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Changing currents in second language writing research: A colloquium

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Abstract

This article is based on an invited colloquium on second language (L2) writing presented at the 2002 meeting of the American Association for Applied Linguistics. The colloquium featured five L2 writing researchers who discussed some of the important currents that have, over the last decade, shaped the field of second language writing.

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Introduction

Paul Kei Matsuda

The field of second language (L2) writing has come of age. The formal study of L2 writers, writing, and writing instruction has a relatively short but fruitful history going at least as far back as the 1960s. Research on L2 writing has grown exponentially over the last 40 years and, during the late 1980s and the early 1990s, second language writing began to evolve into an interdisciplinary field of inquiry with its own disciplinary infrastructure — replete with a journal, monographs,

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edited collections, a book series, annotated bibliographies, graduate courses, and conferences as well as symposia.

Yet, even as the field matures, its dynamics do not seem to be stabilizing; the intellectual currents seem to be fluctuating more than ever before, and disagreements abound on some of the most fundamental issues. The changing currents do not necessarily indicate that the field is underdeveloped or unstable. In an issue-driven field whose research practices are inextricably situated in complex socio-cultural, institutional, and disciplinary contexts, change is not only inevitable but also desirable. In fact, the changing currents in the field of L2 writing are driven by various extemporaneous changes — demographic, technological, and disciplinary — and L2 writing researchers' effort to respond to those changes.

Given the dynamic nature of the field, it seems fitting to use the metaphor of changing currents to characterize various traditions of research — each current joins other currents, influencing the direction of the field while being transformed by coming in contact with other currents. In order to explore the changing currents in second language writing research and to provide an understanding of the dynamics of the field, five L2 writing scholars gathered as part of the invited colloquium on L2 writing research at the 2002 meeting of the American Association for Applied Linguistics in Salt Lake City, Utah. Each of them represented an important intellectual current in the field, focusing on the context of its emergence, the existing research, and directions for further research. The goal of this *JSLW* colloquium article is to make the conversation available to a wider audience of L2 writing specialists.

Linda Harklau examines the changes that have been taking place in response to the presence of an increasing number of resident L2 writers, primarily in North America. She calls for more attention to ethnolinguistic minority students in other countries and to the issue of identity; at the same time, she cautions against the tendency to reify the term “Generation 1.5.” A. Suresh Canagarajah explores the implications of the notion of multiliteracies in the context of second language education — the negotiation of discourses and identities that have been prompted partly by the diversity of English-language users (Matsuda, 2002) as well as the development of technologies for written communication. The issue of technology and its relationship to L2 writing is discussed further by Mark Warschauer. He begins by exploring growing areas of research, including computer-assisted classroom discussion (CACD), e-mail exchanges, and Web-based writing, and then points to the need for longitudinal, ethnographic studies as well as corpus-based discourse analytic studies. Ken Hyland then considers the growing interest in discourse analysis in the context of what some researchers have called the “post-process era” in L2 writing research (Atkinson, 2003a). Finally, in “Metadisciplinary Inquiry in Second Language Writing Research,” I discuss the importance of metadisciplinary inquiry — self-conscious, reflective inquiry into the nature and status of a field — in the context of L2 writing research.

We hope this colloquium provides an understanding of some of the traditions of research and possible future directions. Needless to say, the currents being

represented in this colloquium are by no means the only ones — or the only important ones for that matter. We hope this colloquium will stimulate further discussion of many other currents that continue to shape and reshape the field of L2 writing.

L2 writing by “Generation 1.5 students”: Recent research and pedagogical trends

Linda Harklau

The United States currently has one of the highest proportions of adolescent and young adult immigrants in its history. These immigrants join a post-industrial economy where an increasing number of occupations demand post-secondary training and credentials. As a result, more and more U.S. resident English-language learners are coming to college. In fact, at some colleges these “1.5 generation” students now form the majority (Lay, Carro, Tien, Niemann, & Leong, 1999).

Yet until recently a traditional bipartite division of labor between ESL and mainstream composition resulted in these students’ institutional invisibility, often confounding them with international students. It is only in the past 5 years that explicit research and pedagogical attention has focused on Generation 1.5 students. In the following, I identify crucial areas for future scholarship in this area and suggest the broader implications of this work for second language writing and applied linguistics research.

