

## College Writing Teachers' Perceptions of Multilingual Writers' Presence and Needs

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### ABSTRACT

There is very little research on writing teachers' perceptions of multilingual writers' needs and the teachers' preparation in working with L2 writers in first year composition courses. This present study was conducted to identify the extent to which first year writing teachers recognize the presence and needs of multilingual writers and the preparation those teachers need to have to better work with multilingual writers. A total of 22 writing teachers completed a 21- item survey. The 22 participants were teaching English writing courses at the university. The participants include graduate teaching assistants with different educational backgrounds, currently pursuing their master degree in English and full-time and part-time adjunct teachers with master's or Ph.D. degrees. The participants completed a survey to identify: 1) to what extent do teachers recognize the needs of multilingual writers and 2) what preparation (professional development needs) that those teachers need to better work with multilingual writers. The research reveals that teachers recognize multilingual writers' presence and needs, and suggest external professional preparation opportunities to address the unique needs of L2 writers. The findings of the study serve as an informative source for college writing programs to identify the existing shortcomings and devise administrative and training plans to address them.

**KEYWORDS:** multilingual writers, first-year composition, professional development

### Introduction

There has been an increasing population of culturally and linguistically diverse students enrolled in U. S. universities (Perry, 2016). The demographic shifts of students on university campuses have also changed the population of the students enrolled in First-Year composition (FYC) courses, which are often required for undergraduate students. In FYCs, students develop their basic literacy and writing skills in their first year of higher educations. While the requirements and objectives vary depending on the program, the courses prepare students to be a successful writer in an academic context. These courses are required courses for all students including international students unless they are exempted by meeting certain criteria set by the program. As a result of the demographic change, it is not uncommon for writing teachers to have second language (L2) writers who have linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds and who need

to address their unique needs and successfully achieve the outcomes of academic writing courses.

Although some FYC programs offer separate sections of FYC courses for L2 writers to address their specific writing needs, there are still L2 writers placed in mainstream sections and receiving instructions from mainstream writing teachers (Matusda, 2006, 2013). Those teachers need to be prepared not only in working with monolingual English students, but also working with L2 writers in their classes. It is also a responsibility for FYC program administrators to fill the gap between experienced and novice writing teachers, and to prepare all writing teachers in working with L2 writers regardless of their professional experiences and educational backgrounds.

Additionally, there are some FYC courses which are taught by experienced writing teachers with PhDs in rhetoric or composition. However, a vast majority of FYC courses are also taught by teachers whose background are not composition or graduate student teachers who are pursuing their graduate degree while teaching writing classes simultaneously (Matsuda, 2013). It is important for FYC programs to understand these writing teachers' perceptions toward the needs of L2 writers and their approaches in working with multilingual writers as well as their experiences and preparedness in teaching multilingual writers. This is to fill the gap between different professional backgrounds and preparedness of writing teachers so that adequate resources and professional development opportunities can be provided.

While there exist multiple terms to refer to the linguistically and culturally diverse students used in studies, for the purpose of this study, we use the term "multilingual writers" defined by Matsuda (2013, p. 73) as "students who grew up using languages other than English and are acquiring English as an additional language". This term is used to refer to different types of students who are currently developing their English proficiency and acquiring academic English in the FYC classes.

This study addresses the following components: the writing teachers' perceptions of presence and needs of multilingual writers; the writing teachers' experiences in working with multilingual writers; and the necessary professional development opportunities for writing teachers.

## Literature Review

Writing teachers in FYC programs are usually prepared well and experienced in teaching composition classes with the knowledge to instruct English monolingual students. However, many of them are not prepared or skilled to work with multilingual writers. It is wrong to assume that they can handle the issues that the multilingual writers bring up to class just because of the experience they have in teaching writing (Preto-Bay and Hansen, 2006). Additionally, Shvidko (2015) argues that instructors who teach writing composition have no previous training in L2 writing. Also, many of those L2 writing teachers are not provided with curricula by the administrators to prepare them in addressing unique needs of L2 writers. These two areas are addressed in this review.

