Paul Kei Matsuda

Composition Studies and ESL Writing: A Disciplinary Division of Labor

Specialization leads to its own problems. The discipline or department can become an end in itself.

—Joel Colton (317)

Although the number of nonnative speakers of English in U.S. institutions of higher education has been increasing continuously during the last four decades, the development of composition studies does not seem to reflect this trend.¹ Until fairly recently, discussions of English as a Second Language (ESL) issues in composition studies have been few and far between. Few composition theorists include second-language perspectives in their discussions, and only a handful of empirical studies written and read by composition specialists consider second-language writers in their research design, interpretation of data and discussion of implications. It almost seems as though the presence of over 457,000 international students in colleges and universities across the nation (Davis 2) does not concern writing teachers and scholars.²

The presence of ESL students should be an important consideration for all teachers and scholars of writing because ESL students can be found in many writing courses across the United States. As Jessica Williams' survey of ESL writing program administration suggests, the vast majority of institutions continue to require undergraduate ESL students to enroll in first-year composition courses, often in addition to special ESL writing courses.

Paul Kei Matsuda is a doctoral candidate in the Rhetoric and Composition program at Purdue University, where he specializes in second-language writing. He teaches the graduate practicum in teaching ESL writing as well as undergraduate and graduate writing courses for both native and nonnative speakers of English. This essay is part of a larger historical study of second-language writing in US higher education.

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In many cases, they are also required by their departments to take professional writing courses. Thus, it is becoming increasingly likely that writing teachers at one point or another will encounter ESL writers in their classrooms. Although working with these students is “not radically different from teaching writing to native English speakers” (Leki xi), some of the linguistic and cultural differences they bring to the classroom pose a unique set of challenges to writing teachers. In a review of empirical research comparing ESL writers and native speakers of English, Tony Silva states that the former not only produced texts that were characterized by native-English-speaking readers as “distinct from and often simpler and less effective” but also “planned and reread their writing less, wrote with more difficulty because of a lack of lexical resources, and exhibited less ability to revise intuitively by ear” (“Differences” 215). In Teaching ESL Writing, Joy Reid also writes that “the needs, backgrounds, learning styles, and writing strategies of most ESL students differ dramatically” (vii) from those of native English speakers. Furthermore, she points out that there is considerable diversity even among ESL students “in terms of language and cultural backgrounds, prior education, gender, age, and ESL language proficiency” (vii), which may make working with ESL students challenging for some writing instructors. While there also are many similarities, these and many other differences continue to “cause anxiety and misunderstandings” (Leki xi), suggesting the need for writing instructors to become more sensitive to the unique needs of ESL writers.

This absence of second-language writing discussions reflects and is reflected in the way composition studies has been constructed in its historical context. The second-language component does not appear in the work of influential historians of composition studies—such as James Berlin, Robert Connors, Susan Miller and David Russell—because ESL writing has not been considered as part of composition studies since it began to move toward the status of a profession during the 1960s. This omission poses a serious problem for the status of second-language issues in composition studies because historical studies provide narratives that shape the practice within the profession. That is, the lack of second-language elements in the history of composition studies, and therefore in our sense of professional identity, continues to reinscribe the view that the sole responsibility of teaching writing to ESL students falls upon professionals in another intellectual formation: second-language studies, or more specifically, Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). This view of the interdisciplinary relationship, or what I call the “disciplinary division of labor,” seems to reflect the values of the two intellectual formations that sought, especially during their formative years, to establish their own unique identities as respectable professions or academic “disciplines.” As I will argue, this desire
to claim their own areas of expertise led to the division of writing scholarship into first- and second-language components. This division of labor, however, is inadequate as a metaphor for the relationship between composition studies and TESL because ESL students, just like their native-speaker counterparts, continue to be affected by the institutional practices within composition studies because of their continued presence in composition classes. Yet, this metaphor not only keeps writing teachers from applying the insights from the growing body of second-language writing scholarship in working with ESL writers in their classrooms but also creates a tension that further divides teachers and researchers in the two fields.5

To construct an interdisciplinary relationship that is more responsive to the needs of ESL students in composition programs, it is necessary to understand the historical context in which the disciplinary division of labor is situated. In this essay, I examine how this division emerged between composition studies and TESL. Specifically, I will show how the professionalization of TESL over the period of 1941 to 1966—just when composition studies was also undergoing a revision of its own disciplinary identity—inadvertently contributed to the creation of the disciplinary division of labor that continues to influence the institutional practices in composition programs across the nation.

The Birth of a Profession

It is not enough for the foreign language teacher to be able to speak English; to be most effective he should know English—its sound system, its structural system, and its vocabulary—from the point of view of a descriptive analysis in accord with modern linguistic science.