Emerging and future scholarship

If the defining feature of Generation 1.5 students is that they are products of our own secondary education system, then we need a better understanding of how that system prepares — or does not prepare — students for what we expect them to do in college. From the limited amount of research now available (e.g., Faltis & Wolfe, 1999), we can say that most Generation 1.5 students in U.S. schools are educated exclusively in English. As a result, their literacy abilities are often more developed in English than in their native language. This profile tends to set them apart from international students. We can also say that the quality of their high school writing experiences is highly variable and depends on a host of factors including the socioeconomic standing of their communities and schools, levels of school and state support for bilingual students, teacher training and expectations for L2 learners, and ability to track placement for English classes. While some receive remedialized and simplistic instruction (Olson, 1997; Valdés, 2001; Vollmer, 2000), others receive a high caliber, demanding curriculum (e.g., Mehan, Hubbard, & Villanueva, 1994).

The need for more communication and research crossing the boundaries of secondary and tertiary education is well recognized. Yet research that documents

students' actual transition from high school to college or that compares differing institutional literacy norms and practices is limited. In its absence, researchers tend to rely on retrospective reflections or simply declare high schools to be lacking in how they prepare students for college. I would argue that we need more comparative research on the differing institutional "ecologies" of high school and college literacy (see [Harklau, 2001](#)). Contextualized longitudinal portraits of student experiences undergoing this transition would complement existing college-level longitudinal case studies ([Leki, 1999](#); [Spack, 1997](#)) and provide us with first-hand evidence of what Generation 1.5 students find new and challenging.

Research on Generation 1.5 writers at the college level is most plentiful, although still in early stages of development. A major focus has been the thorny and contentious issues of writing program configuration and placement practices. L2 writing researchers report that these vary widely across institutions ([Harklau, 2000](#); [Roberge, 2001](#); [Smoke, 2001](#)) and may be motivated as much by political and economic exigencies or disciplinary divides as by sound instructional principles ([Benesch, in press](#)). Scholars also disagree significantly regarding the equity of mandatory composition coursework and its utility in preparing Generation 1.5 writers for writing demands in other parts of the college curriculum.

Work on pedagogical strategies and curriculum for Generation 1.5 students in college composition continues to grow (see, e.g., [Caldwell, Marshall, Noji, & Wald, 2001](#)). [Ferris \(1999\)](#), [Reid \(1997\)](#), and others have shown that these "ear learners" (Reid, 1997) patterns of deviation from the standard differ from those of international students. Because of these differences, scholars suggest that grammar placement testing and instruction must take different forms in order to be effective. Another growing area of work takes advantage of the ambiguous position of Generation 1.5 students within traditional divisions such as mainstream composition, basic writing, developmental studies and study skills, and ESL composition in order to promote new dialog and collaborations across programmatic and disciplinary boundaries (e.g., [Goen, Porter, Swanson, & VanDommelen, 2001](#); [Goldschmidt & Ziemba, in press](#); [Murie & Thomson, 2001](#)).

Broader implications and future directions

The presence of Generation 1.5 writers in U.S. high school and college classrooms can be seen as part of a worldwide expansion of post-secondary enrollment in recent years. Whether it is post-colonial immigration in Europe, post-apartheid education in South Africa, or the "mind-boggling and largely haphazard expansion" of Indian higher education ([Atkinson, 2003b](#)), colleges worldwide are contending with student populations who are learners of the dominant language of instruction. Nevertheless, North American college composition research has tended to have a somewhat parochial focus. Comparative

research is needed to show how the writing abilities of immigrants and other second language learners are regarded and dealt with in higher education in other parts of the world.

Even while post-secondary enrollment has been expanding, the U.S. has been engaged in a 20-year long project to narrow college access and marginalize programs for students deemed underprepared for college (Smoke, 2001). Because ESL instruction often carries a remedial stigma, Generation 1.5 students are disproportionately affected by this trend. Moreover, the scholars who work most with Generation 1.5 students — community college faculty, graduate students, and part-time instructors — are also the ones least likely to be provided with the material resources to carry out research and advocacy efforts on behalf of Generation 1.5 students. This has no doubt hampered the development of research and policy on Generation 1.5 students.

