

***Assessing Preparation of Mainstream Composition Teachers Working with Multilingual Writers*****ELENA SHVIDKO,  
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Research on multilingual writers in first-year composition classes in U. S. universities seems to overlook the issue of professional preparation of mainstream composition instructors who work with multilingual writers. Composition courses are commonly taught by teachers with no formal training in L2 writing pedagogy. Therefore, a better understanding of their professional preparation and needs will help composition programs develop adequate training and prepare instructors who are able to address linguistic and cultural needs of multilingual writers. In this study, a perception survey was completed by 34 instructors of mainstream first-year composition at a large research U.S. university. The participants had no formal training in L2 writing pedagogy. Responses reveal that most instructors acknowledged their lack of education and professional experience and generally felt ill equipped to work with multilingual writers. Conclusions discuss the need to strengthen professional development of mainstream composition instructors.

*Keywords: multilingual writers, teacher preparation, mainstream composition*

**Introduction**

Multilingual writers are no longer an uncommon phenomenon in first-year composition courses (FYC) in the U. S. institutions of higher education. To help these students in their academic experiences, many universities provide a variety of services and programs (Dadak, 2006; Kubota & Abels, 2006; Leki, 2007; Matsuda, Saenkhum, & Accaardi, 2013; Shuck, 2006; Williams,

2004). FYCs, required in most universities, are certainly in the center of attention for many ESL writing specialists and writing program administrators (WPA). Much attention has been paid to understanding what type of FYC would best serve the population of multilingual writers, and scholars in the field of second language (L2) writing propose different placement options, such as basic writing courses (Silva, 1994), ESL writing courses (Braine, 1996), and cross-cultural composition (Matsuda & Silva, 1999). However, while some composition programs can afford providing these alternative options for placing multilingual writers, in the majority of universities, these students are placed in mainstream classes.

Accordingly, much research has been done in the field of L2 writing on the issues related to multilingual writers in mainstream composition classrooms (Canagarajah, 2006; Ferris, Brown, Liu, & Stine, 2011; Horner, 2006; Matsuda et al., 2013; Sadler, 2004; Stuart, 2012). Scholars continue to address challenges of these students as well as provide suggestions to classroom instructors and WPAs on how to alleviate these challenges.

However, while focusing on the struggles of multilingual writers and looking for ways to accommodate their needs, previous research seems to overlook the issue of professional preparation of composition instructors in working with this population of writers. The majority of composition courses, as known, are taught by those who do not have—or have very little—formal training in L2 studies, including L2 writing pedagogy. This is particularly true for large research universities where much of the teaching load is given into the hands of graduate teaching assistants, whose professional background oftentimes relates to creative writing, linguistics, and literary studies (Matsuda et al., 2013).

At the same time, the “CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers” (2009) clearly indicated that writing programs must provide adequate professional support to

teachers to prepare them to work with multilingual writers: “Any writing course, including basic writing, first-year composition, advanced writing, and professional writing, as well as any writing-intensive course that enrolls any second-language writers should be taught by an instructor who is able to identify and is prepared to address the linguistic and cultural needs of second-language writers.”

Based on this statement, it is evident that in order to better serve multilingual students, we must first look at how well instructors are prepared, and whether or not they are aware of the kinds of support that multilingual writers need. Surprisingly, research on this subject is scarce. To this end, the current study attempted to fill this gap by looking at how mainstream composition teachers—with no formal training in L2 studies—perceive their professional preparation in working with multilingual writers.

To avoid ambiguity in terms, the following definitions need to be given. The term “teacher professional preparation” was used in this paper to refer to teachers’ educational background and professional training. The term “multilingual writers” was borrowed from Matsuda et al. (2013), who define multilingual writers as “students who grew up using languages rather than English and are acquiring English as an additional language. Multilingual students include international students who hold student visas and resident students who are non-native English speakers” (p. 73). Finally, the term “mainstream composition teachers” was used to refer to first-year composition teachers with no formal training in second language studies, including second language writing pedagogy.

## Literature Review

## **Multilingual Writers in First-Year Composition**

Among the central research foci related to the issues of multilingual writers in FYC classrooms is the notion of the “right” placement (Crusan, 2006; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008; Ruecker, 2011; Silva, 1994). L2 scholars have long been asking such questions as “What is the best placement option for multilingual writers?” and “How can we ensure the right placement for these students?” The most widely discussed in the previous research placement options include mainstreaming, separate ESL sections, and basic writing.

