**Final Report**

**The Association of Legal Writing Directors (ALWD)**

**Submission date:** Friday, May 16, 2025

**Grantees:** Julie Lake & Heather Weger (Georgetown Law)

**Title of Project:** An Innovative Approach to Strengthen Multilingual Student Voices and Autonomy in Legal Writing Classes

**Description of the Project:**

We developed and piloted a series of pedagogical sequences — aimed at empowering multilingual students — to assess and revise their writing using an asset-based lens.

We wanted to first share some student testimonials from Spring 2025:

* “I would tell incoming LL.M. students to take [this course] seriously from the beginning. Legal writing is very different from other types of writing, so it takes time to get used to. Don’t be afraid to ask for help, go to office hours, and use feedback to improve. The more you practice, the more confident you’ll feel in law school.”
* “It was a fantastic journey, and I really appreciate our professors' dedication and thorough preparation for the course. I felt strongly supported all the time, as the professors are always warm-hearted to help and care about us.”
* “I’m glad that I was able to learn the writing process and its steps. This class gave me the confidence that if I follow the steps I learned here, I will be able to write effectively.”

**Rationale for Project**

Over the past 10 years, as we have taught legal writing to multilingual students in law school, we have seen how these writers are decentered as they navigate their educational experience. This led us to reflect on our teaching practices in our legal writing courses, resulting in several pedagogical shifts aligned with asset-based principles (MacSwan, 2020) that foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity for multilingual (and monolingual) students. We decided to create a pedagogical process that empowered students to take charge of their legal writing experience and develop their legal writing voice.

Becoming an autonomous writer with a clearly defined individual “voice” (Lancaster, 2019; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007) can be challenging for any novice legal writer and doubly challenging for multilingual writers. The first step toward developing one’s voice is for emerging writers to develop the ability to analyze their own written texts (Teng, 2020).

Yet, in our legal writing courses, we have noticed that multilingual students often struggle to critically engage with writing in their non-dominant language; instead, they tend to look to teachers to “correct” their written texts. To help learners overcome this dependency and develop their legal writing voice, we wanted to transform traditional standard-based pedagogy (Cox, Malone, & Winke, 2018) into asset-based pedagogy (Lubbe & Eloff, 2004) as we designed our pedagogical sequence that encourages learners to take charge of their legal writing process.

**Overview of Deliverables for the Project**

1. We provide **two pedagogical sequences** that guide multilingual students to critically assess the underlying discourse features and rhetorical strategies associated with legal texts. We focus on these features because they are expected in legal texts. Without them, readers can easily become confused. We use the linguistic tool of genre analysis, which means that we analyze model texts to demonstrate expected language features of a particular text type for a given discourse community (e.g., the field of law).

Each pedagogical sequence has three moves: (1) Teacher-Fronted Model Analysis, (2) Scaffolded Interactive Activities, and (3) Independent Application with Self-Analysis. For the Scaffolded Interactive Activities (Move 2), we created the following steps:

* + We first show the class assignment (see “In-Class Modeling” slide with image of assignment).
	+ Then we model the analysis in class (see “In-Class Modeling” slides) to ensure students understand the at-home assignment.
	+ Students work in pairs to complete the rest of the assignment outside of class (see “Out-of-Class Assignment” slide with image of assignment).
	+ When they come back to class, volunteers present their analysis, and we discuss as a class (see “Answer Key” slides).
1. We also provide a **bank of materials** that we developed to help students work collaboratively with us to look at language development and writing strategies using a coaching model.

***1. Pedagogical Sequences***

1. **Unpacking Transitions as a Discourse Feature**: We provide materials that we piloted using transitions — as a discourse feature — and how they are used across text types in (1) a lawyer-to-lawyer case, (2) a lawyer-to-lawyer office memo, and (3) scholar-to-scholar law review articles. Demonstrating the variety of ways transitions can be used demystifies how successful writers convey their logic to readers and creates awareness of writers’ robust choices. For more on transitions, see Simon (2021).
	* **Move 1**: Teacher-Fronted Model Analysis – we provide [slides](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17dKYUj5UvTdoGlbFYH1FA44sK0OR98qn/view?usp=sharing)
	* **Move 2**: Scaffolded Interactive Activity – we provide one activity using [slides](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17dKYUj5UvTdoGlbFYH1FA44sK0OR98qn/view?usp=sharing) & an [assignment handout](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xi3F-R3L5C8U0petkJ2CdPepFZ19vDlg/view?usp=sharing) with the answer key embedded in the slides
	* **Move 3**: Independent Application with Self-Analysis – we provide [slides](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17dKYUj5UvTdoGlbFYH1FA44sK0OR98qn/view?usp=sharing) and a [self-analysis guide](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yWNxf5FeWpOLK2HcFwvCSC7ETIGHH59v/view?usp=sharing)
2. **Presenting Persuasive Support as a Rhetorical Strategy**: We provide materials that we piloted to demonstrate how legal writers present persuasive support — as a rhetorical strategy — across text types in (1) a lawyer-to-lawyer case, (2) a lawyer-to-lawyer office memo, and (3) scholar-to-scholar law review articles. Demonstrating the variety of ways that persuasive support can be presented demystifies how successful writers present a convincing and cogent legal argument to readers and creates awareness of the writers’ set of choices. For more on persuasive support in legal writing, see such writers as Neumann et al. (2021).
	* **Move 1**: Teacher-Fronted Model Analysis – we provide [slides](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17dKYUj5UvTdoGlbFYH1FA44sK0OR98qn/view?usp=sharing)
	* **Move 2**: Scaffolded Interactive Activities – we provide two activities using [slides](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17dKYUj5UvTdoGlbFYH1FA44sK0OR98qn/view?usp=sharing) & two assignment handouts ([activity 1](https://drive.google.com/file/d/15_aD4tnUgThE4cOQTp4jb52PDk-cBarP/view?usp=sharing) and [activity 2](https://drive.google.com/file/d/10D9UxHvHSHdHoUbM_D_dt4f_8AwOP0Is/view?usp=sharing)) with the answer keys embedded in the slides
	* **Move 3**: Independent Application with Self-Analysis – we provide [slides](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17dKYUj5UvTdoGlbFYH1FA44sK0OR98qn/view?usp=sharing) and self-analysis guides ([activity 1](https://drive.google.com/file/d/14OwhJwa4rBWDGfw4wVcQxEo3FFLiE5Ur/view?usp=sharing) and [activity 2](https://drive.google.com/file/d/12967H6Csycb4lPgUFD_g1aWvtuh5Up23/view?usp=sharing))