—Charles C. Fries, Teaching (13)

Prior to the 1940s, the teaching of ESL was not regarded as a profession in the United States, although this is not to say that the teaching of English to nonnative speakers had not taken place. By the 19th century, the teaching of English to Native American children was well under way (Spack, Americans), and Americanization programs provided some formal English language instruction to immigrants in urban areas during the late 19th century and the early 20th century.6 At the college level, ESL instruction began to take place during the early 20th century. Harold B. Allen notes that the first English class for international students was taught in 1911 by J. Raleigh Nelson at the University of Michigan. Harvard University offered
a similar course in 1927, followed by George Washington University in 1931 ("English" 307). Other institutions, however, failed to recognize the special needs of international ESL students, although by 1930 there were already almost 10,000 international students, mostly from Asia and Europe (Institute of International Education 232–35). Consequently, many ESL students were forced into the sink-or-swim approach to language learning. The teaching of ESL generally did not receive serious attention in the United States, and there seemed to be little respect for ESL teachers (Allen, "English" 307; "Freshman" 156).

A significant change was brought to the status of the ESL teaching profession with the development of U.S. foreign policy. Following President Franklin D. Roosevelt's announcement of the Good Neighbor policy at the Pan-American Conference in 1933, the teaching of English to nonnative speakers—especially in Latin American countries—became a serious concern of the federal government. The subsequent development prompted the U.S. Department of State to promote the teaching of the English language to nonnative speakers as well as the preparation of English language teachers. In the fall of 1939, the State Department funded, in cooperation with the Rockefeller Foundation, a conference at the University of Michigan to decide on a theoretical basis for the teaching of ESL (Allen, "English" 299; Alatis 382). Two of the most promising proposals were presented, according to Allen, by I. A. Richards and by Charles C. Fries:

Richards, who had just come to Harvard University from England and his association there with C. K. Ogden in developing Basic English, offered a plan to teach English as a foreign language through a combination of lessons involving word and picture correspondence and vocabulary acquisition through the use of Basic English. In sharp contrast, Fries's proposal not only relied heavily upon the principles of Henry Sweet but also added a significant dimension taken from current linguistic theory. This dimension provided for controlled drills, structural study of English and the native language of the learner. ("English" 299)

Fries' proposal convinced the Rockefeller Foundation to provide him with a grant in 1940 to develop teaching materials for Latin American students. In 1941, with additional grants from the Department of State and the Rockefeller Foundation, the English Language Institute (ELI) at the University of Michigan came into being with Fries as its first director.

The opening of the ELI at Michigan was one of the most significant events in the history of TESL in the United States. At the 1956 meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Paul R. Sullivan of the University of Minnesota referred to the Institute as the
starting point of modern English language teaching methods ("Studies" 163–64). Allen later characterized the ELI as "the nation's most dynamic single force in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language" ("English" 298). Indeed, the creation of the ELI at Michigan had a significant influence on the development of TESL as a profession. One of the primary missions of the ELI was to provide specialized intensive language instruction to ESL students. Influenced by the US foreign policy, the ELI initially provided courses designed primarily for Spanish speaking students from Latin American countries, but later it opened itself up to ESL students from other countries who were brought by the conclusion of the World War II. During its first ten years of operation, 2,100 international ESL students at the University of Michigan were enrolled in the intensive language courses offered by the ELI. The Institute also provided a professional preparation program for ESL teachers, thus promoting a sense of professionalism among ESL teachers. In fact, one of the most important consequences of the creation of the Michigan ELI was the rise of what may be called "Michigan professionalism," the principle on which the Institute was founded.

Before the Michigan ELI was established in 1941, it was commonly believed that anyone whose native language was English was qualified to teach English to nonnative speakers—much as some thought any literate person could teach writing. In fact, one of the most significant contributions that Fries's ELI made to the profession was to dispel this myth. As Fries later wrote:

The native speaker himself however, unless he has been specially trained to observe and analyze his own language processes, finds great difficulty in describing the special characteristics either of the sounds he makes or of the structural devices he uses. His comments about his own language more often mislead than help a foreigner. ("As We See It" 13)

With the creation of the professional preparation program at the University of Michigan, however, the teaching of ESL began to move toward the status of a respectable profession.

The meaning of "professionalism" that emerged among applied linguists at Michigan during the 1940s was quite different from the sense of professionalism embraced by practitioners of TESL during the 1960s. Allen's characterization of the language teaching profession in the inaugural issue of the TESOL Quarterly in 1966, for instance, focused on the sense of belonging to a group of teachers who shared common concerns and problems:

Nor without an organization can a large number of people with common interests effectively further those interests. Without an organization, teachers
having a common discipline and a common subject matter will not easily come
to consider themselves a professional group. ("TESOL and the Journal" 3)

In contrast, professionalism, as defined by Fries and his colleagues at Michi-
gan, privileged the knowledge of structural linguistics. What professionalism
in language teaching meant to them was the application of the principles of
linguistics, hence the use of the term "applied linguistics" in describing the
profession of language teaching. The term, in the words of Robert B. Kap-
lan, was "initially nearly inextricably tied to language teaching," although it
has, at least in the United States, acquired a broader meaning (374). 8

In *A History of English Language Teaching*, A. P. R. Howatt points out that
Fries' view of applied linguistics was "a hierarchical one" with the linguist
"at the 'top'" producing the "basic, scientific descriptions of the source and
target languages" to be applied by language teachers (267). That Fries de-
cried the lack of knowledge about linguistic principles among language
teachers was apparent in the preface to his *Teaching and Learning English as
a Foreign Language* (1945), a textbook for second-language teachers that
continued to be influential until the 1970s. He wrote:

