2012

ESL writing across the curriculum

Rachel Valleroy
The University of Toledo

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A Thesis

entitled

ESL Writing Across the Curriculum

by

Rachel Valleroy

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree in English with a concentration in English as a Second Language

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The University of Toledo

May 2012
An Abstract of

ESL Writing Across the Curriculum

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Rachel Valleroy

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in English with a concentration in English as a Second Language

The University of Toledo
May 2012

This thesis examines the effectiveness of the University of Toledo’s English as a Second Language (ESL) writing program in preparing students for disciplinary coursework. If the ESL writing program is to be effective, its writing assignments should be comparable to the writing assignments that students will be assigned in their disciplinary coursework. This thesis juxtaposes suggestions in recent literature along with the results of a survey of University of Toledo faculty about disciplinary coursework, and the University of Toledo’s current ESL writing program assignments. The purpose of this thesis is to identify what curriculum changes might be appropriate for the University of Toledo’s ESL writing program students, so that the ESL writing program’s assignments may more accurately reflect the types of writing that are frequently assigned in disciplinary courses at the University of Toledo.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................ iii

Acknowledgements ....................................................................................... iv

Table of Contents ........................................................................................... v

List of Tables ................................................................................................... vii

List of Abbreviations ....................................................................................... vi

I. Literature Review ......................................................................................... 1
   A. Introduction ............................................................................................... 1
      a. ESL Student Experience ........................................................................ 3
      b. Academic Issues Impacting ESL Students’ Experience ......................... 4
      c. Strategies for Success ............................................................................ 6
      d. Academic Literacy Acquisition ............................................................ 9
   B. Content Course Assignments ................................................................. 11
   C. ESL Views in Assignment Sequencing and Writing Skills ....................... 14
      a. Focus on Volume ................................................................................... 15
      b. Focus on Expertise ............................................................................... 16
      c. Focus on Fluency ................................................................................ 17
      d. Research Writing ............................................................................... 20
      e. Academic Writing .............................................................................. 22
   D. Conclusion ............................................................................................... 23

II. Methodology ................................................................................................. 25
   A. Introduction ............................................................................................. 25
   B. Student Body .......................................................................................... 26
C. Content Coursework Survey 26
D. Writing Program Instructors 34
E. Writing Program Courses 35
F. Participants 36
G. Data Sources 37
H. Instruments and Procedures 38

III. Discussion 41
A. Introduction 41
B. Writing Assignments Across the Curriculum 42
   a. Research Writing 42
   b. Research Proposal 43
   c. Summaries of Research/Data 44
   d. Article Review, Interpretation/Analysis/Position Paper 44
   e. Drafts of Papers 45
   f. Essay Exams, Focused Writing, Paragraph Response 45
   g. Interview with Expert 46
C. ESL Writing Skills and Curriculum Design 47
   a. Focus on Fluency/Volume 47
   b. Topic Selection and Development of Expertise 49
   c. Making Professional Contacts 50
   d. Research Writing 51
   e. Academic Writing 53
D. Conclusion 56
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>58</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: <em>English 1110: Composition I (ESL)</em> Research Proposal</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: <em>English 1110: Composition I (ESL)</em> Book/Article Summary</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: <em>English 1110: Composition I (ESL)</em> Response Paper</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: <em>English 1110: Composition I (ESL)</em> Template for Interview Report</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E: <em>English 1110: Composition I (ESL)</em> Interview Report</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Out of Class Activities – Research Papers – 10+ Pages.</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Out of Class Activities – Research Papers – 7 - 10 Pages.</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Out of Class Activities – Research Papers – Less than 7 Pages.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Out of Class Activities – Discipline Specific Papers – Research Proposals.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Out of Class Activities – Discipline Specific Papers – Summaries of Research and/or Data.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>Out of Class Activities – Discipline Specific Papers – Single Article Reviews.</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7</td>
<td>Out of Class Activities – Discipline Specific Papers – Interpretation/Analysis/Position Papers.</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8</td>
<td>Out of Class Activities – Informal Writing – Drafts of Papers</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9</td>
<td>In Class Activities – Essay Exams.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Abbreviations

ESL………………….English as a Second Language
L1………………….First Language, Native Language
L2………………….Second Language
UT………………….University of Toledo
Chapter One

Literature Review

Introduction

This study examines the effectiveness of the English as a Second Language (ESL) writing instruction program at the University of Toledo (UT) in preparing students for disciplinary writing. In this project, I juxtapose research on college writing assignments across the curriculum and ESL teaching methods, on the one hand, with UT’s ESL writing instruction program’s design, on the other hand. The goal of this study is to identify the gaps between the research from the published literature and UT’s ESL writing program, and to investigate if its current assignments are suitable and appropriate given the trends of the UT’s disciplinary writing coursework.

The research questions I investigate are:

1. How does UT’s ESL writing program’s coursework compare to assignments across the curriculum, as reported by university faculty members in a survey of disciplinary coursework?

2. How does UT’s ESL curriculum compare to teaching suggestions and research findings for ESL writing as described in the literature?

3. What curriculum changes might be appropriate for UT’s ESL writing program’s students?

I came to be interested in this issue while tutoring students in the Writing Center and teaching English 1120: Composition Lab, the ESL course for students who need assistance with essay organization and development. While working with English 1120: Composition Lab students in the classroom and Writing Center, I found that ESL students
frequently have trouble understanding discipline-specific vocabulary, finding appropriate source information, and understanding writing assignment requirements. In these situations, language difficulties can prevent students from understanding an assignment’s prompt and thus, they may be unable to complete the assignment. As I observed while tutoring, if students can not comprehend, let alone discuss, an article for which they must write a response paper, they clearly can not complete the necessary tasks required by the coursework. I bring to this research an insider’s perspective based on my two years of experience in UT’s ESL writing instruction program, and offer my suggestions based on this participant observation.

In the first section of Chapter 1, I define the term ‘ESL’ and discuss the academic issues that may affect ESL students, including teacher-student adjustments and expectations; culturally-influenced roles in the classroom; and teachers’ standards for academic writing. Following this section, I focus on strategies described in the literature that can be developed to ease anxiety about writing and increase familiarity with writing conventions, as well as the benefits of students taking on active roles in developing awareness of their thought processes about writing. Drawing on relevant published literature, I then define the skills that are required for academic literacy and explain the process through which it is acquired.

In the second section of this chapter, I present current trends in typical content course assignments, as documented in the published literature, which analyze the type, length, and frequency of common assignments and required skills across the curriculum. In the third section in Chapter 1, I discuss current ESL teaching ideology, focusing on assignment sequencing and research and academic writing skills.
In the second chapter, I present my research methods and describe the context of UT’s ESL writing program. I then outline this study’s research participants, instruments, and procedures. In assessing UT’s ESL writing program, I worked with the program’s director and students who had taken these courses, examined a UT faculty writing survey, and reviewed UT’s ESL writing program syllabi and assignments.

In the third chapter, I compare UT’s ESL coursework with disciplinary writing trends as reported in current research, and with current research on ESL writing instruction. I then analyze the gaps between the research data and recommendations and UT’s ESL writing program curricula, and identify changes that might make the ESL writing assignments more closely match UT’s disciplinary coursework.

**ESL Student Experience.** To understand the ESL student’s academic experience, we must first understand the implications surrounding the term ‘ESL’. By noting the identity issues that may accompany the ‘ESL’ label, the ESL teacher may come to better understand the reason for the range of possible academic issues that may arise in ESL students’ courses, as well as strategies for managing these issues. One issue students may face is coming to terms with the designation they acquire as bilingual, international, immigrant, second language (L2) or non-native English speaking students; all carry the label ‘ESL’ (Leki, 2007). Students who feel that they are proficient in the English language may interpret the ‘ESL’ label, and placement in ESL programs, as an affront to their capability as writers (Blanton, 1999).

This is significant because ultimately ESL students’ identities are, as Leki (2001) proposes, the “hidden transcripts” that may predict the difficulties they may encounter in their academic studies (p. 17). In addition to the ‘ESL’ label, students may also have to
confront unfamiliar classroom environments, complete with teachers’ varying adjustments and expectations. The academic issues discussed in the next section should be of interest as we examine the ESL writing program curriculum, as the solutions to some of these issues may be realized during the course of an L2 student’s participation in the ESL writing instruction program. In particular, many parallels can be drawn between these principles, and the problems and solutions experienced by UT’s ESL writing program students, as I will discuss in Chapter 3.

*Academic Issues Impacting ESL Students’ Experience.* In short, a large part of academic success is related to the teacher-student dynamic. It follows then, that facilitating student success begins with making coursework material understandable; understanding the difficulties that may result from trying to meet course demands; understanding potential assertiveness and comprehension issues; and recognizing the need for the writing skills that are considered essential in undergraduate courses.

To an extent, teachers can improve the classroom experience for L2 students when appropriate. In her case studies of four ESL students’ “socioacademic interactions”, Leki (2006) says that the gaps between teachers’ requirements and attitudes toward ESL students, and the students’ expectations, abilities, and needs, can affect ESL students both personally and academically (p. 141). Leki (2006) notes that teachers can help students by offering access to lecture notes, modifying their language in lectures and writing so as to avoid jargon and slang, and altering course topics so that they are easily understood by students from any background. By meeting ESL students halfway, Leki (2006) says that teachers can avoid causing ESL students to have an “unfair disadvantage” in the classroom (p. 142).
Additionally, teachers can be aware of what information is being conveyed, and the context in which it is being understood by students. The cause for concern, for both teachers and students, is the disparity between what the teachers expect that students will learn and what the students actually learn. In her case study of L2 students’ experiences with academic writing, Carroll (2002) says problems occur when ESL students become frustrated with teachers’ expectations of how they should go about the writing tasks, and “student resistance” is caused by “students’ quite reasonable efforts to sort through multiple, and often conflicting demands on their time and energy, hearts, and minds” (p. 27). Citing Yancey’s (1997) term, Carroll says that ESL “students’ ‘experienced curriculum’ is often at odds with the official curriculum described by faculty” (p. 27). Describing a student’s misunderstanding in a legal course, Leki’s (2006) case study recounts how the L2 student confused the word “will” for “wheels,” which led to her “desperately attempting to interpret [the teacher’s] lecture within a framework generated by the word the student thought she was saying” (p. 141).