### *L2 Writing Curricula and L2 Writers Needs*

In U.S. higher education contexts, the number of multilingual students has dramatically increased (Matsuda, 2013, Anayah & Kuk, 2015). These students need to be offered different writing curricula that meet their writing needs. However, these courses often fail to prepare L2 learners to join the academic writing community because such courses disregard the linguistic background of the L2 students that are distinctive from native English learners because “FYC are still designed to serve monolingual students” (Shvidko, 2015, P. 56). Such a difference creates many challenges to L2 writing teachers, particularly those with little or no experience teaching writing to L2 learners. According to Matsuda (1999), because of the linguistic and cultural differences of the non-native learners, writing teachers struggle in meeting the needs of those students. Therefore, to bridge the gap between writing curricula and L2 learners’ needs, writing courses should be reevaluated. Making changes to the curricula is one of the effective ways (Ferris, Jensen & Wald, 2015). This would definitely help L2 writers succeed in their writing classes

To create writing curricula that meet the needs of L2 writers, Crusan (2002) suggests that new writing courses to be created and that the current courses can be adjusted to offer placement options and procedures to the new population of learners. Reexamining writing curricula is one step that would help administrators and writing programs to better see the gaps in these writing curricula and thus serve the increasing number of L2 learners. Preto-Bay and Hansen (2006) emphasize that decision makers should reevaluate writing curricula in terms of “what is” and “what ought to be?”

However, there is no single or magic method in creating writing curricula. Many researchers such as Flower and Kern have suggested different ways to construct writing curricula. For instance, Flower (1990) argues that “first-year composition courses should teach students the strategic knowledge that will embed their comprehension/response strategy in a rhetorical plan and lead them toward the goal of “self-directed critical inquiry” (p. 251). Kern (2000), on the other hand, states that writing courses should focus on “a wide range of cognitive abilities, on knowledge of written and spoken language, on knowledge of genres, and on cultural knowledge” (p.16). Accordingly, writing curricula should reflect L2 learners’ ability to think critically as well as their knowledge of different types of writing and the culture in which writing takes place. Improving writing curricula for L2 learners is not the only aim that writing programs should examine but preparing and training L2 writing instructors is also another important goal that should be considered to meet the needs of L2 writers.

### *L2 Writing Instructors’ Training and Preparation*

Many L2 writing teachers have little or no experience teaching L2 writing. So, many L2 writing teachers struggle or fail in meeting the students’ writing needs in their first year of composition because of lack of training or preparation (Shvidko, 2015). Braine (1994) argues that writing instructors are required to be prepared to work with L2 learners in writing courses that are mainly premeditated for native English speakers from advantaged language backgrounds.

Several studies have focused on writing teachers' preparation and their professional development experiences in working with L2 writers. Ferris, Brown, Liu, Eugenia and Stine (2011) have surveyed on FYC writing teachers professional training experiences and have found that a majority of the teachers had not had any formal professional development or training to teach their L2 students. Their findings also showed that many of the writing teachers' written feedback was focused on the L2 writers' grammar and language issues. Other writing teachers suggested L2 writers to ask for additional help from the writing center or provide extra assistant to them as feedback. Shvidko (2015) study that surveyed mainstream writing teachers has also found that 67% of the respondents felt unprepared to teach multilingual writers in their FYC classes because of their lack of formal training and experiences in working with L2 writers. Another recent study by Ferris et al. (2015) echoes those findings from previous studies. They surveyed 140 writing teachers at nine University of California campuses about their perceptions of L2 writers and their professional preparedness in working with L2 writers. While more than 70% of respondents had taught college-level writing for six years or more, and more than a half of the respondents were holding PhDs, the survey found that only 25% of the respondents had completed a formal training for teaching L2 students and only 20 % of the respondents felt very comfortable in teaching L2 writers. The survey carried out by Tardy (2011) has made enquiries on writing teachers in a FYC program about their most helpful strategies to help L2 writers. The results found that although all of the writing teachers in the survey held at least a master's degree in writing, providing additional help during teachers' office hours and recommending those students visit the writing center are common responses, rather than making changes on their classroom instructions.

The teacher should be aware of the L2 writers' presence. They need to be trained to work with L2 writers, and provide adequate instructions. According to Matsuda (2006), despite the increasing number of L2 writers in FYC programs, the vast majority of FYC programs remain as places where "the myth of linguistic homogeneity" exists (p.638). He further explains that writing teachers in those programs are unprepared to effectively work with L2 writers since all the students in their classrooms are native English speakers and thus they are not aware of the presence of L2 writers. Even if they are aware of the presence and needs of L2 writers in their FY writing classes, some instructors indicated that they made no changes and adjustments in their approaches for their multilingual writers (Matsuda, 2013). In addition, Ferris et al. (2011) have found that some writing teachers are not even aware that they have L2 writers in their classes, and they do not think about their students' language backgrounds as being relevant to their L2 writing. Shvidko (2015) and Ferris et al. (2011) conclude that there is a need to help writing teachers to get more specific and in-depth training whether they teach mainstream writing courses or L2 writing classes.

