# Exploring Teacher Knowledge in Multilingual First-Year Composition

by

Juval V. Racelis

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved August 2016 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Paul Kei Matsuda, Chair
Mark A. James
Matthew T. Prior

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2017

ABSTRACT

This project examines how writing teachers of multilingual students conceptualize their pedagogical practices. Specifically, it draws on work in teacher cognition research to examine the nature of teacher knowledge and the unique characteristics of this knowledge specific to the teaching of second language writing. Seeing teacher knowledge as something embedded in teachers' practices and their articulation of the goals of these practices, this project uses case studies of four writing instructors who teach multilingual students of First-Year Composition (FYC). Through qualitative analysis of interviews, observations, and written feedback practices, teachers' goals and task selection were analyzed to understand their knowledge base and the beliefs that underlie their personal pedagogies.

Results from this study showed that while participants' course objectives were primarily in alignment with the institutional goals for the course, they each held individual orientations toward the subject matter. These different orientations influenced their task selection, class routines, and assessment. This study also found that teachers' understanding of their students was closely tied with their orientations of the subject matter and thus must be understood together. Findings from this study support a conceptualization of teacher knowledge as a construct comprised of highly interdependent aspects of teachers' knowledge base.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER Page

APPENDIX Page

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

# CHAPTER 1

# FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION INSTRUCTORS AND MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS

This study explores second language writing instructors, their knowledge base, and how they make sense of this knowledge when teaching multilingual sections of First-Year Composition (FYC). This study builds upon scholarship in Teacher Cognition, an area of education research that investigates teachers' mental lives, ranging from teacher knowledge and beliefs to emotion and identity (Borg, 2006; Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). Research in Teacher Cognition has brought to light the complex nature of teacher knowledge by exploring how teachers negotiate various domains of their knowledge base, including knowledge of the curriculum, students, institutional context as well as the beliefs that shape how this knowledge base is interpreted and employed. This study focuses on how teachers make sense of their practices by investigating teachers' reflections on their personal pedagogies. Furthermore, it examines the knowledge embedded in their discussion of their goals and task selection, classroom routines, and written feedback practices.

Exploration of teacher knowledge is long established in general education literature and research specifically on language teachers has grown substantially over the past two decades. Work on teacher knowledge has been important for both researchers and program administrators in helping bridge the gap in the understanding of how research and certain pedagogical frameworks are transformed into classroom practice.

Teachers also benefit from this research through gaining an awareness of their own practices resulting in more thoughtful and reflective pedagogy. Findings from the research on language teachers have thus far highlighted the role that knowledge about language plays in teachers' knowledge base (Gatbanton, 1999; Johnston & Goettsch, 2000; Mullock, 2006), drawing attention to the centrality of subject matter knowledge as an important construct for understanding teachers' practices and language teacher identity more broadly (Kanno & Stuart, 2011). Moreover, this research has contributed to a conceptualization of teacher knowledge as a highly process-oriented construct consisting of interrelated and often inseparable domains (Johnston & Goettsch, 2000; Tsui, 2003).

In the second language (L2) writing literature, however, teacher knowledge has been less researched. While recent interest in teachers' perspectives on the area of written feedback practices has raised awareness of teachers' active roles in writing pedagogy (e.g. Ferris, 2014; Lee, 2008; Montgomery & Baker, 2007), there still remains relatively little known about how teachers conceptualize the subject matter and subsequently negotiate the multiple disciplinary and experiential influences that inform their knowledge base when teaching writing to multilingual students.

This line of research is important because teachers and administrators in writing programs often draw on scholarship in multiple disciplines ranging from Rhetoric and Composition to Applied Linguistics to inform programmatic and classroom goals. This influence is most clearly evidenced by the ubiquity of the Writing Programs Administration Outcomes Statement as a model for many university writing programs' goals focusing on rhetorical issues (Matsuda & Skinnell, 2012). When addressing the needs of multilingual writers in the composition classroom, teachers and administrators

inevitably extend their scope of influence and draw upon the fields of Applied Linguistics and TESOL to understand and meet the needs of their multilingual students, needs that include not only writing development, but can also encompass language development (Manchón, 2011). Cutting across these disciplinary knowledge bases, teachers must also be adept at the various pedagogical practices that facilitate learning. Writing instruction to multilingual students is thus inherently transdisciplinary in nature (Matsuda, 2013), as teachers negotiate various disciplinary influences in the development of their own pedagogies to meet the exigencies of a complex classroom.

In addition to these disciplinary influences, teachers must also rely upon their own experiential knowledge to inform their classroom practices. Their years as former students and their experience as teachers contribute to an understanding of the classroom that is both personal and practical (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Elbaz, 1983; Lortie, 1975). Together with their understanding of various disciplinary domains, composition instructors of multilingual students rely on a complex knowledge base to inform their teaching.

## Statement of Problem

This study aims to investigate teacher knowledge in second language writing by exploring how teachers understand the subject matter. In doing so, it seeks to problematize existing conceptualizations of subject matter that rely on either tacitly assumed or singularly defined subject matter, such as language or grammar. While several recent studies have pushed for similar scrutiny, such as Irvine-Niakaris and Kiely's (2014) study on reading instruction in ESL, studies focusing on how teachers understand subject matter knowledge within specific domains remain relatively few.

Research into the knowledge base of second language writing instructors is important for it can help contribute to a classroom-based professional knowledge, allowing for a real-world vantage point (Johnson & Freeman, 1998). As such, a better understanding of how teachers make sense of their practice can inform frameworks in writing pedagogy by shedding light on how writing instructors implement, accommodate, and subsequently transform institutionally defined curriculum into their classroom.

In this vein, this study looks to highlight any possible gaps that exist between best practices as forwarded by the L2 writing research and the actual practices of writing instructors. Given the significant body of literature suggesting various pedagogical approaches in the instruction of multilingual writers, it is equally important to understand the barriers that exist for teachers in the employment of these practices (Ferris, 2014).

This study also aims to provide a more complex understanding of the role that teachers' knowledge of students plays in their practices. Given the diverse population of university students, teachers across campus are tasked to learn how to adapt their pedagogies to meet an increasingly multilingual classroom. This study contributes to scholarship on how teachers manage and adapt their own practices to address these students' needs, while also acknowledging the needs of these teachers. Previous research has tended to consider a teacher's knowledge of students to primarily consist of the problems students face when learning the subject matter. While this is an important factor, this fails to acknowledge other factors that teachers consider about students, such as students' cultural backgrounds and motivation. These factors also contribute to how teachers make sense of their practices and thus, a clearer picture of teachers' knowledge of students in the writing classroom is important.

Given the relative lack of research focusing specifically on writing teachers and the limits of applying existing language teacher research, this study explores the knowledge of writing teachers who teach multilingual students. Specifically, it seeks to understand the nature of teacher knowledge in the teaching of composition in multilingual classrooms by exploring how teachers understand their subject matter and the needs of their students.

## Overview of Chapters

Below I outline each of the six chapters in the project. In Chapter 1, I introduce Teacher Cognition as a rich area of inquiry concerned with the "hidden side" of teaching in both general education and language instruction. I argue for the necessity of a study on the knowledge base of composition instructors and how such an investigation can shed new light on the multilingual composition classroom. In Chapter 2, I explore the different ways in which teachers' mental lives have been conceptualized. In doing so, I explore how research in Teacher Cognition has developed through different epistemological and conceptual progressions and the implications this has had for research in the multilingual classroom context. I also explore the concept of teacher knowledge as a conceptual framework for exploring the pedagogical practices of composition instructors teaching multilingual students. In Chapter 3, I outline the research design, participants, data collection, and data analysis. I discuss the rationale for the interview process, the recruitment process for participants, and the coding for the collected data.

Chapter 4 explores the teacher knowledge of the four participant composition instructors by examining their articulation of goals and objectives and their task and activity selection. In Chapter 5, I examine the specific practice of written feedback to

better understand the knowledge embedded in the practices of these four teachers. Finally, in Chapter 6, I review teacher knowledge based on the findings of this study and I discuss further implications and future research trajectories.

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Cognition scholarship has roots in general education research stretching back more than 30 years. Research on language teachers specifically has a more recent history, with the number of studies doubling just within the past decade. While earlier research focused primarily on ESL instruction in North American teaching contexts, more recent studies in EFL contexts and on other languages such as Chinese and Spanish have begun to diversify the field. Accompanying this growth in research have been several reviews of the state of the art in language teacher cognition research, the most comprehensive being Borg's 2006 review (see also Freeman, 2002; Wright, 2010). More recently, Kubanyiova and Feryok (2015) and Burns, Freeman, and Edwards (2015) addressed prevailing conceptual and ontological dilemmas in language teacher cognition research.

Below I begin by exploring how teacher knowledge has been developed as prevailing conceptual frame in research on teachers. I then review the current state of teacher knowledge research in the areas of language teaching and writing teaching.

## Teacher Knowledge: A Conceptual Framework

*Teacher knowledge* has been widely understood as a concept representing the knowledge that teachers draw upon for their professional practices as teachers. Attempts to further explicate the nature of teacher knowledge and what constitutes it, however, suggest it to be a far more complex concept. This can be evidenced by the multiplicity of largely overlapping terminology used to investigate what teachers know (Borg, 2006). In

their review of research on teacher knowledge, Clandinin and Connelly (1987) described a growing inventory of terms in what was then a new field. Borg's (2006) comprehensive review highlights that the proliferation of terms has continued. While many studies see terms such as teacher cognition and teacher knowledge as interchangeable or overlapping, I refer to teacher cognition as an area of scholarship that is concerned with research on teachers (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). As a working construct, I rely on the term teacher knowledge in this study to describe how teachers conceptualize their own pedagogies. I explore this construct in further detail as follows.

Despite this large number of terms, approaches to understanding teacher knowledge can be roughly divided into two areas. The first predominant approach conceptualizes teacher knowledge as an objective construct (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). Its connections to the ontological underpinnings of cognitivist paradigms of the late 1970s and 1980s, research relying on this approach examined the teachers' decision-making processes and categorized their knowledge as propositional (Borg, 2006; Burns, Freeman, & Edwards, 2015). Focusing on the domains that constitute teachers' knowledge base, this branch of research can be exemplified by Shulman's categorization of knowledge domains in teacher knowledge (1986, 1987).

In this categorization, Shulman emphasized on the importance of subject-matter knowledge. Calling it the "missing paradigm," he argued that prevailing descriptions of teachers' pedagogical practices have ignored how teachers understand and reconstruct subject-matter knowledge learned from education programs. Calling for overarching categories of teacher knowledge, Shulman added *content knowledge* as an additional domain that is distinct from the then prevailing conceptions of *general pedagogical*

*knowledge*. He further defined three types of content knowledge: subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular knowledge. Of these different classifications, Shulman emphasized *pedagogical content knowledge* as unique in that it articulates how subject-specific knowledge is adapted to meet the needs of the context.

Shulman's framework of knowledge domains remains widely influential, especially in the inquiry of subject-specific teaching. Much of its endurance can be attributed to Shulman's original call-to-action to address subject-matter knowledge. As researchers and teacher educators continue to seek answers to locally situated issues such as those that occur in the classroom, such a framework that concentrates on how teachers make sense of subject-matter knowledge can be particularly useful. Of his categories, these researchers have relied most heavily on the construct of *pedagogical content knowledge*, or PCK. As a purely theoretical concept, PCK was subsequently critiqued for lacking empirical foundation and for being a messy concept in general. In response to such critiques, subsequent work has endeavored to more definitively conceptualize PCK, seeing it as an umbrella term (Grossman, 1990) and further working it in with other specific concepts. Subsequent research further situated PCK into subject-specific areas, expanding PCK to be further integrated into models that look to understand subject-specific concepts (e.g. Ball, Thames & Phelps, 2008). Research in language teaching has done similar work with the work of Andrews (2007) on teacher language awareness and subsequent work by researchers like Irvine-Niakaris and Kiely (2015) on reading comprehension. Such work has been important in shedding light on the nature of teacher knowledge as a having a dialectic relationship between teachers' experiences and their conceptualizations of the subject.

Shulman was not the first to categorize teacher knowledge into domains. Elbaz's (1983) study, also subdivided practical knowledge into: knowledge of subject matter, curriculum, instruction, self, and the milieu of teaching. Elbaz (1986) subsequently clarifies, however, that these categories are "emphatically not as a catalogue of discrete bits of knowledge of different kinds" (p. 501). Elbaz's emphasis highlights a theoretical tension in outlining discrete types of knowledge while also acknowledging their inherent interconnectedness. Similar critiques against discrete categories were raised by Calderhead and Miller (1986) who argue that distinctions between different types of knowledge are unrealistic. The findings in their study of student-teachers in primary school were corroborated by Feiman-Nemser and Parker's (1990) study of experienced and novice teachers, both revealing that teachers rarely articulated specific knowledge types. They argue instead that teacher knowledge is best seen as a whole entity. Meijer, Verloop, and Beijaard (2001) echo these critiques and go even further to argue that teacher cognition and teacher knowledge are inseparable constructs. They use *teacher knowledge* as the overarching construct that encompasses all types of teacher cognitions and contend that because teachers do not distinguish between different constructs, attempts to distinguish between knowledge and other constructs do not truly reflect teachers' knowledge.

The second main approach relies on the experiential nature of teacher knowledge, emphasizing its tacit and highly personal nature. In this vein, teacher knowledge is situated and subjective (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). This approach can be characterized by the early works by Elbaz (1983) and Clandinin and Connelly (1987). Elbaz investigated teacher knowledge in a case study exploring how an experienced high

school teacher used and understood her knowledge as she did her teaching. Using the term *practical knowledge*, Elbaz's work is considered seminal for developing a definition of knowledge that is sensitive to the context of the teacher and rooted in their told experiences. Clandinin (1986) elaborates on Elbaz's framework of practical knowledge with an emphasis on the value of teachers' experiences as knowledge itself. Situated in teachers' local and personal contexts, Clandinin's notion of *personal practical knowledge* advances previous conceptions that portrayed experience and knowledge as separate yet related concepts. By explicitly constructing experience and knowledge as a unified notion, Clandinin's work echoes discussions on the divide between theory and practice and the legitimization of teachers' knowledge base (e.g. Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Clarke 1994; Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

In its emphasis on the role of context in the interpretation of teachers' knowledge, *personal practical knowledge* is related to Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of *situated knowledge* which looks at the construction of knowledge as highly context-dependent. Leinhardt (1988) applies this notion in her study on expert teachers of mathematics. Specifically, Leinhardt looks at how context and the act of teaching mutually inform each other. Taken together, these works characterized teacher knowledge as a more subjective construct that is experiential and contextually situated and as such tied closely together with beliefs and emotions (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015).

The above characterizations of teacher knowledge share a conceptualization that exists in the world of practice. Although originally born out from contrasting conceptualizations, the experiential and the domain-specific natures of knowledge are complementary; central to both perspectives is the imperative to situate teacher

knowledge in the local contexts within which teachers learn, develop, and employ this knowledge.

## Teacher Beliefs

A closely related area to teacher knowledge is that of *teacher beliefs*. Teacher beliefs have traditionally been contrasted with teacher knowledge by emphasizing beliefs as evaluative and subjective. Pajares (1992) exemplifies this distinction in stating, "knowledge of a domain differs from feelings about a domain" (p. 309) and thus from this perspective, beliefs can affect *what* knowledge is employed. Pajares also points out that attempts to generally define *beliefs* fail because they neglect to contextualize beliefs within the systems that influence them. Thus, also central to the concept of teacher beliefs is the context and situation, affecting not only how these beliefs are employed but also how these beliefs come about. Synthesizing these and other explorations of beliefs, Borg (2011) defines beliefs as follows:

> "[B]eliefs are propositions individuals consider to be true and which are often tacit, have a strong evaluative and affective component, provide a basis for action, and are resistant to change." (p. 370)

An important characteristic highlighted here is a resistance to change. This resistance can be especially problematic when considering teacher education, and so it is not surprising that much of the research on teacher beliefs has concentrated on the impact language teacher education has had on teacher beliefs. Pajares attributes this resistance to the years of schooling that teachers have as students prior to becoming teachers themselves, something Lortie (1975) describes as the *apprenticeship of observation*. Pajares argues that pre-service teachers are thus "insiders" (p. 323), a notion further complicated in

language teaching when one acknowledges that language teachers themselves have devoted much time, in and out of the classroom, learning their native language and often additional languages as well.