Given their marginal status in higher education, it may be difficult for programs serving Generation 1.5 students to move beyond what Benesch (in press) has termed a “pragmatic” orientation to instruction. However, a growing strand of research suggests that learning to write in a second language is not simply the accrual of technical linguistic abilities but rather is intimately related to identity — how one sees oneself and is seen by others as a student, as a writer, and as an ethnolinguistic minority (e.g., Harklau, 2000). Therefore, we need to understand how Generation 1.5 students’ writing is interwoven with multiple, unstable, and ambivalent identities as immigrants, as young adults, as ethnolinguistic minorities, and often as people of color in the U.S. We also need to find out more about how institutions position students and how students and educators resist, accommodate, and reshape those positionings (Benesch, in press; Harklau, 2000).

The presence of Generation 1.5 students in colleges and universities provides a vivid reminder that we live in a linguistic world whose complexity and ambiguities no longer match the neat categorizations of writers in place at most institutions. The question of who is and is not a native speaker of English, for example, is a vexed one. Do we count speakers of Hawaiian and Afro-Caribbean Creoles as native speakers of English, for example? Where in this classificatory scheme do we put Puerto Ricans who may migrate back and forth between Spanish- and English-dominant societies throughout their lives? Furthermore, if Kachru (1996) is correct in his contention that there are four non-native users of English for every native speaker in the world today, Generation 1.5 students constitute part of a global majority. Yet instead of recognizing and building upon our students’ multilingual talents, colleges and universities often regard them as unwelcome deviations from a monolingual standard of English usage. While folk beliefs about language and literacy are pervasive and powerful, L2 writing instructors can play an active agentive role by dealing forthrightly with these issues in the classroom.

Finally, I would like to caution against tendencies to reify the term “Generation 1.5.” I try to limit my use of the term to active learners of English for at least two reasons. First, we live in a society that tends to equate “American” with

“whiteness,” (Harklau, 2000), where the term Generation 1.5 may inadvertently contribute to a representation of students as perpetual foreigners no matter how long they have resided in the U.S. Second, I am concerned that this term can be seized upon by the public discourse on college literacy, with great potential for misuse. I look back at Bartholomae’s (1993) often cited article on how the category of “basic writer” has become essentialized and taken for granted in institutional discourse. It occurs to me that like “basic writer,” the term “Generation 1.5” unfortunately lends itself far too easily to essentializing and to a discourse of need — a way to label bilingual students as in need of remediation. My hope is that the notion of the “Generation 1.5” writers remains useful as a means to look at our students and our programs in a new way, but at the same time I also hope it remains contested and unstable.

In all, I believe that the new attention to Generation 1.5 students benefits the field as a whole by pointing out the need to develop more diverse and context-sensitive notions of second language writers and second language writing. Although we have more questions than answers at present, the active scholarly community forming around these issues will no doubt produce new and challenging perspectives in years to come.

Practicing multiliteracies

A. Suresh Canagarajah

The term *multiliteracies* is becoming important in popular discourse in the context of post-modern cultural developments, the decentered workspace, and cyber-communication. The term refers to new ways of reading and writing that involve a mixture of modalities, symbol systems, and languages. A typical Web page, for example, may involve still photographs, moving images (video clips), and audio recording in addition to written language. Apart from processing these different modalities of communication, “readers” will also have to interpret different sign-systems, such as icons and images, in addition to words. Furthermore, texts from languages as diverse as French and Arabic may be found in a site that is primarily in English. Different discourses could also be mixed — as legalese, medical terminology, and statistical descriptions, besides everyday conversational discourse.

Context of emergence

Apart from the obvious influences of the Internet, digital technology, and cyber-communication, such fluidity in literacy practices is possible at a time when the borders of cultures and communities are becoming porous. Processes of globalization, which include advances in travel, news media, and the new economy, demand that we shift between different languages and discourses (see Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The decentered workspace and the post-Fordist

industrial arrangement encourage almost everyone to be knowledge-workers who can shuttle between different discourses in their everyday life.