If understanding course content in course lectures or material is a problem, a resulting concern is that students’ assumptions about how the classroom works will prevent them from being assertive and asking for clarification when they need it. In an empirical study of students’ strategies for completing coursework, Adamson (1993) found that L2 students’ culturally-influenced ideas about their role in the classroom may become an academic issue, because they may see questioning their teachers as disrespectful. Adamson (1993) states that ESL students may be reluctant to convey the fact that they do not understand to their teachers, while at the same time indicating that they do understand. Naturally, this situation, which I discuss in Chapter 3 in the context
of UT’s ESL writing program assignments, is a fundamental roadblock to coursework completion.

In addition to the disparities outlined above, the features of academic writing that teachers value may greatly differ from the ESL students’ writing abilities. Consequently, students may not meet professors’ standards when it comes to the writing skills professors consider essential. Through surveying history, psychology, business, chemistry, and engineering professors, Rosenfeld, Leung, & Oltman (2001) identified what writing skills are the most essential for ESL students in their courses. The professors, who taught both undergraduate and graduate courses, listed the following features, in order of importance: organization, exemplification, use of standard written English, vocabulary range and facility, and audience awareness (as cited in Hinkel, 2004, p. 19). It should be noted that these skills are actually some of the hardest writing skills for ESL students to acquire, and therefore may pose the most difficulty to the challenge of writing “what the teacher wants”. Students must cope with figuring out how to meet teachers’ writing expectations; students need to be able to make sense of these issues and develop appropriate strategies that will help them make the necessary changes in their writing strategies and classroom role. As I will discuss in Chapter 3, UT’s ESL writing program courses present an opportunity for the ESL instructor and student to focus on these kinds of issues.

**Strategies for Success.** Based on the assertiveness, comprehension and writing issues discussed, the basis for students’ success lies in whether students and teachers can identify the academic issues that cause students to struggle, and if they can develop strategies students can use to succeed in other courses. Possible areas for focus discussed
in the published literature about ESL issues are coping with anxiety, gaining familiarity with writing conventions, taking an active role in learning, and becoming aware of opportunities for improvement.

One reason why many L2 students struggle with coursework is anxiety about language-related issues, as in Herrington & Curtis’ (2000) case study description of a student feeling incompetent when writing in English. Although repeated practice may help ease ESL students’ anxiety about writing, Carroll’s (2002) case study finds that the feeling that there is too much to do and learn in the little time allowed for each assignment, is a “major constraint on student performance” (p. 110).

To manage anxiety relating to knowledge of essay features and language-related writing issues, a variety of strategies can be used to help L2 students start to solve these issues themselves. Referring to the ESL student who struggled with feelings of incompetence when writing in English, Herrington and Curtis’s (2000) case study description notes that he was able to learn to write according to his discipline’s conventions, by “[appropriating] the discourse that matched or seemed to speak what he wanted to say,” and incorporating words and phrases he came across in his texts and in speaking with others, into his writing (pp. 56-57). The authors say that writing about subjects that are meaningful to students can improve L2 students’ confidence and purpose for writing, and can “make what [students] experience helpful for others” through their writing (Herrington & Curtis, 2000, p. 57).

As students approach writing assignments in their general and disciplinary courses, they can run into problems trying to meet specific course requirements and writing conventions, of which they may not even have basic knowledge. In their report of
L2 student case studies, Herrington and Curtis (2000) describe the case of an ESL student who completed two basic writing courses without knowing what an essay was. The authors write that problems can occur when ESL students feel like they are receiving conflicting messages about the most essential writing skills, from teachers’ feedback in both writing courses and disciplinary courses (Herrington & Curtis, 2000). Likewise, in her empirical study, Carroll (2002) writes that even within the same discipline, teachers may offer conflicting instruction about writing conventions, which ESL students may also find confusing.

It has been demonstrated that students who take an active role in solving the problems that hinder their progress become successful at completing assignments. In her detailed look at one ESL student’s struggles with coursework, Spack (1997) reports that once the student learned to read to get the “gist” of a subject, reading long assignments changed from being an overwhelming task to an opportunity to read for enjoyment. In her empirical study of ESL students and their professors’ interactions, Leki (2006) reports that another way ESL students can fully benefit from coursework is to take extra care to make sure they understood course material by asking questions. Leki also found that if students do not understand why teachers assigned specific readings or writing assignments, trying to rationalize why the teacher assigned them can give students a new outlook on why they are required to do coursework (Leki, 2006).

Students need to be able to figure out in what areas they need improvement, and how to improve that situation. In her empirical study of ESL and native speaker students’ progress from first-year courses to disciplinary courses, Carroll (2002) writes that students must develop the metacognitive awareness needed to create learning strategies.
that work for them. Similarly, Bruner (1996) advises the teacher of ESL students that “achieving skill and accumulating knowledge are not enough. The learner can be helped to achieve full mastery by reflecting as well upon how she is going about her job and how her approach can be improved” (p. 64).

Based on her students’ experiences, Carroll (2002) concludes that trying to make sense of new demands and practicing through trial-and-error can improve writing skills, and that trying to figure out “what the professor wants” may enable L2 students to better cope with a particular course’s demands (p. 9). In addition, Carroll states that it is the repeated practice of reading discipline-based texts, paying attention and participating in class, and free writing that cause ESL students to “pick up” academic and disciplinary conventions (p. 90).

Relevant to this study, several assignments in UT’s ESL writing instruction program seek to address this concern with instruction and practice in essay writing that emphasizes important essay features, which is discussed in Chapter 3. In addition, I discuss UT’s ESL writing coursework which introduces students to several types of source material from a topic in their disciplines in the Chapter 3 as well.

**Academic Literacy Acquisition.** The process of learning to navigate through these academic issues, as well as the writing conventions of a students’ own discipline, is referred to as academic literacy acquisition. As discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, this process has a great impact on the larger matter of academic success. The published literature has defined the skills that constitute academic literacy, and the process whereby students acquire academic literacy as the “ability to read and write the various texts assigned in college” (Spack, 1997, p. 4). Similarly, in Leki’s (2007) L2 case
studies, academic literacy is defined as “the activity of interpretation and production of academic and discipline-based texts” (p. 3).

L2 students may have widely varying backgrounds and educational experiences. According to Spack’s (1997) three-year L2 case study, limited educational experiences and linguistic and cognitive development are major factors in students’ acquisition of academic literacy. Adamson’s (1993) empirical study of ESL students’ classroom experiences, found that students who simply have not attended school in a while, or who take mainstream classes despite not comprehending what is going on, have a fragmented academic development experience. Consequently, students may find writing assignments that require skills such as critical reading and research knowledge perplexing.

One of the most apparent ways ESL students develop academic literacy is repeated practice through writing assignments. In her study of L2 and native speaker students’ development as writers as they progressed through first-year writing courses to disciplinary coursework, Carroll (2002) states that the college “‘writing assignment’ is actually comprised of a series of ‘literacy tasks’ calling for high-level reading, research, and critical analysis” (p. xiv). However, Carroll acknowledges that it is the basic activities of finding good sources of information, understanding and conveying the information, and managing deadlines, that are problematic for students, rather than mechanics or rhetorical issues. Additionally, Walvoord and McCarthy (1990), in their analysis of history, biology, and business course professors’ observations, list more difficulties L2 students encounter as having to choose a position, write for an audience, and organize their writing.
In short, the issues discussed in this section all play a part in students’ academic success, through the improvement of academic literacy. Beginning with the examination of specific expectations of both teachers and writing skills, and continuing on to maintaining an active role in the classroom and constantly looking for areas of improvement, students can build their comprehensive skill set to recognize disciplinary conventions and inconsistencies, and adapt their writing styles to fit assignment requirements in courses across the curriculum. In this study of the ESL writing program at UT, we must examine the role the program plays in the development of these academic literacy skills. The published literature’s recommendations for how the ESL writing program should address this task is outlined in Section 3.1 in this chapter, and analyzed in reference to UT’s ESL writing program in Chapter 3.

**Content Course Assignments**

As the purpose of UT’s ESL writing instruction program is to prepare students for disciplinary coursework, we should naturally be concerned with the types of writing that instructors are assigning in content courses. The research studies’ findings reported in this section analyzed the types and length of writing assignments and the literacy skills needed to accomplish them, focusing on writing assignments in the fields of engineering and science as these disciplines tend to have high ESL enrollments (Reid, 2001). However, as these studies analyzed the assignments of courses across the curriculum, the results can be applicable for both ESL and native speaker students.

The purpose of these studies was to describe the types, frequency, and length of common writing assignments and tasks. In her compilation of data from a variety of discipline-specific writing assignments, Reid (2001) concludes that the most common
writing assignment tasks reported are summary; analysis; research paper; plan/proposal; and book review/critique. However, for both ESL and native speaker students, the writing skill most needed is the ability to demonstrate knowledge of course material (Reid, 2001). Along the same lines, Hinkel (2004) notes that the skills that make up the majority of the tasks involved in most writing assignments are summary and synthesis writing. As for assignment length in comparison to assignment type, Hale, Taylor, Bridgeman, Carson, Kroll, & Kantor (1997) found that most disciplines, except science and engineering courses, assigned medium-length essays of 1 to 5 pages, and half of all undergraduate courses assign 0.5 to 1.5 page responses, the majority of which are library research reports, book reviews, and laboratory or experiment reports (as cited in Reid, 2001).

Another study analyzed assignments specifically in the fields of the natural sciences and engineering. Taking 80 disciplinary course assignments from colleges across the U.S., Braine’s (1995) study focused on the ‘lab report’ in particular, which he subdivided into separate tasks and calculated the frequencies for each: experimental lab report (52.5%), experimental design report (21.25%), summary/reaction (8.75%), case study (7.5%), and research paper (5%) (p. 114). Because the experimental reports made up the highest percentage of total assignments, Braine examined these assignments to determine the essential writing skills in science and engineering fields (p. 121). In the lab report, Braine found that students actually utilized many kinds of writing skills: summary, paraphrase, description, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, analysis, and data interpretation and integration (Braine, 1995, p. 115).
Braine (1995) notes that the second least frequent assignment, the case study, requires students to solve a hypothetical problem based on an assigned scenario, and propose, choose, and justify a solution (p. 120). The least frequent assignment on the list, the research paper, calls for students to explore a topic, gather and coordinate information from a number of sources, organize the information according to an assigned order, and include a proposal and abstract (p. 121).