Following these descriptions, both teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs are situated in teachers' experiences while the primary distinction lies in the evaluative and affective nature of beliefs. Moreover, teacher beliefs are primarily shaped by these experiences while teacher knowledge is shaped and informed both by experiences as well as disciplinary or content knowledge. Because of the importance of experience in shaping both knowledge and beliefs, however, this distinction quickly becomes muddy. Pajares challenges clear cut distinctions by asking, "what knowledge can exist in the absence of judgment or evaluation?" (p. 310). The inseparable nature of knowledge and beliefs have lead some to subsume beliefs as a type of knowledge (Kagan, 1990, Gudmundsdottir, 1990), while others offered yet other conceptualizations, such as Woods's (1996) term BAK, beliefs-assumptions-knowledge which looks to acknowledge the interrelated nature of these concepts. Whether considered a wholly separate construct or an interrelated aspect of teacher knowledge, teacher beliefs remain of central importance in the investigations of teachers.

## Conceptualizing Teacher Knowledge

Building upon the prevailing characterizations of teacher knowledge, I draw attention to several key aspects of teacher knowledge. Firstly, teacher knowledge is embodied in teachers' practices, through their planning of curriculum and their classroom instruction. This knowledge is context-dependent and situated in their worlds of practice. It is influenced by teachers' experiences, both as learners and teachers. Teachers also

hold certain beliefs and assumptions with regard to their practice, beliefs that are formed through their experiences. Given the inseparable nature of teacher's knowledge and the beliefs that influences this knowledge, I view beliefs as an embedded aspect of teacher knowledge.

It is also important to acknowledge Shulman's characterization of teacher knowledge as it serves as useful analytical framework for understanding teacher knowledge. While Shulman's original conceptualization primarily views these components as discrete categories, more recent research has argued that such categories are more highly integrated than discrete. As such, I rely on the aspects of subject matter knowledge, knowledge of students, and knowledge of pedagogy as a useful heuristic in examining teachers' knowledge while acknowledging that such categories are more analytical than real.

Figure 1 below represents the interrelated nature of teacher knowledge as a construct situated in teachers' experiences. Teacher knowledge here is conceptualized as the interrelated constructs of teachers' knowledge of subject matter, students, and pedagogy and influenced by teacher beliefs. Teacher knowledge is situated in teachers' institutional context. Teachers' experiences in the classroom and teacher knowledge are mutually influenced and therefore iterative in nature.

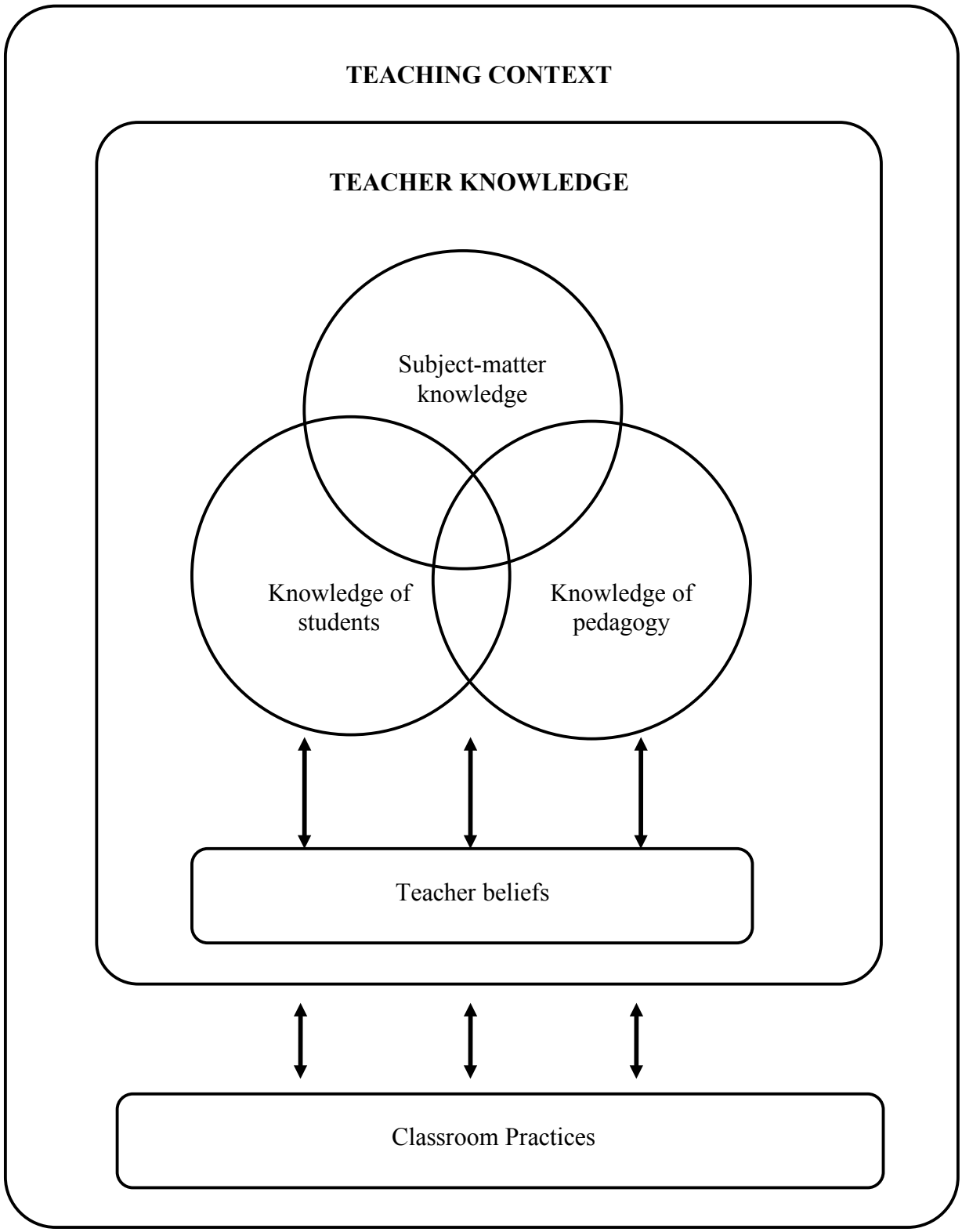


Figure 1. Elements of teacher knowledge

## Research on language teachers

The above discussion has outlined how teachers' mental lives in the area of Teacher Cognition has been conceptualized both in language teacher education and in general education more broadly. Many of the conceptual frameworks have been applied and further elaborated upon as scholars in language teaching have investigated the language classroom. Below, I survey the some of the major trajectories of research within this broad area of inquiry.

**Types of cognitions.** Many studies have concentrated on describing and categorizing the wide range of language teachers' cognitions. For example, Woods (1996) and Richards (1996) both look at principles that teachers rely upon when making pedagogical decisions. Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver and Thwaite (2001) investigated eighteen ESL teachers and found five overarching "concerns" that motivated classroom practices (p. 484). These concerns can be summarized as concern for the learner and their individual attributes, concern for the subject, and concern for their role as teachers in facilitating learning. The study also highlighted two practices common across all teachers: pair or group work, and modeling and explanation of language. An earlier study by Gatbonton (1999) reflected similar findings for a central concern surrounding language management through employing tasks and activities that facilitated this learning.

**Examining context.** Context factors also play a role in understanding teacher knowledge. Breen et al. (2001) emphasize that despite the general commonalities in cognitions across the teachers in their study, the diverse institutional contexts including the varying needs of their students affected how teachers enacted certain core principles. Teaching context has also been attributed as the primary reason for a lack of

correspondence between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual practices. Golombek (1998) highlighted this in exploring the tensions that arose as teachers negotiated their knowledge of the curriculum and the subject material in relation to their current experiences in the classroom with their current students. Basturkmen's (2012) review of a number of studies also looked at this relationship and found that context and other institutional constraints played the largest role in limiting teachers' ability to employ practices that corresponded with their beliefs. Similarly, Lee's (2009, 2011) investigation of written feedback practices among teachers in Hong Kong EFL contexts found that student expectations and programmatic demands often resulted in mismatches between teachers' beliefs and actual practices.

**Pre-service learning.** In addition to studies looking at language teachers' cognitions in general, a large number of studies have focused on pre-service teachers, with many examining sources of teachers' beliefs and the impact that training programs have on these beliefs. Several studies have shown language teachers' beliefs to be primarily rooted in previous language learning experiences. For example, Johnson's (1994) study on pre-service teachers in a practicum course found that many of the teachers' guiding beliefs were based on experiences these teachers had as previous language learners. These prior experiences were reported to affect how teachers taught in their practicum courses, despite teachers' efforts to employ alternative approaches. Several other similar studies (e.g. Richards & Pennington, 1998, Urmston, 2003) also point to the role that prior language learning experiences play in shaping language teachers' beliefs. These findings resonate with general education research, most notably Lortie's (1975) notion of the *apprenticeship of observation* which describes the impact

that years of being a student has on a teachers' underlying cognitions.

Studies that have looked specifically at the impact of pre-service programs on teachers' beliefs have largely been mixed with some studies finding that teachers' pre-existing beliefs tend to persist. Peacock's (2001) longitudinal study of trainee ESL teachers found that over the course of a three-year program, changes in trainees' beliefs were minimal. Urmston's (2003) study on undergraduate students majoring in TESOL, however, and found that while coursework had limited effect on these students' knowledge and beliefs about teaching, practicum teaching experiences during the program did result in change. Other studies have found some evidence of an impact and change in beliefs. Busch (2010) found considerable changes in pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning. Investigated through surveys and written responses, Busch further found that teachers were often surprised when presented with their previous beliefs. Practicum courses in pre-service training programs have also shown to have impact on pre-service teachers' cognitions. Similar to Urmston's (2003) findings (and others, e.g., Johnson, 1994), Faez and Valeo (2012) also found that the practicum course to be the most influential in contributing to positive self-efficacy among novice teachers.

In response to such mixed findings, more recent research has looked at how to affect change in pre-service teachers through more effective training. Cabaroglu (2014) investigated the role of action research in the training of pre-service teachers and found that such engagement resulted in higher reports of self-efficacy. Work by Johnson and Golombek (2011) has also looked at the role that mediation can have on fostering positive change in pre-service teachers' cognitions. Such studies are important given the

importance that these cognitions play as teachers' transition from pre-service education to in-service teaching.

Grossman's (1989) study on literature teachers in secondary school, while not on language instruction specifically, helps shed light on how differences in pre-service education result in different changes in classroom practice. It also highlights the interaction between disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Her study investigates six teachers with backgrounds in English and literature, three of whom also had undergone teacher education. In analyzing the two groups' different approaches to teaching English literature, Grossman found that the teachers who had undergone teacher education viewed their classes as an opportunity for self-expression through the coursework material. In contrast, the teachers who had no formal teacher education primarily relied upon literary and textual analysis of readings as an approach for understanding material, an orientation Grossman attributes to these teachers' alignment with disciplinary practices in isolation of pedagogical knowledge. Grossman concluded that the former group's pedagogical content knowledge underwent reinterpretation and personalization, similar to the instructors in Sato and Kleinsasser (1998), a process influenced by previous teacher education, while the later group's pedagogical content knowledge remained mostly unchanged.

**Novice teachers.** Other research on novice teachers has been able to capture the transition between pre-service education and subsequent application of their training. What has been most captured is the reality shock that many teachers experience when faced with the realities of the classroom and the idealized nature of their pedagogical perspectives (Farrell, 2003; Johnson, 1996). Richards and Pennington's (1998)

investigation of five novice teachers uncovered specific tensions surrounding how teachers manage the new reality with their idealized teaching goals. The study found that all five teachers moved away from their initial attempts to maintain more communicative language teaching.

Further research on novice teachers has also been conducted in contrast to experienced teachers. More experienced teachers have generally been found to have a more coherent knowledge base than novice teachers, characterized by an ability to integrate both skill- and content-based learning to address the learning needs of the students (Nunan, 1992; Tsui, 2003). Similarly, Gatbonton (2008) found that novice teachers were less successful in addressing both student language needs and the general pedagogical management of the classroom. More recent studies such as Wette (2010) and Farrell (2013) have found that the experiences teachers gain through the course of their years teaching result in an increased sensitivity to the broad range of students' needs as well as a more acute ability to address these needs.

**Teachers' knowledge base.** A number of studies have investigated language teachers by trying to understand what constitutes the knowledge base of these teachers. For example, in examining the domains that constituted teachers' knowledge base, Gatbonton (1999) conducted verbal protocols with seven experienced teachers and found the primary domains to be (1) handling language items; (2) factoring in students' contributions; (3) determining the contents of teaching; (4) facilitating the instructional flow; and (5) building rapport. Of these domains, handling language items was the most frequently occurring domain in teachers' verbal reports. In a partial replication of Gatbonton's study, Mullock's (2006) study investigated four TESOL teachers to

determine what constituted their knowledge base. While uncovering similar findings to the domains uncovered in Gatbonton's study, Mullock's study found that her participating teachers relied more heavily on the domain of factoring students' contributions. Mullock attributes this difference to the fact that her four teachers were responding reflectively to practices when teaching their own classes in contrast to Gatbonton's study in which teachers' verbal reports were in response to their teaching in class that was constructed specifically for the study. Thus, Mullock adds contextual factors as an additional category to Gatbonton's original list of domains.

Johnston and Goettsch (2000) also looked to uncover the domains that constitute language teachers' knowledge base in their study of four grammar teachers at an Intensive English Program. Relying primarily on Shulman's (1987) framework that conceptualizes teacher knowledge as comprising of multiple categories, Johnston and Goettsch focused on content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and knowledge of learners in their analysis. They found that the content knowledge of grammar that these teachers possessed was represented in their classes through examples, with far less reliance on overt grammatical rules. This finding led the authors to suggest that teacher knowledge with regard to grammar was far more procedural. Moreover, their findings highlighted teacher knowledge as primarily situated and contingent upon the learners and the classroom context. This led the authors to argue more broadly, that teacher knowledge is largely process-oriented and that the categories that constitute this knowledge are interconnected and situated in the experiences of each teacher.

While many of the studies described above looked primarily at language teaching in general, with specific focus on English instruction, many studies have focused on the

specific domains that constitute a teacher's knowledge base when teaching specific areas, such as reading or speaking. The largest subset of these studies focuses on grammar instruction (e.g. Andrews, 1994; Sanchez & Borg, 2014). Similar studies looked for the same answers and built upon Shulman's framework of teacher knowledge by looking specifically at pedagogical content knowledge within specific areas of language teaching such as pronunciation (Baker 2014) and reading (Irvine-Niakaris & Kiely, 2014).

These more recent studies have contributed to research addressing Borg's (2006) call for action for more research within specific areas of language teacher cognition. By looking at reading instruction, for example, it becomes clear that language and grammar no longer constitute the primary content knowledge that teachers rely upon in their teaching (Irvine-Niakaris & Kiely, 2014). Rather, a more complex portrait of language teaching emerges, one that when seen through the lens of language teacher cognition, highlights the increasingly transdisciplinary nature of language teaching. These observations become all the more acute in the research on teacher cognition in second language writing instruction.

**Research on second language writing teachers**

Interest into second language writing teachers and what constitutes their knowledge has been slowly growing over the past decade. Despite this interest, studies in this area remain few and a comprehensive understanding of teacher knowledge within the context of second language writing is still lacking.

Within the existing body of research that looks at how teachers understand their practice, Shi and Cumming (1995) was one of the earliest works. They investigated teachers' general conceptualizations of their writing pedagogy, finding commonalities

with regard to teachers' guiding concepts in defining curricula. Cumming (2003) reported similar findings in a study that explored multiple teaching contexts, reporting that teachers conceptualized their practice along five areas: (1) composing processes, (2) genre/text types, (3) text functions, (4) topic or content themes, and (5) creative expression. Cumming notes that there was relative uniformity in these conceptualizations of L2 writing curricula despite varied teaching contexts, with participants in both ESL and EFL contexts teaching in university academic programs and settlement programs. Shi and Cumming (1995) tentatively suggested that these areas constitute a knowledge base for L2 writing.

Despite shared conceptualizations, Shi and Cumming (1995) also found that each teacher in their study had their own personal beliefs of writing that influenced the orientation of their writing tasks and objectives. In understanding how these beliefs affected the implementation of an innovation, Shi and Cumming observed that some teachers more readily incorporated innovation because the innovation aligned with their pre-existing beliefs about writing. Other teachers were more resistant, resulting in both minor and major modifications of the innovation. Such findings shed light on the innovation process, suggesting that despite a shared and agreed upon knowledge base, individual beliefs factor more heavily in the translation of this knowledge base into the classroom.