However, despite the advantages of each of these placement options (Silva, 1994), none of them is without drawbacks. According to Silva (1994), mainstream composition is the easiest option in terms of logistics. However, they present considerable linguistic, cultural, and rhetorical challenges for multilingual writers. Basic writing classes, created for inexperienced native writers, may not be a fully appropriate solution either, as many of multilingual writers are very skilled in their native language. Finally, while special separate ESL writing sections allow international students to develop a sense of camaraderie with other classmates as well as receive the instruction that best meets their needs, these courses are often seen as remedial (Dadak, 2006) and “given second class status” (Silva, 1994, p. 40).

Nevertheless, due to limited resources in many composition programs, mainstreaming, as mentioned above, oftentimes seems to appear the only resort available for multilingual writers. It is not surprising therefore that L2 writing specialists make continuous attempts to understand how to adequately meet the needs of multilingual learners in those classes. What seems to be astounding, however, is the scarcity of research examining mainstream teachers’ attitudes towards multilingual writers in composition classrooms. Only a handful of studies (Ferris et al,

2011; Matsuda et al, 2013) explored instructors' perceptions of multilingual students and pedagogical approaches that teachers implement based on those perceptions.

Ferris et al. (2011) explored teachers' attitudes and the methods that teachers used to respond to multilingual writers. Participants in this study were mostly composition instructors who received no extensive training in working with multilingual writers. The results demonstrated that whereas most teachers tried to adapt their feedback to the needs of multilingual writers, their responses revolved primarily around various language-related problems, leaving, by and large, global issues in the periphery. In addition, some instructors expressed their frustration due to the lack of practical knowledge in addressing the needs of multilingual writers. These findings led the authors to propose a need for more substantial professional development and collaboration among writing instructors within the same program.

Similar suggestions were given by Matsuda et al. (2013), who examined teachers' perceptions of the presence and needs of multilingual writers in FYC classrooms. Whereas overall, the instructors recognized the presence of multilingual students in their classes, some were unaware of their particular challenges and thus "took no action" (p. 76), but treated them in the same way as native English speakers. The study also examined the issue of teachers' needs in working with multilingual writers and revealed that some instructors admitted the lack of expertise in L2 issues, and as a result, they indicated a strong desire for more professional preparation opportunities. Based on these findings, Matsuda et al. proposed a number of administrative changes and instructional practices, such as assigning an L2 writing specialist, increasing the frequency of a graduate course on L2 writing issues, making a teaching practicum a requirement for all first-time instructors of multilingual sections, and developing a textbook appropriate for the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of multilingual writers.

## **Professional Preparation of Composition Instructors**

Despite these calls for better training of mainstream composition instructors in working with multilingual writers, scant attention has been paid in the literature to the issue of professional preparation of composition teachers with no formal training in L2 writing pedagogy. This is particularly alarming considering the results revealed by the very few studies conducted in this area.

Williams (1995) looked at the instructional staff of ESL composition classes by surveying 78 colleges and universities in the United States. The findings indicated that the instructors teaching ESL composition courses had various education backgrounds: TESOL (41%), composition (35%), TESOL and composition (12%), literature (8%), and linguistics (4%). In addition, 60% of the program administrators participated in the survey reported that half of the ESL composition classes in their institutions were taught by fairly inexperienced instructors, that is, instructors with 1 to 2 years of experience. Some administrators (43%) admitted that due to budgetary reasons, they were forced to hire instructors with less than one year of teaching experience.

The lack of awareness about teacher preparation is particularly apparent when it comes to two-year (community) and small four-year colleges, as well as universities that do not offer doctoral programs; they are normally excluded from the nationwide surveys (Preto-Bay & Hansen, 2006). Given the fact that the majority of small four-year and two-year colleges staff their composition classes with full-time lecturers and adjunct faculty, an assumption can be made that formal professional development opportunities are unlikely to be offered. According to Preto-Bay and Hansen (2006), the administrators in these institutions tend to believe that full-time instructors already know how to teach composition, and since many of them have had

several years of teaching experience before being employed by a university writing program, the administrators may also anticipate those teachers to have both experiences and knowledge in teaching multilingual writers. Another reason for the lack—and oftentimes the absence—of teacher development opportunities in small four-year and two-year colleges is insufficient resources, including funding and teacher training specialists with the expertise in pedagogy and knowledge of both composition and second language studies. These assumptions, however, need to be empirically verified.

Along with the dearth of research on teacher preparation in working with multilingual writers, little attention has been paid to understanding the particular needs that composition instructors may face to be able to appropriately accommodate multilingual writers in mainstream classrooms. As Matsuda et al. (2013) correctly noticed, “the infrastructure for producing trained L2 writing teachers is still seriously lacking” (p. 82), thus, more attention needs to be paid to developing professional opportunities, mentoring teachers, as well as offering other types of support to instructors working with multilingual writers.