Accordingly, it is important for the FYC programs to provide support in assisting writing instructors to be aware of the diversity in their classrooms in order to identify the needs of students and address them adequately. Many teachers are native English speakers, so their learning experiences are different from L2 students (Aalto & Tarnanen, 2015). It is challenging for them to understand the L2 writers' difficulties. Preto-Bay and Hansen (2006) have stated that L2 instructors "have an even greater lack of knowledge of how to address issues of linguistic and cultural diversity in their classrooms" (p. 45). Therefore, writing instructors need first to

understand the backgrounds, weaknesses and strengths of L2 learners (Ferris, 2009), which entail “specific skills and abilities, familiarity with features of other languages, and some knowledge of cross-cultural issues” (Friedrich, 2006, p. 24). However, providing L2 instructors with the right training can definitely prepare them to deal with linguistic and cultural issues that multilingual writers have (Shvidko, 2015).

Several studies have identified the writing teachers' preparedness in working with L2 writers in FY courses at larger universities where the FYC programs offer separate sections for L2 writers. Yet, little attention is paid to smaller universities where resources are limited and inadequate to create separate sections or hire well-prepared writing teachers with experience to work with L2 writers (Preto-Bay & Hansen, 2006). Smaller universities have also been facing the issues of the increasing number of linguistically and culturally diverse students enrolled in FYC courses and thus, the need to prepare the writing teachers to be able to assist these students in successfully achieving their academic writing goals.

## Methods

### *Context of the Study*

We conducted the study in a small first-year composition program at a smaller university in the Northwestern United States. The First-Year Composition program includes English 101 (Introduction to College Writing) and 102 (College Writing and Rhetoric) in a two-semester sequence, which are the required courses for all of the first-year students enrolled in the university. The program does not offer separate sections for multilingual or international students. The program also offers English 109 (Writing Studio), which is a co-requisite course for students who are enrolled in English 101. Currently, the program offers 35 sections of English 101, 30 sections of English 102, and 22 sections of English 109. At the time of the study, there were thirty-five teachers of English Composition courses at this university. The instructional teachers include graduate teaching assistants with different educational backgrounds currently perusing their master's degrees in English as well as full-time and part-time adjunct teachers with master's or Ph.D. degrees. All new graduate student teachers attend a mandatory one-week intensive orientation in fall before the spring semester starts. The graduate students in their first year of teaching also need to take one composition theory class. Teachers who are teaching only English 109 section(s) are excluded from this study due to the possible limited familiarity with the curriculum and learning outcomes of FYC courses. This is because they do not necessarily teach those classes or attend the intensive orientation for new graduate teachers.

### *Participants*

We received 22 total responses. Sixty-eight percent of our respondents who had been teaching writing in the college level for 0-2 years, 22% had taught for 2-5 years, and 9% had taught for over 10 years. Therefore, our responses were mostly from novice writing instructors. 68% of respondents held B.A. in English, Education, or in other fields (foreign language, history, or

Spanish). 27% of respondents had an M.A. in English or TESOL, and only 4% of respondents held a Ph.D. in 18th and 19th Century British Literature.

### *Instrument and Procedure*

We developed a survey using Qualtrics, a software for survey. The survey used for the data collection tool consisted of 24 questions. The goal of this survey is to understand respondent's experience working with multilingual writers in their writing classes. There are three sections: Respondent's Background Information, Respondent's Students' Information, and Teaching Multilingual Writers & Professional Development Needs. The survey included closed-ended questions: Likert scale, multiple choice and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions offered more in depth analysis to the participants' perspectives (Payant, 2016). To ensure the validity of the survey, it was based on Ferris (2015) survey. The survey was emailed to 35 graduate student writing teachers in the seventh week of the spring semester of 2018. Twenty-two responded to the survey. Since one limitation of the questionnaire survey is that the return rate might not be adequate (Bryman, 2012), the seventh week was chosen to ensure enough return rate. Also, the seventh week was selected because it is assumed that teachers will be familiar with their students after at least one project/essay.

### *Data Analysis*

For the survey data, the frequency and percentages of the respondents' responses to multiple choice questions were examined. The questions including follow-up answers were categorized and tabulated. The findings were sorted into categories based on the following components: the writing teachers' perceptions of presence and needs of multilingual writers; writing teachers' experiences in working with multilingual writers; and necessary professional development opportunities for writing teachers.