Tsui's (1996) investigation of how one teacher incorporates process pedagogies, an innovation for this teacher, further adds to research on how pedagogical content knowledge is transformed into the classroom. Tsui found that the teacher's understanding of process underwent change as she negotiated her own teacher beliefs, the constraints of

the institutional context, and her understanding of her students' needs. In a related study, Tsui and Ng (2010) found that Hong Kong's cultural context also played a factor in how teachers conceptualized process pedagogies. In this study, they investigated how teachers reconceptualized their understanding of peer review as a part of the writing process through what they identified as the cultural tendency to value collective responsibility and group goals. Both Tsui (1996) and Tsui and Ng (2010) support previous research in support of an understanding of teacher knowledge as personal and practical.

A larger amount of the research within studies on teachers in second language writing have focused specifically on written feedback. These studies have suggested that teachers' practices are affected by several factors including student expectations, feasibility, and institutional constraints. For example, Diab's (2005) study revealed that while the instructor was skeptic of the effectiveness of grammar feedback and indeed prioritized content feedback, she continued to provide some grammar feedback primarily because she felt her students expected it. Here, managing students' expectations resulted in a discrepancy between a teacher's beliefs and actual practices. This gap between student and teacher beliefs has been reported in several other studies as well (e.g. Basturkmen, 2012; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Zhou, Busch & Cumming, 2013).

Regarding mismatches between teachers' beliefs and actual practices, Lee's (2008, 2009) study on written feedback uncovered institutional pressures to mark errors comprehensively, despite teachers' own doubts of its effectiveness. In a related study, Montgomery and Baker (2007) found that teachers were not always aware of their own feedback practices. In their study, teachers self-assessed that they provided equal amounts of global and local feedback. However, analysis of teachers' actual performance

revealed that the bulk of teachers' feedback was on local issues with far less feedback on global issues. Thus, teachers tended to overestimate the amount of global feedback and underestimate the amount of local feedback that they gave their students. A series of studies by Ferris and her colleagues (Ferris, 2014; Ferris, Brown, Liu, & Stine, 2011; Ferris, Liu, & Rabie, 2011) reported similar findings regarding discrepancies between teachers' reported and actual practices.

Regarding assessment, research on teachers' cognitions in L2 writing has primarily investigated on decision-making behaviors in the rating of large scale assessments. One of the few studies to discuss writing assessment in the classroom context was Cumming (2003). In his study, orientations toward specific-purposes or general-purposes not only resulted in unique course objectives and writing tasks, but also differences in the assessment of student achievement. Teachers whose classes were more specific-purpose oriented tended to outline more clear criteria for assessing students' achievement of course goals. Teachers whose classes were more general-purpose oriented, however, had a wider range of methods for assessing student achievement.

Despite these important findings, research in what writing teachers know and believe has relied primarily on investigations of specific curricular practices that are often decontextualized or generalized through questionnaire data. With the exception of a few studies, little research has looked at how teachers understand and subsequently implement certain pedagogical approaches into their daily practice. Moreover, while Cumming (2003) points to possible content knowledge bases within L2 writing instruction, there are few studies that investigate how teachers understand these knowledge bases and how they are subsequently transformed into the classroom. Given

the transdisciplinary nature of the teaching of L2 writing (Matsuda, 2013), teachers often work under the influence of multiple disciplinary perspectives. For this reason, it is important to explore the complex relationship between teachers' experiences and their knowledge in the context of L2 writing instruction. In order to get a better picture of the nature of writing teacher knowledge, a more holistic picture that investigates multiple aspects of writing teachers' practices within a specific course is necessary.

# CHAPTER 3

# THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore how composition instructors of multilingual writers conceptualize their practice and the role that this knowledge plays in shaping their pedagogies within the context of First-Year Composition. To address this main purpose, sub-questions include:

- How do teachers orient toward the subject matter?
- What comprises their knowledge of their students and how does this influence their pedagogy?
- How is their knowledge enacted in the selection and implementation of curriculum?
- How is their knowledge enacted in the practice of written feedback?

I conducted an interview-based qualitative study in the ASU Writing Programs during the Spring and Summer semesters of 2014. Data primarily came from a series of interviews with four teachers who were currently teaching multilingual sections of First-Year Composition (FYC). Specifically, participating teachers were all currently teaching the second semester of a two-semester FYC course sequence. I also observed three classes for each teacher and collected samples of written feedback they gave on one writing project to two different students.

## Context of the Study

This study was conducted at ASU, a large, research-oriented institution. The ASU Writing Programs offers a range of courses from first-year composition (FYC) to more specific courses such as business writing and technical editing. FYC is a two-semester

sequence with mainstream (ENG 101 and 102) and multilingual (ENG 107 and 108) tracks; multilingual students can choose either track.

No major distinctions are made between the mainstream and multilingual tracks. ENG 101/107 focuses primarily on idea development and expression while building an understanding of the rhetorical process. ENG 102/108, builds upon these goals by placing additional attention on the development of written arguments supported by evidence, usually from secondary research. In addition, the second semester course also focuses on rhetorical strategies, such as ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos.

Data collection was conducted over the Spring and Summer semesters of 2014. Although the course requirements, goals and objectives for the courses are the same regardless of when the course is offered, spring courses extend across 15 weeks of instruction, while summer courses are truncated within 7 weeks. The hours of instruction, however, remain relatively the same resulting in more hours of classroom meetings per week during the summer session.

All FYC courses require students to complete three major writing projects, with multiple drafts to be completed for each project. Teachers are required to adopt a textbook from a list of approved textbooks by the Writing Programs; alternatively, they can create a custom textbook of selected sections from different textbooks on the list, in coordination with the publisher. Teachers are free to design their writing projects and additional course materials themselves.

At ASU, all FYC instructors are required to undergo training before the start of their instructorship. These training sessions have changed over the years with training sessions lasting up to three weeks in previous years, with more recent sessions lasting

four days. In addition to this initial orientation training session, regular meetings that focus on professional development continue throughout the first year of a TA's instructorship. In order to teach the multilingual tracks, teachers are required to take a semester long practicum. Because the practicum requirement is relatively new, however, some of the teachers with extensive experience had not participated in the practicum.

**Writing Programs Goals and Objectives**

The Writing Programs' goals and individual course descriptions are provided as a general framework for each course it offers. According to the Writing Programs mission statement, writing courses seek to "introduce students to the importance of writing in the work of university and to develop their critical reading, thinking, and writing skills" (Missions Statement, http://english.clas.asu.edu/wp-mission). The Writing Programs' goals center around four areas: (1) rhetorical knowledge, which includes notions of argument, voice, purpose, and audience; (2) critical thinking, reading, and writing, which includes synthesis, analysis, and evaluation of multiple perspectives across various readings; (3) composing processes, which includes interactions with texts, planning, drafting, and various modes of feedback; and (4) conventions, which includes attention to discourse communities, documentation systems, and organization strategies. The Writing Programs offers a variety of writing courses in addition to FYC and it is from an understanding of these goals that individual courses are further developed.

FYC, specifically, is a two-semester sequence, with the first-semester course (ENG 101/107) serving as an introduction for students to the goals described above with emphasis on providing opportunities for exploration, invention, and idea development to achieve these goals. The second-semester course (ENG 102/108) builds upon ENG

101/107 with additional attention on developing argument through various rhetorical strategies and supporting these arguments with secondary research. It is important to note that while the Writing Programs offers mainstream and multilingual tracks for both first- and second-semester course, the stated goals described here are the same regardless of the track. All teachers in this study were teaching the multilingual track of the second-semester FYC course, ENG 108. Further detail of course goals and objectives are available to teachers via the department website and through Writing Programs teachers' guides (See Appendix A and B for goals and objectives of ENG 102 and 108, respectively).

In addition to these goals, the Writing Programs also has guidelines on the assessment of grammar. Specifically, the Teachers' Guide stipulates that neither grades for the course nor grades for individual papers can be based on grammatical issues (See Appendix C for Grammar Guidelines). The Teachers' Guide emphasizes that such a policy is intended for all students in FYC and not just multilingual students. The guide continues on to note that such policies, however, do not preclude the importance of grammar nor the necessity to address grammar concerns.

**Participants**

**Recruitment.** To recruit participants, emails were sent to all FYC instructors teaching the second semester course. Participants were offered a $35 gift card for their participation. Recruitment for the study began in the Spring semester; the Writing Programs offered 22 sections of ENG 108 with twelve instructors during this semester. Prior to the start of the Spring semester in early January, emails were sent to all twelve ENG 108 instructors inviting their participation. Of the twelve instructors, two replied to

the initial email expressing their interest in participating in the study. Follow-up invitation emails were sent to the remaining ten instructors during the first week of classes; four replied to the follow-up emails declining the invitation to participate. A third round of invitation emails were sent during the second week of classes. One teacher replied to this invitation; however, this teacher expressed only limited ability to participate and ultimately declined participation.

With only two participants in the Spring semester, the study was extended into the summer. In the summer semester, seven sections of ENG 108 were offered with seven different instructors. Emails were sent to all seven instructors of ENG 108 in April, prior to the start of the Summer semester. Of the seven, two replied expressing their interest in participating.

**Brief Profiles.** In total, participants included four teachers who were teaching ENG 108 either in the Spring or Summer of 2014. Below are brief profiles of each participant. Information for the profiles described below were collected during the first interview with each participant. The following names were pseudonyms that the participants chose. The profiles for these teachers are summarized in Table 1.

- John is a graduate student teaching assistant (TA). After earning his Bachelor's degree in Spanish, he taught English at two high schools in Bolivia for one year. He then taught English in Japan at a private conversation school for another year before returning to the US to pursue his Master's of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MTESOL). While earning his MTESOL, he gained experience in ESL teaching at various community colleges through tutoring and volunteer work. He began teaching FYC during his master's program. At the

time of the study, he was working on his Ph.D. in Rhetoric, Composition, and Linguistics and had been teaching FYC for seven years, with experience teaching both mainstream and multilingual sections.

- Michaela is a lecturer in the English department. She earned her Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. in Literature. She has taught a range of courses in literature, primarily focusing on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century African American literature. She also has been teaching writing courses for approximately fifteen years. Michaela only recently began teaching the multilingual sections of FYC two years prior to this study.
- Brianna is an instructor in the English department, primarily teaching writing courses. She earned a Bachelor's degree in English and later a Master's degree in Film and Literature. She then went on to pursue a Ph.D. in literature. Dissatisfied with the direction of her Ph.D. program, she later decided to change directions and instead finish a degree in MTESOL. She said that this decision to move towards a MTESOL degree was influenced by her previous experiences tutoring ESL while pursuing her first Master's. At the time of the study, she had been teaching writing courses for over ten years, with experience teaching both mainstream and multilingual sections.
- Sonce is a graduate student TA. Originally from Macedonia, she completed her undergraduate studies in her home country receiving her Bachelor's degree in English language and literature with Italian language and literature as her minor. She moved to the U.S. in 2000 and later pursued a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics. After earning her Master's in 2006, she worked as an English

language teacher at ASU's intensive English program, before returning to pursue a Ph.D. in Rhetoric, Composition, and Linguistics in 2010. At the time of this study, she had been teaching FYC for four years, with experience teaching both mainstream and multilingual sections.

Table 1

Teacher Participants

| Teacher | Instructor Position | Experience with multilingual students | Experience with FYC | Educational background | Languages studied and/or spoken (other than English) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| John | Graduate TA | >10 years | 7 years | MTESOL; currently PhD student in Rhetoric, Composition, & Linguistics | Spanish |
| Michaela | Lecturer | 15 years | 2 years | PhD in Literature | NA |
| Brianna | Instructor | >10 years | >10 years | MTESOL | French |
| Sonce | Graduate TA | >10 years | 4 years | MA in Applied Linguistics; currently PhD student in Rhetoric, Composition, & Linguistics | Macedonian, Italian |

## Data Collection and Analysis

This study relies on an understanding of teachers' knowledge as something embedded within teachers' practices as well as in subsequent reflections and articulations of these practices. A central problem to examining this knowledge, however, is that it can be both conscious and unconscious and thus not always directly accessible (Calderhead, 1988; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Moreover, asking teachers to articulate their knowledge and beliefs can be problematic because teachers may not be ready or able to describe them (Borg, 2006). To mitigate these issues, teachers were not asked directly to describe their what they know or believe about their classroom practices. In addition, observations were coupled with in-depth interviews to allow for triangulation of data. The primary goal of observations was to use the observed classroom tasks and routines as stimulus for teachers' commentary and reflection. Interview data built on this by relying on how teachers described and reflected upon how they conducted their classroom and why. The goal of these interviews was to elicit teachers' own descriptions and interpretations of their goals and practices rather than relying solely on either my observations or the teachers' reflections. The following outlines the sequence of interviews and their purposes.

**Interviews**. Interviews were conducted with each teacher lasting approximately thirty-minutes to one hour each. Each teacher was interviewed four times except for Sonce who was interviewed three times. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

The initial interview intended to gain an understanding of teachers' overall goals and plan for the course. When teachers agreed to participate in the study, the initial

interview time was arranged and teachers were requested to send their syllabus for the course. During this interview, teachers were asked to walk through their syllabus and describe the rationale for their course policies and task selection.

The second and third interview followed the first and second observations. The follow-up interviews were within the day or following day of the observed class, depending on the teachers' availability. These interviews served as an opportunity to ask teachers to reflect upon their classroom practices and discuss the progress of their students. To do this, teachers were asked to describe what they did in class and comment on the lesson.

The final interview was conducted at the end of the term and was intended to gain teachers' final reflections and impressions on the semesters' tasks and goals.

**Observations**. Non-participant, unstructured observations were conducted three times during the course of one writing project for each instructor. All observations were audio recorded. Field notes were taken narratively (Evertson & Green, 1986).

**Written feedback on student papers**. Written feedback practices represent a central pedagogical task for composition teachers. In order to examine these tasks as a representation of teachers' practices, each teacher was asked to select two samples of written feedback given to students on one draft of a writing assignment, totaling eight student samples with written feedback.

**Stimulated recall interviews**. Teachers were first asked to describe their general feedback practices. They were then asked to reflect on the feedback they gave to the two student drafts they provided.

Stimulated recall methods most often involve video recordings as stimuli and ask

participants to reflect upon specific moments of the video as chosen by the researcher (Gass & Mackey, 2000). In the stimulated recall interviews my study, participants were not stopped at specific moments and instead were asked to go through each of their feedback points and reflect upon that feedback. One limitation to stimulated recall interviews is the possibility of memory decay. To minimize this possibility, the stimulated recall interviews were conducted as close as possible to the time that teachers completed the feedback. Additional limitations to stimulated recall interviews are discussed below.

**Collection of pedagogical materials.** Program policies, course syllabi, textbooks, and assignment descriptions were collected throughout the study. Information from this data was used to supplement existing data.

**Limitations of data collection.** Despite efforts to mitigate the problems of data that rely on teachers' articulation of goals and reflections and stimulated recall, limitations must be acknowledged. As described above, teachers may not always be readily able to describe the rationale for their task selections or course goals. This can understandably be a problem for more experienced teachers for whom many of their own personal practices have since become automatic or routine. While the analyses below seek to uncover the meanings behind teachers' routines and tacitly held knowledge, it must be acknowledged that teachers' responses in interviews may constitute articulation of idealized goals as opposed to real goals.

**Researcher role.** In addition to the limitations described above, it is important to acknowledge my own role in the research process and the influence I have in shaping the responses and meaning-making when collecting and explicating the relationship between

teachers' practices and their knowledge base. Over the course of a semester observing and meeting with these teachers, interviews grew more dialogue-like in nature. As Breen (2001) points out, the interview inevitably involves a co-construction of data between the researcher and the teacher. Thus, the interview becomes a space of co-constructed sense-making through the teacher-research dialogue (Burns, Freeman, & Edwards, 2015).

My own status and relationship with these teachers may also have influence on the interactions and subsequent data. While I did not know any of the teachers well before the start of the study, I had previously met John and Daniela (both graduate TAs) briefly during previous graduate student functions. In addition, my own role as a researcher and teacher of second language writing and composition may have had influence in their orientation toward me thus influencing their responses and the dialogue in our interviews.

**Data Analysis**

**Interviews**. All interview transcripts were read repeatedly and were analyzed initially noting emerging themes regarding teacher knowledge and aspects of teacher knowledge such as their knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of students, and knowledge of pedagogical practices. The initial set of emergent themes are as follows:

- Class routines
- Conceptualization of writing
- Course goals
- Past experiences
- Student pragmatism
- Students' needs

- Task administration
- Task goals
- Task selection
- Teacher's needs

Special attention was paid to teachers' articulation of goals and objectives and their reflections on task and activity selection. Salient themes describing their conceptions of teaching, understanding of students, and approaches to their classroom were identified. To identify common themes across the cases, cross-case analyses were conducted and common patterns were noted. The process of cross-case analyses often resulted in re-examination of the data from the other cases.