Braine (1995) found that each course provided guidelines about the accepted discourse methods in that discipline, finding that lab manuals offer guidance in prescribed formats and written conventions, which recommend “supplying the reader with sufficient background information to understand the present study and evaluate its results” (Braine, 1995, p. 123). Braine noted that these course materials recommend that students “get right to the point,” and go on to demonstrate how an abstract, introduction, and conclusion should be tied together by reiteration of information (p. 123). Braine noted that other skills needed for writing in these fields are summary and paraphrase writing (p. 125). Overall, Braine’s findings indicate the need for ESL students, as well as native speaker students, to be able to know how to write using a variety of strategies in order to fulfill writing in the science and engineering fields.

One of the largest-scale studies was Melzer’s (2003) analysis of college course assignments which, although part of a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) based study, may still indicate what kinds of assignments ESL and native speaker students may encounter. The 787 writing assignments were gathered from the hard sciences, social sciences, business and humanities, from 48 institutions in the U. S., and were analyzed in terms of type and frequency (Melzer, 2003, p. 86). He found that short-answer exams, at
23% of total assignments, were the most common, followed by journal assignments, which made up 13% of total assignments (p. 100-101). He found that term/research papers made up just 6% of the total, and that summary and response papers and lab reports are the next most common type at 4% (p. 90). Melzer (2003) concluded that informative writing is the main purpose of writing across the curriculum.

Based on the results of these studies, we can generally expect that the ESL student will need to be able to accomplish a variety of tasks, and will need to have the critical reading and writing skills to match. Having discussed these studies’ skills and assignments that are considered generally essential, I juxtapose in the third chapter the survey data of UT’s faculty-reported assignment types and frequencies presented in Chapter 2.

**ESL Views in Assignment Sequencing and Writing Skills**

Based on the writing skills needed for the common assignments reported in disciplinary courses, the question of how ESL writing classes should help prepare students to meet these expectations arises. In the advice for teachers outlined in this section, we can see the suggested aspects of writing the ESL writing program curriculum should teach. This section outlines three methods of assignment sequencing, and views on research writing and academic writing.

The benefit of sequenced assignments, according to White’s (1995) guidelines for ESL assignment design, is that the structure can be used to “subdivide a complex task so that it can be approached as a series of smaller jobs” (p. 3). Carroll (2002) adds that scaffolding assignments about topics in their majors will help L2 students build a framework of knowledge in their disciplines. According to White (1995), the benefit of
sequencing assignments is that both ESL and native speaker students will be more “likely to incorporate revision into their writing process and produce better work”, since each step is necessary for and can be made a part of the next step (p. 3).

The assignment sequences presented here, from Hinkel (2004), Leki (1991), and MacGowan-Gilhooly (1991), each have a distinct focus and purpose in assigning reading and writing activities. Designed by the authors for their ESL writing courses, each assignment sequence builds language facility by using varying amounts of reading and writing assignments. These assignments are designed to equip ESL students for coping with content course material through emphasis on exposure to large amounts of material; emphasis on developing language facility through extensive writing; and emphasis on using research investigation to develop expertise.

**Focus on Volume.** Of the three ESL writing program sequences presented in this section, Hinkel’s (2004) sequence is most concerned with exposure to large amounts of course material. In his handbook of ESL teaching methods, Hinkel’s (2004) describes a sequence which places emphasis on reading and writing for volume, which proved to be beneficial for his ESL students who needed to develop lexical and grammatical proficiency, and improve their ability to read and write academic texts. In this sequence, students vote on course topics, read 150-300 pages per week independently, participate in class discussion about the reading, and write summaries and syntheses of readings on a daily basis (Hinkel, 2004). This sequence assigns 7-10 major writing assignments of 3-6 pages each, several of which require students to write two drafts (Hinkel, 2004). Hinkel notes that other concepts the ESL students study are effective thesis statements, essay structure, and appropriate summary and paraphrase writing. Additionally, students
engage in continuous individual practice of vocabulary, grammar structures, and editing (2004).

**Focus on Expertise.** Unlike Hinkel’s (2004) sequence, Leki proposes a sequence for the ESL writing course that allows students to build their research and writing skills; develop their knowledge about a subject; and gain the ability to write with expertise about a single topic that interests them, like financial aid opportunities (1991). About the issue of topic selection, Leki notes that allowing students to write only about topics they know, like their personal experiences and preferences, “constricts them intellectually and may suggest to them that they are not qualified to discourse on the truly important issues of the world” (p. 20). Leki says that students’ writing and thinking abilities can not improve when they are “forbidden admission to the intellectual arena to try out their ideas against those of others and to exercise their ability to reason through positions and arguments” (p. 20).

After choosing a topic in Leki’s (1991) sequence, students find and summarize several sources, create a questionnaire, survey at least 20 people, interview an expert on the topic, and write a final report. Throughout the sequence, Leki notes that the personal and practical significance of each topic reinforces ESL students’ interest, and “each student begins to be a genuine expert on the topic” (p. 21). Students become “truly knowledgeable” and as the “problem of lack of expertise disappears,” so does the potential problem of underdevelopment, as the only question that remains is how to organize the large amount of information they have collected (Leki, 1991, p. 22). Leki writes that this research project “allows students to confront problems affecting them and
to realize that they are capable of investigating solutions and entitled to look to others for help,” which she says is an empowerment ESL students need (p. 21).

The overall benefit of this sequence is that students can try out the understanding, reading, and writing skills that are needed to function at the university level. Leki (1991) says that this sequence allows for these skills to be learned in a context that “provides continuity and purpose,” and students develop expertise by being “empowered to select and mold their information as they see fit,” developing the ability to form educated opinions based on research (p. 22).

Dr. Melinda Reichelt, Coordinator of ESL Writing at the University of Toledo, developed the ESL writing program curriculum based on Leki’s (1991) sequence, with the distinction that students may explore one controversial topic from their own major, allowing students to develop a framework of knowledge in a particular area in their discipline. In Chapter 3, I further compare Leki’s (1991) sequence to the University of Toledo’s ESL writing program design.

**Focus on Fluency.** Like Hinkel’s (2004) ESL writing course sequence discussed previously in this chapter, MacGowan-Gilhooly’s (1991) program is concerned with both exposure to a large amount of course material and improvement of language facility. Similar to the University of Toledo’s ESL writing program, MacGowan-Gilhooly designed this ESL writing program so that students progress through three courses. She outlines a writing program sequence that, using a whole-language approach, addresses the problems of lack of fluency, lack of knowledge about subject matter, and grammar and mechanical usage issues ESL students encounter in their reading, writing, and speaking (MacGowan-Gilhooly, 1991). While there is no prescribed syllabus or
curriculum for the three courses and students work with peer-groups and teachers to a degree, most of the work is done individually (MacGowan-Gilhooly, 1991).

The first course in MacGowan-Gilhooly’s (1991) sequence requires reading 1,000 pages total, or 70 pages a week, of popular fiction, responding to the reading using double-entry journal format, and discussing the reading in small groups. The ESL students also complete a writing portfolio of 10,000 words that can be made up of many types of writing and as students bring in new chapters weekly, they share them with their peers to receive advice to aid the revision process (MacGowan-Gilhooly, 1991).

In the second course, MacGowan-Gilhooly (1991) states that ESL students transition from reading for pleasure to academic reading, write response journal entries and discuss the reading with each other in class. The class assignments include narrative, descriptive, and point-of-view writing; interviewing an expert and writing a report about the interview; finding sources; and writing a research paper (MacGowan-Gilhooly, 1991).

By the third course, ESL students are able to write freely and issues with grammar and mechanics can then be addressed. MacGowan-Gilhooly (1991) writes that the goals of the course are correctness and preparation for the exit exam, which consists of writing a mostly grammatically correct, persuasive essay of 350 words in one hour. The course assignments include reading newspaper and magazine articles, writing journal responses and several process-written essays per week, and participating in small group discussion and debate. The teachers of this course guide the ESL students in discovering and correcting frequently-made errors, and students apply these principles as they revise for style and mechanics as well as frequently misspelled words, vocabulary and grammar (MacGowan-Gilhooly, 1991).
MacGowan-Gilhooly (1991) reports that the benefits of this program sequence were immense: ESL students wrote with greater fluency, better grammar, “more depth and richness”, and better organization and control (p. 56). While there is no explicit grammar instruction, ESL students do gain greater control of English by consulting teachers about what they should keep in mind when revising and applying these principles (MacGowan-Gilhooly, 1991). MacGowan-Gilhooly (1991) found that the amount of reading and writing required did not deter students, and that the students who made the most progress were the ones who did the most reading and writing. The common readings and discussion contributed to the “shared experience” of learning to think critically about the topic and gave them “equal footing” in class discussions (MacGowan-Gilhooly, 1991, p. 56).

MacGowan-Gilhooly (1991) writes that the teachers of these courses noted “greater clarity in the way students presented ideas, more daring in their use of new vocabulary, greater ability to write interesting pieces, better reading comprehension and speed, greater enjoyment of reading than in previous ESL courses, and better discussions of readings with students providing insights from their own lives and world views.” (p. 55). Overall, MacGowan-Gilhooly (1991) points out that the course sequence results in vast improvements in ESL students’ reading, writing, and speaking abilities.

Regarding student empowerment, MacGowan-Gilhooly (1991) reports that ESL students developed the ability to concentrate and work independently to a greater degree using this sequence than the previous, traditional sequence, and promoted students’ analytical thinking and intellectual curiosity. MacGowan-Gilhooly writes that the teachers of these programs noticed a “higher degree of engagement, attention, and time
on task” and that students were “more willing to write and less afraid of it” (p. 56). She writes that the coursework’s effect on interpersonal skills included students’ improved ability to work in groups and tolerance for classmates’ opposing opinions. The students were proud of the fact that they had read several “real” novels, and thus gained confidence as readers and writers (MacGowan-Gilhooly, 1991, p. 56).