But multiliteracies is not a new-fangled post-modern notion of the western hemisphere. Post-colonial scholars have been reminding us of the multiliteracies that were already there in many communities before the West imposed its grapho-centric (i.e., written-word-based) literate tradition on them (Mignolo, 2000). There is an effort now to rejuvenate those complex literate traditions that once accommodated paintings, words, and speech in the texts of traditional communities (see De Souza, 2002). Others like Pratt (1991) have theorized that since colonialism we have had a situation where the clashing cultures have produced new literacies. These “arts of the contact zone” often involve the different languages, ideologies, and literacies that competing communities have brought to the intercultural engagement.

In the context of this larger development, I would like to address multiliteracies in a more restricted sense that concerns teachers of writing in ESOL circles. Compositionists in our profession have started employing this notion to refer to text construction practices that negotiate different styles, genres, and writing traditions. This development is exemplified by recent book titles like *Reflections on multiliterate lives* (Belcher & Connor, 2001). Hybrid texts that accommodate a range of voices are beginning to be appreciated even within the narrow context of academic writing in a single language (English). As multilingual writers shuttle between different communities and literate discourses — between Chinese and English, for example — we realize that they can bring the strengths from alternate backgrounds to enrich their writing in English. The readiness of the academy to accept texts of this nature stems from the post-Enlightenment questioning of the transparency of language and texts (i.e., whether language/text provides direct access to the real world without any distortions). We are now more willing to accept that texts are mediated by the beliefs, values, and subject positions of writers.

Exemplary research

Research on multiliteracies in the ESOL context has focused on both students and professional writers. However, there are more publications on the writing practices of professional writers than on those of student writers. A possible explanation for this is that teachers of ESOL from non-native backgrounds, having a history of publishing in professional circles, are treated by researchers as enjoying the maturity to reflect on their discourse strategies and serve as models for student writers.

Among the reports on student writers (see Belcher, 1997; Canagarajah, 1997, 2002a; Lam, 2000; Prior, 1998), perhaps the earliest is that of Lu (1994). Much before multiliteracies became a fashionable term, Lu found that the struggles of her bilingual students (even in a mainstream composition classroom) presented

challenges on the ways we orientate to texts. A Chinese student from Malaysia uses the modal “can able to” — a structure that connotes for her “ability from the perspective of the external circumstances” (Lu, 1994, p. 452). Though the student is aware of the modal *can*, she finds that this is loaded with a volitionist connotation that is more typical of a western sense of unlimited agency. The student wants to express the need to achieve independence despite community constraints (as it is true of her personal experience of coming to study in the United States despite the family’s view that the place of a woman is inside the house). Her neologism is an attempt to convey a more qualified agency that takes account of community restrictions. Finding that even grammar can be ideological, Lu asks whether we shouldn’t go to the extent of accommodating creative uses of language in our practice of multiculturalism in education.

A more recent study by Lam (2000) incorporates the extended definition of multiliteracies (introduced in the beginning of this section) for showing how communication in the new media empowers ESL students for classroom literacy. In a case study of a Chinese student Almon in California, she documents the independence, creativity, and daring with which Almon converses with multiple unknown correspondents from diverse countries on topics relating to pop and teen culture in e-mail and chat rooms. These writers from different language backgrounds resort to using English for their communication — albeit in different dialects and levels of formality. Paradoxically, this purposeful and contextualized language usage helps Almon’s acquisition. A student who was previously tongue-tied in the ESL class develops the proficiency to communicate in English through the multiliterate communication outside the classroom. While the normative and homogeneous values informing classroom literacy disempower Almon, the multiliteracies outside actively engage him.

To move to professional writers, some of the first-person reflective essays in the collections by Belcher and Connor (2001), Braine (1999), and Casanave and Vandrick (2003) show the implications for textuality when writers shuttle between competing communities. More objective studies can be found in Canagarajah (2002b) and Kramsch and Lam (1999). Though the writers presented in these studies adopt different strategies to negotiate their challenges in academic text construction, they find their multilinguality a resource for the construction of a unique and striking voice in their writing. In the process of constructing this voice, they have to creatively complicate the accepted conventions of academic texts in Anglo-American settings.