**Member Checks.** Once I drafted initial interpretations of how they conceptualized their teaching practices, I met with each teacher briefly to share the transcripts and my interpretations of their practices. I then asked teachers to address any possible misinterpretations of their interviews or of their practices.

**Observations**. Audio recordings were listened to repeatedly and together with field notes, they were reviewed for notable events. Notes from observations served to inform subsequent discussions in post-observation interviews.

**Written feedback on student papers**. Although samples of written feedback served primarily as stimuli for teachers' reflections on their practices, the actual written feedback was analyzed for general characteristics, following an adapted framework by Ferris, Pezone, Tade, and Tinti (1997). Written feedback on each of the papers provided by the teachers was first examined for general characteristics. This included characteristics such as whether feedback was handwritten or annotated through Microsoft

word or if teachers included memos or endnotes. Then written commentary throughout each students' papers was categorized into two groups, (1) feedback on grammar and mechanics and (2) feedback on content. Feedback on grammar and mechanics included comments on things such as verb tense, word usage, punctuation, and included cross-outs and insertions. Feedback on content included written commentary by teachers on ideas in the students' papers such as "*Provide background information here*" or "*This is good, but remember to convince you readers*."

**Stimulated Recall**. The audio-recorded stimulated recall interviews were transcribed. The interview data was read repeatedly noting salient themes and a preliminary list of themes was created. Then cross-case analyses were conducted to consolidate any overlapping themes resulting in the following list:

1. Prioritizing feedback on content
2. De-emphasizing feedback on grammar
3. Managing practical constraints
4. Addressing students' individual needs
5. Encouraging/not overwhelming students

The goal of stimulated recall interview was to uncover teachers' embedded knowledge and underlying rationale behind their feedback practices. It quickly became apparent that these themes were not mutually exclusive, but rather that teachers' reflections often represented more than category. For example, prioritizing feedback on content was sometimes discussed in tandem with de-emphasizing feedback on grammar. At other times, they were discussed separately and thus warranted a separate theme. Acknowledging that the feedback process often required the management of multiple

objectives, transcripts were coded to denote multiple categories when applicable.

To ensure reliability of coding, a second coder was asked to code one transcript chosen randomly. At the time of the coding, the coder was a doctoral student in Rhetoric, Composition, and Linguistics. I first described the goal of the stimulated recall and then reviewed the codes. I also reviewed that multiple codes were possible. Given this multiple coding schema, inter-coder reliability was based on whether we both coded the unit with the same set of codes. For the coding of the transcript, we obtained 86.5% inter-coder reliability. It is worth nothing that in all cases our coding matched on at least one category. Cases where our codes did not match involved situations where we did not match on all the categories.

# CHAPTER 4

# TEACHER KNOWLEDGE IN THE MULTILINGUAL COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

In this chapter, I explore the knowledge embedded in the four teachers' conceptualizations and implementation of the writing curriculum. To organize this discussion, I look at two specific areas within each teacher's practices: teachers' articulation of goals and objectives and teachers' selection and implementation of tasks and activities. I acknowledge that these areas are highly interrelated. I argue, however, that it is in the discussion and reflection of these areas that much of teacher knowledge is revealed.

All four teachers articulated course objectives that aligned with the goals as set forth by the Writing Programs. However, individual orientations surfaced through teachers' emphases on certain areas of the curriculum over others. I use the term orientation to refer to the intersection of teachers' knowledge and their beliefs toward the subject matter, an orientation that shapes and is shaped by their contexts of practice. These varying orientations toward the subject matter reveal interesting insight into the relationship among the various aspects of teacher knowledge, namely teachers' subject matter knowledge, their knowledge of their students, and their pedagogical knowledge. The following sections explores each teachers' orientations towards the subject matter by investigating how their conceptualization of subject matter intersects with their knowledge of students and pedagogical knowledge.

## Case Studies

### John: "It's not just the writing skills."

John was a graduate student teaching assistant (TA) working on his Ph.D. in Rhetoric, Composition, and Linguistics and had earned a MTESOL prior to beginning is doctoral degree. He had previous experience teaching in South America and Japan, and at the time of the study he had been teaching FYC for seven years with experience in both mainstream and multilingual sections.

John articulated course objectives that reflected the Writing Program's goals. He emphasized a focus on argument and rhetorical strategies as central to his ENG 108 class, which aligns with the programmatic outline of ENG 108 as a course that focuses on argument in academic writing. John also emphasized the importance of helping his students learn how to do research, something he saw as an extension of learning how to build strong arguments. Despite his general alignment with program-level course goals, John's orientation toward ENG 108 emphasized the importance of rhetorical argument above all other goals and objectives. Furthermore, this heavier emphasis on rhetorical argument was not uniformly shared across the other three participants, suggesting that this orientation reveals important insights into his teacher knowledge.

Concepts like ethos, pathos, logos were among the rhetorical strategies John focused on and to him, these rhetorical strategies were "the material" of the course and were the most important aspects of his ENG 108. He describes "the material" for the course here in a post-observation interview where we discussed certain pop-culture references that he used to exemplify these rhetorical concepts. After briefly reflecting upon the examples he gave in class, he explained that those examples were chosen in

order to "cover the material" in a way that connects with the students' interests and background (John, Interview 3). Unsure exactly what he was referring to when he mentioned "material," I asked for further clarification:

JR: Just right now you mentioned one of the reasons you gave the examples as you did was so that you could just get through, I'm sorry, so you could get through the material. Um, what do you mean by, um, what is the material?

JN: I mean, get through the material. But like, to uh, to cover the rhetorical strategies that make for you know, that are generally accepted as effective writing techniques. Again even when I give like outlines, and stuff, I don't, I mean, I don't say that they should stick to the structures because that's a mistake in many ways. Where you know, when people say like this is how you should write, you know, students always see other examples of people who have written well, really good things that are not following that structure. So, but it does, I do try to tell them that following a structure makes it a lot easier particularly for second language writers who are not used, you know, the type of writing that we're used to in college that follows, that tends to follow a certain, you know, strategy. And uses certain rhetorical devices.

JR: Okay, so um, so, to recap what you just said, um, more than emphasizing structure, emphasizing the rhetorical strategies that they could use is more important.

JN: Well I think structure is important. But not, 'cause I do offer clear structure. Although I don't say that this is the only way you can do it. But

> and then I just offer uh, you know, rhetorical strategies that I think are important. What I don't emphasize is really the grammatical like—I don't do a lot of grammar classes that are inside class. I tend to do those outside of class. Or um, you'll see some grammatical markings on that (points to essays on his desk) where I can just highlight them, so that they notice them without having it as part of the class.
>
> (John, Interview 3)

This excerpt reveals several key things about his orientation toward the subject matter. In describing "the material," John contrasts rhetorical strategies with two other possible topics: organizational structures and grammar. He describes rhetorical strategies to be "generally accepted as effective writing techniques," strategies that he implies are more broadly applicable to good writing the than rigid outlines and organizational structures that are often taught in writing classes. While he concedes that "structure" is important, he adds that there are many different types of organizational structures that his students may encounter. Moreover, he disagrees that one specific organization type 'should be' taught. While organizational structure was important but not central, John also points out that grammar is something he explicitly does not emphasize. He mentions that he values language feedback as part of the writing process, but that he does not see a place for language instruction in the classroom. This de-emphasis of grammar is something he regularly revisited throughout my time meeting with him.

In exploring why John prioritizes rhetorical strategies while de-emphasizing grammar, it is important to consider another aspect of John's teacher knowledge, his knowledge of his students. Much of the value he places on these two specific areas of the

course is closely tied to how he understands his students. Throughout our discussions, John emphasized his desire to convince students of the future applicability of ENG 108. This was primarily influenced by his assumption that some of his students may not find value in the course. This was reflected in his reply when asked to describe possible weaknesses of his students. Rather than weaknesses, he considers students' motivation as a more important factor:

> I think that uh, there is a tendency in English 107 and 108 classes, arguably all classes, all required classes, is just to be getting through them. So do the least possible to get through the class and I think that a lot of them feel that that's the purpose, that there's really not a lot of use. They don't necessarily feel that there's a lot of use. They don't necessarily feel that there's a lot of use for this. So the getting through to them may be a weakness because that takes away from them really trying to learn the materials and that could be an issue.
>
> (Interview 5).

To understand John's orientation toward the subject matter, it is thus important to understand his perceptions of his students' motivation. This influences John's insistence on convincing his students of the importance of ENG 108. For John, his support for the courses importance lies in his further understanding of his students' future academic and career choices. Thus he frames argument as a useful skill applicable to these contexts and chooses tasks and activities that highlight this connection.

His consideration of his students' future academic and career choices can be seen when he describes his general experiences with students in ENG 108. He describes how regardless of major, the ability to formulate effective arguments and communicate these

purposes in both writing and speaking is important.

> I think that I do make it an effort to show that there is a, that it is useful, especially if you're doing like presentations, or process-oriented. That if you're doing um, if you're going to be even in the engineering department, lets say, which I do have, I tend to have a large number of engineering students and even in an engineering course, you'd be asked to present material in a way that makes sense, or present argument that, the reasons for doing some type of a project. Being an engineer or not. (John, Interview 1)

Here, John's knowledge of his students intersects with his justification for his task selection, that of presentations. More importantly, John's understanding of the needs of his students are addressed by emphasizing the importance of argument in general and not necessarily just written arguments.

In another interview when he mentions that he deals with language issues outside of the classroom, I asked him to clarify his reasons.

> JR: Now you mentioned that you try to focus on content when you're in the classes and leave language out of it and put language in your, or incorporate language in your conferences.
>
> JN: well yeah, and the reason why I would say that is that first of all would be, I think if I lesson on some type of grammar in the classroom, it would either be below the level of, you know, a good portion of the students, and perhaps the level of some of the students, so how many students would it be applying to, and if you take so much time out of valuable classroom time, and using it towards something that may or may not be relevant to

> them, then um, you can see that if these problems occur in the written format, you can at least highlight them and bring them to the attention of the students in or outside or in conference, you know so that you're actually giving one-on-one feedback. And it may be that it's much easier to understand if it's just a simple mistake as a part of the learning process, or they really don't understand the concept, if you're actually having a conversation with, you know, the individual.
>
> (John, Interview 1)

Here, John's knowledge of his students and their varied language needs inform how he conceptualizes the subject matter. Because he felt language proficiency to be rather individual and difficult to generalize, he chose to focus his course on the "content" or the rhetorical knowledge of argument while addressing language needs on an individual basis.

An emphasis on argument and rhetoric is further exemplified by John's task selection. In connection to the third writing project, he assigned an oral presentation of the paper to be delivered during class. When asked to reflect on how well his students did in the class overall, he turned to the presentation as an example of their successful understanding of argument strategies.

> I think that a lot of them really developed some strong, good strong arguments and um, some of them even passionately, which is nice. And not only developed good papers but also were able to put that paper into a good presentation for delivery. Which is another thing that I failed to mention that I liked kind of. I like to make sure the project has some kind of ending in the delivery. So it's great and all to write a decent argumentative paper, but we always have an audience. So

> delivering it to the audience and you know that makes, in a way that makes sense, in the form of a presentation is also a good skill that I like to see in students. And I think that the majority of my students were able to do that pretty well. (John, Interview 6)

Moreover, for John, the mastery of rhetoric and argument, however, was not bound to writing. Rather, writing served as the primary, but not only, means through which argument could be practiced. John explained that an understanding of the elements of argument were important for their future contexts. When asked in the first interview why he chose the presentation, his rationale was telling:

> 'Cause I think that's also, it's not just the writing skills. I think that they, written skills tend to be combined with other skills in everyday life. You write and then you talk about the writing or you present the writing. Or if you have a job, you put together a report and then you present the report to your superior. Or to your colleagues. Or you right the schematics for a new micro chip and you present that material to your, you know. And so I think, and also because I think they do have presentations in other classrooms too, sometimes they're group work, sometimes they're not. um, and even if it's just a matter of them applying for jobs or other things, then I think it becomes a skill that's necessary. And it's good to practice. (John, Interview 1)

Based on the observations of John's classes and follow-up interviews in which he reflects upon the rationale for his tasks and goals for the course, several further observations can be made. While his conceptualization of the subject matter focuses on rhetoric and argument, he does not tie this subject matter solely to written argument.

Writing still plays a central role in his course, but it seems to be the medium through which argument is learned rather than the subject matter itself. His knowledge of his students further influenced his orientation toward the subject matter. The ability to formulate successful arguments was relevant to his students regardless of their major, and this applicability was something he emphasized in every class and throughout our interviews. This is in contrast to how he addressed the language needs of his students. While he relies upon knowledge of grammar as well as a knowledge of language proficiency issues to address the needs of his students, this knowledge domain does not contribute to his conceptualization of the subject matter. Rather, it influenced his knowledge of his students and how he met their individual needs. This distinction is important because his assessment of the students' performance in the course was based on what he conceptualized to be the subject matter—rhetorical arguments not language.

**Michaela: "Students should be writing in every class."**

Michaela was a lecturer in the English department and earned her Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. in Literature. She had been teaching writing courses for approximately fifteen years by the time of this study but only recently began teaching the multilingual sections of FYC two years prior. Part of her preparation for teaching multilingual sections involved taking a practicum for first-time teachers of multilingual sections that addressed various issues in teaching multilingual writers, a practicum newly offered when she began.

Similar to the other participants, Michaela articulated objectives that aligned closely with the Writing Program's curricular goals for ENG 108. She described the importance of rhetorical argument as well as critical thinking and reading in her class. In

addition to this, Michaela also emphasized the importance of writing as expression, a central theme that permeated much of her pedagogy.

Together with writing as expression, Michaela also centered on critical reading skills, and these two focuses were closely tied to each other. When asked to reflect on her goals for the course, Michaela concentrates on these critical reading skills while also connecting them to the classroom routine of group discussions.

> Well my goals were basic. They were simple. Though they are L2 writers, I wanted them also to become critical readers and thinkers. Then the critical writing will come. Even though I know it's a writing class, but I think that we have to start with reading and then become thinkers and then writers. At least that's the way I looked at it. And the way I was able to do that is through using essays and then having discussions. But the discussions always started in a group. I never depended on just throwing a question out. But I would always have prompt questions that they would work on as a group. Each group would have a particular question and we would come back and then present those ideas and then open it up for, I don't want to say debate, but to give other sides. So whatever one group presented, I would want to get the counter side of it. And then following a reading and a discussion, I would have them freewrite in their journals about the process, um, what they got out of it. (Michaela, Interview 5)

Michaela's discussion of her goals and how she achieves these goals reveals several key characteristics of her teacher knowledge. Firstly, her orientation toward the subject matter as a focus on critical reading is clear. Because this subject matter is more skill-based than content-based she primarily relies upon a pedagogical knowledge that entails

the progression of in-class discussions from small groups to whole class discussion to finally a freewriting reflection. This focus on critical reading is something that she later attributed to her "literature side" which also suggests the importance of her disciplinary background in shaping her pedagogical decisions.

Her focus on writing as expression was immediately apparent in her classroom routines and task selection. In my observations, she began each class with a freewrite, and on two occasions she asked students to return to freewriting either at the middle or end of the class. In a post-observation interview, she gave the following rationale for relying on freewriting so extensively:

> Well first of all, it is a writing course, okay, so students should be writing in every class. So using freewriting prompts gets students to how can I say this, it gets them to write, okay, so I'll provide a prompt. I'm not really interested in the right answer, but it's just to get them in the practice of writing fast, their ideas and thoughts. And I do grade their writing, I'm sorry, but I've learned that unless they know that I'm looking at their work, I have seen in the past, that they write less. But I collect journals three times a semester. It's more work for me, but I can see them writing, not only in class, but out of class, because I tell them that any ideas that come to mind, it can be on something we discuss in the class, it can be something that you saw in the news, whatever, or ideas about your paper, just write it down. I just want them to get into the practice of writing. And so I collect their journals. And they get rewarded with points. So that's how I get them motivated. 'Cause they love points. (Michaela, Interview 2)

Her freewriting task focuses on getting her students' "ideas and thoughts" down on paper

and that there is no "right answer" emphasizing this perspective of writing as expression, something that she later attributed to having read the work of Peter Elbow while a graduate student. When discussing freewriting, however, she is also immediately aware of her students' pragmatic orientation towards the task. This knowledge of her students' learning habits was something she gained through her previous experiences teaching writing; her students "love points" and thus facilitation of the task relied on specific knowledge of the students, here seen as giving grades for freewriting in their journals to "get them motivated." It is worth noting that these are completion grades in which Michaela primarily checked to see if the students had been writing in their journal.