MacGowan-Gilhooly (1991) reports that students offered this critical feedback: the journal writing was time-consuming, they preferred more instruction from teachers instead of peer-oriented discussion and review, and they would have liked to have more grammar instruction and practice for the final exam (p. 57). In response to this feedback, MacGowan-Gilhooly (1991) comments that “despite their recognition of and satisfaction with their own growth, years of traditional instruction limited their confidence in the approach” (p. 57). In conclusion, she found that the most notable, overall benefit of the ESL writing sequence is its student-oriented approach: both in the control it allows the student, and the responsibility it requires of the student (MacGowan-Gilhooly, 1991).

Because of the variation in the emphasis and benefits of these ESL writing program sequences, it is worthwhile to consider each suggested feature in contrast to the ESL writing program at UT. In Chapter 3, Hinkel’s (2004) and MacGowan-Gilhooly’s (1991) assignment and course sequences are juxtaposed with UT’s current ESL writing program sequence, which was based on a modified version of Leki’s (1991) model.

**Research Writing.** As mentioned in the section on important skills for content course assignments, research skills are necessary for completing tasks such as finding, evaluating, synthesizing, and citing source material. Based on the suggestions made by writing teachers of both ESL and native speaker students, the main goal of the writing
course is to help students manage the research project. The problem is, as Watt (2000) states that students are often intimidated by the volume and depth of information from source material and subsequently can not manage and incorporate that information into their own writing. His observation, although not ESL-specific, can still be applicable to the ESL classroom. Therefore, it would benefit students to learn research strategies that would help students to manage these projects, as well as how to write about their research.

To keep the research project manageable, White’s (1995) native speaker focused recommendation is that the number of sources allowed should be limited, and that teachers should emphasize the appropriate use of sources to support, rather than replace, the writer’s ideas. In order to meet research writing expectations, students need explicit instruction in library and on-line research skills (White, 1995). In fact, Watt (2000) believes that any student, ESL or native speaker, would benefit from learning how to evaluate and use source material in their writing even if they are not assigned the traditional research paper in their field. In Johns’ (1997) native speaker focused study, she lists the four most important academic writing skills students need as being able to introduce and discuss topics; discuss information from sources; justify the value/importance of their research; and present the purpose of the paper and their findings.

Based on these suggestions, the ability to work with source information may be a valuable skill for students who are unsure about the methods with which they can approach text and reference it effectively in their writing. As the majority of the assignments in UT’s ESL writing program’s English 1110: Composition I (ESL) and
English 1120: Composition Lab are research-oriented tasks, such as locating, summarizing, and quoting source material, the theories outlined here may provide insight on how the ESL writing program may better prepare students for these types of tasks.

**Academic Writing.** Besides developing research writing techniques, students should be aware of the differences between personal writing and academic writing, and the techniques that can make writing acceptable for academic coursework. Johns’ (1997) survey emphasized that many faculty find sentence-level features of academic writing such as appropriate uses of hedging, active and passive voice, balanced generalizations, and exemplification are missing in non-native speaker students’ writing. In addition, Johns (1997) writes that faculty find L2 students’ writing vague, unstructured, and too personal for academic writing. Besides these sophisticated techniques, other basic components of writing are cause for concern in many L2 students’ writing.

Other academic writing issues include objectivity, assertiveness, and citation. A solution to Leki’s (1991) observation that ESL students’ unwillingness to choose one side of a topic in an effort to remain objective, may be found in White’s (1995) proposal that the ability to decide on an opinion/side of a topic and assert those opinions can be developed by having students write about topics from differing perspectives so that they can gather enough knowledge about the controversy to be able to develop their opinions and arguments about it. Another academic writing issue is the use of citation and the avoidance of plagiarism, which Braine (1995) notes is a major problem for ESL students because they must figure out how to refer to outside material often.

Based on these observations, we can recognize the fact that the ability to recognize and produce the features of academic writing is essential for academic work.
As part of UT’s ESL writing program coursework, students are given guidelines for exemplification as part of the essay-format instruction, and are instructed in using a research writing template that emphasizes not just citation, but discussion of source material. Further discussion of the writing program’s instruction about academic writing follows in Chapter 3.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this chapter has been to present the issues, according to the research, that affect L2 students, including the academic issues; the process and skills that make up academic literacy acquisition; types of assignments that may encountered in content courses; and current ESL ideology about L2 writing program coursework. Based on the discussed general coursework trends, the assignment sequence structure, and teaching recommendations, we can assess the ESL writing program to suit the needs of the ESL student at UT, in particular.

Keeping in mind the basic writing and research skills that will allow ESL students to communicate information in an effective manner, the ESL writing courses should instruct students in learning how to understand assignment requirements, how to find relevant source information, and express their understanding of this information clearly. As my experience as an ESL writing program teaching assistant and writing center tutor confirms, teaching these techniques may not insure that the instruction will ‘stick’, but does offer an introduction to academic reading and writing conventions that may be new to students due to their academic backgrounds.

In Chapter 2, I describe the context of the writing program in terms of the composition of the University of Toledo student body, and discuss the University of
Toledo faculty-reported data on assignment types and frequencies from courses across the curriculum. I then outline the structure of the ESL writing program’s three courses, and explain their assignment sequence and instruction. Following these sections, I present my participants, instruments, and procedures.

In Chapter 3, I examine how the common writing assignment trends compare to UT’s faculty-reported survey data. I also compare the teaching advice from this chapter to the writing program’s design and curriculum, drawing from my participants’ input and my own observations as well.
Chapter Two

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the University of Toledo’s English as a Second Language (ESL) writing program’s curriculum. It is necessary to determine how the ESL writing assignments compare to assignments across the curriculum, so that the ESL writing program curricula can better prepare students for academic disciplinary writing at UT. From the literature outlined in Chapter 1, we can see the ESL teaching methods with which an ESL writing program curriculum ideally should be aligned, focusing on volume, expertise, or fluency. In addition to these sources, I will also draw from a University of Toledo faculty assignment survey, former ESL writing program students’ comments on their experiences, and my insider’s perspective as a graduate teaching assistant. To evaluate what kind of program changes might be appropriate for the University of Toledo ESL writing program’s students, I address the following questions:

1. How does UT’s ESL writing program’s coursework compare to assignments across the curriculum, as reported by university faculty members in a survey of disciplinary coursework?

2. How does UT’s ESL the curriculum compare to teaching suggestions and research findings for ESL writing as described in the literature?

3. What curriculum changes might be appropriate for UT’s ESL writing program’s students?
This chapter first discusses the demographics of the University of Toledo’s student body and the results of a survey of UT faculty about writing assigned in undergraduate courses. I then provide an overview of UT’s ESL writing program’s courses and instructors, along with the course assignments and sequencing. I then describe this project’s participants, data sources, instruments and procedures, and data analysis. Later, in the third chapter, I juxtapose the research from Chapter 1, the data from the survey of UT’s faculty from this chapter, and students’ experience with the curriculum.

**Student Body**

The majority of UT’s ESL students are international students majoring in engineering. At the time of this project, the numbers of international undergraduate students at the University of Toledo in the following fields were: engineering (145), business (208), pharmacy (99), arts and sciences (64), health and human services (34), education (8), and nursing (7) (Schroeder, 2010). It should be noted that the University of Toledo does not maintain data on the number of students that fall under the categories of bilingual, immigrant, or otherwise second-language or non-native English speaking. Additionally, at the time of this project, the minimum TOEFL score for international students to be accepted into UT was 450, or 400 in special circumstances.

**Content Coursework Survey**

In assessing what curriculum changes might be appropriate for UT’s ESL writing program, we should take into account what types of writing UT faculty members are assigning in discipline-specific courses. In order to find out what kind of writing occurs in disciplinary courses at the University of Toledo, Dr. Barbara Schneider, Director of
Composition, and Dr. Anthony Edgington, Director of Composition, conducted a survey of UT faculty members in 2008.

The survey, delivered by email to all tenured faculty (over 700), gathered responses from 240 faculty members of undergraduate and graduate courses, although the number of respondents from each department was not recorded in the online survey. However, since these results were self-reported and sometimes no data was supplied, the results may not give a complete indication of the average frequency of writing assignments. Nevertheless, the results may give some indication as to how often students might be given writing assignments similar to the coursework of UT’s ESL writing program.

In this survey, University of Toledo faculty were asked to rate the frequency at which they assigned in-class, out-of-class, discipline-specific, and informal writing tasks. The in class activities included focused writing, essay exams, peer evaluations, lab notebook, and free writing. The out of class activities categorized the research paper as 10+ pages, 7 – 10 pages, less than 7 pages, and progressive papers. Discipline-specific out of class activities included summaries of research and/or data, book reviews, single article reviews, research proposals, abstracts, lab reports, and interpretation/ analysis/ position papers. The out of class activities that required brief response writing were paragraph responses to a prompt, take home exams, workbook answers, memos, and letters. Informal writing activities included email, web discussion boards/blogs, drafts of papers, free writing or quick writing, and journals.

The assignments which correspond to assignments in UT’s ESL writing program are the research paper; research proposal; summaries of research and/or data; single article
review; interpretation/analysis/position paper; drafts of papers; and essay exams. I present the data from the faculty survey in the following tables.

Table 1

*Out of Class Activities – Research Papers – 10+ Pages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Data Supplied</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In UT’s ESL writing program, research-based assignments are the focal point of *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* and *English 1120: Composition Lab*. A research paper of at least 5 pages is the final product of *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* coursework. Although 47.9% of respondents noted that they never assigned a 10+ page research paper, 15.8% reported assigning it once, and 5.0% reported assigning a 10+ page research paper twice per semester, as shown in Table 1 (Edgington & Schneider, 2008).