However, in order to provide comprehensive professional preparation for mainstream composition instructors, a thorough analysis needs to be conducted to look at the difficulties that these instructors experience due to their lack of their expertise in L2 writing pedagogy. Unfortunately, to date nothing has been done to obtain a clear understanding of these needs. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore mainstream instructors’ perceptions of their professional preparation in working with multilingual writers as well as identify their needs for developing expertise in L2 writing pedagogy. The study was conducted to answer the following questions:

Q1: How do mainstream composition teachers evaluate their ability and professional preparation to teach multilingual writers?

Q2: What do mainstream composition teachers believe to be their challenges in teaching multilingual writers?

Q3: What professional preparation opportunities do mainstream composition teachers currently employ to improve their teaching of multilingual writers?

## **Methods**

### **Context**

The study was conducted at Purdue University, which has long been hosting a large number of international students. The composition program—Introductory Composition at Purdue (ICaP)—is a large and comprehensive program, hosted by the Department of English.

There are two placement options currently available for incoming international students. ENGL 106 is a standard 4-credit composition course, in which students learn to compose in various rhetorical genres for different audiences as well as use digital technology. A unique feature of the course is several different syllabus approaches, with each having specific thematic and rhetorical foci. At the time of the study, the ICaP program supported the following syllabus approaches: Academic Writing and Research, Composing through Literature, Composing with Popular Culture, Digital Rhetorics, Documenting Realities, UR@, Writing about Writing, and Writing Your Way Into Purdue.

Along with the mainstream first-year composition, a separate section— ENGL 106i—is created exclusively for multilingual writers. The goals and objectives of this section are similar to the mainstream course; however, curricula are designed to meet cultural and linguistic needs of multilingual writers. Unlike the mainstream section, most ENGL 106i instructors follow one

syllabus approach, albeit with slight variations, which is based on the series of sequenced writing assignments on the same subject (Leki, 1998) that students develop over the course of the semester.

Each year, the ICaP program offers approximately 113-115 sections of ENGL 106 during the fall and spring semester and 3-4 sections during the summer semester, 25 sections of ENGL 106i during the fall and spring semester and 1-2 sections during the summer semester, 18 sections of ENGL 108 during the fall semester and 2 sections during the spring semester. At the time of the study, there were 115 sections of ENGL 106 and 25 sections of ENGL 106i. In the same semester, there were total of 2,332 students—domestic and international—enrolled in first-year composition.

A vast majority of composition instructors are graduate teaching assistants enrolled in different programs in the Department of English: Creative Writing, English Language and Linguistics, Literary Studies, Rhetoric and Composition, Second Language Studies/ESL, and Theory and Cultural Studies. There is also a small number of post-doc teaching fellows or limited-term lecturers. At the time of the study, the instructional staff of FYC included 108 graduate teaching assistants teaching ENGL 106, 18 graduate teaching assistants teaching ENGL 106i, 2 graduate teaching assistants teaching ENGL 108, 1 post-doc teaching fellow or limited-term lecturer teaching ENGL 106, and 3 post-doc teaching fellows or limited-term lecturers teaching ENGL 106i.

All new graduate teaching assistants are required to participate in a one-week intensive training program usually held a week before the beginning of an academic year. In addition, during their first year, the graduate instructors are enrolled in a mentoring program— ENGL 505B—that consists of weekly meetings with a mentoring group led by an experienced teacher

who has both theoretical and practical knowledge in teaching composition. A one-semester long mentoring course is also required for new ENGL 106i instructors. The course consists of weekly meetings led by the director of the ESL Writing Program. The major requirement for teaching ENGL 106i is at least one year of teaching experience in the ICaP program.

### **Participants**

Participants in this study were composition instructors in the Department of English, excluding those who were enrolled in the Second Language Studies (SLS) program (i.e., with the training in L2 studies). The invitation to participate in the survey was emailed to all composition instructors, and 34 teachers responded to the survey. The major and the degree that the participants were pursuing at Purdue at the time of the study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Participants' Major and Degree Pursued at Purdue*

Degree and Major	N
<b>Doctoral Degree (n=21)</b>	
Rhetoric and Composition	13
Literature	5
Literary Studies	1
Linguistics	1
Theory and Cultural Studies	1
<b>Master's Degree (n=13)</b>	
Literature	5
Creative Writing	3
American Studies	2
Rhetoric and Composition	2
Comparative Literature	1

The participants were also asked to self-identify their prior education. This information is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Participants' Prior Education*

Degree and Major	N
<b>Master's Degree</b>	
Literature	11
Rhetoric and Composition	7
Creative Writing	2
Professional and Technical Communication	2
American Studies	1
Education	1
English	1
Linguistics	1
<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	
Literature	12
Creative Writing	4
Professional Writing	4
Education	2
English	2
Rhetoric and Composition	2
Africana Studies	1
American Studies	1
Linguistics	1
Sociology	1
Writing	1
<b>Other</b>	
Teacher Certification (ELA Grades 4-8)	1

At the time of the study, most participants were teaching mainstream sections of the composition course (n=29), with only 1 participant teaching ENGL 106i. Other teaching appointments identified by the participants included tutoring in the Writing Lab (n=2), ENGL 505B: Teaching First-Year Composition (n=2), ENGL 205: Intro to Creative Writing (n=1), ENGL 420: Business Writing (n=1), ENGL 267: World Literature, 1700 to now (n=1), and ENGL 238: Intro to Fiction (n=1). One participant had no teaching appointment at the semester of the study. Because multiple responses were possible, these numbers may overlap.