The studies hitherto on multiliteracies have largely been qualitative, naturalistic case studies. We are still in the formative and descriptive stage of observing how these text construction practices work in small settings or small groups of subjects. Teachers like Lu (1994) and Auerbach (1996) have used methods approximating action research to engage with the literacy challenges faced by their multilingual students. More formally conceived studies such as Canagarajah (1997), Lam (2000), and Prior (1998) have been ethnographic. To encourage reflective data from multilingual writers on their writing experience, Belcher and

Connor (2001) have developed a set of heuristics that would lead subjects to write their own literacy autobiographies. Needless to say, to interpret text construction practices that span diverse styles and genres, motivated by differing cultural and social backgrounds of the writers, scholars have had to move beyond the narrow text linguistic approaches that have been used before. Some boldly employ eclectic approaches that border on literary criticism, as in Kramsch's (2000) presentation. I have personally found it useful to employ Swales' approach of textography — which he defines as, “something more than a disembodied textual or discursal analysis, but something less than a full ethnographic account” (1998, p. 1). In adopting this approach, I have been able to interpret how the hybrid cultural background of the writers has influenced their negotiation of established genres and conventions for the development of voice (see Canagarajah, 2000, 2002b).

Future directions

It must be said, however, that studies on multiliteracies have to soon move from the current exploratory stage towards more analytical model building. We need to learn from the several case studies to form generalizations regarding effective practices and productive strategies. I offer below a tentative comparison of the divergent strategies displayed in the evolving literature on multiliteracies. Needless to say, multilingual writers are using different strategies with different levels of effectiveness. Therefore, I distinguish each following strategy according to the way it engages with competing discourses to develop a creative mode of articulation (voice), resist dominant discourses and conventions to introduce new values into that genre of writing (ideology), and construct texts that achieve a rhetorical coherence that controls the discordance implicit in divergent discourses (textual realization).

Strategy	Voice	Ideology	Textual realization
accommodation	monological	uncritical	coherent
avoidance	monological	uncritical	discordant
opposition	monological	critical potential	discordant
transposition	dialogical	critical	coherent
appropriation	dialogical	critical	coherent

Accommodation refers to the strategy described by Connor (1999) among others (see Bhatia, 2001; Tsai, 2001). As a Finnish national, Connor gradually moves from the restrained, self-effacing style from her home to the more aggressive and self-affirming style demanded in the American context. Though this results in rhetorically effective texts, perhaps still displaying unique features

from Connor's subjectivity, her writing doesn't consciously challenge the dominant conventions to expand the established rhetoric for this context.

Less linguistically proficient writers — such as intermediate-level ESL students — may fail to negotiate the rhetorical conflicts effectively. Irina, a Ukrainian student I describe in [Canagarajah \(2002a\)](#), tries to adopt a safe approach of not wrestling with the rhetorical differences up front. She defers to the dominant conventions of college-level American writing uncritically. She avoids bringing in other discourses from her background to inform her writing in the academy. Hence *avoidance*. Eventually, her texts display multiple discourses that are not sufficiently integrated. While diverse discourses may be found in the texts of some non-native writers, we have to examine if they are there by default (not by choice). In such cases, the text may lack coherence. I analyzed the texts of locally trained Sri Lankan faculty members who wrote in English for publication to show how they sometimes lacked control over the heterogeneous discourses (see [Canagarajah, 2002b](#)).

Another student, Sri, a Sri Lankan graduate student I describe in [Canagarajah \(1999\)](#), chooses to adopt local vernacular discourse traditions (largely from oral conventions) in his academic writing in English. Though this is an ideologically *oppositional* strategy, it is rhetorically ineffective as he doesn't negotiate sufficiently with the established conventions to create a space for his alternate conventions.

The final two strategies are ideologically and rhetorically more effective. *Transposition* is similar to what [Kramsch \(2000\)](#) identifies as the “third spaces” that multilingual writers construct textually. Such writers draw from the rhetorical resources of both their first language (L1) and the learned language to construct a third discourse that is different from either. They find it empowering to employ a creative new discourse that draws from the multiliterate strengths they bring with them. [Li \(1999\)](#) also narrates such a strategy of constructing a “third” discursive space for resolving the conflicts she faced between her native Chinese and English discourse.