Table 2

*Out of Class Activities – Research Papers – 7 – 10 Pages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Data Supplied</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four or more times</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second question UT faculty members were asked was how often they assigned a 7 – 10 page research paper. Table 2 indicates that although 40.0% of respondents reported that they did not assign the 7 – 10 page research paper, 21.3% reported assigning it once, 4.6% reported assigning it twice, 2.1% reported assigning it three times per semester, and 0.8% reported assigning the 7 – 1 page research paper four or more times per semester (Edgington & Schneider, 2008).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Out of Class Activities – Research Papers – Less than 7 Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Data Supplied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four or more times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third question that University of Toledo faculty members were asked was how often they assigned a research paper of 7 pages or less. While 24.6% of respondents reported that they never assigned a research paper under 7 pages, 16.7% reported assigning it once and 13.3% reported assigning the research paper under 7 pages twice per semester. Additionally, 7.9% reported assigning it three times per semester, and 4.6% reported assigning the research paper of 7 pages or less weekly throughout the semester, as indicated in Table 3 (Edgington & Schneider, 2008).
Another out of class activity that University of Toledo faculty members were asked to rate was the research proposal, which is included in the *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* coursework. Although 41.3% of respondents reported that they never assigned the research proposal, 22.5% reported assigning it once. However, only 2.9% of respondents reported they assigned the research proposal twice, and only 0.4% assigned the research proposal three times per semester (Edgington & Schneider, 2008).

In addition to the research proposal, University of Toledo faculty members were asked how frequently they assign the summary of research and/or data, which is a course
topic in *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)*. As indicated in Table 5, while 30.0% of respondents reported never assigning summaries of research and/or data, 21.7% of respondents reported assigning it once per semester. However, only 5.8% of respondents reported assigning it twice, and only 1.3% of respondents reported assigning it three times. Additionally, 8.8% of respondents reported assigning summaries four or more times, and 5.4% of respondents reported assigning the summary of research and/or data weekly throughout the semester (Edgington & Schneider, 2008).

Table 6

*Out of Class Activities – Discipline Specific Papers – Single Article Reviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Data Supplied</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four or more times</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another discipline specific paper University of Toledo faculty members were asked to rate was the single article review, which is assigned in *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* and *English 1120: Composition Lab*. While 29.2% of respondents reported never assigning the single article review, 15.0% of respondents reported assigning it once, and 10.8% reported assigning it twice per semester, as presented in Table 6. In addition, 5.0% of respondents reported assigning it three times, 7.1% of respondents reported assigning it four or more times, and 4.6% of respondents reported assigning the single article review weekly (Edgington & Schneider, 2008).
Table 7

*Out of Class Activities – Discipline Specific Papers – Interpretation/Analysis/ Position Papers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Data Supplied</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four or more times</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UT faculty members were also asked to rate the frequency at which they assigned the interpretation, analysis, or position paper, which is similar to the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) and English 1120: Composition Lab response essay assignment. Table 7 indicate that although 17.9% of respondents reported never assigning the interpretation, analysis or position paper, 17.1% of respondents reported assigning it once per semester. Additionally, 12.1% of respondents reported assigning it twice, 7.5% reported assigning it three times, and 13.3% of respondents reported assigning it four or more times per semester. In addition, 6.3% of respondents reported assigning the interpretation, analysis, or position paper weekly throughout the semester (Edgington & Schneider, 2008).
In UT’s ESL writing program, the final step of the *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* assignment sequence is completing several drafts of the research paper. In the University of Toledo survey, faculty members rated how often students in their courses complete multiple drafts of papers. Although 22.5% of respondents reported never assigning drafts of papers, 11.7% of respondents reported assigning it once, and 7.9% reported assigning drafts of papers twice. Although only 3.3% of respondents reported assigning drafts of papers three times, 14.6% of respondents reported assigning it four or more times, and 6.3% of respondents reported assigning drafts of papers weekly throughout the semester, as indicated in Table 8 (Edgington & Schneider, 2008).

### Table 8

*Out of Class Activities – Informal Writing – Drafts of Papers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Data Supplied</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four or more times</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9

*In Class Activities – Essay Exams*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Data Supplied</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four or more times</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last category I present from the survey of University of Toledo faculty members is the frequency of the essay exam, which is assigned in *Composition 1120: Composition Lab*. Although 32.9% of respondents reported never assigning the essay exam, 15.0% of respondents reported assigning it once, and 19.6% of respondents reported assigning the essay exam twice, as presented in Table 9. However, only 9.6% of respondents reported assigning the essay exam three times, only 7.5% reported assigning it four or more times, and only 1.3% reported assigning the essay exam weekly throughout the semester (Edgington & Schneider, 2008).

**Writing Program Instructors**

The University of Toledo’s ESL writing courses are taught by graduate teaching assistants in the MA-ESL program. Some teaching assistants take part in a week-long orientation before classes begin, taught by Dr. Barbara Schneider, Director of Composition, and Dr. Anthony Edgington, Associate Director of Composition. All ESL graduate teaching assistants take Dr. Melinda Reichelt’s course, *Linguistic 5210: Issues in ESL Writing*. Many teaching assistants take *ENGL 6010: Seminar in English*
Instruction: Composition, taught by Dr. Barbara Schneider or Dr. Anthony Edgington. In addition, Dr. Reichelt holds a brief orientation at the beginning of the fall semester, and also oversees staff meetings and scorer training sessions in which all teaching assistants participate. Teaching assistants’ responsibilities include teaching one class per semester and scoring placement essay exams, and many serve as Writing Center tutors (after undergoing orientation and observing other ESL tutoring sessions) and work at the American Language Institute, which is located on the UT campus.

Writing Program Courses

At the time of my assistantship, UT provided three ESL writing instruction courses for students. English 1020: Writing and Grammar may be required as a prerequisite to English 1110: Composition I (ESL) for students who place into this course by virtue of the fact that they need to have more time and writing experience to improve grammatical aspects of their writing, especially sentence structure. English 1110: Composition I (ESL) introduces students to academic research and writing. English 1120: Composition Lab, which was taken concurrently with English 1110: Composition I (ESL) if needed, provided additional instruction in development and organization. Since that time, the English 1120: Composition Lab course has been eliminated.

When I undertook this project, the average number of sections for each course in the program was four per year for English 1020: Writing and Grammar; two per year for English 1120: Composition Lab; and seven per year for English 1110: Composition I (ESL). These courses are taught by graduate teaching assistants, under the direction of Dr. Melinda Reichelt, ESL Writing Program Coordinator at the University of Toledo.
Participants

The participants in this study included UT’s ESL writing program coordinator and students who had taken UT’s ESL writing courses. The four students I interviewed were undergraduate students, and had all taken *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* concurrently with *English 1120: Composition Lab*. Two of the interviewees had been students in the *English 1120: Composition Lab* course I taught.

Jennifer, aged 21, a communications major whose L1 was Malay, had not taken any composition courses prior to taking *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)*. Justin, aged 23, who was majoring in electrical engineering whose L1 was Gujarati, had not previously taken a composition course before *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)*.

Michael, aged 22, a finance major whose L1 was Arabic, had taken an advanced writing class at the American Language Institute at UT. Alex, a business major who did not state his age, had previously taken *English 1020: Writing and Grammar* and had taken *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)*. Both Alex and Justin had been students in my *English 1120: Composition Lab* course.

In addition to interviewing these students, I conferred with UT’s Coordinator of ESL Writing and Professor of English, Dr. Melinda Reichelt, about how these classes work in conjunction with each other and how they prepare students for academic writing. Dr. Reichelt, whose Ph.D. is in English with concentrations in linguistics, rhetoric/composition, and ESL, oversees the teaching of these courses, and created the syllabi and lesson plans for teaching assistants’ use for each course.

I also draw on my own experience in teaching *English 1120: Composition Lab*, and tutoring ESL students in the Writing Center. Throughout the course of two semesters,
I was able to observe the problems students experienced when asked to complete reading and writing tasks both in the ESL writing classroom and in a variety of discipline-specific courses. Through teaching and tutoring students both in and outside the program, I have been able to observe that there are some gaps between the ESL writing program’s course material and students’ assignments in other courses.

**Data Sources**

My data sources were course syllabi, lesson plans, and assignments from the ESL writing program; Edgington & Schneider’s (2008) survey of UT faculty; Smoke’s (2005) *A Writer’s Workbook*; interviews with students; and conferring with Dr. Melinda Reichelt. The assignments used in the *English 1020: Writing and Grammar* course are from Smoke’s (2005) *A Writer’s Workbook*, and include an autobiographical essay, comparison/contrast essay, persuasive essay exam, summary, and practice essay exam.

With the exception of chapters from *A Writer’s Workbook, English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* and *English 1120: Composition Lab* coursework is based on Leki’s (1991) model of assignment sequencing. Most of these courses’ writing assignments are linked by a topic of interest from a student’s major, which students may choose and research through the completion of several linked assignments. In *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)*, the assignments that are linked by topic are an essay-length, paragraph-length, and sentence-length summary of an article or book chapter; a research paper proposal; a report of an interview with a professor; a response paper to an article or book chapter used in the research paper; note cards; and several drafts of a research paper. In addition, students complete dialog journals, writers’ memos, reading logs, quizzes, and in-class writing.
In *English 1120: Composition Lab*, the assignments that are linked by topic of interest are an annotated bibliography, a response paper, and a speech about the response assignment. In addition, there are two practice essays with writer’s memos, in-class writing, homework, and reading assignments.

**Instruments and Procedures**

To investigate how helpful students found the ESL writing program courses and how the ESL curriculum compared to their discipline-specific coursework, I interviewed students and the ESL program director. After recruiting four students through placing an advertisement on campus, I interviewed these students using a list of questions I had prepared. During the interviews, which lasted 40 minutes, I asked the following questions:

1. Which ESL writing classes have you taken? (*English 1020: Writing and Grammar, English 1110: Composition I (ESL), English 1120: Composition Lab*)
2. Were these courses helpful to you? If so, how?
3. What classes have you taken, or are taking, that apply to your major?
4. What kinds of writing assignments did these classes require you to write?
5. What classes have you taken, or are taking, to fulfill general education requirements?
6. What kinds of writing assignments did these classes require you to write?
7. How effective at communication do you think you are?
8. What writing techniques do you remember from your ESL writing classes?
9. Do you think you use these techniques in your writing?
10. What writing problems do you think you have? For example:

   Amount of reading       Understanding the reading
Amount of writing   Type of writing assignments

11. Do these problems interfere with what you want to communicate?

12. What kind of writing assignments do you do well at?

13. What kind of writing assignments do you have trouble with?

14. How important do you think it is to be able to use standard written English in your future career?

I obtained copies of syllabi, writing assignments, and lesson plans from the ESL Program Coordinator, Dr. Melinda Reichelt. I also interviewed Dr. Reichelt using the following questions:

1. What are the goals of the ESL writing program?

2. What kinds of writing skills should students be familiar with after the ESL writing program?

3. What is the basis for the current curriculum assignment sequencing?

I discuss the students’ and Dr. Reichelt’s responses to these questions in Chapter 3.