As seen, ENGL 106i was an uncommon teaching appointment among the participants. The survey data also indicated that the majority of the respondents (n=28, 85%) had never taught this class, with one teacher stating that he/she would be “interested in doing so in the future.” In

addition, one participant mentioned that whereas he/she had never been assigned to teach ENGL 106i, he/she substituted for an ENGL 106-I instructor for one week.

### **Data Collection**

A web-based survey (see Appendix) was designed to answer the research questions. The survey was administered at the department of English using the survey software Qualtrics. The survey contained 20 questions and was divided into five parts. The first part asked the participants to provide information about the type and number of classes they were teaching at the time of the study and the number of multilingual writers in their current and previous classes. In this part of the survey, the participants were also asked to indicate whether or not they had taught ENGL 106i while being a graduate student at Purdue University. The second part asked the participants to provide the following information: their prior education, the major and degree pursued at Purdue, their training and teaching experience in working with multilingual writers. In addition, the respondents were also asked to evaluate the effectiveness of their education and training experiences and their overall preparedness in working with multilingual writers. The third part of the survey aimed at eliciting information about instructors' challenges in working with multilingual writers. In the next part, the participants were asked to indicate the types of professional development opportunities, if any, that they used to increase their expertise in working with multilingual writers. The final part of the survey included questions about the instructors' needs for professional development, which they perceived to be necessary to improve their abilities to work with multilingual writers.

To code the data, the responses were organized into four categories according to their relation to the research questions of the study: instructors' perceptions of their educational background, the challenges that the instructors had in working with multilingual writers, the

professional development opportunities used by the participants, and the needs for developing their abilities to teach multilingual students. Within these four categories, the responses and comments were organized by themes and patterns (e.g., giving feedback, teacher collaboration, lack of cultural knowledge).

### **Data Analysis**

To develop a coding scheme, two types of coding were applied: researcher-imposed and emerging (Howitt & Cramer, 2007). First, four categories (researcher-imposed) were created based on the research questions of the study: instructors' perceptions of their educational background, the challenges that the instructors had in working with multilingual writers, the professional development opportunities used by the participants, and the needs for developing their abilities to teach multilingual students. Then these coding categories were further divided into thematic sub-categories that emerged from the data (e.g., giving feedback, teacher collaboration, lack of cultural knowledge). The resulting coding scheme was used to analyze participants' responses.

### **Results**

*Q1: How do mainstream composition teachers evaluate their ability and professional preparation to teach multilingual writers?*

The purpose of the first research question was to examine how mainstream composition teachers self-evaluated the effectiveness of their prior education and professional experience in working with multilingual writers. One question on the survey asked the participants to identify the types of training in teaching L2 writing that they had in the past. The majority of the participants (n=22, 64.71%) indicated in-service workshops as one of the types of their prior professional development. Some respondents also stated that they took courses in teaching L2 writing—both

on the graduate and the undergraduate levels (n=7 (20.59%), n=2 (5.88%) respectively), and 5 participants (14.71%) had a practicum or an internship on teaching/tutoring L2 writing.

Attending conference presentations on teaching L2 writing was identified as another area of the prior professional experience (n=9, 26.47%).

In addition to the prior training in teaching L2 writing, the participants were also asked to indicate the types of experiences in teaching English as a second/foreign language that they had in the past. The responses to this question are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

*Participants' Experiences in Teaching English*

Response	% (n)
Did private tutoring of ESL learners	35.29% (12)
Taught English in other institutions or programs	29.41% (10)
Tutored multilingual writers at other institutions and programs	20.59% (7)
Tutored multilingual writers in the Writing Lab at Purdue	14.71% (5)
Taught English abroad	8.82% (3)
Taught L2 composition in other institutions or programs	5.88% (2)
Volunteered as part of conversation groups for adult ESL learners	2.94% (1)

When asked to evaluate the overall effectiveness of their prior experience in working with multilingual writers as well as the quality of their training, 23 participants (67.65%) thought the training and experience they received were not sufficient. The feeling of unpreparedness, expressed by these participants, was primarily caused by two factors—the lack of formal training in teaching L2 writing and the lack of experiences in working with multilingual writers. For example, one instructor admitted, “I received almost no formal training in teaching L2 writers. I still feel ill equipped to work with students who have difficulty writing/learning in English.” Almost echoing this comment was another one: “I haven’t had enough classes or lessons to prepare me.” While evaluating their prior preparation in working with multilingual writers, frequent mention was also made about the in-service training in the ICaP program, such as “I

feel like we only received tips and tricks and not a solid pedagogical approach.” Some teachers voiced frustration over the lack of a structured mentoring program and consistent workshops on L2 writing issues.