## **Results and Discussions**

### *Section 1: Writing Teachers' Perceptions of Presence and Needs of Multilingual Writers*

When the participants were asked how they described their students' mixed backgrounds in their writing classes over the past year, more than 54% of the respondents indicated that their classes included a mix of monolingual English speakers, U.S. resident multilingual students, and international students. 45% of respondents said that there were mostly native/monolingual English speakers in their current writing classes. Even though more than half of the respondents said that their writing classes have a mix of multilingual students, only 4% reported that they had over 50% of students who were multilingual students in their writing classes. A large number (77%) of respondents said that their writing classes had less than 25% of students who were multilingual students, and 9% of the respondents reported that there were 25%-50% multilingual students in their writing classes. Although in some contexts, the number of multilingual students might not be large, multilingual students are still present in each classroom.

When the survey asked the participants if they had perceived the changes of the proportion of multilingual students in their classes over the last couple of years. Over 50% of our respondents answered, "It's stayed about the same," 13% said "it has increased slightly," and 4% said "it has decreased." There were also 22% of the respondents who answered "not sure", and one respondent who answered "other" and wrote "I've only been teaching for 1 year, so no previous years to judge by." The responses indicated that although the number of multilingual students is steady in the last couple of years, it is increasing slowly in recent years. Therefore, it is important to understand writing teachers' needs for teaching first year writing in college. It is also important to note that not all respondents may have been able to perceive the demographic changes over the past couple of years because many of the teachers were graduate teaching assistants who taught classes while they were pursuing their degrees (one to three years) at the University.

The respondents were also asked what they did to identify or become aware of student backgrounds in their classes. The respondents chose an answer from several options provided. Nearly 58% of the respondents expressed that they identified or became aware of student backgrounds through informal interaction (in-class discussions, in their writing, one-on-one writing conferences), and 22% identified student backgrounds through a formal background questionnaire at the beginning of the semester. Although nearly 80% of the respondents said they used either informal or formal methods to learn their student backgrounds, there were two respondents (9%) who chose the option "Nothing—I just take students as they come; their backgrounds aren't that important." When it comes to instructors' impression on multilingual students' preparation for their class, a good number of the respondents (72%) stated that some students seemed well prepared while some students were not prepared, and 22% said most of the students seemed appropriately prepared. 4% of the instructors said that most of them were not prepared well, and the instructors mentioned it in the comments such as "not able to understand assignment sheets, and significant sentence level error in their writing."

When the instructors were asked about how the multilingual students perform in their writing classes, 50% said that the multilingual students were about the same or sometimes better than other students. 50% stated that some multilingual students do pretty well while some others are unsuccessful. It can be said that the majority of multilingual students have adequate preparation that helped them to perform well in the writing classes despite the struggle of some. These results contradict the findings of Ferris, Jensen and Wald (2015) survey, which states that the multilingual students' struggle in writing classes is due to their previous educational unpreparedness or that they were matriculated into university when they were not ready yet. As for the multilingual students' struggles in their writing classes, the instructors chose all the options: weak academic writing skills (28%), weak reading skills (21%), weak oral skills (12%), and weak overall language skills (19%). In addition, there are four more comments added in response to the question of multilingual students' struggles in their writing classes:

"For multilingual students who struggle in my classes, I think a lot of it has to do with getting more practice and developing effective strategies for completing their work and following assignment instructions." (R1)

"Some of my strongest students are ESL, because they are used to working hard on English/Writing. Outcomes reflect this." (R2)

“Trouble with being an athlete and managing their time in regard to school and sports.” (R3)

“Following directions (assignment prompt) is a problem.” (R4)

It can be noticed that although multilingual students struggled mostly with academic writing skills, multilingual students' lack of academic skills (i.e. understanding the instructions and prompts and developing effective strategies) that required a level of critical thinking can be attributed to their struggle in writing classes. This observation is similar to Flower (1990) argument which indicated that “first-year composition courses should teach students the strategic knowledge” (p.251). The strategic knowledge should be part of the writing curricula offered to multilingual writers.

When the instructors were asked about how they perceived multilingual students' need for additional help, over 54% of respondents said they wished multilingual students would ask for more help, and 36% said that they spent an appropriate amount of time helping multilingual students. There was one comment added in response to this question: “It depends on the students. I would love for more struggling students to seek help, ESL or otherwise. I find ESL students are less apprehensive about seeking help when they need it, which is good.”

### *Section 2: Teachers' Experiences and Professional Development Opportunities*

When the instructors were asked about how they adapted writing instruction for multilingual students, they chose all the answers applied. We summarized them in Table 1 as follows.