To analyze the data, I read through these data sources including the interview notes, recursively, with my research questions in mind. I drew on these data sources to answer my research questions, to assess the gaps between the writing assignments in UT’s ESL writing program, and the writing assignments most frequently assigned according to the survey of UT faculty. I then categorized the trends in the types of writing assignments that appeared in the UT faculty survey, and the writing skills required to complete those assignments, as discussed in the review of literature in Chapter 1. The trends which emerged are discussed in Chapter 3.
In Chapter 3, the program’s assignments are discussed in light of the recommendations from the literature from Chapter 1; the UT faculty-reported coursework that was presented in this section; and students’ reflections on the effectiveness of the courses. Through this juxtaposition, ESL writing program changes can be considered that may make the curriculum more accurately reflect content coursework and better prepare students for writing across the curriculum.
Chapter Three

Discussion

Introduction

In this project I have reviewed current research and pedagogical trends in the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) composition, in order to determine the appropriateness of the University of Toledo (UT) ESL writing program’s curriculum. In this chapter, I juxtapose the findings from the studies of discipline coursework about typical writing assignments, and survey results of UT faculty members presented in Chapter 2, with the curriculum of UT’s ESL writing instruction program. If the goal of UT’s ESL writing program is to prepare students for disciplinary coursework, the ESL writing program’s assignments should reflect the kinds of assignments and tasks frequently required in disciplinary courses. The research questions investigated in this chapter are:

1. How does UT’s ESL writing program’s coursework compare to assignments across the curriculum, as reported by university faculty members in a survey of disciplinary coursework?

2. How does UT’s ESL curriculum compare to teaching suggestions and research findings for ESL writing as described in the literature?

3. What curriculum changes might be appropriate for UT’s ESL writing program’s students?

In the first section of this chapter, I identify the writing skills that may be required in UT’s ESL writing students’ future content courses, based on UT faculty responses about research-oriented writing assignments, writing assignment length, and
other types of writing assignments. In the second section of this chapter, I compare UT’s ESL writing program curriculum to current teaching approaches to assignment sequencing, topic selection, research writing, and academic writing as reported in the ESL writing literature. Throughout this chapter, I consider what changes in the current ESL writing program’s curriculum may be appropriate given the needs of UT ESL writing students.

**Writing Assignments Across the Curriculum**

The research presented in Chapter 1 indicates that in many disciplinary courses including the courses at UT, there are certain writing tasks which are necessary components of academic writing, and there are writing skills which instructors consider crucial in many courses. From the survey of faculty which was presented in Chapter 2, we can see, specifically, how writing assignments tend to be distributed in the disciplinary coursework at UT. The self-reported results of the survey conducted by Edgington & Schneider (2008) at UT, show what kind of writing ESL students are being assigned after the ESL composition sequence. As I noted in Chapter 2, although it is difficult to tell if these results are really representative of what kind of writing assignments UT faculty typically assign, the responses provide a useful reference point for analyzing the assignments in UT’s ESL writing program. In this section, I compare the survey responses to the types and frequencies of corresponding assignments in UT’s ESL writing program, focusing on the program’s core course, *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)*.

**Research Writing.** From the research presented in Chapter 1, we saw that there were variations in the published literature’s data on the importance of research writing
skills, as both one of the most important skills (Reid, 2001; Hinkel, 2004) and one of the least frequently-required skills (Braine, 1995; Melzer, 2003). The data from the faculty survey, presented in Chapter 2, presents a different picture of the importance of research writing skills at UT.

As noted in Chapter 2, it is not likely that UT students will be assigned research papers of seven or more pages more than once per semester. However, it is likely that faculty will assign the research paper of less than seven pages four or more times per semester. In contrast, UT’s English 1110: Composition I (ESL) assigns a variety of research-oriented tasks, but these tasks conclude with only one five-page research paper. As there is a good chance that students will be required to complete a research paper as frequently as four or more times per semester, students should be proficient in finding sources, organizing source material, and writing about several topics over the course of one semester. Moreover, if the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) were to include several research projects, ESL students could benefit by applying several of the research steps to multiple topic, as opposed to the current project that allows only one topic.

**Research Proposal.** The research proposal was reported to be an important skill for academic writing (Reid, 2001). As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the survey of UT faculty indicated that 22.5% of respondents reported assigning the research proposal once in disciplinary courses, while only 2.9% of respondents assigned it twice, and only 0.4% of respondents reported assigning it twice (Edgington & Schneider, 2008).

As the research proposal is one of the six major writing assignments in English 1110: Composition I (ESL), students spend a significant amount of time working on the research proposal. The specific writing tasks that make up the English 1110: Composition
I (ESL) research proposal are writing a personal statement, making an outline of research questions, and listing research sources (see Appendix A). While these tasks may help students build primary research skills, working on the research proposal for two weeks of the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) course may not be the best use of time for UT’s ESL students. Additionally, less emphasis on the research proposal in the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) curriculum would allow students to spend more time on other writing assignments.

**Summaries of Research/Data.** Summary writing was estimated to be one of the most common writing assignments among all the disciplines (Hale, Taylor, Bridgeman, Carson, Kroll, & Kantor, 1997; Hinkel, 2004; Reid, 2001) and a component of the frequently assigned lab report (Braine, 1995). In Edgington & Schneider’s (2008) survey of UT faculty, summaries of research and/or data assignments could reasonably be expected about once a semester. In UT’s ESL writing program, this task is assigned in English 1110: Composition I (ESL) as a book or article summary and response essay (see Appendices B and F), and the English 1020: Writing and Grammar, which focuses on Smoke’s (2005) Writer’s Workbook chapter on summary writing for two weeks. Because the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) course’s instruction in summary writing is a necessary part of preparing students for writing about their research, the amount of time students spend on writing summaries for these assignments is appropriate.

**Article Review and Interpretation/Analysis/Position Paper.** In Edgington & Schneider’s (2008) survey presented in Chapter 2, we saw that faculty respondents did not report assigning the single article review frequently, and only 13.3% of respondents reported assigning the interpretation/analysis/position paper four or more times per
semester. In UT’s ESL writing program, English 1110: Composition I (ESL) does include one assignment which specifically requires students to respond to an article or book chapter by agreeing or disagreeing and explaining their own position (see Appendix B). Like the assignments discussed earlier in this section, students are assigned the response essay only once in the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) course. However, as the response essay is one step of the research project, UT’s ESL students are limited to the same controversial topic.

**Drafts of Papers.** According to Edgington & Schneider’s (2008) survey of UT faculty, the frequency at which students were required to complete multiple drafts of papers is notable because 14.6% of faculty reported assigning drafts of papers four or more times. In UT’s ESL writing program, all writing assignments in English 1110: Composition I (ESL) require at least two drafts and English 1020: Writing and Grammar also requires several drafts of major essays. However, the survey of UT faculty indicates that some of these assignments are not occurring so often as to justify ESL writing students spending time completing several drafts of these assignments in the ESL writing program. Based on the UT faculty survey, eliminating the multiple drafts of the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) research proposal may be an appropriate modification.

**Essay Exams, Focused Writing, Paragraph Response.** In the published literature discussed in Chapter 1, it was discussed that the ability to demonstrate knowledge of course material is reported to be the most important academic task (Melzer, 2003; Reid, 2001). In Chapter 2, I noted that in Edgington & Schneider’s (2008) survey of UT faculty, respondents most often reported assigning the essay exam twice per semester. UT faculty respondents frequently reported assigning the paragraph response to a prompt as
many as four or more times per semester. Faculty respondents frequently reported assigning another in-class activity, focused writing, weekly (Edgington & Schneider, 2008). Consequently, the ability to present information in the essay exam, paragraph response, or focused writing may be considered a skill that is useful for UT’s ESL writing program’s students.

In UT’s ESL writing program, the coursework of English 1110: Composition I (ESL) requires students to complete several writing assignments in essay form using explicit classroom instruction and assignment templates (see Appendices A, C, D & E). Considering the fact that students will most likely need to demonstrate knowledge in essay form several times per semester, UT’s ESL writing program’s assignments will help introduce students to the essay format expected by professors outside the ESL writing program. In the next section, I discuss how the UT ESL writing program instructs students in the elements of conventional essay writing which may be useful for essay exams.

*Interview with Expert.* Although Edgington & Schneider’s (2008) survey of UT faculty provides evidence that certain writing skills needed frequently in disciplinary writing, it should be noted that the survey did not ask about certain kinds of activities, such as interviewing a professor or other expert. Interviewing a professor and writing a report about that interview is one of the five major assignments in UT’s English 1110: Composition I (ESL) course (see Appendices D & E). Like the other major assignments in UT’s English 1110: Composition I (ESL), the course allows ESL students to spend several weeks working on the report about the interview. While we can not compare this specific assignment with survey data, we can evaluate this assignment in light of its
significance for ESL writing students’ development of expertise, which is discussed in the next section.

Overall, the results of the survey of UT faculty about the kind about writing assigned in disciplinary courses do not exactly match the curriculum of the ESL writing program. The main difference is that faculty report that they are assigning research papers multiple times per semester, and report that they are not frequently assigning the article review, research proposal, and summaries of research/data. Additionally, ESL students in UT’s ESL writing program take the time to complete several drafts of each of these three writing assignments. In the next section, I juxtapose the results of the survey of UT faculty about writing assigned in undergraduate courses, with UT’s ESL writing program curriculum and assignments.