Appropriation refers to the strategy of writers who take over the dominant conventions for their purposes — as my own narrative in [Canagarajah \(2001\)](#) and that of [Prior's \(1998\)](#) student Theresa exemplify. Such writers make a space for suppressed vernacular discourses from their native background in the established discourses in the academy. I narrate the experience of Sri Lankan academics like Suseendirajah and Sivatamby (see [Canagarajah, 2002b](#)) who not only shuttle between divergent academic communities at home and abroad, but make it a point to employ a discourse that is critical in both contexts. They draw from one background to infuse creative differences into the discourse of another background. This strategy is different from *transposition* in which both discourses are taken to a different level, to such an extent that the achieved voice differs from that typically associated with either discourse. In *appropriation*, the writer is infusing the established conventions with one's own discourses in a direct act of resistance. The dominant discourses are shaped to convey the values and interests of the writer.

There are other issues that can be explored for model building in this area of literacy. The following are some of them: the attitudes that lead to effective multiliterate writing strategies (i.e., discursive self-awareness; ability to take risks; positive feelings towards one's local/native discourses; humility to learn through trial-and-error, etc.); the factors that help explain the desire of writers to adopt one strategy over another (I discuss Connor's desire for accommodation over Li's desire for transposition and Sri's preference for opposition in [Canagarajah, 2002a](#), pp. 112–113); and the variable difficulties and resources multilingual writers derive from their background for writing in English (i.e., linguistic, rhetorical, social, ideological).

Other areas of concern in this field of study relate to a tendency to exaggerate the linguistic and subjective possibilities represented by multiliteracies. Some scholars who have recognized the potential of multiliteracies in the context of globalization and the Internet theorize that these developments portend the possible collapse of linguistic imperialism and rhetorical control (see [Murray, 2000](#)). They feel that the new communicative context shows that diverse languages and dialects of English enjoy equal power in the new dispensation. Others go on to argue that genres are so fluid that it is wrong to categorize them (see [Zamel, 1997](#)). They would argue that one can write any way one wants in the academic context — that the academy accommodates a wide range of genres and discourses. But this attitude of “anything goes” is not borne out by existing conditions. Multiliteracies doesn't mean that certain discourses are not valorized in certain contexts. In the academic context, the IMRD structure is still considered the norm for research articles in the empirical and quantitative sciences. English still remains the overwhelmingly dominant language in which knowledge construction takes place in academic publications. Scholars like Li and Suseendirajah have to cautiously negotiate their alternate discourses with much care and wisdom to make a space in the established conventions. In fact, if their negotiation strategies are not effective, their writing can be defined as a failure, resulting in academic disrespect (as Li experienced when she was initially denied tenure, with her alternate discourse in her book treated as non-academic).

Others adopt a cavalier attitude towards multilingual writers. Articulating what she calls the transculturation model, [Zamel \(1997\)](#) argues that writers shouldn't be categorized as coming from one culture or another. To identify writers in cultural terms is to essentialize. She argues for the agency of the writer/student to adopt any cultural identity he/she wants. Though [Zamel's](#) case for agency is important in explaining the possibility of multiliteracies, we cannot say that writers have a nebulous subjectivity. All subjects are located in specific material and social contexts. They enjoy preferred membership in specific communities, while their intent to join new communities is also often challenged. For many, their ability to shuttle between communities is achieved through intense struggle (see [Ringbom, 2001](#); [Sasaki, 2001](#); [Söter, 2001](#)). [Kubota \(2001\)](#) and [Liu \(2001\)](#) discuss the ideological desire and the rhetorical difficulty of accomplishing a strategy of transposition in their writing. In the case of [Suseendirajah](#), his ability

to shuttle between communities develops through conflicts on the extent to which he would like to make discursive compromises and the modes in which he can assert his own subjectivity in the new context. It is important, therefore, for ESOL teachers to be sensitive to the challenges multiliteracies involve for their students.

These controversies notwithstanding, multiliteracies have opened up a new paradigm for writing instruction in the academy. The pedagogical implications and classroom applications have to be worked out in the future. To engage in this creative and critical process of text construction, we have to stop imposing uniform norms and rules of textuality. We have to teach our students strategies for rhetorical negotiation so that they can modify, resist, or reorient to the rules in a manner favorable to them. If we can assume that texts and genres are changing, rather than static, we will adopt a teaching practice that encourages students to creatively rework the conventions and norms of each writing context.