Her description above of her classroom routines to facilitate critical thinking and reading through discussion, however, is an idealized description. In a post-observation interview, it became clear that knowledge of her students played a key role in the facilitation of these tasks. Specifically, her developing knowledge and perceptions about students' cultural and educational backgrounds seemed to limit the success of several of her in-class activities. For example, in one of her classes, she had assigned a reading on the legalization of same-sex marriage. The essay was included in her textbook and highlighted the elements of argument. During the in-class discussion, she asked students to discuss the thesis of the argument but found that many students had not read the piece. In the post-observation discussion, she expressed regret over choosing this piece.

> It's not hard to do in selecting articles for English speaking students. However, I didn't do so well this semester. So, I do think about the student body who will be reading those pieces. Because again, the piece about the gay community, legalizing marriage won't be quite as interesting to Arab students. Or maybe

> something they don't even want to talk about. That doesn't seem to be true for Asian students. I think it's—I don't mean to generalize, but uh, it sounds like the gay community is tolerated, or gays are tolerated in some of the Asian countries. And I can only speak about the Chinese. But when you start talking about women's rights, abortion, and I don't address abortion, but pregnancies outside of marriage, drugs, and about gays, those tend to be subjects that students do not engage in when I have discussion. And that's why I always start by having them meet in their groups and assigning one question for them to focus on so that when we come back as a class, I can get through all the points that I wish to address for that particular paper because I found my error, that I can't just come to the classroom and say, okay, and start discussing the piece like I do in my literature class. I can do that. But for this level, and for these students, international students, you have to take a different approach in order to get them to discuss. (Michaela, Interview 3)

Her description of what she felt to be a poorly chosen reading piece highlights a growing sensitivity to possible taboo topics for international students of diverse cultural backgrounds. This discussion also shows how her pedagogical knowledge, informed by her knowledge of students, helped somewhat mitigate what she felt to be an unsuccessful discussion. She contrasts her experience teaching courses in Literature with her ENG 108 class of international students acknowledging that these students need further scaffolding during in-class activities to ensure active participation in class discussions.

Her growing knowledge of international students' backgrounds also affected her assessment of how well she felt they understood the notions of audience, concession, and

multiple viewpoints when making an argument. In a post-observation interview, she explained that she had been discussing these concepts since the beginning of the semester, and that although her "English-speaking students" have less of a problem with this, it remained a challenge for her international students.

> But I just found that international students don't understand, or see the importance of including other viewpoints. You know they wanna, this is my argument, and then they conclude. I'm like, no wait, wait, hold up. We do have to address our skeptics. You know, their viewpoints. And sometimes we do concede to part of the argument. But um, you have to show whether you refute their argument or concede their arguments. You can't refute and then concede to a small part. So some of them just didn't get that. (Michaela, Interview 2)

This excerpt highlights the intersection of her orientation toward the subject matter, the focus on elements of a good argument, with her developing knowledge of her students. While it may be argued that such strategies of argumentation could be challenging for any student, her perception that this is particularly challenging for international students illustrates her developing knowledge base of international students' needs.

Based on the observations of Michaela's classes and follow-up interviews in which she reflects upon the rationale for her tasks and goals for her course, several further observations can be made. Her orientation toward the subject matter, in alignment with many of the goals of the Writing Programs, relies primarily on the notions of process writing perspectives (writing as expression), an understanding of rhetoric and argument, and an emphasis on critical reading. She relies both on her pedagogical knowledge of how to scaffold critical thinking, observed through her implementation of

in-class discussion and freewriting, and her knowledge of the students, which incorporates an understanding of their studying habits and their cultural and educational backgrounds. Her primary challenges lie in her still developing knowledge of her students' cultural background, a fact that can be attributed to her limited experience teaching international students. It is worth noting that language-related issues remained primarily absent from her discussions of goals and tasks.

**Sonce: "It's not just for 108."**

Sonce was a graduate student TA. She received her Bachelor's degree in English language and literature and her Master's degree in Applied Linguistics. She was currently working on her Ph.D. with a Linguistics focus. She had several years of experience teaching ESL/EFL and at the time of this study she had been teaching FYC for four years, with experience teaching both mainstream and multilingual sections.

It became clear early on in our meetings that her experience with teaching ESL influenced her understanding of the subject matter. In our first interview, when asked how long she had been teaching writing, she drew a distinction between "ESL writing" and the writing she taught in FYC which she referred to as "academic writing."

JR: How long have you been teaching writing?

SD: Writing? Since 2010. That's academic writing. And then for ESL purposes, more than ten years.

JR: More than ten years?

SD: Yes. As a skill. As a language skill. But academic writing, it would be four years now.

JR: Okay. So you differentiate between um, academic writing and then ESL

writing as a skill.

SD: Yes

JR: how do you differentiate that?

SD: well the teaching, it's more grammar-oriented when it's a language skill, more attention is placed on the sentence structure and then the structure of the paragraph. It's more on the sentential and paragraph level. Where as in academic writing, it's on the style, the discourse, the academic discourse and then the arguments and other stuff so it's not, to me it's not the same.

JR: okay

SD: it's way different.

(Sonce, Interview 1)

For ENG 108, Sonce's orientation toward the subject matter centered on rhetorical analysis. Through rhetorical analysis, she sought to facilitate students' understanding of key constructs of argument, including supporting claims through various rhetorical strategies and making these claims relevant to specific audiences. When asked to share her goals for ENG 108, she described the importance of analyzing arguments in connection to its applicability to students' future contexts.

> The way I teach it, the main focus is on arguments. So the structure of the argument, and that's what we'll be doing in WP1 is understanding the structure of the written argument, looking at, you know, the rhetorical strategies that authors use. I think it's really helpful. It's not just for 108. They will be reading articles in the future in their academic careers and in their lives. I'm always trying to make that connection. It's not just for the academic discourse, academic world. It's for

> everything you do, in kind of reading. And then um, again, I really want them to see that the skills that they will get in 108 are applicable to their real life. So, it could take it outside of academia. (Sonce, Interview 1)

Similar to John, Sonce frames the needs of her students in a way that moves beyond ENG 108, emphasizing "It's not just for 108." Sonce regularly returns to the importance of future applicability throughout her justifications for the writing tasks she selects. Moreover, her focus on the analysis of argument is something she describes as fundamental. She later went on to describe her rationale for choosing to begin with a rhetorical analysis for the first writing project by emphasizing that it builds the students' foundation to continue throughout the course.

Her focus on rhetorical analysis was clear in her in-class activities as well. In one class I observed, she asked her students to discuss an article in which the author argues against the practice of egg donation. In her reflection on the in-class discussion, she evaluated the success of the activity based on the students' ability to identify and analyze the claims made by the author.

> Yeah I think that they did well overall. Well not all of them, some of them, most of the parts. It's a very small class. But at least I mean they were able to understand what the major claim was and then I provided additional information and then we connected to what's going on in their countries and then they were all able to recognize at least the voice of the author. She has a really strong voice and then some of the examples, I was glad that we were able to touch on. At least the type of evidence is presented in the text which is, I think, very important. (Sonce, Interview 2)

Her reflection also reveals the intersection of her knowledge of her students and pedagogical knowledge of how to facilitate classroom discussion around a controversial topic. In class, the students were able to recognize that this article was originally intended for an American audience. Sonce was able to build upon her students' diverse backgrounds to expand the conversation while also further facilitating analysis of the arguments made by the author.

Throughout the course of her ENG 108 class, Sonce expressed satisfaction with how well her students in this class were able to understand various elements of rhetoric and argument. A recurring concern for her, however, was her students' language proficiency. At the start of the course, she expressed apprehension of the affect her students' fluency—or limitations thereof—may have on their ability to successfully understand the subject matter. She raised this as a concern in the first interview when commenting on her previous challenges she faced when teaching multilingual sections of FYC.

> The fluency they have in the classroom, in terms of language use, not able to understand those academic texts. The readings we do in class are very challenging, spend a lot of time. When you're not able to understand the text, how can you understand it rhetorically? What you're asking them to do, you have to have a grasp. And then you either look for easier texts, and then if you feel you're doing them a favor or not, it's a big question. Or you just expose them to the texts that are in the book, that they're supposed to be analyzing in class. It's swim or sink. (Sonce, Interview 1)

While she felt that her students in this class were relatively successful, the role of

language proficiency again surfaced in her later reflections of the students' performance in the course. When asked to reflect on her students' weaknesses at the end of the course, her comments concentrated on grammar and language proficiency.

> I think it's so, the grammar. The sentence structure. That's still big. And then clearly, kind of expressing their ideas. And that's related to sentence structure. As a non-native speaker, I always, I mean I always have felt that I'm able to understand what they're trying to say. But I always put myself, if a native speaker reads this, they would never be able to understand, for the weaker students. you know for the ones who are in between fairly good and, you know, excellent. It's not going to be a problem. Visiting the writing center is enough. But for people who have, um, struggle with sentence structure, grammar stuff. Even after visiting the writing center, their papers were so, not, it's not not-legible. I mean far from it. (Sonce, Interview 4)

When asked to elaborate upon how she managed these language proficiency challenges, she described meeting with students outside of class as well as sending them to the writing center for additional help. She also described one student who, at the end of the course was successful in building an understanding of rhetorical knowledge but remained weak in language skills despite individual conferencing, multiple drafts, and trips to the writing center.

These reflections reveal several key characteristics of her knowledge base when teaching multilingual sections of FYC. Firstly, her knowledge of her students' language proficiency plays a factor in evaluation of her students' writing as well as in her task selection, seen in the earlier excerpt about choosing appropriate readings. Her reflections

also reveal tensions in her conceptualization of the subject matter. In her alignment with institutional goals, her conceptualization of the subject matter focuses on rhetorical knowledge and she finds her students to be successful in this regard. She does not, however, see language related issues as part of the subject matter and thus feels challenged with the lower proficiency she observes in many of her students. Addressing language issues thus moves out of the classroom and into individual meetings, or outsourced to the writing center.

**Brianna: "This semester, it's much more academic."**

Brianna was an Instructor in the English department, primarily teaching writing courses. She earned a Bachelor's degree in English and later a Master's degree in Film and Literature and a MTESOL. At the time of the study, she had been teaching writing courses for over ten years, with more than five years experience teaching both mainstream and multilingual sections.

Brianna's orientation toward the subject matter centered on academic writing, and more specifically, the incorporation of research writing as a part of academic writing. For Brianna, this incorporation of research writing, and building familiarity with the documentation of sources, is a key characteristic of academic writing.

> The goals for writing programs are to introduce the students to more academic style of writing, more research writing than in English 107. And so my goals are to help them become more familiar with MLA and APA. I start to introduce a little bit of research in English 107, towards the end of the semester. But this is the semester where it's, where I really focus on getting it right. Or helping them get it right. Um, 'cause that's the big struggle a lot of the time. Learning how to,

> not only cite sources, but using them appropriately. Paraphrase, evaluate the sources, that's a big part of English 108. And then also, a little bit more awareness of um rhetoric. And like the rhetorical triangle. And things like that. So again, in English 107, it's more introductory. It's just getting them comfortable with writing. And you know, narrative writing, observational writing. But this semester, it's much more academic. (Brianna, Interview 1)

Brianna's focus on academic writing as the subject matter highlights her awareness of the institutional context. While acknowledging that these are the goals of the Writing Programs, she also sees academic writing as a natural progression from the types of writing in the first-semester course, ENG 107. She also depends on her knowledge of students, knowledge that she has built through her previous experiences teaching ENG 108. She mentions that the incorporation of research, including proper citation and documentation, is often difficult for students. Aware of this difficulty, she explains that she introduces the incorporation of research writing gradually throughout the three projects.

> I try and start off a little more slowly, so the required research for this project is actually--I'm not asking them to do outside research. I'm asking them to incorporate an article that we read together and discuss and that helps them with their analysis. So the first paper, they're not doing their own outside research. They're just working on incorporating, you know, a source into their paper. (Brianna, Interview 1)

In her second writing project, she progresses on to more guided evaluation of outside sources through an annotated bibliography. These sources are then incorporated into her

final writing project, a written proposal.

Her pedagogical knowledge, marked by her progression of tasks from less to more difficult was also evident in how she targeted critical reading skills. For example, she scaffolds students learning of critical reading skills by focusing on visual texts explaining that they are often easier to analyze than written texts.

> Critical reading of visual texts which is a little bit different I think actually in some ways, that's a lot easier for some students I think. I think today's students are you know very conscious of you know visual arguments and visual tactics and things like that, whether they know it or not. (Brianna, Interview 3)

Her decision to focus on visual texts was influenced by her knowledge of her students, a population she felt to be very keen in understanding visual arguments more easily.

Similar to the other teachers, Brianna's awareness of her students' cultural background played a role in understanding how she facilitated in-class activities. In the first discussion of the session, she asked her students to discuss and evaluate a Victoria Secret commercial that was related to a reading in their textbook. She mentioned that holding classroom discussions sometimes felt like "pulling teeth," something she attributed to the fact that "the confidence to speak in class is something that a lot of international students maybe struggle with" (Interview 1). In contrast, she was pleasantly surprised at the level of engagement in her students in this class.

> I was impressed. For it being like the first class that we, I mean this is literally the second class of the session, but the first class when we're discussing things. Um, they were really willing to participate and a lot of them too. And I was worried that maybe you know some of the, a lot of times some of the female students,

especially from the Middle East, tend to be a little more, timid, it seems to me. But that didn't seem to be the case at all in class. (Brianna, Interview 2)

As she evaluates this class discussion, she relies on previously gained knowledge about students and contrasts that with her current students and how this affects her task facilitation. This previously gained knowledge comes from her experiences teaching writing to multilingual students, providing her a frame of reference for evaluating the success of her task facilitation.

Her understanding of language issues was also a part of her knowledge base. In the final interview, I asked her about any weaknesses that the students still had at the end of the semester.

> I think, you know, just, I think paraphrasing is something that a lot of students struggle with. You know, and not just international students, but, I think them more than others, because it's another language too. And in order to paraphrase something really well, you have to understand it really well, and you have to have the vocabulary to put it into different language, different words. Um, so it, I think that paraphrasing is something that they struggle with. I think that many of them did a good job with it. But it's something I struggle to teach and they struggle to put into practice. (Brianna, Interview 5)

Brianna later added that the next time she teaches ENG 108 she intends to include more in-class practice of paraphrasing.

Based on these follow-up interviews and the observations, it became clear that Brianna's knowledge base relied on a conceptualization of the subject matter that centered on her notions of academic writing. This academic writing style was

emphasized through the connections she drew to certain writing conventions such as MLA or APA research paper formatting. In contrast to other teachers, however, Brianna did not emphasize the knowledge of rhetoric as heavily. Having taught ENG 108 many times, she seemed to rely primarily on a generalized knowledge of students that she has accumulated throughout her experience, a knowledge domain she returns to as she evaluates how her current students were doing.

## Conclusion

By looking at teachers' articulation of goals and objectives, I attempted to highlight the underlying orientations that each teacher had toward the subject matter. Although all teachers shared similar goals, much in alignment with those as set forth by the writing programs, they each had unique orientations toward the subject matter. These orientations were shaped and further shaped their knowledge of the students, knowledge of the curricula, and knowledge of their pedagogical approaches.

Another important aspect of their teacher knowledge was the knowledge these teachers had of their students. Specifically, each teacher's practices were shaped in different ways by their knowledge of their students. For example, for John, his knowledge of the students as pragmatically oriented affected how he chose his explanations and the subjects of the tasks he would give. His assumptions of his students' future writing contexts, affected his orientation toward the subject matter and the goals. Moreover, rather than focus on textual features, John focused more on writing as argument because that would best serve them in their future writing contexts.

For Michaela, her knowledge of students and her interpretation of their needs is that these students need to build good writing habits and that they need to have more

confidence when writing. This was reflected in the way she approached her in-class activities as well as how she assessed their learning. For Sonce, her students' language skills served as an important lens through which she understood their overall skills in the classroom. This understanding affected how she scaffolded her students reading and writing, ensuring that her students were afforded ample opportunities to seek additional help. For Brianna, her knowledge of her students' cultural backgrounds shaped her expectations for classroom activities.