Table 1

Methods of adapting writing instruction for multilingual students (Q13)

| Options  | Responses |
|--|-----------|
| I keep an eye out for them and give them more individual help.   | 27.45%    |
| I'm careful about who I put them with for pair/group work.   | 17.65%    |
| I've deemphasized oral class participation as part of the lesson (or part of the grade).   | 7.84%     |
| I'm mindful of presenting key information (assignments, instructions, deadlines) in both written and oral form to adapt to listening comprehension difficulties. | 29.41%    |
| I think about international students' frame of reference in selecting reading texts and/or developing writing assignments.                                       | 15.69%    |
| No, I teach my classes the same as I always have.  | 0         |
| Not sure if I do.  | 1.96%     |
| Other (please specify)   | 0         |

As shown in Table 1, multilingual writing instructors did not only seem to understand their multilingual writers' writing needs, but they also appeared to be aware of other language skills that might impede multilingual writers from performing well in the writing classes. In question 14, instructors were asked about how they characterized their feedback to multilingual students' writing. 15% said they gave the same feedback as for everyone else, 30% said that they provided more written feedback, especially on grammar/vocabulary issues, 15% stated that they work one-on-one with multilingual students more than with other students, 25% said that they regularly encourage students to seek extra help elsewhere (tutoring, writing center), 10% recommended



students some self-study materials. There is one comment added in this question: "I urge them to meet with me or go to the writing center."

When we asked instructors to describe their assessment practices for multilingual student writers, most of the instructors (80%) said that they disregard language issues in assessing their writing because they know second language acquisition takes time. 10% of respondents stated that multilingual students are graded the same as other students, and only 5% said they weigh language problems more heavily in assessing their writing. There is one comment added in this question: "I tend to grade all of my students based on improvement and effort. I don't expect them to do things they're incapable of, but I do expect incremental improvement and the work that requires." In question 18, instructors were asked their confidence level in regard to their knowledge of the language issues. While 85% said that they were very confident identifying subjects and verbs in sentences, only 20% were very confident giving feedback on language errors that is clear and helpful to students and only 15% were very confident teaching lessons to students (individuals, groups, whole class) on problematic grammar and usage points.

The findings suggested that multilingual writing teachers seem to be aware of their multilingual students' needs and presence although some of those writing teachers might not have as much experience in teaching multilingual writers. The multilingual writing teachers' awareness could be attributed to their educational background as they are required to take linguistic related courses such as the composition theory class. This can be seen in the adjustments and adaptations that the teachers are willing to make to meet the language and writing needs of the multilingual writers. This finding supports Ferris, Jensen and Wald (2015) survey results which have found that participants in their survey also made changes to support their multilingual students. However, it conflicts with Tardy (2011) study that found that writing instructors tend to offer their support to their students through their office hours and the writing center without taking the time to make changes to their own instruction.

When the instructors were asked about how they feel about their own ability to work with multilingual students from a range of backgrounds, only 10% said they are very comfortable. 65% responses were fairly comfortable, 15% were somewhat comfortable, and 10% were not at all comfortable. Again, the feeling of comfort might be attributed to the training that most of the writing instructors received. In other words, having previous training (courses, workshops and conferences) helped those instructors somewhat to know the needs of their multilingual students. When it comes to the question about instructors' biggest challenge in working with multilingual students, we summarized the answers in Table 2.

Table 2

Instructors' biggest challenges in working with multilingual student writers (Q17)

| Choices   | Responses |
|---|-----------|
| Giving effective written or oral feedback                               | 15%       |
| Giving feedback about language errors                                   | 5%        |
| Getting them fully involved in class discussion activities              | 30%       |
| Helping them to read assigned texts accurately and critically           | 15%       |
| Knowing how to fairly and effectively assess/grade L2 writers' work     | 10%       |
| Knowing how to balance their needs with those of other (L1/monolingual) | 20%       |

|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| students               |    |
| Other (please specify) | 5% |

In Question 4, instructors were asked about the type of training they had received that was relevant to working with L2 writers. All the participant writing instructors received some kind of training at some point of their career. Over 21% of the respondents had taken a graduate course in teaching composition and 16% had taken graduate or undergraduate course(s) in grammar or linguistics. However, only 10% of the respondents had taken graduate level courses in teaching L2 writing and 4% had taken undergraduate courses in teaching L2 writing. This suggests that although respondents had experience to learn about multilingual writers from a general teaching composition course and linguistic knowledge from a grammar or linguistics course, they may not have received extensive training to instruct multilingual writers and address their unique language and writing needs. The responses are summarized in Table 3.

According to the writing instructors, they understand multilingual students' language and writing needs. However, they still perceived that the need for professional development activities and training are indispensable despite the fact that majority of the instructors received training at some point in their career. Different results were found in Shvidko (2015) and Ferris et al. (2011) studies which indicated that writing teachers lack of formal training. Working in a small university could explain why many writing instructors received training either through courses or workshops and conferences. Such training opportunities might not be available in larger universities due to the huge number of writing instructors.