> In spite of the fact that there has been more than a hundred years of vigoro-
> us linguistic investigation in accord with sound scientific methods, very lit-
> tle of the results of this investigation has actually got into the schools to
> affect the materials and methods of teaching language and the actual condi-
> tions under which language teaching is attempted. (i)

He went on to quote structural linguist Leonard Bloomfield, who com-
plained in 1925 that teachers at all levels "do not know what language is,
and yet must teach it, and in consequence waste years of every child's life
and reach a poor result" (Bloomfield 5, qtd. in Fries, *Teaching i*). Influenced
by a Bloomfieldian view of linguistics as a body of knowledge with prac-
tical applications, Fries saw the development of teaching materials at the
Michigan ELI as "an attempt to interpret, in a practical way for teaching,
the principles of modern linguistic science and to use the results of scien-
tific linguistic research" (*Teaching i*).

Fries's view of professionalism was not always welcomed by language
teachers, however, because his hierarchical notion of applied linguistics
struck them as condescending. As William G. Moulton notes, Fries's idea of
"instruction being based on 'sound linguistic principles' and being sup-
ervised by a 'trained linguist' struck them [language teachers] as profes-
sional exaggeration, not to say arrogance, on the part of the linguists" (97).
Yet, Michigan professionalism became increasingly pervasive both
nationally and internationally due to the enormous success in reproducing
the values of Fries's ELI through the graduates of its teacher preparation program. Although the number of programs that offered graduate courses and certificate programs in TESL had increased to 22 by the end of the 1950s (Institute of International Education 123), the creation of many teacher preparation programs at various institutions across the nation did not so much diversify the view of the profession as it perpetuated the already influential Michigan professionalism because many of those programs were developed or staffed by people who were associated with the Michigan ELI in one way or another. As Allen wrote:

Even in many of these newer programs is felt the pervasive influence of Charles C. Fries, for dominant in the list of those who founded or now direct or teach in principal other programs are the names of persons who were either trained in the English Language Institute or, now a second generation, were trained by former graduates or staff members. ("English" 302)

Another significant event that contributed to the perpetuation of Michigan professionalism was the creation of a journal. Graduate students at the Michigan ELI had established the Research Club in Language Learning and, in 1948, began the publication of Language Learning: A Quarterly Journal of Applied Linguistics, the first journal of its kind in the United States. It was also "the first journal in the world to carry the term 'applied linguistics' in its title," although L. W. Lockhart had already used the term in the subtitle of his book in 1931 (Editorial 1). The goal of the journal, according to Howatt, was "to bring the ideas developed at Fries's English Language Institute at the University of Michigan to the attention of a wider public" as well as to promote the understanding of linguistics and applied linguistics in general (265). As Robert Lado also noted in his 1960 editorial for the journal, the stated goal of the Research Club in publishing the journal was clearly in line with Fries's view of the profession: "to publish articles exploring the application and implications of linguistics in foreign language teaching" (v). Lado further wrote:

Language Learning steadily continued to fill the need for the publication and distribution of those articles that more or less deliberately applied linguistics to language teaching.... Language Learning has dared to publish articles which would be rejected as too linguistic for the non-linguist and not linguistic enough for the pure linguist. (v)

The initial goal of the Research Club was met successfully; the journal became widely accepted—in the first ten years of the publication, the circulation rose from 200 U.S. subscribers to 1,200 subscribers in 76 countries (Lado v).
The journal continued to adhere to Fries's view of the language teaching profession until the late 1960s. As a 1967 editorial stated, the journal had been publishing articles that "dealt with applications of linguistic theory in the teaching and learning of languages." However, it was no longer possible to ignore the broadening definition of applied linguistics, which came to include "studies in first language acquisition, in bilingualism, translation (human and machine), in linguistic statistics, in sociolinguistics, in psycholinguistics, in the development of writing systems for unwritten languages, in the development of 'new' national languages, and so on." For this reason the editor announced that the journal would also consider articles "in these and other branches of applied linguistics" but only "to the extent that they are at least of marginal interest to those applied linguists whose primary concern is with language learning and teaching" (1).

The growth of Michigan professionalism and its view of second-language teaching as the application of linguistic principles had a profound impact on the way ESL writing was positioned in the emerging field of composition. Before discussing how the rise of professionalism in TESL contributed to the division of labor, however, it is necessary to understand the place of ESL issues in composition studies during that time. I now turn to a discussion of how ESL issues became a concern among teachers of composition and how they were handled in composition programs.

**ESL Concerns at CCCC**

Many colleges and universities in the United States, especially large institutions with a reputation abroad, are constantly faced with the problem of what to do with foreign students who do not have a knowledge of English adequate for keeping up, on an even basis, with native students.

—George Gibian, (157)

Despite the development of the Michigan ELI and other innovative local ESL programs, such as the program developed at Queens College (Schueler), the number of institutions that developed specialized ESL programs for international students during the early 1940s was rather small. As Allen reported, "there was no noticeable increase in the numbers of foreign students" and "no one saw any major problem." As a consequence, few institutions were prepared for the large numbers of international ESL students who came to the United States at the conclusion of the Second World War ("English" 307). The development of the Conference on
College Composition and Communication during the first decade after the war reflected rising concerns about ESL students. When CCCC was first established in 1947, ESL was not a major component of the organization. Yet, as the number of ESL students continued to increase during the 1950s, institutions were no longer able to ignore the presence of this population, and ESL became an important issue at the annual meetings of the Conference.