Taken together, these findings emphasize the need to understand how teachers orient toward the subject as well as how they understand their students as an important dialectic relationship that shapes their continually developing teacher knowledge.

# CHAPTER 5

# EXAMINING WRITTEN FEEDBACK PRACTICES

In this chapter, I examine the knowledge embedded in the four teachers' written feedback practices. Investigations of written feedback continue to be an important area in second language writing research. This chapter looks to contribute to this area of research by further understanding the knowledge base that undergirds teachers' practices when giving feedback. More importantly, this chapter focuses on written feedback as a means of better understanding the teacher knowledge of these composition instructors. In this vein, written feedback practices provide a unique window into a practice that is central to writing instruction (Ferris, 2014).

## Teacher knowledge in written feedback

A substantial body of research has been devoted to investigating the focus and types of feedback and their effectiveness in improving L2 students' written accuracy and overall writing development. Much of this research has contributed to 'best practices' suggestions for teachers on how to provide feedback to students' writing. Despite having this substantial research base, investigation of what teachers actually do, whether this existing research base has contributed to teachers' feedback practices, and how or why such practices are being adopted remains relatively scarce. As Ferris (2014) points out, "The teachers' voices have been the missing link in the research base to date" (p. 6). In response to this gap, investigations of teachers' beliefs and perspectives on written feedback have begun to grow. While there still only exists a small amount of research on this, there are some clear trends that have developed across these studies. With regard to how teachers give feedback, the existing research has pointed to writing teachers'

inclinations to provide more form-focused feedback than content-focused feedback (Ferris, Brown, Liu, & Stine, 2011). In addition, much of this feedback has been found to be more comprehensive in nature than it is selective (Lee, 2008). For example, in Lee (2008), teachers were observed to provide some kind of feedback for every single error. Moreover, teachers have been found to be directly correcting their students mistakes in writing more often then providing indirect feedback which would alternatively provide students with the opportunity to work through the error (Montgomery & Baker, 2007).

Much of this research has also examined teachers' motivations behind their feedback practices as well as their perspectives on responding to students. A predominant trend across several studies highlights mismatches between teachers' beliefs and their actual feedback practices. In Lee's (2008, 2009) study in the Hong Kong context, these mismatches were attributed to teachers' perception that institutional constraints restricted them from giving the feedback that aligned more closely what 'best practices.' In other studies, such as Junqueira and Payant (2015), the teachers that reported valuing content feedback more heavily were surprised to discover that they often gave more attention to local-level issues—findings that suggest that teachers may not always be aware of their mismatches between what they actually do and what they thing is best. Regardless of whether they did, or did not do, as they felt best, many teachers in these studies lamented the time-constraints that limited the extent to which they could provide more effective feedback. Finally, findings from Ferris, Brown, Liu, and Stine (2011) suggest that teachers were often inadequately trained to properly address the needs of multilingual students in the writing classroom, further exacerbating the restrictions to implementing better feedback practices.

In summary, while research in the area of teacher knowledge in written feedback remains relatively scarce, the existing studies have highlighted the challenge that teachers face when managing form-focused and content-focused feedback. While context and institutional factors have been shown to play a role, there is also some evidence that teachers are unaware of the heavier emphasis they place on form-based feedback. Given our current understanding, the following analysis aims to further explore teachers' feedback practices within the broader context of their teacher knowledge. Specifically, I look at what teachers' feedback practices reveal about their understanding of the subject matter and how their knowledge of their students contributes to an understanding of these approaches to feedback.

## Feedback Principles

An examination of the teachers' feedback practices revealed varied approaches to responding to student papers. To examine these feedback practices, teachers were asked to share drafts from two different students and the written feedback they gave on these students' drafts. The written feedback was first analyzed for type of feedback given, either (1) feedback on grammar and mechanics and (2) feedback on content. In stimulated recall interviews, teachers were then asked to walk through each of their feedback and reflect upon that feedback. Upon analysis of their feedback practices together with their reflections, several key principles emerge. The five prevailing principles were as follows:

1. Prioritizing feedback on content
2. De-emphasizing feedback on grammar
3. Managing practical constraints
4. Addressing students' individual needs

5. Encouraging/not overwhelming students

While these principles that emerged were recurrent themes, these themes overlapped suggesting that as teachers provided feedback to their students' papers, they were regularly managing multiple demands. I briefly describe each of these principles below before examining in greater detail how these principles played a role in each teachers' feedback practices.

*Prioritizing feedback on content* refers to the emphasis that teachers' placed on helping students develop their ideas in their papers and projects. The teachers often explicitly stated their heavier attention to content feedback in contrast to their *de-emphasizing of feedback on grammar.* While all teachers provided feedback on grammar and mechanics, they all expressed a need to mitigate this type of feedback. For example, both Sonce and Brianna only provided feedback on grammar and mechanics on certain sections of their students' papers. *Managing practical constraints* refers to the different strategies teachers employed to handle the time-consuming task of providing feedback. For example, Michaela described becoming "burnt out" when she would previously provide extensive handwritten comments to her students' drafts, which prompted her to use Microsoft Word *comment* and *track change* functions to alleviate the time commitment. *Addressing students' individual needs* refers to teachers' perspective that the feedback process afforded them opportunities to address the individual needs of the students that couldn't be addressed in the classroom. Finally, *encouraging/not overwhelming students* refers to how teachers emphasized the need to mitigate the possibility of students feeling discouraged or overwhelmed from the feedback they receive.

These five principles emerged across all of the teacher's reflections. However, each teacher's practices remained distinct, with no teacher following the exact same feedback procedures. Next, I look at each of the teachers and examine how each of these principles came together to shape their individual feedback practices.

## Common Principles, Individual Practices

Below, I explore each teachers' feedback practices and their reflections on these practices in relation to the principles outlined above. I begin each discussion with a brief description of each teacher's general feedback practices.

### John

John's written feedback on his students' papers included a mix of content feedback with selective marking on grammar and mechanics. His feedback was handwritten directly on students' papers. Feedback on grammar and mechanics included both direct, including cross-outs and insertions, and indirect feedback, including circles and underlining. His content-focused feedback primarily consisted of questions in the margins with arrows and brackets pointing to specific areas of focus. He included no endnotes.

When asked to describe his general feedback practices, he described a process that began with skimming over a student's paper to first determine if the student is primarily on track before continuing onto providing more detailed comments. As he reflected on the feedback he gave to his students' papers, he emphasized the importance of content. "I tried to focus more on things to make the actual argument better" (Interview 4). This was evident in the actual feedback he gave on his students' papers. Such feedback came in the form of marginal notes, ranging between two to three

sentences that either asked questions or proposed alternative ideas to the student.

His approach to content feedback was in contrast to his approach to grammar and mechanics. Here he describes how he treated such issues.

> When it comes to mechanics and grammar, I usually try to do that without like, in person in our meetings, 'cause it's a lot easier to cover things and it might just be a mis-intention between me and the student and not like uh, you know an actual grammatical mistake in that sense. And so, yeah, I mean, as you see there (referring to a stack of marked papers on his desk), for some that are, you can't just because a student turns in a poor paper, you can't just, you know, go crazy on it. Otherwise, you know, it's both intimidating for the student, and you can't learn everything at once too. So you kind of have to choose. (Interview 4)

For John, grammar mistakes are highly individual and require an understanding of the individual student's needs. Thus, individual meetings were the based place to address these needs. Also, his choice to avoid overly extensive corrective feedback on paper serves the additional purpose of not intimidating the student.

His actual feedback practices further reflected these principles. When providing feedback on grammar and mechanics, he distinguished between major and minor errors. For major errors, he underlined and described the error while with minor errors he provided the correction directly. In describing one such minor error he stated:

> I just wrote it up top because I don't think it's something that he needs to look into right, where as you know, the tense, keeping the tense, is something he might need to look into. (Interview 4)

It is also worth noting that while he distinguished between major and minor errors, he did not provide feedback on all errors. Thus, mitigating the importance of grammar feedback came in the form of highly selective feedback.

**Michaela**

Michaela provided written feedback to her students' papers through Microsoft track changes and comments. Her selective marking on grammar and mechanics included indirect feedback, through highlighting and bolding, direct feedback, through insertions and deletions. She provided content-focused feedback through marginal comments in the form of questions and suggestions. In addition to this in-line feedback, Michaela wrote a short memo to each student at the end of his or her paper highlighting strengths and weaknesses.

Encouraging students was a central principle evident in much of the reflections that Michaela shared about her feedback practices. Much like her approach to the course itself, she looked at feedback as an extension of her concern for encouraging her students. To maintain a nurturing environment, Michaela had specific places in her feedback where she made sure to include positive comments, one of which being in the short memo she wrote to each student at the end of their papers. Here she describes this memo:

> I try to leave with, okay I begin with something positive, then the middle, I then turn to the errors, things they need to fix, or things they were missing. And then I try to leave with something positive, by saying I'm confident that the next paper, the ideas will be just as enlightening as these and I won't see the writing errors that you committed here. So I try to leave on a positive note. And then, and I write it in letter format, as you've seen. (Interview 4)

For Michaela, it was also important that the final memo was written in "letter format," something she commented to be a way in which she maintained a personal connection to her students. Her concern for fostering a positive environment was further reflected in how she viewed feedback on grammar.

> Now I'll tell you, with 107, 108 students, I am a little lenient. By that I don't grade on grammar and mechanics. I point out the mistakes and errors and I tell them that for the next paper, I should see less of that error. But, like maybe perhaps this was a C paper and I awarded a C plus. I do see, how can I say this, the commitment of these students. I mean they're really working hard. And I'll tell them, you have worked hard this semester. And I give them a number of assignments to do. Homework, freewrites, and they really put an effort and so I try to encourage them, so I may give them a half grade more than one what the paper is. (Interview 4)

Similar to John, Michaela viewed an undue emphasis on grammar to be potentially discouraging to her students. Thus her feedback with regards to grammar was guided by a desire to mitigate its importance while also encouraging her students. Her feedback was also guided by a need to manage time constraints. Learning how to do this, however, took practice for Michaela. When asked to expand upon her approach to feedback on grammar and mechanics, she recalled a time earlier in her teaching career when she did not prioritize her feedback as appropriately as she would have hoped.

> Another time, I would grade and I would just, I mean, I was almost like their editor. And I found I was just really burning myself out. I mean, everything I would correct. And then I heard a student make the comment, boy she really tore

> up your paper, without him really seeing the paper. I was also pointing out good comments, but a student looking at it, you know, with all, 'cause I use the computer to do my comments. They would see all these marginal comments. And it's like, did I do all these things wrong. And they're not really seeing the good things they did. And I'm like, okay. That doesn't work. So, but I have found by writing a letter it's more personable, more personal. And I'm talking to them as a person, as a student. And I think that they appreciate that. (Interview 4)

By providing too much feedback on grammar and mechanics, she was poorly managing the practical constraints of giving feedback. Moreover, Michaela felt that her positive comments were being buried. Thus, moving toward more selective feedback was motivated by her desire to foster an encouraging environment and do so in a more practical manner.

In addition to providing more selective feedback, Michaela also managed the practical constraints of providing feedback through several other practical strategies. She mentioned using a rubric in the form of a grade sheet also helped save time in her feedback process.

For Michaela, as for the other participants, the feedback process served as an opportunity to address the individual needs of her students. Acknowledging that her students' needs were varied and that the classroom may not always be the best place to address these needs, Michaela paid extra attention to the personal feedback she gave for this opportunity. However, to effectively manage time constraints, Michaela also relied on external resources. Here, she describes her use of My Writing Lab, an accompanying software application to her textbook that Michaela uses to supplement grammar issues.

> If I had more one on one time, I can target right into their own personal problems, issues, uh, whereas I can't do that in the classroom, because everyone has a different issue. But I can only teach so many things. And this is where, my writing lab comes in. So they got a weakness. Okay for instance in sentence structure. And we're not supposed to be teaching grammar in the classroom. I know some instructors do. But when you do that, you're taking away from the focus of the writing assignment. But anyway. So that's why I use my writing lab because I can't teach them everything in the classroom. And this way they can do it on their own time. And uh, it, they can do it at their own pace.

Interestingly, Michaela mentions, "we're not supposed to be teaching grammar." While this may be influenced by her interpretations of programmatic policies, what is clear is that she feels that grammar instruction takes away the focus on the writing assignment.

**Sonce**

Sonce provided feedback through Microsoft track changes and comments. Her selective marking on grammar and mechanics was primarily indirect feedback in the form of questions and comments. Similarly, her feedback on content included marginal comments. She included no endnotes.

When asked to reflect upon her feedback practices, she emphasized that she mostly commented on content with less feedback on grammar. When asked to expand on how she addressed grammar, she discussed her selective feedback practices.

> All of it in the first paragraph. And then, whatever affects meaning, you know, throughout the paper. If it's a very bad sentence structure that takes away from the meaning and stuff like that, messes things up, then I would comment on that too.

> But no, I don't correct their grammar mistakes, just the first paragraph. And I would correct it and name it. (Interview 4)

By only providing grammar feedback on the first paragraph, Sonce sought to de-emphasize grammar by concentrating more of her feedback on the content. In examining her actual feedback, she did occasionally provide feedback to grammar after the first paragraph, but by and large, the majority of her feedback after the first paragraphs of her students' papers focused on content-based issues.

Similar to Michaela, Sonce wanted to create more personal connections with her students. While Michaela relied on memos or short letters at the end of her students' papers, Sonce incorporated this mentality in her feedback throughout the paper. These often encouraging remarks in the margins of her students' texts were also meant to model how a reader engages with the text.

> And I respond personally you know as a reader, not just as a teacher. I'm not grading, but I'm putting comments so if I like something, and that's comment seven. If I agree, so they can see that's what people do when they're reading their papers. It's not just an evaluation, but also you like something or you don't like something. (Interview 4)

Although her practices and her articulated goals of feedback reflected an emphasis content-based feedback over grammar-based feedback, Sonce did struggle with the challenge of meeting the individual language needs of the students. This struggle became apparent as she reflected upon the feedback she gave one of her students whom she described as having weaker language skills. Upon reflecting upon the feedback she provided on this specific student's paper, Sonce noticed that she provided more grammar-

based feedback than she usually does. In explaining this feedback, Sonce describes the student's individual needs:

> I think this student, the reason why she has a paper like this, because of her writing skills and language skills, I don't want to say poor. But she's still working, developing her skills. So she really needs help from the writing center. What we're doing in class is too, not advanced, but it is difficult. (Interview 4)

To address these additional language needs, Sonce has come to rely on the writing center as an external resource for her students.

**Brianna**

Brianna provided handwritten feedback to her students' papers with comprehensive feedback on both grammar and content on the first page of a student's draft, and selective content-based feedback on subsequent pages of the draft. Her feedback on grammar and mechanics on the first page included a mix of direct and indirect feedback. She provided feedback on content in the form of marginal comments. At the end of each paper, Brianna included a memo addressing areas for improvement.

Examination of Brianna's feedback practices revealed that the five principles were evident in her approaches. This was most reflected in her primary strategy of providing extensive grammar and content based feedback only on the first page of a student's essay. When asked to expand on why she provided such extensive feedback, but only on the first page, she articulated three reasons:

> The most practical reason is because I don't have time to edit everybody's paper. It would take me at least a half an hour for each student. So I have personal, practical reasons for not doing that. But I also think that it encourages students to

> become a little bit more aware. And I talk to them about this. Look for, what is the most common error you noticed on your first page, the most common error that I marked. And I want you to look for that same type of error later in your essay. Um, so I think it encourages, I mean, I don't know if it always works in practice, but I try to encourage them to become more aware of their common mistakes that way. Um, as I say, I'm not going to do all the work for you. You've got to do something. And the third reason is because it's not the most important thing. I try, a lot of students want some grammar feedback and want to improve sentence structure and things like that. but still, the most important concern for a paper are content and organization and expression. Those are the things that I value more as an instructor. (Interview 4)

For Brianna, addressing the grammar needs of her students was important. However, to emphasize that content was more important she only provided feedback on the first page. Limiting this kind of feedback to one section, the first page, became a strategy by which she prioritized her students' focus. To further emphasize the importance she placed on the content, Brianna further drew her students' attention to the "bigger concerns" by revisiting them in her memo at the end of the paper, which she describes here:

> I'm providing everybody at least one page of that intensive style of feedback. But um, then I don't usually focus on that in the end comments. The end comments are usually reserved for the big picture things. Like these are the, I usually do two to four, two to four things that you should start to focus on in your revision. And it's very rare that I say anything about sentence structure or grammar. Unless everything else is really, really strong. (Interview 4)

Brianna's actual feedback was also marked with attention to academic writing conventions drawing her students' attention to including sources when necessary and including proper citations. Such feedback aligns with her orientation towards the subject matter as a focus on academic writing.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the feedback practices of the four teachers and their reflections to their feedback practices. An analysis revealed five underlying principles across all their practices. These principles were interrelated and often affected each other. For example, by providing selective feedback instead of more comprehensive feedback on grammar and mechanics, teachers were prioritizing their students' focus on content level issues. This selective feedback also had a practical element allowing teachers to better manage the time commitment of responding to many students' papers over a short period of time.