**ESL Writing Skills and Curriculum Design**

After examining the features of the ESL writing program sequences outlined in the published literature in Chapter 1, we can compare them to the writing assignments and features of UT’s ESL writing program curriculum. The issues I take into consideration in this section are focus on fluency/volume; topic selection and development of expertise; making professional contacts; research writing; and academic writing. Alongside these features, I examine the current structure of UT’s ESL writing program’s courses and curriculum and discuss what curriculum changes might be appropriate.

**Focus on Fluency/Volume.** The three methods of sequencing ESL writing assignments, which I reviewed in Chapter 1, allowed students to practice writing through individual research and varying amounts of reading and writing assignments. In
MacGowan-Gilhooly’s (1991) sequence, particularly, the fluency-focused writing program model places emphasis first on reading and writing for volume, then progresses to academic reading and writing, and finally concentrates on issues with grammar and mechanics. By that time, students are able to write freely without being hindered by grammar or mechanical concerns, and can finally address those concerns.

In UT’s ESL writing program, the textbook, Smoke’s (2005) *Writer’s Workbook*, provides readings which include topic-specific vocabulary. Besides these readings, the ESL library articles and book chapters provide context for new vocabulary, both from general topics and topics in their fields. From my experience working with students in *English 1120: Composition I Lab* and as an ESL tutor at the Writing Center, understanding an article needed for the *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* research project can take some time due to the number of unfamiliar terms.

In addition, the experiences of the students I interviewed for this study confirmed that problems often arose with understanding the readings required for disciplinary courses. Students like Justin, who noted that disciplinary course readings made him nervous because he did not know some of the vocabulary words, often guessed at the meanings. Another student, Michael, a finance major, noted that the amount of reading needed to complete his coursework is a problem, as it could take 2½ hours to complete a 50 page chapter. For the most part, in the *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* research project, the readings students complete are about one controversial topic, which is only one area of their major. The specialized vocabulary ESL students learn from researching a single controversial topic may not be helpful to students again in future disciplinary
classes. Therefore, topic selection for the research project is an issue for ESL students in UT’s ESL writing program.

*Topic Selection and Development of Expertise.* In ESL writing programs, topic choices are sometimes limited to topics students are already familiar with, like students’ experiences with school and work (Leki, 1995). Leki’s (1995) ESL writing program allows students to research topics outside their school and work experiences, like financial aid opportunities for international students or educational differences between countries, provided that students have some experience with topic. As described in Chapter 1, Leki’s (1995) sequence seeks to develop in-depth knowledge of a topic by having students research that one topic throughout the course.

While the curriculum of the UT ESL writing program is based on Leki’s (1995) writing course sequence, *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* students choose one controversial topic within their majors. According to Dr. Reichelt, studying a topic in their field contributes to the knowledge students hold about their area of study at the time, as they may enter the ESL writing program before taking any discipline-specific courses. Some examples of controversial topics ESL students have chosen in the past are global warming and alternative sources of energy. Through investigation, students can research that topic from their major, which will help them be able to write with authorial expertise about the controversial topic.

The issue with topic selection in *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* is the length of time students research that topic. The research proposal helps students decide if a topic is complex enough that they can write a five-page researched essay about it (see Appendix A). However, students may lose interest in researching their topic halfway
through the semester. In relation to Edgington & Schneider’s (2008) results of the faculty survey, UT faculty respondents frequently reported assigning the research paper of under seven pages four or more times. With this in mind, UT’s ESL writing program might better prepare students for disciplinary coursework by having students research several topics in a shortened version of the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) research project. In UT’s English 1110: Composition I (ESL), one step of the research project is writing a report about an interview with a professor.

Making Professional Contacts. One aspect of Leki’s (1991) sequence, which seeks to develop students’ expertise, is that students can research any topic of personal importance, and can consult the ‘experts’ in that field—from consulting knowledgeable officials in their community to surveying the general public. This approach, as Leki points out, is effective for topics such as educational differences or financial aid. While Edgington & Schneider’s (2008) survey of faculty about the writing assigned in undergraduate courses did not ask about assignments that require writing about an interview, being able to approach professors with questions was mentioned in the published literature as a strategy for academic (Adamson, 1993; Leki, 2006).

The curriculum of UT’s English 1110: Composition I (ESL), based on a modified version of Leki’s (1991) sequence, requires students to interview a professor in their field who has experience with the students’ controversial topic. From my perspective, having to interview a professor may be a significant event for students who may have limited contact and communication with professors. From discussing this assignment with students, I found that this task had a positive effect on students who previously had been
uncomfortable asking instructors questions or approaching instructors about problems they are having with the course.

However, as I mentioned in the previous section about the UT faculty survey, a large amount of time—three weeks—in the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) course is spent working on writing and revising a report about the interview (see Appendix A). While building primary research skills like interviewing professors is beneficial according to the published literature, students may not have to write reports entirely about interviews in disciplinary courses.

**Research Writing.** Based on the studies reviewed in Chapter 1, the research paper is one of several assignment types that frequently appear in studies on college coursework (Hinkel, 2004; Reid, 2001). As research writing requires a number of tasks, separating these tasks can break down the research paper into manageable steps (Carroll, 2002; White, 1995). Moreover, as Edgington & Schneider’s (2008) survey of UT faculty showed, students should be prepared to complete research papers of less than seven pages several times per semester. To make the UT ESL writing program’s English 1110: Composition I (ESL) coursework more closely reflect the type of research writing that is occurring in disciplinary courses, one change that might be useful is repeating several of the research steps using different topics.

In my interviews of UT ESL students, I found that some of the students had been unfamiliar with the research project steps used in the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) course. One of the ESL students I interviewed, Jennifer, reported that the research project sequence of the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) course helped her complete longer research papers more easily in other courses. Although Jennifer had never written a
research paper before entering the ESL writing program, she reported that learning how to use note cards to organize quotations from the book turned out to be helpful in creating outlines for research papers in her communication courses. Using these templates helps students with organizational issues, and students can then focus on developing their own response to the reading.

Based on the published literature presented in Chapter 1, being able to evaluate and respond to a text was a useful skill for students (Johns, 1997; Watt, 2000). Both the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) assignments from Smoke’s (2005) Writer’s Workbook, as well as the response essay assignment, address the task of source annotation (See Appendix F). In these assignments, students mark the main idea, thesis statement, secondary points, and sentences that students would want to quote in their paper. The assignment sheet states that students have the option of agreeing or disagreeing, expanding on the passage’s point, or questioning the passage. The templates in Smoke’s (2005) Writer’s Workbook and English 1110: Composition I (ESL) writing assignment explanations are guides to organizing writing according to a conventional format including citation, which is necessary for research writing.

One of the students I interviewed for this study, Alex, reported that the writing assignments in English 1110: Composition I (ESL) were similar to the reports assigned ENGL 2960: Organizational Report Writing. In addition to helping with essay organization, Alex found that using the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) assignment templates assured that he could write the essays according to “what the instructor wanted.” According to Alex, this skill was useful for organizing writing assignments like emails, memos, business letters that were assigned in ENGL 2960: Organizational Report
Writing. In contrast, Alex found that research writing was more difficult. He found that when he summarized source information, he had trouble avoiding the key words the article used.

As stated in the previous section about topic selection, the type of research writing most frequently reported by faculty respondents was less than seven pages, and may be assigned four or more times per semester. In contrast, the current curriculum of the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) course requires students to write only one research paper about one topic. In order for the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) assignments to match the kind of research writing reported by faculty respondents, students would need to complete several research papers. At the least, students should repeat the tasks of deciding on and narrowing a topic; finding source information; and synthesizing source information into their own writing.

Academic Writing. Based on the published literature discussed in Chapter 1, the general skills students need for academic writing are the ability to introduce, summarize, respond, and draw a conclusion (Johns, 1997), which will help students be able to develop and organize their writing according to instructors’ expectations (Rosenfeld, Leung, & Oltman, 2001). These skills are well addressed by UT’s English 1110: Composition I (ESL) writing assignments, and by the templates which encourage students to organize their writing (see Appendices B & C). According to Edgington & Schneider’s (2008) survey of UT faculty about writing assigned in undergraduate courses, ESL students should be able to complete essay exams, paragraph responses to prompts, and focused writing assignments several times throughout the semester.
The textbook for UT’s ESL writing program, Smoke’s (1995) *Writer’s Workbook*, introduces students to the elements of the academic essay. Additionally, each major writing assignment in *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* includes a guide for the format of the paper, explaining what information should be included in the introduction, body and conclusion (see Appendices A, C, D & E). Based on my experience teaching *English 1120: Composition Lab*, this instruction is helpful for ESL students who are not familiar with professors’ expectations for essay format. Additionally, students in *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* complete free writing, outlining, and in-class writings several times throughout the semester.

Several of the students I interviewed reported that the writing techniques they learned in UT’s ESL writing program from these templates were helpful for writing essays in other courses. The writing skills that these students stated were the most helpful in writing essays for other courses were writing essay introductions, conclusions and appropriate examples. Two of the ESL students I interviewed, Michael and Justin, mentioned that before the ESL writing program, they did not know how to write essays that met instructors’ expectations for essay structure. This was the case with Justin, who noted that before taking *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)*, he tended to place the thesis statement in the last sentence of his essays. Before taking *English 1020: Writing and Grammar*, Alex reported that he used think it was alright to write in much longer sentences, as long as he used commas to separate his ideas. The instruction provided in the ESL writing program, through classroom instruction and assignment guidelines, does address the need for students’ familiarity with conventional essay format.
In regard to having to complete essays during class, a problem that was brought up by the students I interviewed was that they had problems completing a response in a set amount of time. Michael, a finance major, reported that exams are difficult because he has to read the questions several times before he can compose his response. Justin, an electrical engineering major, stated that even though the ESL writing program’s instruction in academic writing helped him to write essays outside of class more efficiently, completing essay exams within the given time was a continuing problem for him. In my experience teaching *English 1120: Composition Lab*, participation in free writing and outlining during class, both individually and in groups, greatly improves students’ ability to organize and develop ideas more quickly.

One of the students I interviewed reported that the *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* and *English 1120: Composition Lab* did not prepare her for writing essays that are entirely based on her own opinion. Jennifer felt UT’s ESL writing program did not prepare her for an assignment like a twelve-page paper essay that required her to reflect on her opinion about a certain issue rather than write about her research on that topic. Although the major writing assignments focus mostly on writing about research, the in-class activities discussed above give students experience in developing responses to new topics.