In the late 1950s, the problems associated with international ESL students often became a topic of discussion at the annual spring meetings of CCCC. A number of panels and a series of workshops on issues surrounding international students were presented between 1955 and 1966, and were included in the workshop reports printed annually in CCC, a practice that continued until the 1970s. The names of prominent ESL specialists—including Kenneth Croft of Georgetown University, Robert B. Kaplan of the University of Southern California, Robert Lado of the University of Michigan, and Paul R. Sullivan of Georgetown University—appeared regularly in those workshop reports.

Among the scholars and teachers who were active in both TESL and composition studies was linguist Harold B. Allen, who later presided over NCTE in 1961 and became the first president of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in 1966. Allen was a key player during the formative years of CCCC. In a historical review of CCC, Phillips, Greenberg and Gibson count Allen among the most frequently published authors of major articles as well as the most frequently cited authors between 1950 and 1964. Characterizing him as one of the “early shapers of the discipline,” they also note that Allen “was active in the national organization” and that “his reprinted speeches about the future of the profession were often referred to in CCC articles” (452). Allen was a member of the general committee for the first CCCC meeting in 1949, and he chaired a workshop the following year. At the business meeting on November 24, 1950, he was elected associate chair of the committee. He then chaired the Conference in 1952.

Although the lack of English language proficiency was one of the most important concerns among English teachers, it was obvious to many that the difficulties that ESL students faced were not only linguistic. For this reason, discussions at CCCC meetings included a wide variety of topics. The participants in the workshop called “The Foreign Student in the Freshman Course” at the 1955 meeting “quickly agreed that satisfactory handling of the foreign student’s problems with English involved more than materials and methods of classroom instruction” (“Foreign Student” 1955, 138). Indeed, topics of discussion in this and subsequent workshops often included a wide range of issues: the need for and the availability of
English language proficiency tests, models of special ESL curriculum, the issue of granting college credits for ESL courses, evaluation standards in English classes, admission criteria for international students, the need for orientation programs, and the role of English teachers in the students’ cultural adjustment process.

The presence of a large number of ESL students in the English classroom was a serious concern not only among ESL specialists but among teachers whose professional interest or preparation did not include the teaching of ESL. The issue of increasing linguistic diversity in English classrooms was highlighted in a 1956 panel entitled “Studies in English as a Second Language.” The panel chair, Paul R. Sullivan, began the session by noting that “all teachers of English frequently teach English as a second language” in effect because of the presence of students who spoke a differing variety of English, if not another language, outside of school. He also pointed out the need to provide specialized instruction for the increasing number of international ESL students (“Studies” 163–64). In the following year, Sullivan chaired another panel on the application of TESL principles to the regular English classes. In this panel, he once again pointed out that it had become “increasingly evident that many teachers are finding themselves faced with the problem of teaching English as a second language” (“English” 10). For this reason ESL workshops attracted many non-ESL specialists; in 1956, faculty from institutions without ESL programs constituted the majority of the participants in the CCCC workshop. One of the central topics of discussion at this workshop was the question of how to deal with international ESL students in the regular composition course at institutions where neither ESL specialists nor separate ESL courses were available—a question that continues to be relevant today. The report also indicated that participants in this workshop “represented an immense range in the kinds of programs (or lack of them) now existing” (“Foreign Student” 1956, 122).

Despite the increasing recognition throughout the 1950s of the presence of ESL students in English classrooms and the unique problems they brought with them, the vast majority of institutions continued to place ESL students into sections of English courses designed only for native speakers of English without making any adjustments or providing sufficient linguistic support. Others placed international ESL students into basic writing courses, or “remedial subfreshman courses” as they were then called, although the needs of international ESL students tended to be quite different from those of basic writers and immigrant ESL students.12 These courses were often taught by teachers whose interest and preparation were limited to literary studies. Some institutions even sent ESL students to “speech clinics where speech therapists treated them as suffering from speech defects” (Allen, “English” 307).
At other institutions, where a large number of ESL students were enrolled, the problem of writing instruction for ESL students became "too conspicuous to be brushed under the freshman English rug" (307). One type of solution, deemed most desirable by applied linguists at the time, was the creation of intensive English language programs modeled after the ELI at Michigan. Many of those programs, often located outside the traditional institutional structure of the English department, were staffed by specially trained ESL instructors. However, the "special training" for the teachers meant at the time coursework in structural linguistics. The intensive programs were able to meet the needs of beginning or intermediate ESL students who had limited or no background in the English language, but they did not address the needs of ESL students in composition courses. Fries's approach to language teaching, which he termed the "oral approach," focused on the "mastery" of the sound system of the English language and was not intended for the teaching of writing to ESL students at the college level. In Fries's words,

The practice which the student contributes must be oral practice. No matter if the final result desired is only to read the foreign language[,] the mastery of the fundamentals of the language—the structure and the sound system with a limited vocabulary—must be through speech. The speech is the language. The written record is but a secondary representation of the language. To "master" a language it is not necessary to read it, but it is extremely doubtful whether one can really read the language without first mastering it orally. (Teaching 6)

To Fries, a language was nothing more than "a set of habits for oral production and reception," and writing, or "written symbols," was used only to the extent that it assisted in the mastery of the spoken language (6). Partly due to the dominance of Fries's view of applied linguistics, the study of written language or the teaching of writing to ESL students did not attract serious attention from applied linguists until the 1960s, and intensive English programs did not pay much attention to the teaching of writing beyond grammar drills at the sentence level.