These guiding principles aligned with each teachers' general orientation toward the subject matter. For example, in John's orientation toward ENG 108, he emphasized the central role of argument and rhetoric. As such, the main focus of his feedback looked to strengthen his students' arguments. One of Michaela's central concerns in her teaching was providing her students with a nurturing environment where they feel comfortable to express themselves. This was reflected in Michaela's understanding of her students' needs and how she assessed her students, as she described herself sometimes being more lenient with her students and acknowledging of their efforts. Sonce's feedback, while also focusing more heavily on content, also looked to ensure that her students were understanding the reading she was assigning. Finally, Brianna's focus on academic

writing conventions were evident in her feedback practices in her students, although such conventions could be grouped together as feedback on mechanics, because it was an important part of how she understood the course, she distinguished it as a different type of feedback.

While the stimulated recall here did not elicit the underlying influences behind these decisions, it is important to acknowledge institutional and disciplinary factors that may have contributed in shaping their principles. For example, the Writing Programs has specific guidelines on the assessment of grammar that stipulate that grades for papers or for the course cannot be based on grammatical issues (see Appendix C for Grammar Guidelines). Moreover, these guidelines emphasize process-based pedagogies that seek to foster positive learning environments.

# CHAPTER 6

## DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In this study, I explored the teacher knowledge of four composition instructors who were teaching multilingual students. I define teacher knowledge as a situated knowledge embodied in teachers' practices and their articulation of goals and reflections of these practices. The goal of this study was to investigate teachers within the specific context of multilingual composition courses to better understand how teachers' pedagogies are shaped by their knowledge of the subject, their students, and their practices. In doing so, this study contributes to a greater understanding of the unique characteristics of teacher knowledge within specific curricular contexts.

Findings from this study showed the importance of specific aspects of teacher knowledge. Although each teachers' objectives for the course echoed those set forth by the Writing Programs, individual orientations toward the subject matter emerged. These orientations were influenced and represented by their unique knowledge bases, a knowledge base comprising of the interrelated aspects of their knowledge about the subject matter and their knowledge of the students. Findings also revealed a more complex understanding of their knowledge of students. Specifically, student motivation was a factor that influenced how teachers oriented toward the subject matter as well as what kinds of tasks and activities teachers selected. In addition, as teachers of international students, some teachers relied on an understanding of their students' cultural backgrounds when determining appropriate classroom activities.

Analysis of teachers' written feedback practices revealed five underlying principles that were evident across all participants: 1) prioritizing feedback on content; 2)

de-emphasizing feedback on grammar; 3) managing practical constraints; 4) addressing students' individual needs; 5) encouraging/not overwhelming students. These common principles, however, were represented by individual practices, practices that were influenced by their prevailing orientations toward the subject matter. For example, while each teacher performed selective feedback, how and where they prioritized this feedback was different. An important aspect of these principals was that were not discrete principles and that rather they were often overlapping and influencing each other. For example, Brianna's decision to only provide feedback on a specific section was both a way for her to manage the practical constraints of providing feedback while also prioritizing feedback on content.

## Reconsidering Teacher Knowledge

This study highlights the importance of teachers' orientation towards the subject matter in shaping their pedagogies. Prevailing research on teacher knowledge, however, has tended to maintain an implicit understanding of the subject matter. For many studies in language teaching, the subject matter has been understood to be "language" or "grammar" without further delineating the values that teachers place on this implicit subject matter. As Gudmundsdottir (1990) points out in her earlier study, these values influence how teachers organize and prioritize the subject matter for their students, subsequently influencing choices in the classroom. One of the few studies to address this issue is Worden's (2015) investigation of student teachers' developing knowledge of specific concepts in the writing curriculum.

This study also highlights the need for a more complex understanding of teachers' knowledge of students within the research on teacher knowledge. While much research

exists explore the varying learning needs of students, research in teacher knowledge has primarily understood teachers' knowledge of students to comprise of the conceptual problems students face when learning the subject matter at hand. However, as this study highlights, there are additional characteristics of students that teachers consider when making pedagogical decisions. Issues such as student motivation and cultural and learning backgrounds have been widely discussed with regards to student learning, but it remains far less explored how teachers understand these various issues. As this study shows, not only were teachers' choice of tasks and activities influenced by their knowledge of students, but it also influenced how they oriented toward the subject matter itself.

**Teaching composition to multilingual students**

Findings from this study have several implications for composition instruction in the multilingual classroom. Firstly, a central aspect of teachers' knowledge was their knowledge of their students. With regard to multilingual students specifically, this most often manifested in teachers' understanding of how to scaffold in-class tasks to support the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students. It was also represented in the individual attention that teachers paid to students in their feedback to their students. Given the general belief across the teachers that language was addressed on an individual level and not in class, a superficial observation of these teachers' classes would find few differences between it and its mainstream equivalent. Assuming as such, however, would belie the underlying knowledge that teachers rely on of their students to shape in-class activities or choose certain writing tasks. Thus what marked these classes as multilingual sections was not the curriculum or the objectives, but rather the individual choices that

each teacher made in an awareness of their students' needs as multilingual students.

The language needs of multilingual students are worth further consideration. The teachers in the study generally believed that grammar or language instruction was not appropriate for the classroom. Both John and Michaela, for example, both shared the opinion that this would take away from focusing on the content of the course. As a result, addressing such language needs was largely left to individual conferences and meetings. This also left some teachers to rely on external resources, such as Sonce referring her students to the writing center to address their language needs, or Michaela relying on textbook related online applications to give students self-guided practice with language issues. This is by no means an argument for more form-focused instruction in the composition classroom. Rather, it highlights the issue of teachers' possible struggle to address the language needs their multilingual students. An area of further research could examine the effectiveness of these external resources in meeting these needs and whether additional support, and in what form, would be necessary to support both the teachers and their students.

Findings from this study also have implications for our current understanding of rhetoric and argument as a common theme in curriculum for multilingual students in First-Year Composition. Although each teacher had varying orientations toward argument and rhetoric, they all shared the belief that learning such rhetorical strategies would benefit their students' future academic and professional careers. Several of the teachers connected an understanding of rhetorical strategies as a means of improving the critical thinking skills necessary in future coursework. However, it has been debated whether such critical thinking skills are indeed transferrable. Atkinson (1997) argues that

such critical thinking skills may represent Western cultural values and that such curricula may not take into consideration alternative ways of thinking among multilingual and international students. While such views have since been further debated (e.g. Davidson, 1998; Gieve, 1998), it remains important that teachers' orientation toward the subject matter was influenced by a perceived conceptual transferability of these skills in rhetorical argument.

With regard to teacher feedback specifically, the findings from this study showed that teachers valued content above the feedback they gave on grammar or mechanics. Previous research has generally found the opposite to be true, with teachers providing more extensive feedback on grammar and mechanics, despite generally held beliefs that content was more important. While the context of these previous studies varied considerably, the findings from this study showed that in order to maintain a heavier emphasis on content, teachers employed different ways to mitigate their grammar feedback. This was done in various ways of selective feedback, such as Sonce's and Brianna's marking of grammar feedback only on a short section of the paper. This raises the question as to whether students oriented toward the feedback in the same way as the teachers did.

## Further Implications

Findings from this study have further implications on teacher professional development and teacher training. Firstly, many of the orientations that teachers held in this study with regard to the subject matter were often tacitly held values embedded in their practices and the understanding of the students. Given the influential nature that these orientations have in shaping the curricular decisions teachers make, it is important

that teachers become aware of the orientations that these teachers may hold toward the subject matter. Doing so would allow teachers to make more informed and purposeful decisions with regard to their practices.

Findings from this study also strengthen the conceptualization of teacher knowledge as a construct comprised of highly interdependent aspects of teachers' knowledge base. For the teachers in this study, teaching rhetorical argument was not a static task; rather what they emphasized and valued within the curriculum shaped and was shaped by their students and the practical constraints of the classroom. With this in mind, teacher training in language teaching and composition instruction must be anchored in real contexts that acknowledge the practical constraints teachers face. Ideal situations are rare and instead teachers are more often forced to manage addressing the individual needs of their students as well as the practical constraints that doing so entails.

With regard to curriculum development on programmatic level, this study highlights the role that teachers' orientations played in shaping how they constructed their classroom. As such, program administrators seeking to implement changes to curriculum must consider these orientations. Shi and Cumming (1995) remains one of the few studies to have investigated innovation in relation to teachers' subject matter orientations. This current study adds to this understanding by looking at how teachers' knowledge of students shapes these orientations and how it subsequently shapes the classroom.

## Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, one area of research in teacher knowledge that can further be pursued is the area of student motivation and how teachers understand

student motivation as factor that influences their practices. This inquiry would be coupled with investigations of students' perceptions of the course and motivation in the course. Such a study would help shed light on how teachers orient toward the practical needs of their students and how their choices are shaped by these practicalities. This line of possible research also addresses more recent concerns raised by such scholars as Kubanyiova and Feryok (2015) highlighting the lack of connection that research in teacher cognition with understanding student outcomes.

REFERENCES


Abell, S. K. (2008). Twenty years later: Does pedagogical content knowledge remain a useful idea? *International Journal of Science Education, 30*(10), 1405-1416, DOI: 10.1080/09500690802187041

Abelson, R. P. (1979). Differences between beliefs and knowledge systems. *Cognitive Science, 3,* 355-366.

Adoniou, M. (2015). Teacher knowledge: a complex tapestry. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 43*(2), 99-116, DOI: 10.1080/1359866X.2014.932330

Akbari, R. & Dadvand, B. (2014). Pedagogical knowledge base: A conceptual framework for teacher admission. *System, 42*, 12-22.

Anderson, C., & Hounsell, D. (2007). Knowledge practices: 'doing the subject' in undergraduate courses. *The Curriculum Journal, 18* (4), 463 – 478.

Atkinson, D. (1997). A critical approach to critical thinking in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly, 31*, 71-94.

Auerbach, C. F. & Silverstein, L.B. (2003). *Qualitative data: An introduction to coding and analysis*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Ball, D. L., Thames, M. H., & Phelps, G. (2008). *Content Knowledge for Teaching: What Makes It Special? Journal of Teacher Education, 59*(5), 389- 407, DOI: 10.1177/0022487108324554

Bartels, N. (2005). Applied linguistics and language teacher education: What we know. In N. Bartels (Ed.), *Applied linguistics and language teacher education* (pp. 405-424). New York, NY: Springer.

Basturkmen, H. (2012). Review of research into the correspondence between language teachers' stated beliefs and practices. *System, 40*, 282-295.

Baumert, J., Kunter, M., Blum, W., Brunner, M., Voss, T., Jordan, A., Klusmann, U., Krauss, S., Neubrand, M., & Tsai, Y-M. (2010). Teachers' Mathematical Knowledge, Cognitive Activation in the Classroom, and Student Progress. *American Educational Research Journal, 47*(1), 133-180.

Bell, H. (2016). Teacher knowledge and beliefs about grammar: a case study of an English primary school. *English in Education, 0*(0), 1-16.

Ben-Peretz, M. (2011) Teacher knowledge: What is it? How do we uncover it? What are its implications for schooling? *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*, 3-9.

Berry, A., Loughran, J., & van Driel, J. H. (2008). Revisiting the Roots of Pedagogical Content Knowledge. *International Journal of Science Education, 30*(10), 1271–1279.

Biza, I., Nardi, E., & Zachariades, T. (2007). Using Tasks to Explore Teacher Knowledge in Situation-Specific Contexts. *Journal of Math Teacher Education, 10*, 301–309. DOI: 10.1007/s10857-007-9043-y

Blömeke, S. Busse, A., Kaiser, G., König, J., & Suhl, U. (2016). The relation between content-specific and general teacher knowledge and skills. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 56*, 35-46.

Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in grammar teaching: A literature review. *Language Awareness, 12*(2), 96-108.

Borg, S. (2005). Experience, knowledge about language, and classroom experience in teaching grammar. In N. Bartels (Ed.), *Applied linguistics and language teacher education* (pp. 325-340). New York, NY: Springer.

Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language teaching*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Borg, S. (2011). The impact of in-service teacher education on language teachers' beliefs. *System, 39,* 370-380.

Breen, M.P., Hird, B., Milton, M., Oliver, R., & Thwaite, A. (2001). Making sense of language teaching: Teachers' principles and classroom practices. *Applied Linguistics, 22,* 470-501.

Burns, A. (1996). Starting all over again: From teaching adults to teaching beginners. In D. Freeman & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *Teacher learning in language teaching* (pp. 154-177). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Burns, A., Freeman, D., & Edwards, E. (2015). Theorizing and studying the language-teaching mind: Mapping research on language teacher cognition. *Modern Language Journal, 99*(3), 585-601.

Busch, D. (2010). Pre-service teacher beliefs about language learning: The second language acquisition course as an agent for change. *Language Teaching Research, 14*, 318-337.

Calderhead, J. (1996). Teachers: Beliefs and knowledge. In D. C. Berliner & R. C. Calfee (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology* (pp. 709-725). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Macmillan.

Calderhead, J., & Robson, M. (1991). Images of teaching: Student teachers' early conceptions of classroom practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *7*, 1-8.

Clandinin, D. J. (1986). *Classroom practice: Teacher images in action.* Philadelphia, PA: The Falmer Press.

Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (1995). *Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes* (pp. 3-15). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Clandinin, J. D. & Connelly, F. M. (1987). Teachers' personal knowledge: What counts as personal in studies of the personal. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 19*(6), 487−500.

Clarke, M. (2008). *Language teacher identities: Co-constructing discourse and community.* Multilingual Matters, Clevdon.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1995). Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes: Secret, sacred, and cover stories. In D. J. Clandinin & F. M. Connelly (Eds.), *Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes* (pp. 3–15). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Cumming, A. (2003). Experienced ESL/EFL writing instructors' conceptualizations of their teaching: Curriculum options and implications. In B. Kroll (Ed.), *Exploring the dynamics of second language writing* (pp. 71-92). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Cumming, A. (1990). Expertise in evaluating second language compositions. *Language Testing, (7)*1, 31-51.

Cumming, A., Kantor, R., & Powers, D. (2002). Decision making while rating ESL/EFL writing tasks: A descriptive framework. *The Modern Language Journal, 86*(1), 67-96

Davidson, B. W. (1998). Comments on Dwight Atkinson's "A critical approach to thinking in TESOL": A case for critical thinking in the English language classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 32*, 119-123.

Diab, R. L. (2005). Teachers' and students' beliefs about responding to ESL writing: A case study. *TESL Canada Journal, 23*, 28-43.

Elbaz, F. (1983). *Teacher thinking: A study of practical knowledge*. New York, NY: Nichols Publishing.

Ellis, V. (2007). Taking subject knowledge seriously: from professional knowledge recipes to complex conceptualizations of teacher development. *The Curriculum Journal, 18*(4), 447-462.

Ertaut, M. (1985). Knowledge creation and knowledge use in professional contexts. *Studies in Higher Education, 10,* 117-133.

Evertson, CM., & Green, J. L. (1986). Observation as inquiry and method. In M.C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching, 3rd. ed*. (pp. 162-213). New York, NY: Macmillan.

Feiman-Nemser, S. & Parker, M. B. (1990). Making subject matter part of the conversation in learning to teach. *Journal of Teacher Education, 41*(3), 32-43.

Fenstermacher , G. D. (1994). The Knower and the Known: The Nature of Knowledge in Research on Teaching. *Review of Research in Education, 20*, 3-56.

Ferris, D. R. (1999). The case for grammar correction in L2 writing classes: A response to Truscott (1996). *Journal of Second Language Writing, 8*, 1-10.

Ferris, D. R. (2003). *Response to student writing: Implications for second language students*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Ferris, D. R. (2014). Responding to student writing: Teachers' philosophies and practices. *Assessing Writing, 19,* 6-23.

Ferris, D. R., Brown, J., Liu, H., & Stine, M. E. A. (2011). Responding to L2 students in college writing classes: Teacher perspectives. *TESOL Quarterly, (45)*2, 207-234.