Overall, the academic writing instruction provided in *English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* provides students with the background in essay writing that is needed for demonstrating knowledge of course material in essay exams, paragraph responses to prompts, and focused writing assignments. Based on the frequency at which UT faculty reported assigning these types of writing, especially focused writing assignments, the
amount of time ESL students spend working on these skills in English 1110: Composition I (ESL) is appropriate.

Conclusion

To summarize, the kind of writing UT’s English 1110: Composition I (ESL) is preparing students for does not exactly match the kind of writing that UT faculty respondents reported assigning. One issue with the curriculum of English 1110: Composition I (ESL) is that students are required to complete writing assignments that faculty respondents reported they did not frequently assign, such as the research proposal and report about an interview with a professor. Furthermore, ESL students in English 1110: Composition I (ESL) spend time completing several drafts of these assignments.

Moreover, the English 1110: Composition I (ESL) curriculum requires students to research only one topic, whereas students may have to complete several research papers on multiple topics in UT’s disciplinary courses. While UT’s ESL writing program curriculum does help familiarize students with research tasks and a controversial issue in their discipline, the fundamental discrepancy between that curriculum and writing assignments reported by UT faculty respondents, is the frequency at which students are assigned the research paper.

While there may not be enough time for students to complete several research projects in English 1110: Composition I (ESL), it may be more beneficial to assign several shorter research-based essays, in which students can repeat the research steps of choosing and narrowing a topic; finding source information; and incorporating source information into their own writing. Additionally, the academic writing instruction of English 1110: Composition I (ESL) does prepare students for meeting professors’
expectations for essay format for assignments such as focused writing and paragraph responses to prompts.

In conclusion, the focus of the UT ESL writing program’s core course seems to fit the results of the faculty survey, in that research writing does indeed seem to be a large part of disciplinary writing at UT. For the purpose of familiarizing students with both academic and research writing in the course of one semester, in addition to promoting students’ development of expertise through study of a topic in their major, the ESL writing program does address the needs of UT ESL students. To better prepare students for writing in disciplinary courses at UT, the *English 1110: Composition (ESL)* curriculum changes suggested may be more appropriate for UT’s ESL writing program’s students.
References


Appendix A

*English 1110: Composition I (ESL) Research Proposal*

You will do a research project on a controversial topic in your major (or in a field you may be interested in majoring in). You will investigate various viewpoints on the controversial issue by finding and reading several articles and book chapters about your topic. Through this reading, you will inform yourself about your topic so that you can form an educated opinion about it. The research project will consist of five major parts, all focusing on the same topic:

1. A 2-3 page research paper proposal
2. A report on an interview with a professor about your controversial topic
3. A response essay about one article, book chapter, or web source to be used in your research paper
4. Preparation of note cards for your research paper, based on at least four different published sources
5. Several drafts of your final research paper, which must be 4-5 pages long

For the remainder of the papers your write in this course, you will choose a single topic to write about. The topic you choose must be a controversial issue within your major (or an area you’re interested in majoring in) and must also be something you think your classmates will be interested in learning about. You may use the topic that you wrote a summary about, but if you choose, you may change topics at this point. While you should have some interest in the topic you choose, you should not be an expert on it already because if you are, you will have very little to investigate. (Please do not choose the topic “Career possibilities in my major,” but instead select a topic that specialists in your field are interested in and do research on.) You should choose a topic that is complex and controversial enough for you to be able to write a 5 page research paper about it, that your instructor and classmates will be able to understand.

For the proposal paper, you should write a 2-3 page paper in which you explain what topic you will research for your research paper. As you write, keep in mind that your instructor is your primary audience because s/he will read your proposal and give you feedback in order to guide you as you do your entire research project. The proposal should include the following information:

- A short statement indicating what your major is and what people in that major study

- What your research topic for your research paper is and what you already know about it. Remember: your topic should be a narrow area *within* your major.

- A description of why your topic is controversial
- A list of research questions: What do you want to find out about your topic (that you don’t already know)? Please write your questions in the form of a list, and please use the sentence structure of a question. This is the most important part of your proposal.

- A list of the titles of three scholarly journals in your field in which you might find relevant chapters for your final research paper.

- A list of the titles and authors of three scholarly books in your field in which you might find relevant chapters for your final research paper.

- A list of three credible web sources that will provide you with answers to some of your research questions. You must include the title of the website, the full web address, and the date you accessed it on-line.
Appendix B

English 1110: Composition I (ESL) Book/Article Summary

Instructions for assignment: Choose an article or book chapter about a controversial topic in your major. The article/chapter must be at least three pages long. Write three summaries of this source: an essay-length summary, a paragraph-length summary, and a sentence-length summary. At the beginning of your paper, you must include a citation for your source, following MLA style. (See pp. 204-5 of your textbook.)

Required length: The essay-length summary must be 3-5 paragraphs, and at least 1 ½ pages long, double-spaced, with 12-point type and 1” margins. Do not insert extra spaces between paragraphs or do anything to make your paper appear longer. Follow the guidelines for paper formatting on pp. 16-17.
Appendix C

English 1110: Composition I (ESL) Response Paper

Choose and photocopy an article or book chapter that will help you answer some of the research questions about your topic that you listed in your proposal. You will use this as one of the sources for your research paper. The article or book chapter must be at least three pages in length, not counting charts, diagrams, or figures. It must explore the controversial aspects of your topic or take a position regarding the controversy. Use a difficult, challenging, and informative source rather than a short, easy one.

Using the article or book chapter you have selected, write a 2-3 page response essay. Include a photocopy of the source when you turn in your response. As you write, keep in mind that your instructor and your classmates are your audience. You need to write the response in a way that will make sense to them even if they have not read the source you are writing about. As far as is possible, write in a way that is understandable to people who are not specialists in your field. At the beginning of your paper, be sure to include a bibliographical entry for the original source in the MLA style. See pp. 204-5 of your textbook for instructions about how to use MLA style.

Your response paper should follow the following format (adapted from our textbook, p. 158):

- Bibliographical Entry

- Introduction

  Begin with a brief summary of the main idea of your source. Be sure that you refer to the author of your source, using his/her last name.

- Body

  Introduce a passage from your source that really interests you and relates to at least one of your research questions. It may be the main idea of the source, a secondary point, or an example.
  Respond to this passage by, first of all, explaining how it relates to one (or more) of your research questions. Then, do one or more of the following:
  - Agree or disagree
  - Explain how it is relevant to your experience
  - Expand on it by giving more information
  - Explain what further questions it raises in your mind about your topic

- Conclusion

  Summarize or reinforce your ideas.
Appendix D

*English 1110: Composition I (ESL)* Template for Interview Report

Introduction:
You should introduce your controversial topic, explain why it is controversial, and make it clear to the readers that this paper and the information in it was learned from doing an interview (give the name and credentials of the person you interviewed).

A thesis statement that explains the single most important idea that you learned about your topic from your professor.

*Example:* After the discussion with Dr. Smith of the Spanish Department of the University of Toledo conducted on October 13, 2007, I was shocked to learn that the number of illegal Mexican immigrants is increasing in drastic numbers even after the U.S. government passed legislation to increase border security.

Body:
Each paragraph will relate to the main idea in your thesis statement. Each paragraph will be based off of a question that you asked during your interview and the answer that your professor gave. Each paragraph should have a few sentences describing the main idea, a quote from your professor, and then your opinion about what the quote means in relation to your controversial topic.

Every paragraph should have this order:
Explanation of the idea
Meaningful quote from the professor
Commentary about the importance/meaning of the quote
(How does it relate to your thesis?)

*Paragraph example:*

Mexican immigration has been highly debated recently within the American public. Every day Americans are bombarded with the idea that Mexicans are entering the country in such high rates that soon, our American identity will be jeopardized. “White middle class Americans are scared that their English-speaking identities will soon disappear. They believe that soon, their cultural identity will vanish because Mexicans will take over the middle class,” said Dr. Smith. Personally, I think this is ridiculous. The basic idea that Mexicans are ruining American culture is flawed. The whole idea of culture is that it is supposed to change and adapt in order for people to be successful. For example, Americans that learn Spanish would help them get ahead in the business world and decrease the stigma that Americans are ignorant to learning about others. Therefore, Americans should embrace the idea that the Mexican culture is being brought into America. These immigrants could actually help Americans rather than hurt them.

Conclusion: Summarize the main idea in each paragraph in a sentence. Make sure you talk about the ideas in the order that you talk about them in the paper. Then in the last 2 sentences, restate the main thing that you learned from conducting this interview.
Appendix E

*English 1110: Composition I (ESL) Interview Report*

This is the second component of the final research project about a single controversial topic within your major. For this part of the project, you will write up a report about an interview you will conduct with a professor. The professor must be one that deals with your controversial topic as part of his/her academic discipline! (For example, you cannot talk to an engineering professor about gun control.)

The goal of this part of the project is so that you can talk with a professional about more specific ideas regarding your topic which will help you better understand the arguments and current research surrounding your topic and ultimately help you write a better research paper. It will also teach you how to organize an develop a paper based on what someone else has told you about a topic.

1. A series of 8 questions you will ask the professor.
2. A transcript of the interview of what you asked and how the professor answered. This should have a typed question with a space left for you to handwrite the response.
3. A 2 page interview report about what you learned about your topic during the interview in essay form.

Your report MUST be in paragraph form with complete sentences, examples, and supporting details. Your report MUST have an introduction which includes a thesis statement, a series of body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

The thesis should be the single most important idea you learned from the professor and how this relates to your final research paper. Make sure everything you say supports your thesis.

You may include direct quotes from the professor in your paper; however, your entire paper should not be a series of quotes. Look back at “paraphrasing” in the text to help you.

You may find that you can not incorporate all 8 questions in your paper. That is okay. Just report on the most important, significant, or interesting things that the professor told you about your topic that you think will help you write your final research paper.

Your final draft should be in MLA format with proper heading, margins, font, etc. If you directly quote your professor, make sure your citation is in MLA form. Also, please include an MLA bibliographic reference to your interview at the beginning of your report.