Technology and second language writing: Researching a moving target

Mark Warschauer

The Internet is one of the fastest spreading technologies of communication in human history. The number of e-mail messages sent annually throughout the world is estimated at more than three trillion (Pastore, 1999) and, according to one study, e-mail is beginning to surpass face-to-face and telephone communication as a means of business interaction (American Management Association International, cited in Warschauer, 2000a). And with English remaining the dominant language of online communications (see Warschauer, 2002), the Internet has become the primary medium of English-language writing for many second language speakers around the world.

Yet, as theorists from many cognitive traditions have pointed out (e.g., Bateson, 1972; Ong, 1982; Vygotsky, 1978), technologies are not external to human activity but rather intimately bound up with it. If people are increasingly writing on the Internet, then this may bring about changes in the nature of writing, and it is incumbent on us to better understand what those changes are. Over the last two decades, a number of researchers have begun to examine the relationship of technology to second language writing. This emerging area of research has focused on computer-assisted classroom discussion, e-mail exchanges, and Web-based writing.

Computer-assisted classroom discussion

CACD consists of real-time (i.e., synchronous) computer-mediated interaction within a single classroom, with students each writing at their own individual computers using special software designed for the purpose (e.g., Daedalus InterChange, Daedalus Inc., 1989). CACD became popular in first language writing instruction in the 1980s and soon spread to the second language class-

room. Because CACD represents an alternate form of student interaction and discussion, many of the early studies compared the features of CACD to oral communication (for reviews, see [Ortega, 1997](#); [Warschauer, 1996b](#)). For example, CACD was generally found to foster more complex language use than face-to-face discussion ([Warschauer, 1996a](#)), heightened and more equal student participation ([Chun, 1994](#); [Kern, 1995](#); [Warschauer, 1996a](#)), and language learning through noticing and incorporation of linguistic chunks ([Warschauer, 1999](#)).

Recent studies have focused on the particular role of CACD in the second language composition classroom, suggesting that it provides a favorable medium for students' exploration of ideas in preparation for formal writing ([Warschauer, 1999](#)). One particularly interesting study explored the role of CACD as a medium for peer writing feedback, again in comparison to face-to-face interaction. As it turned out, foreign language students receiving computer-mediated feedback made more detailed revisions in their writing, whereas those receiving oral feedback made more global changes ([Schultz, 2000](#)). In sum, this initial body of research has helped define the particular features of CACD and point out the role that it, thus, might play in second language writing instruction. Of course the nature of language use and interaction in computer-mediated communication depends both on the particular interface involved (e.g., Daedalus InterChange fosters lengthier texts than does Internet Relay Chat (IRC)) and on the beliefs and approaches of the teachers involved (see discussion in [Bloch & Brutt-Griffler, 2001](#); [Warschauer, 1999](#)).

E-mail exchanges

A second area of research has explored the role of e-mail and other forms of synchronous communication (e.g., online bulletin boards) in second language writing, both within a class and between students in different classes. In one very interesting cross-medium comparison, [Wang \(1993\)](#) found that students completing student–teacher dialogue journals via e-mail wrote more, asked more questions, received lengthier replies, and used a greater variety of language functions than did those using paper and pencil. Similar to some of the CACD studies, [St. John and Cash \(1995\)](#) documented how an e-mail exchange allowed a learner to notice and re-use linguistic chunks, thus fulfilling [Bakhtin's \(1986\)](#) notion of language development through the incorporation of others' word. [Bloch and Brutt-Griffler's \(2001\)](#) study of an online synchronous forum in an ESL composition classroom indicated how different teacher use of the same technology elicited different types of student response.

Several researchers have carried out studies of classes that include project-based e-mail exchanges as a major element ([Barson & Debski, 1996](#); [Kern, 1996](#); [Soh & Soon, 1991](#); [Tella, 1991](#)). These studies have documented a number of positive impacts, including heightened authenticity in writing and increased student collaboration, audience awareness, willingness to revise, and motivation.

The latter theme was picked up by Warschauer (1996c), whose international survey found that three factors — students' desire to communicate, interest in empowerment through mastery of technology, and sense that online interaction helped them learn better — together contributed to learners' heightened motivation, especially when technology projects were well-integrated into the curriculum. Other studies showed that such e-mail exchanges failed when they were added on in a mechanical fashion, and thus, not viewed as meaningful or significant (Warschauer, 1999).