At many institutions where ESL enrollment was relatively low, creating a separate program staffed by ESL specialists was not a feasible option. Instead, special remedial writing courses were created for ESL students and were often taught by instructors from foreign language departments or English departments. In "College English for Foreign Students" (1951), George Gibian wrote that a special section of remedial English was developed at Harvard in 1949 to meet the "peculiar needs" of "a small group of European students, all of whom seemed to need extra aid" (157). The goal of this course was to teach students communication skills—including writing and
reading as well as oral communication—that were necessary to succeed in college courses. Sumner Ives of Tulane University also reported in 1953 the creation of a special ESL writing course offered only in the fall. Although this course was offered on a non-credit basis by default, it sometimes became credit bearing when a significant number of students demonstrated the ability to succeed in the second-semester writing course. While this course was primarily concerned with writing, the curriculum and materials from Michigan’s ELI were adopted to help students who needed extra linguistic support. Similarly, William F. Marquardt of the University of Washington created a three-credit ESL course in which writing was the focus of instruction.

Those who were committed to the teaching of ESL argued for the division of labor on the basis of the need for a specially trained ESL instructor. As Ives wrote: “This course should...be taught by someone on the permanent staff, for an essential feature is the continuity of judgment which is involved. Moreover, it should be taught by someone with linguistic training” (143). Although these courses were intended to provide the needed linguistic support for ESL students, they were also motivated by the need to release composition specialists from the extra “burden” of teaching ESL students in their classes. Gibian argued, for instance, that “distributing the burden of extra aid and consideration among all instructors of courses which the foreign student takes, without helping by providing a special course, is an inefficient process, wasteful and lacking in organization” (157). The creation of these programs was one of the factors that contributed to the division between first- and second-language specialists. However, it was the combination of this and other factors, such as the rise of applied linguistics and the professionalization of both TESL and composition studies, that ultimately led to the institutionalization of the disciplinary division of labor.

Institutionalization of the Division of Labor

If we are to be a profession, we must have standards that the professional worker meets. If we are to be a profession, some agency must establish those standards. If we are to be a profession, some agency must recognize appropriately those institutions that acceptably prepare teachers to meet those standards.

—Harold B. Allen, “The Pros Have It” (117)

As the number of ESL programs and teacher preparation programs increased, more teachers began to receive specialized training in TESL, and
the need for professionalization of TESL was increasingly felt. Yet, many institutions continued to staff their ESL programs with junior faculty and graduate students from English and foreign language departments whose primary interest and training were in literary studies and not in the teaching of ESL. This tendency was deemed unacceptable both by applied linguists, who were increasingly committed to promoting the application of linguistic principles, and by TESL specialists who sought to increase the professional status of ESL teachers. As William Slager wrote:

For linguistic science has made it clear that to teach English (effectiveness, organization and usage) to native-born Americans, and to teach English as a foreign language (mastery of the sound and structure system), are as widely different as two tasks can be. The first in many ways deals with language as an art. The other deals with language as a science: its subject matter and its classroom techniques require special background and training. That both courses are often taught in the same department is coincidental. (24)

To Slager and others, the teaching of ESL required “enough linguistic training to make phonemic and structural comparisons” across languages (“Foreign Student” 1955, 139), and the division of labor between composition teachers and ESL teachers was often suggested as a desirable, if not the only acceptable, solution to the problem of teaching ESL students.

In the report from the 1961 CCCP panel, “The Freshman Whose Native Language is Not English,” chair Ernest A. Boulay argued for the creation of special programs as a solution to the increasing concerns about ESL students. Implicit in this argument was the division of labor between writing teachers and ESL teachers. He argued for a “separate preparatory course” taught by “a linguistic expert, or experts, so that the student may be prepared for and oriented to some of the vagaries of the English language before the Freshman English teacher meets him” (156). At the same session, other panelists also addressed the issue of teacher qualification and argued for the division of labor. Clara M. Siggins of Boston College argued that the course for ESL students “should not be given by the beginning English teacher in order to ‘pick up’ experience, nor should it be given as extracurricular activity” and that “a program such as this calls for careful course organization and a special faculty.” Clifford H. Prator of the University of California, Los Angeles was of the same opinion. He argued that ESL teaching “can be well done only by a specialist with an analytical knowledge of English and with deep insights into the way the student’s native tongue interferes with his learning of the new language. The usual freshman composition instructor is not equipped to do the work, to say nothing of the person whose only qualification is that he speaks English as his mother tongue” (156). Prator’s argument was motivated by the need for professionalization:
The teaching of English as a second language is a perfectly respectable academic field which offers immense opportunities for serious research. This discipline needs more practitioners who will devote their entire career to it and not regard it as a temporary way of winning one's bread while preparing to teach courses in linguistic[s] or literature. It is definitely not a job which some university departments of English can continue with impunity to wish off on the newest member of the faculty and on its most defenseless member. (156)

The arguments for the division of labor were also motivated by Michigan professionalism, which sought to establish, in the language teaching arena, the place of the structural linguists who had "become increasingly interested in applying the results of linguistic methods of analysis to the solution of language problems" (156). In 1965, members of the CCC workshop, chaired by Robert B. Kaplan, formalized the attitude of ESL specialists at the Conference by putting forth a recommendation that "[w]here it is feasible, speakers of English as a second language should be taught in special classes by teachers who have had training in teaching English as a second language" ("ESL Programs" 203).

