

PREFACE

2008 MARKED MY 25TH YEAR IN THE TESOL/SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING FIELD, AND I have been a fascinated witness to and participant in a great deal of activity over those years. When I first began my TESOL graduate training in 1983, I found myself immediately tutoring ESL students in the campus writing center. At the time, we talked mainly about “international students” when we discussed ESL issues, even though at this university, the ESL population also included a number of refugees who had fled Iran after the fall of the Shah in 1979, so they were not technically “international” as to their visa status. It was much later that I began to understand that the “who” of second language (L2) instruction was not identical to the “how”—that “L2 writers” were not a homogeneous group. Of course I knew that they had different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, personalities, and learning style preferences, but what I did not realize in the early years was that the students’ various educational pathways, especially as to their introduction and exposure to English in general and written English in particular, had a huge impact on what they brought into the English language and literacy classroom and how they would respond to various types of instruction.

As I completed my education and gained additional teaching experience in various parts of California, I became keenly aware that the student landscape had changed dramatically since my first exposure to it. At my first post-doctoral position, the vast majority of students in the ESL program were immigrants, not internationals, and many of them had already been in the United States for a number of years and had completed all or most of their secondary education here. In subsequent years, there has been increased attention from researchers and materials developers in understanding the needs of different L2 student audiences and developing approaches to meeting those needs. Nonetheless, we are still in the early stages of *understanding* today’s L2 college/university students, let alone *designing*, *implementing*, and *assessing* practical changes to better serve them now and in the future.

As noted in the preface to Harklau, Losey, and Siegal’s (1999) landmark collection, *Generation 1.5 Meets College Composition*, most of the impact of the so-called “Generation 1.5” student in public schools and colleges has thus far been felt in high-immigration states such as California, Texas, and New York. However, there is both statistical and anecdotal evidence that these demographic patterns are changing (or will be soon); even states with relatively little ethnic or cultural diversity are beginning to notice and ask questions about long-term resident immigrants in their classes (see, for instance, Muchisky & Tangren, 1999). As shifts in student population become more widespread, there is an even greater

need for L2 specialists, composition specialists, and program administrators and developers in colleges and universities to understand and adapt to the needs of the changing student audience(s).

This book is designed as an entry-level treatment of the topic of diverse L2 student audiences in U.S. post-secondary education. It is appropriate for those interested in working with students in academic settings, especially those students who are transitioning from secondary to post-secondary education. For L2 professionals who, like me, have gradually become aware of the shift over time, it provides a coherent synthesis and summary not only of the scope and nature of the changes but of their practical implications for program administration, course design, and classroom instruction—in short, a good deal of information we have been aware of in bits and pieces now put in one relatively concise volume. For pre-service teachers and those new(er) to the field of working with L2 students, it offers an accessible and focused look at the “audience” issues with many practical suggestions. For teacher-educators and administrators, it offers a resource that can inform their own decision-making.

I would also add that my own view of the prospective readership for this book has shifted a bit over the past year or two as I have read, thought, and written about various ideas. I no longer see this project as a book solely “for ESL teachers teaching ESL classes,” but rather as a more broadly based look at the needs of L2 students in *all* sectors of the college/university context—in ESL/English remedial and college-level reading/writing courses, in general education courses, and in courses in their chosen disciplines. I also have found myself focusing not only on ESL or writing courses but also on various types of support services that can and should be available to L2 students throughout their higher education. As a result, other possible audiences for this book include mainstream (or first language/L1) composition instructors, writing program administrators, and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) specialists conducting workshops and providing support for disciplinary faculty.

Because this volume is relatively short and, I hope, reader friendly, it should be a helpful resource for busy instructors and administrators. It could be an excellent addition to a reading list for teacher preparation courses in ESL methods (especially those focusing on academic language and reading/writing skills) and in mainstream composition. With an eye to its potential use for pre-service and in-service training, I have added a few reflection/discussion questions to the end of each chapter.

Focus and Structure

As we consider the characteristics and needs of different language learner audiences in post-secondary education, the discussion will primarily emphasize academic literacy issues—reading and especially writing. In most four-year settings, any “ESL” instruction offered typically involves composition, although some

programs offer “reading and composition” courses for L2 students and a few even offer separate “college reading” courses. While academic listening and speaking skills are important (see Ferris, 1998; Ferris & Tagg, 1996a, 1996b; Flowerdew, 1994; Murphy, 2006), the fact is that few four-year institutions offer instruction or assistance with these skills for L2 learners. Thus, most of the history and research in L2 instruction in higher education has emphasized reading and writing skills. While sub-topics related to academic oral skills are certainly discussed in this book (see especially Chapters 2 and 5), the focus is heavily, and intentionally, on **the development of academic reading and writing abilities**.

The book is divided into three sections. Part 1 (Chapters 1–2) provides research-based definitions and descriptions of the various L2 student audiences co-existing in U.S. higher education today, together with an in-depth discussion of the implications of their differing pathways to English for their academic language and literacy development. This first section also introduces three exemplars, John, Hector, and Luciana, who respectively represent the three broad student groups (**international students, late-arriving resident students, early-arriving resident students**) defined in this section. (These are pseudonyms.)

Part 2 (Chapters 3–5) examines the practical implications of understanding the different student groups—first (Chapter 3) at the general level of program administration (with sub-topics such as identification, placement, assessment, and teacher preparation), then moving to more specific emphases on course design (Chapter 4) and classroom instruction (Chapter 5). While Chapters 4 and 5 do not cover the various sub-topics within them in the depth that book-length treatments on teaching L2 reading or writing might, they provide an introductory look at the issues a teacher of L2 students might consider and some practical suggestions that could be applied to a range of teaching situations.

The final part (Chapter 6 and Postscript) attempts to answer the question, “Where do we go from here?” As I have already noted, many L2 and composition professionals are still in the very early stages of understanding the nature and scope of the changes in student audience and have not begun in earnest to consider possible modifications in the ways in which programs, courses, and instruction might be approached. This final section outlines some current models that appear to have promise, makes some suggestions as to guiding principles suggested by the discussion in the previous two sections, and outlines a broad agenda for future research related to the issues raised by the literature and in this book. The Postscript urges both L2 writing and mainstream composition professionals to work collaboratively on serving the students in their particular contexts most effectively.