*Q2: What do mainstream composition teachers believe to be their challenges in teaching multilingual writers?*

In order to identify the types of challenges in working with multilingual writers, the participants were first asked to indicate whether or not they indeed experienced any challenges. They were asked to rate on a six-point Likert Scale their response to the following statement: *“It is challenging for me to teach L2 writers compared to native speaker students.”* The following responses were provided: strongly agree: n=4 (11.76%), agree: n=8 (23.53%), somewhat agree: n=11 (32.35%), somewhat disagree: n=10 (29.41%), disagree: n=1 (2.94%), strongly disagree: n=0. Thus, total of 23 participants (67.65%) agreed, albeit to various degrees, with the above statement.

In terms of the types of these challenges, the most often-cited challenge (n=22, 64.71%) was the difficulty knowing what kind of feedback multilingual writers need. Several comments showed that the teachers tried to provide effective feedback on students’ papers, but they were not always sure what kind of feedback would be effective. For example, one instructor expressed this concern in the following way: “I want to give examples without being prescriptive, but I also don’t want to overwhelm them with a large amount of additional text.”

The participants also experienced struggles adjusting their speech to multilingual students in their classes (n=13, 38.24%). This could also be one of the reasons why lectures (opposed to conferences and labs) were chosen to be the most challenging type of instruction—selected by 23 (67.65%) respondents. To illustrate, one participant remarked, “L2 learners often have difficulty

keeping up with a fast paced lecture.” Another instructor almost mirrored this statement: “I am afraid that I speak too quickly...” Nevertheless, some teachers said they tried to be mindful of multilingual students in their classes, such as this participant: “Sometimes I have to slow down and repeat myself several times.” Another instructor came up with a helpful suggestion: “I’ve noticed that making lecture notes available to students to follow along with has been helpful in mitigating some of this issue.”

Trying to adjust their instruction to the needs of multilingual writers, some participants admitted they needed more time, which appeared to be a concern on its own. Not uncommon were comments such as: “I don’t have time to give them the one-on-one attention that would be helpful” “Instruction can take a little more time...” “Sometimes these students seem to require more attention, which can seem like an extra challenge in some ways.”

Yet other challenges expressed by the participants were related to their lack of knowledge about students’ cultural backgrounds. For example, 10 respondents (29.41%) found it hard to connect the content of the course to the cultural backgrounds of their students, and 9 participants (26.47%) admitted that they were not knowledgeable about students’ cultures in general. The instructors also mentioned that “frequent references to pop culture” might be challenging for multilingual students, and they wish they knew how to make it more accessible for them.

The concept of rhetorical patterns—perhaps also related to the differences in cultures—was another area of challenges in working with multilingual students. To illustrate, 11 participants (32.35%) experienced difficulty understanding different rhetorical features emerging in students’ writing, and 4 participants (11.76%) had a hard time understanding students’ writing overall. Perhaps this could be related to the lack of some participants’ experiences in learning another language—8 respondents (23.53%) admitted they did not know what it takes to write in a

foreign language. At the same time, some instructors expressed concerns that the rhetorical concepts addressed in class were challenging to multilingual writers. As one participant mentioned, “I am afraid that I ... make generalizations about writing that a non-native speaker would not understand.” Along the same line was another telling comment: “I worry that they do not understand U.S.-centric concepts about writing in my class.”

Students’ lack of language proficiency also seemed to cause difficulties to some instructors. To specify, the participants did not always know how to identify students’ abilities to understand the material presented in class. The following comments are just a few examples of what the instructors expressed about this issue: “I often don't have a sense of my L2 writers' comprehension of my lecture/discussion based classes.” “It's hard to get feedback on if they are understanding what I'm talking about.” “I have a hard time gauging whether my L2 students can understand me during lectures.” “They don’t often respond to questions in class, so it’s hard to tell if they’re understanding the material.” “It’s stressful because I’m never sure if they truly understand what I’m saying.”