Some ESL specialists were wary of the possible implications of the division of labor. When professionalization was realized by the creation of TESOL, Allen cautioned TESL specialists that the argument for professionalization should not become an argument for "the reductio ad absurdum that no one should legally be entitled to teach a single English word to non-English speaking persons without having obtained a license to practice" ("Pros" 114). Although the argument for professionalization did not lead to a ban on the teaching of ESL by non-TESL specialists, it did lead to a decline of interest in ESL issues among composition specialists. In effect, composition teachers were being told by applied linguists and TESL specialists that they lacked the needed expertise to teach ESL students. At the same time, however, composition teachers might have welcomed the same argument because it would release them from the "burden" of acquiring new knowledge and skills to teach ESL students and from the extra time that they had to spend in working with the unique problems that ESL students brought to the classroom.

The decline of interest in ESL issues among composition teachers was evident as the number of participants at CCC workshops on ESL issues decreased; in fact, nobody attended the 1965 workshop. Discouraged by the lack of interest in ESL issues among CCC members, the ESL workshop in 1966, chaired again by Kaplan, made a decision that would, in effect, remove ESL elements from composition studies almost entirely. The "small but loquacious group" of ESL specialists at the workshop resolved
“somewhat sadly...that, given the small attendance at this workshop for several years under the aegis of CCCC, the group should meet hereafter only at NCTE meetings” (“Teaching” 198). In the same year, TESOL was started as a professional organization to serve the needs of a growing number of ESL specialists (Alatis 386–87; Allen, “English” 315–16; Hook 218). The creation of a professional organization that devoted itself entirely to ESL issues and the decline of interest in those issues among composition specialists led to the separation of writing issues into first-language and second-language components. The disciplinary division of labor was thus institutionalized.

The immediate effect of the institutionalization of the division of labor can best be illustrated by considering the exchange that took place between Joseph H. Friend of Southern Illinois University and Gordon Wilson of Miami University, Ohio. At the CCCC executive committee meeting on April 1967, Friend asked “whether problems of teaching composition to non-English speakers should not be included in the program.” Wilson, who was the executive committee chair at the time, responded to Friend’s inquiry by pointing out that the “competition of TESOL might prevent a sufficient number of people from attending a workshop.” Although Wilson suggested that “a panel [on ESL issues] might be advisable” (Burke 1967, 205), sessions concerning nonnative speakers of English—either in the form of panels or workshops—remained absent from CCCC conventions at least for the next ten years.

Richard Braddock of the University of Iowa, who was the convention chair in 1967, was more sympathetic to Friend’s cause. During the same meeting, he appointed Friend to act as a liaison between CCCC and TESOL (Burke 1967, 206–7). When Braddock chaired the executive committee meeting in November 1967, he responded to Friend’s brief report by asking him to “continue submitting such reports to CCCC” and by saying that “CCCC is always willing to cooperate with TESL” (Hettich 262). However, the TESOL reports continued only during Braddock’s tenure in the executive committee. Friend made another report in April 1968 (Burke 1968), but his name disappeared from these meetings after the November 1968 meeting, when Friend “had no report on TESOL” (Burke 1969, 267). ESL concerns had perhaps vanished even earlier, since the content of neither of Friend’s reports were recorded in the secretary’s reports on executive committee meetings.

Beyond the Division of Labor

That there is, and will be, a clash of cultures between the two disciplines is...beyond doubt, and as long as it
remains, the immediate needs of the students will not be met as constructively as they might be if L1 [composition] and ESL specialists worked jointly and cooperatively.

—Terry Santos (89)

As I have argued, the division of labor between composition specialists and ESL specialists was inadvertently created between the 1940s and the 1960s as a byproduct of the professionalization of TESL as well as of composition studies. The division of labor has had a lasting impact on the relationship between the two professions. Guadalupe Valdés observes, for instance, that “individuals who focus on the teaching of English to native speakers generally belong to organizations such as NCTE…and CCC” while “individuals…who focus on the teaching of English to nonnative speakers of English are generally members of TESOL…or NABE (National Association of Bilingual Education).” She continues:

Even though there are segments within CCC and NCTE that specialize in the writing of nonmainstream students, these two organizations are not generally known for their expertise on matters related to the teaching of English to students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. (88)

Indeed, one of the consequences of the disciplinary division of labor is the lack of concern about the needs of ESL writers among composition specialists that continues even today. As Alice Roy suggests, there is a “tendency among administrators and English Department faculties to look for linguists and ESL specialists to ‘deal with’ second language writers” (20; see also Ransdell). Ann Johns also points out that, while some ESL specialists have been trying to suggest ways to increase the understanding of ESL issues among composition specialists, ESL panels at CCC “seem to attract only the ESL people who attend this conference” (“Too Much” 86). Composition specialists, Johns further writes, “have shown little interest, so far, in who we are, who our students are, and what we do” (86). Although ESL issues have become somewhat visible at CCC meetings—thanks to the work of people such as Carolyn Chitereer Gilboa, Barbara Kroll, Nancy Duke S. Lay, Ann Raimes, Alice Roy, Tony Silva and Lynn Quitman Troyka—most CCC members seem to remain oblivious to the needs and characteristics of ESL writers.