Ferris, D.R., Liu, H., & Rabie, B. (2011). "The job of teaching writing": Teacher views of responding to student writing. *Writing & Pedagogy, 3*(1), 39-77. doi: 10.1558/wap.v3i1.39

Ferris, D. R., Pezone, S., Tade, C., & Tinti, S. (1997). Teacher commentary on student writing: Descriptions and implications. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 6*, 155–182.

Freeman, D. (2002). The hidden side of the work: Teacher knowledge and learning to teach. A perspective from North American educational research on teacher education in English language teaching. *Language Teaching, 35*(1), 1-13.

Freeman, D. (2012). Commentary on focus on groups. In R. Barnard & A. Burns (Eds.) *Researching language teacher cognitions and practice: International case studies* (pp. 80-86). Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters.

Freeman, D. & K. E. Johnson (1998). Reconceptualizing the knowledge-base of language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly 32*(3), 397-417.

Gatbonton, E. (1999). Investigating experienced ESL teachers' pedagogical knowledge. *The Modern Language Journal, 83*(1), 35-50.

Gieve, S. (1998). Comments on Dwight Atkinson's "A critical approach to thinking in TESOL": A reader reacts. *TESOL Quarterly, 32*, 123-129.

Gitomer, D. H. & Zisk, R. C. (2015) Knowing what teachers know. *Review of Research in Education, 39*, 1-53, DOI: 10.3102/0091732X14557001

Golombek, P. (1998). A study of language teachers' personal practical knowledge. *TESOL Quarterly, 32,* 447-464.

Golombek, P. & Johnson, K. E. (2004). Narrative inquiry as a meditational space: Examining emotional and cognitive dissonance in second-language teachers' development. *Teachers and Teaching, 10,* 307-328.

Goodman, J. (1988). Constructing a practical philosophy of teaching: A study of preservice teachers' professional perspectives. *Teacher & Teacher Education, 36*(2), 49-54.

Grossman, P. L. (1989). A study in contrast: Sources of pedagogical content knowledge for secondary English. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *40*(5), 24-32.

Grossman, P. L. & Stodolsky , S. S. (1994). Considerations of Content and the Circumstances of Secondary School Teaching. *Review of Research in Education, 20,* 179-221.

Grossman, P.L., Wilson, S. M., & Shulman, L. S. (1989). "Teachers of substance: Subject matter knowledge for teaching." In M.C. Reynolds (Ed.), *Knowledge base for the beginning teacher* (pp. 23-36). New York, NY: Pergamon Press.

Gudmundsdottir, S. (1990). Values in pedagogical content knowledge. *Journal of Teacher Education, 41*(3),44-52.

Guénette, D. & Lyster, R. (2013). Written corrective feedback and its challenges for pre-service ESL teachers. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 69*(2), 129-153.

Guskey, T. R. (1986). Staff Development and the Process of Teacher Change. *Educational Research, 15*, 5-12. DOI: 10.3102/0013189X015005005

Hameyer, U. (2006). Transforming domain knowledge: a systemic view at the school curriculum. *The Curriculum Journal, (18)*4, 411-427.

Harkin, P. (1991). The Postdisciplinary politics of lore. In P. Harkin & J. Schilb (Eds.), *Contending with words* (pp. 124-138). New York, NY: Modern Language Association of America.

Hashweh, M. Z. (2005). Teacher pedagogical constructions: a reconfiguration of pedagogical content knowledge. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice, (11)*3, 273–292

Hill, H. C., Rowan, B., & Ball, D. L. (2005). Effects of Teachers' Mathematical Knowledge for Teaching on Student Achievement. *American Educational Research Journal, 42*(2), 371-406.

Johnson, K. E. (1994). The emerging beliefs and instructional practices of preservice English as a second language teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 10,* 439-452.

Johnson, K. E. (2006). The sociocultural turn and its challenges for second language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly, 40*(1), 235-257.

Junqueira, L. & Payant, C. (2015). "I just want to do it right, but it's so hard": A novice teacher's written feedback beliefs and practices. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 27*, 19-36.

Kagan, D. (1990). Ways of evaluating teacher cognition: Inferences concerning the Goldilocks principle. *Review of Educational Research, 60*(3), 419-469.

Kanno, Y., & Stuart, C. (2011). Learning to become a Second Language Teacher: Identities-in-Practice. *Modern Language Journal, 95*(2), 236-252.

Kubanyiova, M. & Feryok, A. (2015). Language teacher cognition in applied linguistics research: Revisiting the territory, redrawing the boundaries, reclaiming relevance. *Modern Language Journal, 99*(3), 435-449.

Lave, J. (1988). *Cognition in practice*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Lee, I. (2008). Understanding teachers' written feedback practices in Hong Kong secondary classrooms. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 17*, 69-85.

Lee, I. (2009). Ten mismatches between teachers' beliefs and written feedback practice. *ELT Journal, 63*(1), 13-22.

Lee, I. (2010). Writing teacher education and teacher learning: Testimonies of four EFL teachers. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 19*, 143-157.

Lee, I. (2011). Feedback revolution: What gets in the way? *ELT Journal, 65*(1), 1-12.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A Sociological study.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Manchón , R. M. (Ed.) ( 2011 ). *Learning-to-Write and Writing-to-Learn in an Additional Language*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

Matsuda, P. K. (2013). What *is* second language writing—and why does it matter? *Journal of Second Language Writing, 22,* 448-450.

Mishler, E. (1986). *Research interviewing: Context and narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Montgomery, J. L., & Baker, W. (2007). Teacher-written feedback: Student perceptions, teacher self-assessment, and actual teacher performance. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 16,* 82-99.

Mullock, B. (2006). The Pedagogical knowledge base of four TESOL teachers. *The Modern Language Journal, 90*(1), 48-66.

Nespor, J. (1987). The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 19*, 317-328.

North, S. M. (1987). *The Making of knowledge in composition: Portrait of an emerging field*. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook.

Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research, 62,* 307-332.

Park, S., & Oliver, J. S. (2008). Revisiting the conceptualisation of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK): PCK as a conceptual tool to understand teachers as professionals. *Research in Science Education, 38*, 261-284.

Peacock, M. (2001). Pre-service ESL teachers' beliefs about second language learning: A longitudinal study. *System, 29,* 177-195.

Phipps, S., & Borg, S. (2009). Exploring tensions between teachers' grammar teaching beliefs and practices. *System, 37*(3), 380-390.

Popko, J. (2005). How MA TESOL students use knowledge about language in teaching ESL classes. In N. Bartels (Ed.), *Applied linguistics and language teacher education* (pp. 387-403). New York, NY: Springer.

Razfar, A. (2012). Narrating beliefs: A language ideologies approach to teacher beliefs. *Anthropology & Educational Quarterly, 43*(1), 61-81.

Richards, J. C. & Pennington, M. (1998). The first year of teaching. In J. C. Richards (Ed.), *Beyond training* (pp. 173-190). Cambridge: CUP.

Roberts, J. (1998). *Language teacher education*. New York, NY: Arnold.

Sato, K. & Kleinsasser, R. C. (1999). Communicative language teaching (CLT): Practical understandings. *Modern Language Journal, 83*, 494-517.

Scott, R., & Rodgers, B. (1995). Changing teachers conceptions of teaching writing: A collaborative study. *Foreign Language Annals, 28*(2), 234-246.

Shavelson, R. J. & Paula Stern, P. (1981). Research on teachers' pedagogical thoughts, judgments, decisions, and behavior. *Review of Educational Research, 51*(4), 455-498.

Shi, L., & Cumming, A. (1995). Teachers' conceptions of second language writing instruction: Five case studies. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *4*(2), 87-111.

Shin, S. J. (2006). Learning to teach writing through tutoring and journal writing. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 12*(3), 325-345.

Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher, 15*(2), 4-14.

Shulman, L. S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review, 57*(1)*,* 1-22.

Silva, T. (1990). Second language composition instruction: Developments, issues and directions in ESL. In B. Kroll (ed.), *Second language writing: Research insights for the classroom* (pp. 11-23). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, D. B. (1996). Teacher decision making in the adult ESL classroom. In D. Freeman & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *Teaching learning in language teaching* (pp. 197–216). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Tsui, A. B. M. (1996). Learning how to teach ESL writing. In D. Freeman & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *Teaching learning in language teaching* (pp. 97–119). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Tsui, A. B. M. & Ng., M. Y. (2010). Cultural contexts and situated possibilities in the teaching of second language writing. *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*(4), 364-375.

Urmston, A. (2003). Learning to teach English in Hong Kong: The opinions of teachers in training. *Language and Education, 17,* 112-137.

Vaughan, C. (1991). Holistic assessment: What goes on in the raters' minds? In L. Hamp-Lyons (Ed.), *Assessing second language writing in academic contexts* (pp. 111–126). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Villamil, O. S. & de Guerrero, M. C. M. (2005). Constructing theoretical notions of L2 writing through metaphor conceptualization. In N. Bartels (Ed.), *Applied linguistics and language teacher education* (pp. 79-90). New York, NY: Springer.

Voet, M. & DeWever, B. (2016) History teachers' conceptions of inquiry-based learning, beliefs about the nature of history, and their relation to the classroom context. *Teacher and Teacher Education, 55,* 57-67.

Woods, D. (1996). *Teacher cognition in language teaching.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Woods, D., & Çakir, H. (2011). Two dimensions of teacher knowledge: The case of communicative language teaching. *System, 39*, 381-390.

Worden, D. (2015). Developing writing concepts for teaching purposes: Preservice L2 writing teachers' developing conceptual understanding of parallelism. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 30*, 19-30.

Wright, T. (2010). Second language teacher education: Review of recent research on practice. *Language Teaching, 43*(3), 259-296.

Zhou, A. A., Busch, M., & Cumming, A. (2013). Do adult ESL learners' and their teachers' goals for improving grammar in writing correspond? *Language Awareness,* DOI: 10.1080/09658416.2012.758127

# APPENDIX A

## ENG 102: FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION DESCRIPTION

## ENG 102: First-Year Composition Description

English 102 is designed to help students develop sophisticated, situation-sensitive reading and writing strategies. Students make arguments in formal and informal settings. Special attention is given to evidence discovery, claim support, argument response, and their applications to academic debate, public decision making, and written argument. During the 15-week semester students will complete three formal written projects. Combined, the final drafts of these three projects should result in approximately 5,000 words (this is equivalent to about 20 pages using standard academic format). Additionally, a final reflection is required.

# APPENDIX B

## ENG 108: FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION DESCRIPTION

## ENG 108: First-Year Composition (For Multilingual Writers) Description

English 108 is second-semester composition course for students for whom English is a second language. It is designed to help students develop sophisticated, situation-sensitive reading and writing strategies. Students make arguments in formal and informal settings. Special attention is given to evidence discovery, claim support, argument response, and their applications to academic debate, public decision making, and written argument. During the 16-week semester students will complete three formal written projects. Combined the final drafts of these three projects should result in approximately 5,000 words (this is equivalent to about 20 pages using standard academic format). Additionally, a final reflection is required.

# APPENDIX C

## REVISED GRAMMAR GUIDELINES FOR THE ASU WRITING PROGRAMS

**Revised Grammar Guidelines for the ASU Writing Programs**

Here is the specific language for the revised guidelines (changes indicated in blue):

**Grading**

You should keep a clear record of all of the grades assigned in your classes. It will be your responsibility to show these records in the case of a grade dispute or any other problem. Many teachers keep their grades electronically in the Grade Center portion of Blackboard or in Microsoft Excel.

All major paper assignments must be graded. Please try to return graded papers in under two weeks' time. Be sure to return a graded major writing assignment back to the student by no later than the fifth week, so you'll have some sense of how your students are doing – and so you can complete the first Academic Status Report.

It is a good idea to discuss A-E grades before each assignment is completed so that students understand how their work will be evaluated. Evaluative grading criteria should also be listed as part of the assignment sheet.

The Writing Programs Mission supports grading that is process-centered rather than product-centered. Neither individual paper grades nor final course grades should be based on grammatical issues. Under no circumstances should students fail Writing Programs courses solely on the basis of grammatical issues. (Grammatical issues do not include genre-specific conventions, such as formatting, headings, capitalization, punctuation marks or documentation of sources.)

**Rationale**

The current "Writing Programs Teachers' Guide" (updated Spring 2012) stipulates that "individual paper grades must not be based strictly on grammatical issues," but does not specify to what extent grammar can be considered in grading student papers or in assigning course grades. The new wording clarifies that grammar should not be part of individual paper grades or course grades, nor should it be used to fail students.

This change to the Guidelines does not prevent teachers from providing formative feedback on grammar issues. Feedback helps students improve; grading does not. It must be noted, however, that formative feedback—even those given by trained second language writing specialists—does not reliably lead to immediate improvements. Grammar development is a long-term process, and its outcomes cannot be expected after a semester or two of instruction. If no grammar instruction (other than pointing out errors) is provided, it goes without saying.

This proposed change to the Guidelines applies to all writing programs students—not just second language writers. Attempts to draw a line between different populations of students is not practical because writing teachers without specialized training (i.e., the vast majority of writing programs teachers) cannot reliably distinguish between native users of privileged varieties of English (those who already have the target grammar in

their heads) and native users of other languages or of underprivileged varieties of English that are often linked with certain regions, socioeconomic classes or ethnic groups.

Native users of dominant varieties of English would not be affected by this proposed change because they already have privileged grammar in their heads; any errors they make are performance errors that have no long-term consequences for the writer's development or performance. Instruction that provides and reinforces good editing practice is the best way to address their issues, and it can be done through modeling and encouragement rather than by using grades as a form of punishment.

Some writing teachers may feel obligated to ensure that students have proper grammar knowledge before passing the course. While this sentiment is usually well intentioned, assigning lower grades or failing students for grammar errors does not help students improve their grammar knowledge. Furthermore, holding students back for grammar errors can be unethical because research on both first and second language writers has consistently shown that grammar feedback, though helpful in some cases, cannot guarantee grammar learning.

The best that can be hoped for, then, is to facilitate grammar development by providing effective feedback. Providing effective feedback requires some training in pedagogical grammar—a set of teachable and learnable rules of the English language—and in second language writing instruction. (Having a degree in linguistics or being a native/nonnative English user is neither necessary nor sufficient.) For this reason, writing teachers who are concerned about students' grammar are encouraged to engage in professional development activities, such as taking LIN 502, Grammar for TESOL, and ENG/LIN 525, Teaching Second Language Writing. Additional professional development opportunities will be provided in the forms of occasional workshops by the Director of Second Language Writing.

# APPENDIX D

## INTERVIEW GUIDES WITH FYC TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

**Interview Guides with FYC Teacher Participants**

Initial Interview (Interview 1)

1. Please tell me about your educational background.
2. Can you tell me about previous experiences you have had with writing in academic settings? (not only university contexts)
3. What do you recall about how this writing was taught to you (approaches to teaching writing)?
4. Can you tell me about previous experiences you have had with writing in non-academic settings?
5. Have you had previous experiences learning other languages? If so, could you tell me about those experiences?
6. Have you had previous experiences writing in other languages? If so, could you tell me about those experiences?
7. How long have you been teaching (in general)?
8. What subjects, courses, or classes have you had experience teaching?
9. How long have you been teaching writing?
10. Can you tell me more about your experiences teaching these writing courses?
11. How long have you been teaching multilingual writers?
12. What have your experiences been teaching multilingual writers?
13. What are the current goals of your class?
14. What kind of tasks do you do in your class to achieve these goals?
15. What are your overall experiences with this writing class so far this semester?
16. Now that you have had several weeks, with these students, how would you define their needs?
17. How well do you feel your goals and tasks have addressed or will address these needs?
18. Have you had to make any changes or adjustments to your teaching to address these needs?

Post-Observation Interviews (Interviews 2-4)

*Note: Additional questions for post-observation interviews were formulated in response to the observed class.*

1. What were your overall goals for this class's tasks and activities?
2. What were your overall impressions of how the class went?

Interview about Written Feedback (Interviews 5)

*Note: Additional questions for these interviews were formulated in response to the actual written feedback given on the assignments. In addition, samples of their written feedback served as stimulated recall for further comment.*

1. Please describe your general approach to providing feedback to writing tasks.
2. What were your overall impressions of this student's writing?

End-of-semester Interview (Interview 6)

*Note: Additional questions for these interviews were formulated in response to the previous interviews and observations.*

1. What were your overall impressions of this class?
2. At the beginning of the semester, you mentioned several goals for this course. Can you reflect upon these goals again now that the semester has come to an end?