Table 3  
Training for teaching multilingual students (Q4)

| Options   | Responses |
|---|-----------|
| Graduate level courses in teaching L2 writing                                 | 10.34%    |
| Undergraduate course in teaching L2 writing                                   | 4.6%      |
| Graduate course in teaching composition                                       | 21.84%    |
| Undergraduate course in teaching composition                                  | 3.45%     |
| Graduate or undergraduate course(s) in grammar or linguistics                 | 16.09%    |
| Graduate or undergraduate course(s) in second language acquisition            | 5.75%     |
| Graduate or undergraduate course(s) in literacy development in L1/L2 students | 4.6%      |
| In service workshops at place of employment                                   | 11.49%    |
| Professional conferences or workshops   | 13.79%    |
| None to speak of  | 1.15%     |
| Other (please specify)  | 6.9%      |

When the instructors were asked about what areas or skills they would need more information or training, they chose all the options that applied. We summarized it in the table 4. There is one comment from the respondent R1 added in this question: "This isn't for me specifically, because I do teach grammar. But I think it needs to be a core part of English 102, because this becomes the biggest barrier to effective writing for students at some point during this semester."

Table 4  
Areas/skills that instructors would most like more training (Q19)

| Choices   | Responses |
|---|-----------|
| (re)designing my course syllabus to better meet international student writers' needs                    | 9.46%     |
| writing assignments/prompts that are sensitive to international writers' needs                          | 13.51%    |
| designing in- class instruction/discussion activities to help international students participate better | 20.27%    |
| choosing and teaching reading texts in ways effective for a diverse group of students                   | 12.16%    |
| providing language instruction (grammar, usage, vocabulary) and/or resources                            | 13.51%    |
| designing effective feedback systems for a writing course (peer, self, teacher, tutor)                  | 8.11%     |
| analyzing language issues in L2 writing accurately and efficiently                                      | 9.46%     |
| grading L2 writing fairly and accurately  |           |
| all of the above  | 2.7%      |
| Other (please specify)  | 1.35%     |

According to the respondents as shown in table 3 and 4, the main challenge that writing instructors encountered is more about designing engaging class discussions, prompts and selecting reading texts to give more opportunities for their multilingual students to take part in class discussions and activities. It could be that the instructors felt more need to know and understand their multilingual students' specific educational and cultural backgrounds as this might help those instructors to select the more appealing discussion topics, prompts and readings. This might mean that writing instructors need more training on material design in addition to training on language skills related issues to better support their multilingual students. To put it simply, the training the instructors received in this small university might have had lacked discussion issues related to material design. Thus, the focus of training should have a balance of both skills to better serve the writing instructors.

When it comes to the last survey question, "what do you think would be the best model for your further professional development that you and your colleagues would actually attend and that would be the most effective?" Answers are shown in table 5. There is one comment from the respondent R2 in this question: "a lighter course load for graduate students."

Table 5  
Model of professional development for instructors (Q20)

| Choices   | Responses |
|---|-----------|
| An intensive training workshop (over several days or a week before fall quarter/semester) | 15%       |
| A reading list  | 15%       |
| A list of online resources (e.g., OWLs, textbook web sites)                               | 10%       |
| An informal reading/discussion group  | 5%        |
| A series of targeted workshops on various language/usage/ESL topics                       | 45%       |
| Online training modules   | 5%        |
| Other (please specify)  | 5%        |

As shown in Table 5, there is no single training model. A variety of training models can assist writing instructors to better support and help their students depending on each instructor's needs. Ferris, Jessen and Wald (2015) survey has also made a similar observation. That is why it is important for universities and colleges to provide L2 writing instructors with workshops and training because they lack the experience working with multilingual writers and they were not engaged in any form of training (Shvidko, 2015).

## Conclusion

Being writing teachers with heavy course loads, writing instructors may not have sufficient time to address L2 writers' specific needs and may not adjust their instructions to address those needs. In a lot of cases, writing instructors may not try to change their instructions and instead they use the course materials provided by the university which include premade assignment sheets and lesson plan materials. Most of the time, these materials are not adapted to ESL needs either. This brings about the concern that the writing program needs to address. The syllabi, course materials, assignment sheets and projects provided by the writing program need adjustments to meet multilingual writers' needs as well. Additionally, writing programs should take administrative steps to better realize these needs and include them in their curriculum development strategies. This might not necessarily be a perfect solution to the problem, but it can definitely work as an informative source for composition instructors, who lack ESL background and training. Also, the instructors' lack of professional and formal training in dealing with multilingual writers is another valid concern. A suggestion for the writing programs is to mainly hire instructors with experience in ESL and provide in-service training to provide proper and effective instructions to multilingual writers in FYC classes.