As a view of the interdisciplinary relationship between composition studies and second-language studies, the division of labor is far from adequate because it is based on the “myth of transience” (Rose; Russell;
Zamel, “Strangers”)—the assumption that ESL writing can be broken down neatly into a linguistic component and a writing component and that the linguistic problems will disappear after some additional instruction in remedial language courses. Yet, this is often not the case. Even when ESL students are enrolled in special ESL courses before taking required writing courses, the unique difficulties that ESL writers encounter in English composition are not likely to disappear completely after a semester—or even a few years—of additional language instruction, as Ruth Spack demonstrated in her longitudinal study of a Japanese international student (“Acquisition”). Leki also points out that, “after ten years of studying English in classrooms abroad, ESL students still may have trouble writing effectively in English…and students who can recite grammar rules …are not always able to use those rules in producing language” (23). Similarly, Williams argues that it is unrealistic to expect that ESL writers “should have put their second language problems behind them and be ready to take on the challenges of the composition classroom without further support” (175). Furthermore, ESL students may not be familiar with the culturally constructed values and expectations that are tacitly understood and shared by the majority of teachers and students in the composition program, as a number of studies have suggested (Atkinson; Atkinson and Ramanathan; Fox; Li; Ramanathan and Kaplan). Since ESL students in most cases are required to enroll in composition courses, and since many ESL writers also take professional writing courses, ESL writing issues should be as much a concern for composition specialists as they are for second-language specialists.

I am not arguing, however, that composition studies and second-language studies should be merged. Although the disciplinary division of labor has created a number of serious and unresolved problems for the two intellectual formations, the solution to these problems does not lie in eliminating the division entirely. Since both composition studies and second-language studies have established their institutional identities and practices over the last three decades, attempting to consolidate the diverse practices in the two distinct professions would be unrealistic and even counterproductive. Rather, second-language writing should be seen as an integral part of both composition studies and second-language studies, and specialists in both professions should try to transform their institutional practices in ways that reflect the needs and characteristics of second-language writers in their own institutional contexts.

How, then, can composition studies integrate second-language elements into its institutional practices? One logical place to start is for composition specialists to begin learning about ESL writing and writers by reading relevant literature and by attending presentations, workshops,
and special interest group meetings on ESL-related topics at professional conferences. Research on second-language writing also appears regularly in second-language journals—such as College ESL, English for Specific Purposes, Journal of Second Language Writing, Language Learning, and TESOL Quarterly. In addition, a few journals in composition studies—most notably the Journal of Basic Writing, Teaching English in the Two-Year College and Written Communication—have come to include an increasing number of articles concerning second-language writing issues. A number of bibliographic sources on ESL writing are also available. Dan Tannacito’s A Guide to Writing in English as a Second or Foreign Language: An Annotated Bibliography provides a fairly comprehensive bibliography through the end of 1993, and the Journal of Second Language Writing also has been publishing annotated bibliographies of recent scholarship on the subject since 1993.

Composition scholars, regardless of their areas of interest or modes of inquiry, should also try to consider second-language perspectives in their work because theories of composition that exclude second-language writers and writing “can at best be extremely tentative and at worst totally invalid” (Silva et al. 402). In conducting empirical studies, composition researchers should acknowledge the presence of ESL writers in writing classrooms and try to include second-language writers in their research design, analysis, and discussion of implications—rather than excluding them as “outliers” or “exceptions,” as many researchers have done. As Paul Prior points out:

Although nonnative speakers (NNS) of English, whether resident or international students, are now found in many university classes, only one study of writing in the disciplines (Sternglass, 1988) has even mentioned such students, and that mention was brief. The different language, cultural, and educational backgrounds that NNS bring to their courses raise both theoretical and practical questions that deserve careful attention. (271)

Valdés also writes, “research on bilingual minority writers must be carried out by mainstream researchers as well as minority researchers and viewed as a legitimate focus of activity” (128).

Graduate programs in composition studies should also try to incorporate second-language writing into their curricula because graduate school is where institutional values are instilled in new members of the profession. At some institutions, graduate students in composition studies can take a second-language writing course offered through a graduate program in TESL, although the number of TESL programs offering a course in second-language writing is still small, and various institutional practices may discourage them from taking the course. An alternative is to create second-
language writing courses or components within graduate programs in composition studies. A second-language component can easily be added to courses in composition theory and history as publications concerning second-language writing are becoming more readily available (Kroll, *Second Language*; Severino et al.). In empirical research courses, students can discuss how the consideration of second-language writers may complicate research designs and analyses. Readings from second-language writing research can also be included in courses dealing with almost any topic in composition studies, including writing in the disciplines (Belcher and Braine; Johns, *Text*; Zamel and Spack), literacy (McKay; Rodby), assessment (Hamp-Lyons), reading and writing (Carson and Leki), writing program administration (Braine, “ESL”; Kroll, “Rhetoric/Syntax”; Roy; Silva, “Examination”; Williams), and written discourse analysis (Connor; Connor and Johns; Connor and Kaplan; Purves).

