
Introduction

WHEN I READ KEITH FOLSE'S *Vocabulary Myths: Applying Second Language Research to Classroom Teaching* (University of Michigan Press, 2004), I was impressed by the quality of the material but also, and especially, by its presentation. First, each myth is defined. Then, reasons why each myth is counter to good teaching practice are carefully explained, with the published research on which the explanation is based briefly summarized in a chart (for readers who wish to match up the research with the explanation). The final, extended section offers readers helpful pedagogy to substitute for the myth, including methods and materials, sample lesson plans, and specific assignments. Just as important, the chapters are written in a relatively informal way, with personal experiences, student examples, and even humor. Wow, I thought: ESL writing teachers need a similar resource.

Compared with my initial ESL teaching experiences that began 44 years ago, so many resources are now available for teachers, so much research has been reported, that there is even a *Journal of Second Language Writing*. Still, an easily accessible, even inviting and enjoyable book about "best practices" in writing classrooms interested me. Further, certain teaching myths have emerged over the years and, unfortunately, some have prevailed. Worse, writing teachers may be perpetuating those myths.

So I wrote Keith for permission to use his template, then contacted ESL composition specialists to ask them (a) which important writing myths they thought needed to be "outed" and replaced in the ESL writing classroom and (b) which they might choose to write about. Several colleagues agreed to write "myth" chapters that were based on their research and teaching experiences. The result is *Writing Myths: Applying Second Language Research to Classroom Teaching*.

Each author in this collection is a practicing teacher who selected his or her myth based on classroom experience and expertise. In the first section of the chapter, **In the Real World**, the teacher-author draws from his or her discovery of a writing myth by describing ways the myth is often used in writing classroom—and why it doesn't "work." Next, in **What the Research Says and Shows**, the author explains the foundation for eliminating the myth from the ESL writing classroom, including the causes and/or the effects of that myth on ESL writing—for both teaching and learning. The explanation is based on reported research that demonstrates the fallacy of the myth; the research is simply outlined in a chart—interested readers may consult the original research for additional information. The longer third section of each chapter, **What We Can Do**, provides multiple examples of classroom presentation and practice from the author's own repertoire, effectively giving readers materials for best practices that have proved successful in the ESL writing classroom.

Keith S. Folse (University of Central Florida) uses the first chapter to focus specifically on the myth that ESL writing classrooms are not the place to teach vocabulary. Cynthia M. Schuemann (Miami Dade College) follows with Myth 2—that teaching citation conventions isn't really a necessary part of the ESL writing curriculum. Next, Pat Byrd and John Bunting (Georgia State University) discuss why "One Grammar Fits All" is a myth, and Ken Hyland (University of London) confronts the myth that English academic writing should be definite, strong, assertive, even confrontative. Dana Ferris (California State University–Sacramento) takes on Myth 5, that students must learn to correct all their writing errors, while Susan Conrad (Portland State University) dispels the myth that corpus-discourse studies are too difficult to be included in ESL writing class curricula. Sharon Cavusgil (Georgia State University) argues that ESL academic writing classes must teach more than the paragraph and the essay, and Paul Matsuda (Arizona State University) discusses the reasons that ESL and resident students, despite their language learning differences, can be taught in the same classroom. At the end of the book, my chapter doesn't fit the

template. Instead, I report on the myths students hold about composition instruction and instructors.

Both the research and the pedagogy in this book are based on the newest research in, for example, teacher preparation, EAP and ESP, and corpus linguistics. In fact, most of the chapters refer to and employ discourse analysis in the explanations. As a result, in the course of these chapters, other, often connected myths are raised and discussed. These include issues such as genre/disciplinary writing conventions, the essential reading-writing connection, teacher-responses to student writing, authenticity of writing assignments, and identifying and spiraling difficult writing tasks throughout the ESL writing curriculum.

Of course, other writing myths exist. Three others suggested by my initial survey are:

- thinking and planning writing in one's L1 is a bad idea
- non-standard English is lazy and must be fixed
- peer response/review groups are worthless

However, the chapters in this book focus on the most widespread myths that are currently being practiced in ESL writing courses. Further, issues that entire ESL/EFL resource books have already discussed (e.g., Generation 1.5 and grading issues) at length have been excluded. We hope that you will find our information helpful, that you will find the suggested methods and approaches effective, and that you will contact us with your questions and comments through the University of Michigan Press at *esladmin@umich.edu*.