Based on the findings of this study, the study suggests that writing teachers also need to be aware of the presence of demographics of their classrooms by being trained to distinguish between native English writers and multilingual writers and possible cultural and linguistic influences on their writing. In addition, we must also consider the teachers' educational and professional backgrounds that directly influence their pedagogical approaches and instructions toward multilingual writers in order to identify adequate resources and support the writing teachers can utilize in their classrooms. This study does not in any way intend to judge the instructors and their lack of abilities to teach multilingual writers, rather, it is our hope that it serves as an informative source for college writing programs to identify the existing shortcomings and devise administrative and training plans to address them.

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## Appendix

By selecting the “Yes” button below, you are indicating that you voluntarily agree to participate in this survey. Do you agree to participate in this survey?

- Yes
- No

### Section A: Your Background Information

Q1. How long have you been teaching writing at the college level? Include graduate school TA experience, if applicable.

- 0-2 years
- 2-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 10+ years

Q2. In what contexts do you work with international students at your university? Choose your PRIMARY/usual teaching assignment.

- First-year writing courses
  - ESL program writing courses
  - A combination of first-year & ESL courses
  - Advanced writing courses (beyond first-year, including upper-division)
  - Classes for graduate students
  - Other (Please specify)
- 

Q3. Which degree have you received? Please check All that apply.

- Ph.D. (Please specify the field)
- 
- M.A. in English (literature and/or creative writing)
  - M.A./M.S./M.Ed in TESOL or Applied Linguistics
  - M.A. in Composition/Rhetoric
  - M.A. in Education
  - M.A. in other field (Please specify)
- 
- B.A. in English (literature and/or creative writing)
  - B.A. in Education
  - B.A. in other field (Please specify)
- 

Q4. what kind(s) of training have you received that is relevant to working with L2 writers? Please check All that apply.

- Graduate level courses in teaching L2 writing
- Undergraduate course in teaching L2 writing

- Graduate course in teaching composition
  - Undergraduate course in teaching composition
  - Graduate or undergraduate course(s) in grammar or linguistics
  - Graduate or undergraduate course(s) in second language acquisition
  - Graduate or undergraduate course(s) in literacy development in L1/L2 students
  - In service workshops at place of employment
  - Professional conferences or workshops
  - None to speak of
  - Other (please specify)
- 

### Section B: Your Students' Information

Q5. In your CURRENT writing classes (say over the past year), how would you describe the mix of student backgrounds in your classes? Choose the statement that BEST applies.

- Mostly native/monolingual English speakers
  - A split between monolingual English speakers and U.S. resident multilingual speakers
  - A mix of monolingual English speakers, U.S. resident multilingual students, and international students
  - Not really sure
  - Other (please specify)
- 

Q6. In a typical class of yours (within the last year or two), what percentage of your students are international students?

- Less than 25%
  - 25-50%
  - Over 50%
  - Not sure
  - Other (Please specify)
- 

Q7. Has the proportion of international students in your classes changed over the last couple of years?

- Yes, it has increased substantially.
  - Yes, it has increased slightly.
  - It's stayed about the same.
  - No, it has decreased.
  - Not sure
  - Other (please specify)
-

Q8. What, if anything, do you do to identify or become aware of student backgrounds in your classes?

- A background questionnaire at the beginning of the term
  - Informally observe/notice student characteristics (in-class discussions, in their writing)
  - Identify backgrounds when/if problems arise (e.g. if a student asks for help or is struggling in the course)
  - Nothing-- I just take students as they come; their backgrounds aren't that important
  - Other (please specify)
- 

Q9. When you first meet newly arrived international students, what is your impression of their readiness/preparation for your class (and for U.S university work in general)?

- Most of them seem appropriately prepared.
  - some seem well prepared; some do not.
  - Most of them do not seem appropriately prepared. (In what ways? Please specify)
- 
- Not sure/no opinion
  - Other (please specify)
- 

Q10. Generally speaking, how do international students do/perform in your writing classes?

- About the same as (sometimes better than) everyone else
  - Some do well, others are unsuccessful
  - Most of my international students have among the weakest outcomes in the class
  - Not sure
  - Other (please specify)
- 

Q11. For international students, who do poorly in your writing classes, to what do you attribute their struggles? Choose ALL that apply.