With respect to the students’ ability to keep up with the content of the course, an interesting observation emerged from the instructors’ open responses. When asked to identify *their own* challenges in working with multilingual writers, some participants referred to the *students’* lack of language proficiency: “A lot of what I’ve internalized is hard to put in a succinct manner that is helpful for L2 writers” “I don’t always know whether my L2 students have understood my directions. I think they are following along just fine, and then it’s clear from their drafts that they didn’t know what was being asked of them.”

*Q3: What professional preparation opportunities do mainstream composition teachers currently employ to improve their teaching of multilingual writers?*

To examine how the participants were developing their expertise in teaching multilingual writers, they were asked to indicate the types of professional development opportunities they used as composition instructors at Purdue. The question on the survey provided multiple options that they could choose from. The numbers of the selected responses are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

*Types of Professional Development Used by the Participants*

Type of Professional Development	N
Consulting with other graduate students who have experiences in teaching L2 writing	91.18% (31)
Reading teaching material on L2 writing	67.65% (23)
Attending the department Brown Bags related to L2 writing	58.82% (20)
Reading research on L2 writing	41.18% (14)
Observing other teachers in ENG 106 who have multilingual writers	35.29% (12)
Attending conference presentations related to L2 writing issues	32.35% (11)
Consulting with graduate students in the department who are from the same country/language background as my students	32.35% (11)
Consulting with professors who have an expertise in teaching L2 writing	29.41% (10)
Taking graduate courses on L2 writing	26.47% (9)
Observing tutoring sessions with multilingual writers in the Writing Lab	20.59% (7)
Attending other workshops related to L2 writing issues	17.65% (6)
Observing other teachers in ENG 106-I	8.82% (3)

As seen from Table 4, consulting with others in the department—professors, more experienced instructors, and multilingual graduate students who come from the same cultural background as students in composition classes—was the most frequently-cited development opportunity, which in turn demonstrates the collaborative spirit in the department.

Reading additional literature on L2 writing pedagogy—another favorable response—may suggest that since teachers cannot always receive answers to their questions from colleagues or by attending workshops, they turn to studying literature as a way of self-development. Brown

Bag sessions on L2 writing issues, normally given by more experienced graduate students, seemed to have a great potential for providing instructors with practical strategies and tips on working with multilingual writers (researcher's personal experience) however, many instructors may not be available during the times Brown Bags are offered.

Observations were another common way of developing expertise in L2 writing pedagogy; however, only 3 participants indicated observing ENGL 106i as a type of professional development. This finding is disheartening considering that ENGL 106i classrooms could provide instructors with a wealth of valuable information about working with multilingual writers, including strategies, techniques, and ways of interacting with the students.

Overall, the participants' responses to this question indicated that the instructors are generally interested in developing their expertise in teaching multilingual writers; therefore, they tried to compensate for the seeming lack of formal training by implementing different self-educating strategies, such as reading additional literature, observing other instructors, attending conference presentations, consulting with the experts, and attending Brown Bags.

### **Discussion**

As seen, many teachers in this study felt unprepared to work with multilingual writers and experienced various challenges while working with this population of writers. These findings are similar to the ones found by Ferris et al. (2011) and Matsuda et al. (2013). Some of the most common instructors' concerns in this study included the teachers' lack of knowledge about students' cultural backgrounds and the features of students' writing in their first language, the lack of understanding what type of feedback would be helpful for the students, and the difficulty adjusting the pace of the class to the students. The participants also believed that the level of students' language proficiency might make it difficult for some of them to understand the ideas

addressed in class and would require more time and individual attention to these students. It is comforting, however, that teachers' comments did not express "resentment" of having multilingual students in composition classes and the "burden" that they bring along with them (Ferris et al, 2011, p. 220).

It also became apparent that the reason of teachers' feeling of unpreparedness was the lack of formal training in L2 writing pedagogy and the lack of prior experience with multilingual students. Even those participants who developed their expertise through their prior teaching experience admitted they needed more structured training from the composition program. Similar results were found in Matsuda et al. (2013), who also concluded that "the infrastructure for producing trained L2 writing teachers is still seriously lacking" (p. 82).

This lack of focus on training composition instructors to work with multilingual writers may come from the fact that despite the large increase of multilingual learners, FYC classrooms are still designed to serve monolingual students. Similar to Purdue, where many mainstream instructors come from the Rhetoric and Composition program and thus bring along with them the perspectives of composition studies, other writing programs are most likely to advocate approaches and principles perpetuated in the U.S. mainstream composition studies. In fact, Preto-Bay and Hansen (2006) argued that much of what and how is being taught in mainstream writing classrooms revolves around the current trends in composition studies: critical and cultural studies, expressivism approaches, gender studies, which are popular in many English departments.

As Preto-Bay and Hansen (2006) noticed, there is "a tendency in mainstream composition programs for WPAs and teachers to engage in a kind of self-deception that if we teach what we believe we should teach, the students will learn what they need to learn" (p. 50).