Another important site of institutional practice is writing program administration. Since ESL students continue to enroll in writing courses, writing program administrators should make every effort to provide an ESL-friendly learning environment. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. One approach is to place ESL writers into basic writing or “mainstream” sections of composition that are taught by writing teachers prepared to work with ESL writers. Creating an ESL section of required composition courses is also a common response to the presence of ESL writers. Another approach is to create a special section of composition where native and nonnative English speakers are systematically integrated and taught by a teacher who has preparation and experience in working with both types of students (Reichelt and Silva). As Silva suggests, what is important is “to offer ESL students as many of these options (and more) as resources permit” (“Examination” 41). Some institutions, however, may not be able to hire enough writing teachers with ESL preparation because of the lack of financial resources or the shortage of such teachers (Kroll, “Teaching”). In those situations, administrators may need to provide opportunities for writing teachers to learn how to work with ESL writers. This can be accomplished, for example, by offering pre-service and in-service workshops on teaching ESL writing, such as the one described by Braine (“Starting”), or by creating a local e-mail list for the discussion of ESL writing concerns. A number of introductory textbooks are available to facilitate the development of new ESL writing teachers (Campbell; Ferris and Hedgcock; Leki; Reid).

The needs of ESL students differ from individual to individual and from institution to institution, and it is not possible to create one solution that fits all situations. Yet, the solution cannot be found in total isolation from other disciplinary perspectives, either. For more than 30 years, ESL specialists

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have been working to improve the institutional practices for ESL writers in second-language classrooms by incorporating insights from composition studies; it is time for composition specialists to learn from them in developing institutional practices that can meet the needs of an increasing number of ESL students in writing classrooms—and beyond.

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Notes

1. The primary focus of this essay, which covers the period between 1941 and 1966, is on international ESL students at the undergraduate level rather than immigrant ESL students because, whereas the former began to increase in the 1940s, the latter did not reach a critical mass until the late 1960s. The distinction between international, or “foreign,” students and immigrant students, who are permanent residents or citizens (as opposed to "non-immigrant aliens") of the United States, was a salient one during the formative years of composition studies and TESL. (See Slager, for example.) Although this dichotomy tends to oversimplify differences within the two groups of students, it continues to be a significant distinction because immigrant ESL students have needs and advantages that are different than those of international students (Leki 42–43). The presence of immigrant ESL students warrants another historical study, which is beyond my scope here.

2. According to the Institute of International Education, the total number of international students in the 1996–1997 academic year was 457,984, including 227,305 undergraduate students (Davis 130). Although not all international students are ESL students, most of them come from countries where English is not the dominant language.

3. It is important to remember that not all ESL texts are "simple" or "ineffective"—overgeneralization of research findings should be avoided at all cost—and that these are relative characterizations based on the expectations of native-English-speaking readers. Texts written by ESL students are often complex in ways that are different than those written by native speakers of English, and the effectiveness of the text is also context dependent. However, my experience as a second-language writer as well as my interaction with ESL students also suggest that ESL writers, especially in the early stages of language learning, often feel frustrated because they are not able to write with the kind of complexity and effectiveness that they can achieve more easily when writing in their native languages.

4. My use of the term "intellectual formation" is inspired by Michel Foucault, whose notion of formation implies dynamic and complex discursive relations rather than a static and coherent body of knowledge. I thank Patricia Harkin for her insightful comment on this point.

5. I do not mean to imply that there has not been any interaction between the two intellectual formations. Second-language writing researchers have been borrowing theoretical and methodological frameworks from composition studies since the 1960s. (See, for example, Kaplan, “Cultural”; Raimes; Zamel, “Teaching,” “Recent”). During the 1970s and the 1980s, Mina Shaughnessy, Alice Horning and others also made efforts to incorporate insights from second-language studies in general, although their goal was to help basic writers rather than ESL writers.


7. See Rogers for an account of the program at George Washington University.
8. Kaplan claims to be the first in the United States to bear the title of Professor of Applied Linguistics (Kaplan, "TESOL" 374).

9. There were, of course, some exceptions, including programs created at Georgetown University, American University, and the University of Texas, Austin (Moulton 105).

10. The term "Quarterly" was later dropped from the title because of the initial difficulty in maintaining its regular production schedule.

11. Allen contributed significantly to the creation of TESOL and its journal by conducting a status study of the ESL teaching profession (i.e., Allen, Survey) and by organizing conferences on ESL teaching between 1964 and 1966 (Hook 218).

12. Slager was among the first to discuss the differing needs of international ESL students and immigrant ESL students, and the placement issue of ESL students continues to be an important topic of discussion among ESL specialists. See Leki for a succinct review of differences between ESL writers and basic writers (27–38), and Silva ("Examination") for a comprehensive review of available placement options.

Works Cited


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