- Weak academic writing skills (i.e., organizing a paper, writing from sources, development/fluency)
  - Weak reading skills (comprehension, fluency/ability to read longer texts, cultural literacy)
  - Weak oral skills (listening comprehension, speaking skills)
  - Weak overall language skills (grammar and vocabulary knowledge)
  - Not applicable because they don't struggle any more than anyone else
  - Not sure
  - Other (please specify)
-



Q12. How do you perceive international students' need for additional help, relative to other students in your classes? Please check the statement that best applies.

- I spend an appropriate amount of time helping international students, considering their unique needs.
- I spend too much time helping international students.
- I wish international students would ask/visit my office for more help.
- Not sure/no opinion.
- Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section C: Teaching International Students & Professional Development Needs

Q13. Do you adapt your writing instruction for international students in your classes? Please select ALL statements that apply.

- I keep an eye out for them and give them more individual help.
  - I'm careful about who I put them with for pair/group work.
  - I've deemphasized oral class participation as part of the lesson (or part of the grade).
  - I'm mindful of presenting key information (assignments, instructions, deadlines) in both written and oral form to adapt to listening comprehension difficulties.
  - I think about international students' frame of reference in selecting reading texts and/or developing writing assignments.
  - No, I teach my classes the same as I always have.
  - Not sure if I do.
  - Other (please specify)
- 

Q14. How would you characterize your response/feedback to international students' writing? Please choose the statement that BEST describes your typical practices.

- It's the same as for everyone else.
  - I tend to provide more written feedback, especially on grammar/vocabulary issues.
  - I tend to work one-on-one with them more than with other students (in class or in office hours).
  - I regularly urge them to seek extra help elsewhere (tutoring, writing center, etc.).
  - I recommend self-study materials for grammar/language (web sites, handbooks, etc.).
  - Other (please specify)
- 

Q15. Please describe your assessment/grading practices for international student writers. Choose the statement that best characterizes your typical practices.

- International students are graded the same as everyone else is.
- I tend to weight language problems more heavily in assessing their writing.

- I disregard/minimize language issues in assessing their writing because I know second language acquisition takes time.
- I'm not really sure.
- Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

Q16. On a scale of 1 to 4, how do you feel about your own ability to work with international student writers from a range of backgrounds?

- 1: Not at all comfortable
- 2: Somewhat comfortable
- 3: Fairly comfortable
- 4: Very comfortable

Q17. What would you say is your BIGGEST challenge in working with international student writers in your classes?

- Giving effective written or oral feedback
  - Giving feedback about language errors
  - Getting them fully involved in class discussion activities
  - Helping them to read assigned texts accurately and critically
  - Knowing how to fairly and effectively assess/grade L2 writers' work
  - Knowing how to balance their needs with those of other (L1/monolingual) students
  - Other (please specify)
- 

Q18. On a scale of 1-4, how would you assess your confidence level about your knowledge of the following issues in language/usage?

[1: Not at all confident 2: Somewhat confident 3: Fairly confident 4: Very confident]

- Identifying parts of speech of words (in isolation and within sentences)
- Identifying major sentence patterns in English
- Explaining the purpose and usage rules for major punctuation marks
- Analyzing a student paper and identifying the types of language errors made by the student
- Giving feedback on language errors that is clear and helpful to student writers
- Teaching lessons to students (individuals, groups, whole class) on problematic grammar and usage points
- How much to weight language errors against other writing elements in assessing writing and assigning grades

Q19. Considering your responses to the above questions, please choose the areas/skills about which you would most like specific information and/or training.

- (re)designing my course syllabus to better meet international student writers' needs
- Writing assignments/prompts that are sensitive to international writers' needs
- Designing in-class instruction/discussion activities to help international students participate better

- Choosing and teaching reading texts in ways effective for a diverse group of students
  - Providing language instruction (grammar, usage, vocabulary) and/or resources
  - Designing effective feedback systems for a writing course (peer, self, teacher, tutor)
  - Analyzing language issues in L2 writing accurately and efficiently
  - Grading L2 writing fairly and accurately
  - All of the above
  - Other (please specify)
- 

Q20. What do you think would be the best model for your further professional development? (By "best", we mean both that you and your colleagues would actually attend and that would be the most effective.)

- An intensive training workshop (over several days or a week before fall semester)
  - A reading list
  - A list of online resources (e.g., OWLs, textbook web sites)
  - An informal reading/discussion group
  - A series of targeted workshops on various language/usage/ESL topics
  - Online training modules
  - Other (Please specify)
- 

Q21. Any additional questions or comments you'd like to add here?

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