Accordingly, in many mainstream composition classes, multilingual students are forced to dive into modernistic approaches irrelevant for them instead of receiving instruction that would “support their educational, social, and career goals and prepare them for immediate academic needs” (Preto-Bay & Hansen, 2006, p. 47). Therefore, it is important that composition teachers be aware of the fact that these approaches are hardly helpful to multilingual students, who first need to acquire norms and conventions of the academic writing discourse.

Writing program administrators should admit the fact that multilingual learners are no longer at the periphery of the student population, and it is time to start reassessing the effectiveness of teacher preparation and to provide instructors with the type of professional development that would prepare them to effectively work with multilingual writers.

### **Implications**

Based on the findings of this study, this concluding section will provide a number of suggestions for program administrators on how to facilitate instructors’ professional development in L2 writing pedagogy. It is important to note, however, that because of the institutional nature of this study, the results cannot be generalized for other university composition programs. Indeed, writing programs differ in terms of their structure, curricula, and types of training offered to teachers. Nevertheless, it is hoped that these suggestions could at least provide a springboard for further discussion on how to strengthen professional development opportunities for writing instructors working with multilingual writers.

### **Strengthening Pre-Semester Preparation**

Orientation training, normally offered by writing programs for incoming instructors, should include more sessions related to teaching multilingual writers. Clearly, it is not possible to equip instructors with all necessary skills and strategies in this area; however, it seems viable to

familiarize teachers—many of whom have never taught multilingual students—with some of the most common characteristics of L2 writing. Similarly, it seems to be a feasible task to make the instructors aware of the most common needs that multilingual students may have in FYC.

Accordingly, some of the topics covered during the orientation week could include creating a syllabus, selecting reading material, providing feedback, conducting one-on-one conferences, and grading. In many composition programs these topics may already be on the agenda of the orientation training, perhaps only with respect to native English speaker writers. Therefore, WPAs need to make sure that the concept of multilingual writers is included into the discussion on these topics and novice instructors are taught how to balance the needs of native English speaker students with the needs of multilingual learners in each of these areas.

### **Offering Regular Workshops on L2 Writing Issues**

Along with the pre-semester preparation, writing programs could also provide ongoing workshops on L2 writing issues. Possible workshop topics could include responding to student writing, learning about students' cultural backgrounds, adjusting the content of the course to balance the needs of both domestic and international students, learning about the most common students' errors, dealing with plagiarism, to name a few. The workshops could be organized and led by more experienced mainstream instructors as well as teachers or graduate students specialized in L2 studies.

### **Fostering Collaboration Opportunities among Instructors**

Composition programs should also encourage collaboration among novice and experienced instructors by providing activities through which teachers would be able to share their knowledge and experience. These could include creating support groups and offering panels where the more experienced teachers could give a short presentation related to L2 writing pedagogy, after which

attendees would have a chance to ask questions. Another way of establishing stronger collaboration among instructors could be designing an online space on a program website for teachers to share their materials related to teaching multilingual writers—readings, classroom activities, course assignments, and ESL linguistic resources.

### **Promoting Collaboration with L2 Writing Professionals**

Composition programs should draw on the expertise of L2 writing professionals available at a university. In some universities—like Purdue—the source of this expertise might be a graduate program in L2 studies/TESOL/applied linguistics; in others this expertise may come from an ESL department or L2 professionals across the curriculum. Many students in graduate programs related to ESL issues are multilingual learners themselves, so they could provide valuable insights on how to work with multilingual students. On the other hand, L2 writing professionals should also be encouraged to share “their own knowledge, experience, and expertise with other writing instructors who also work with L2 students” (Ferris et al. 2011, p. 227).

### **Appointing Mentors for Mainstream First-Year Instructors**

Another way of strengthening collaboration among teachers could be assigning an informal mentor for each first-year instructor. These mentors could be either graduate students majoring in ESL-related fields or other composition instructors with the experiences in teaching multilingual writers. As demanding as it sounds, informal mentoring does not have to be time-consuming: the mentor would primarily be a source of information that novice instructors could turn to for information and support.

### **Acquainting Instructors with Resources for International Students on Campus**

Plentiful resources for international students are offered in many universities, not only academic, but also social and professional. However, many teachers—especially novice—are not aware of

the existence of these valuable resources, nor do they know how to effectively incorporate them in their composition classrooms. Writing programs are well positioned to help mainstream composition instructors become familiar with the variety of resources, programs, and services offered on campus, so the instructors, in turn, could show them to their multilingual students. The pre-semester training seems to be a good venue for introducing those resources and showing the instructors how to utilize them or even make them part of classroom activities and writing projects.

