonstrates how focused

instruction and curriculum to better address the perceived needs of this student group could enhance learning outcomes.

Reference

Harklau, L., Losey, K. M., & Siegal, M. (Eds.). (1999). *Generation 1.5 meets college composition: Issues in the teaching of writing to U.S.-Educated learners of ESL*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

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