***2. Resource Bank***

We provide materials that we piloted to support students in becoming more independent writers, including an introduction to (1) a collaborative coaching model; (2) a language log – a tool to help multilingual law students assess discrete aspects of their writing for grammar and style; and (3) interactive worksheets exploring different grammar features, such as sentence structure, relative clauses, voice, conditionals, and articles/nouns.

1. **Collaborative Coaching Model:** We provide [slides](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17dKYUj5UvTdoGlbFYH1FA44sK0OR98qn/view?usp=sharing) and [a handout](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AEPsEc7bqvFhmrHXmtt87Z1YkszJvPyi/view?usp=sharing) with an interactive activity that includes (1) discussion questions and (2) a strategy for planning the first individual meeting with the professor. We also provide [a template](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1i_UeGv44qmYSfAD5ECS-0OypXS9qt29R/view?usp=sharing) for generating takeaways during the individual coaching meeting. These activities help students see their teachers as coaches, increasing student agency in the learning process.
2. **Language Log**: We provide [slides](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17dKYUj5UvTdoGlbFYH1FA44sK0OR98qn/view?usp=sharing) and handouts that guide students to use a language log to analyze their use of grammar and style in their writing. This reflective analysis raises awareness of what is working and/or not working in student writing.
	* **Step 1:** We provide an activity ([handout](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1njWXxY_68zT9ntmnP8abz0AJNRm9nI_q/view?usp=sharing)) to find errors in a teacher-adapted text (answer key on slides).
	* **Step 2:** We provide an activity in which the teacher guides the class to create a sample “Language Log” of the teacher-adapted text from Step 1 by (1) reviewing features of a language log and (2) co-constructing a language log of the errors students detected ([answer key](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FPI8JzteUWFnWVoxvYdDVDqxkIf56hxJ/view?usp=sharing)).
	* **Step 3:** We provide an activity for students to identify common “errors” in their writing and create their own “Language Log” ([handout](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vBoDdGqxQiKn9OclfRebtmV83N5Ue2IC/view?usp=sharing)).
3. **Interactive Grammar Worksheets**: We provide [slides](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17dKYUj5UvTdoGlbFYH1FA44sK0OR98qn/view?usp=sharing) and interactive worksheets with answer keys that explore different grammar features. Grammar at the paragraph level is important because it helps writers voice their logic. Similar to the process shown for discourse features and rhetorical strategies (see 1.A. and 1.B.), the student would progress through different stages for each feature: (1) an intuition check, (2) in-class modeling, (3) at-home analysis, and (4) in-class discussion and review of answers.
	* Sentence Structure ([handout](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_kUvs5y7VheRD6O0yqvTnbaK-_8JeuKY/view?usp=sharing) & [answer key](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1au5kscFwSBReVKLynP3vnng_0WPLZqww/view?usp=sharing))
	* Relative Clauses ([handout](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Qgc7RjvEOkJzPfjRatfKnzLhkJNlT9s6/view?usp=sharing) & [answer key](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CqgePzZisubLVrg8IeozoqnuaErPfT-w/view?usp=sharing))
	* Voice ([handout](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sbG8lXEtc-IxJ3XkDsGE1gbduzPm39_2/view?usp=sharing) & [answer key](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ptKYbVJLPTMQTRzRdCNpQ8-n2WTnETP5/view?usp=sharing))
	* Conditionals ([handout](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WSF1Mo8a6ROiMgZDzNTUs6fyarl3sNop/view?usp=sharing) & [answer key](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NQfc9D16MMmyUCvOzluM2DEgll8U1Cfg/view?usp=sharing))
	* Articles/nouns ([handout](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1l78wEPPBegP_cHvnmKrQu1BCsUni8Kbk/view?usp=sharing) & [answer key](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zfVPFtTbnOAErygJJSWz2gqBkH8Qic-R/view?usp=sharing))

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