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## Appendix

### Survey

#### Part 1

1. *What is your current teaching appointment in the English Department? (Please check all that apply.)*

- Teaching ENG 106
- Teaching ENG 106-I
- Teaching ENG 108
- Teaching ENGL 106 learning community
- Tutoring in the Writing Lab
- None of the above
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

2. *How many multilingual writers are in your class this semester?*

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-6
- More than 6
- N/A
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

3. *If you don't have any multilingual writers in your current class, on average, how many multilingual writers were in your other composition classes at Purdue?*

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-6
- More than 6
- N/A
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

4. *Which one applies to you in terms of your experience with teaching ENG 106i (composition class for international students) (Please check all that apply):*

- I am currently teaching ENG 106i
- I taught ENG 106i in the past
- I have never taught 106i
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Part 2

5. *What is your educational background? (Please check all that apply.)*

Doctoral Degree in:

- TESOL
- Linguistics
- Applied Linguistics
- Literature
- Rhetoric and Composition
- Education
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Master's Degree in:

- TESOL
- Linguistics
- Applied Linguistics
- Literature
- Creative Writing
- Rhetoric and Composition
- Education
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Bachelor's Degree in:

- TESOL
- Linguistics
- Applied Linguistics
- Literature
- Creative Writing
- Rhetoric and Composition
- Education
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

6. *What degree and major are you currently pursuing at Purdue?*

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7. *What kinds of training in teaching L2 writing did you have before? (Please check all that apply.)*

- Graduate course(s) in teaching L2 writing
- Undergraduate course(s) in teaching L2 writing

- Practicum or internship course(s) on teaching/tutoring L2 writing
- In-service workshops or training on teaching L2 writing
- Attending professional conference presentations on teaching L2 writing
- None of the above
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

8. *Did you have professional experiences in teaching a second language before? (Please check all that apply):*

- Taught English in other institutions or programs
- Taught English abroad
- Taught L2 composition in other institutions or programs
- Tutored multilingual writers in the Writing Center at Purdue
- Tutored multilingual writers in the Writing Center at other institutions or programs
- Did private tutoring of ESL learners
- None of the above
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

9. *How long have you been teaching composition at the college level?*

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 10+ years
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

10. *Has your education and teaching experience prepared you to work with L2 writers?*

- Yes (explain) \_\_\_\_\_
- No (explain) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

11. *How sufficient do you find your educational background and professional experience for teaching multilingual writers?*

- Very sufficient
- Sufficient
- Somewhat sufficient
- Somewhat insufficient
- Insufficient
- Very insufficient

12. *How confident are you in your ability and preparation to teach multilingual writers?*

- Very confident

- Confident
- Somewhat confident
- Somewhat unconfident
- Unconfident
- Very unconfident

Part 3

13. How would you rate your answer to the following statement? “It is challenging for me to teach L2 writers compared to native speaker students.”

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

14. What kinds of challenges do you face when teaching multilingual writers? (Please check all that apply.)

- I am not knowledgeable about their cultures
- I have a hard time relating the content of the course to the cultural background of my students
- I have a hard time adjusting my speech to multilingual students in my class
- I have a hard time understanding their writing in general
- I have a hard time knowing what kind of feedback would benefit multilingual students
- I have difficulties understanding different rhetorical patterns emerging in their writing
- I don’t know what it takes to write in a foreign language
- No challenges
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

15. Which instruction type do you find the most challenging to work with multilingual writers? (Please check all that apply).

- Lecture (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_
- Conference (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_
- Computer lab (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Part 4

16. What professional preparation opportunities do you currently use (or used in the past) to improve your teaching of multilingual students? (Please check all that apply.)

- Attending the department Brown Bags related to L2 writing

- Consulting with other graduate students who have experience in teaching L2 writing
- Consulting with graduate students that are from the same country/language background as my multilingual students
- Consulting with professors who have an expertise in teaching L2 writing
- Reading instruction material on L2 writing
- Reading research on L2 writing
- Observing other teachers in ENG 106 who have multilingual writers
- Observing other teachers in ENG 106i
- Observing tutoring sessions with multilingual writers in the Writing Lab
- Attending conference presentations related to L2 writing issues
- Attending other workshops related to L2 writing
- Taking graduate courses related to L2 writing
- None of the above
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 5

*17. Overall, how effective is the ICaP in terms of preparing you to work with multilingual writers?*

- Very effective
- Effective
- Somewhat effective
- Somewhat ineffective
- Ineffective
- Very ineffective

*18. In your opinion, what professional preparation opportunities related to teaching L2 writing are lacking in the department?*

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*19. What professional training and resources, if any, do you feel the ICaP program needs to offer to improve your ability to work with multilingual writers?*

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*20. If there is anything else that you would like to mention about your professional preparation and experience in teaching multilingual writers, please do so below:*

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*Thank you!*