

Preface to the Second Edition

This long overdue second edition of *Controversies in Second Language Writing* comes at a time of great change in the fields of first and second language writing, composition, rhetoric, and second language education in general. These changes relate not only to changes in student and teacher populations. They relate as well to pervasive influences of digital technologies developed and expanded since this book was first published (2004) and to issues that cause many of us to wonder what we currently even mean by “writing.” To what extent does it still mainly refer to expository prose comprised of words? Does the term “second language writing” still convey what we want it to convey? Has the notion of visual design (e.g., Kress, 2010) finally superseded our understanding of what writing is and does? Other questions, always present in some form or another, puzzle us in different ways than they did in the past. Can L2 writing be assessed electronically both fairly and accurately? Has the dominance of standard “native speaker” English—the Anglo-American English used by educated mother tongue English speakers—finally given way in writing classrooms at all levels to a less prescriptive English, one characterized as more multimodal, diverse, and hybrid? Are the changes so great that it no longer makes sense to use a term like second language writing? Should we consider disposing of the field of second language writing altogether, as suggested by Canagarajah (2013)?

I am not ready to dispose of the term or the field (or the title of this book). However, our notion of writing, whether in a first or second (or other) language, certainly does need to expand to include new forms and functions of print and digital communications. I hope I have addressed some of these

expansions in the second edition of *Controversies*. Nevertheless, some practices and attitudes, long entrenched in the L1 and L2 writing fields, have not disappeared, in spite of the apparent glitz and glamour of multimodal-multimedia communication. Although some decades ago we thought the only way to teach L1 and L2 writing was through a process (not single-draft product) approach, that change turned out to be overly simplified because one-shot exam-writing continues to influence students' success or failure in school and work settings. We also thought that the era of the ubiquitous five-paragraph essay in college writing classes was finally over, and that turned out not to be the case. I think it is alive and well in many venues, both in classrooms and on essay tests around the world.

One of the questions underlying this new edition of *Controversies*, then, concerns how much change there has really been in the conceptualizations, teaching, learning, and assessing of second language writing. What issues if any have been resolved? What issues have had lasting power from the past, either because people are resistant to change or because the issues continue to be unresolved ones that writing teachers and scholars need to keep discussing? In all cases, writing teachers benefit from knowing something about the theoretical foundations of second language writing (covered wonderfully in Ferris and Hedgcock (2014), as well as how historical backgrounds have influenced current thinking in the field of second language writing (Matsuda, 2003, 2014; Silva, 1990; You, 2010).

Therefore, in this second edition, readers will find that I continue to use the term "second language (L2) writing," as a convenience, to refer to any writing in any setting that people do in languages that are not their mother tongues, whether or not these "writings" also feature images and sounds. (Most of us do have mother tongues; truly balanced bilinguals are rather rare.) I also continue to believe that writing teachers need some historical perspective on what they do. Moreover, my belief continues from the first edition that most issues in L2 writing are not fully resolved and so are still subject to debate, and

that teachers, scholars, and students of L2 writing benefit from debate and discussion within their local contexts more than they do from pat answers to their questions. Without gaps, curiosities, and puzzles, knowledge in a field does not grow. Hence, as was the case for the first edition, readers will not find answers in the book, or guidelines for how and what to teach, or pronouncements about “best methods,” or strongly worded opinions about “right” and “wrong” (although I certainly have some strong views that might seep through now and then).

What, then, has changed in this 2nd edition, and what has remained more or less the same? First, all chapters, whether old or new, are updated and refer to works written since the first edition was published. Given the explosion of knowledge production in second language writing in recent years, these updates barely touch the surface of what is available, and by the time this second edition appears, no doubt numerous important pieces will have been published that did not make their way into my reference lists. One of the messages of the book is that readers need to continuously update their own knowledge by locating relevant sources for their own scholarship and teaching, including not only new work, but also significant older work. Don't depend on this (or any other) book as your only source of updates.

Second, a few chapters and sections appear relatively unchanged, if they have some historical or current value. The chapter on Beliefs and Realities (Chapter 1) has not changed much, in that the need to explore what we believe and practice remains the same and deserves ongoing reflection throughout our careers. Likewise, the chapter on contrastive rhetoric (Chapter 2) goes over familiar ground to readers of the first edition, but adds more recent work on intercultural rhetoric. Chapters on Paths to Improvement (Chapter 5) and Assessment (Chapter 7) also cover familiar ground, but I have reorganized these chapters and added new material, including a great deal of newer work that has been done on written corrective feedback and on automated (digital) essay assessment. Finally, I have added a concluding chapter (Chapter 8) that focuses only on the notions of the “Western” notions of critical thinking,

individualism, and voice, taken in part from the first edition but expanded to include more recent thinking.

Third, a few chapters are mostly new, such as a chapter devoted to writing in an digital era (Chapter 3), and one on the topic of writing from sources with special attention to updated issues concerning plagiarism (Chapter 6). I have also added a chapter (Chapter 4) that addresses some topics that were touched on in the first edition, the political and ideological topic of whose standards of English (or any other language's) writing we adopt in our teaching and assessing of L2 writing. I devoted a whole chapter to this topic in the second edition, given debates about English as a lingua franca, "translingual literacy practices," and other hybrid uses of English that have been ongoing in the last ten years.

The basic structure of the chapters in this second edition remains similar to that of the first edition. Readers are urged to think about the epigraphs and the leading questions at the beginning of each chapter before they read; to get an overview of issues from an introduction section; to review some of the existing literature on the issues; to see the issues from a classroom perspective; to consider ongoing questions; and to use the chapter-final questions to discuss with others their own beliefs and practices. Also continued from the first edition is my decision to put references at the end of each chapter rather than in a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the book. Changed from the first edition is my decision to include only references that have been cited in these chapter-end lists, rather than other uncited resources. This means that the second edition of *Controversies* is a bit more citation-heavy in places than I would like; I hope it does not affect readability significantly. The chapter-end reference lists are substantial.

Once again, I remind readers that *Controversies in Second Language Writing* is not a book that will teach you how to do things. Rather, it is a book designed to help you think and to wrestle with issues in L2 writing that are not easily resolved by how-to prescriptions. In some ways, it is a book that is designed to make you a bit uncomfortable and to seek out others for ongoing discussion and debate.

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