Web-based writing

Writing for the Web has emerged more recently, and fewer studies have examined it. Studies by Lam (2000) and Warschauer (1999) have shown the central role of *identity* in Web-based writing; due to its highly public and multi-modal nature, the Web is an ideal writing medium for students' to explore and develop their evolving relationship to their community, culture, and world. This can contribute to a sense of *agency*, as learners take public action through their writing (Kramsch, A'Ness, & Lam, 2000; Warschauer, 2000a). Once again, as with e-mail exchanges, authenticity of purpose is critical, with students' souring on Web-based writing that has no real-world objective. As summarized by Warschauer (2000b), high student engagement in writing for the Web depends on students' understanding well the purpose of the activity, viewing the purpose as socially and/or culturally relevant, finding the electronic medium advantageous for fulfilling the purpose, and being encouraged and enabled to use medium-appropriate rhetorical features to fulfill the purpose.

Closely related to the issue of identity is that of *voice*. A study by Matsuda (2001b) indicated the complex nature of voice in online writing, showing how a Japanese Web-based diarist drew from a wide range of discourse practices — used by video game players, animation fans, and others — in shaping and expressing her online voice. This complexity could present a particular challenge for language learners, whose range of available discursive repertoires in their second language is often limited.

Future directions

With most of students' Internet-based writing taking place outside the classroom, and with the various forms of computer-mediated writing tending to merge and blur (i.e., creating a Website that one uses as a launch pad for chatting), it becomes increasingly difficult to unravel the nature of computer-mediated writing through short-term classroom based studies. Ethnographies, longitudinal case studies, and other forms of interpretive qualitative research are thus likely to emerge as principal means of exploring the relationship of technology to second

language writing. As seen, for example, in [Lam's work \(2000\)](#), ethnographic case studies provide an excellent approach for examining the complex issues of culture, identity, audience, and media that emerge in new forms of multi-modal online writing.

Another fruitful research approach, as discussed by Hyland in this paper, lies in corpus studies of technology-based writing. The heightened accessibility of both first- and second-language electronic writing — whether carried out in school or as part of the public domain — will allow researchers to explore topics such as cohesion, collocation, coherence, lexis, and syntax through large scale analyses and comparisons of online writing samples in a variety of modes, genres, and contexts.

Finally, it is important to point to some of the areas of contention and controversy that are likely to arise as writing increasingly shifts to online media. These include the relationship of texts to visual elements ([Kress, 1998](#)), changing notions of authorship and plagiarism ([Bloch, 2001](#)), and the importance of equal access to online resources and literacies ([Warschauer, 2003](#)).

In summary, the diffusion of computers and the Internet is likely to be as important for the development of writing as was the earlier advent of the printing press. Fortunately, computers and the Internet also provide important new tools for researching writing — whether through online interviews with language learners or computer-based analyses of electronic texts. Researchers investigating technology and second language writing will have plenty to keep them busy.

Discourse analysis in L2 writing research

Ken Hyland

Discourse analysis (DA), the study of situated language use, involves exploring texts for what they tell us about the purposes and functions of language use and the constraints operating on writers in particular contexts. Like the other sections in this colloquium, I will briefly discuss the context for the emergence of this approach in studies of L2 writing, summarize some of the research, and look at possible directions in which it may develop in the future.

The context of emergence

Discourse analysis (DA) is not actually a “new tradition” in the same way as the other approaches discussed in this colloquium. Its pedigree stretches back to Firth in the 1930s and it has been a significant force both in understanding language use and in literacy education since the early 1970s. In second language contexts it has been decisive in the genesis and development of English for Specific Purposes, where the work of [Swales \(1981\)](#), [Tarone, Dwyer, Gillette, and Icke \(1981, 1998\)](#), [Trimble \(1981\)](#), and others helped reveal some of the recurring features of communicative events and established an empirical basis for teaching both first and second language writers. But despite this more general impact, it has been slow

to attract the attention of those working in the mainstream of L2 writing. There are perhaps four main reasons for this increasing interest in L2 discourse.

First is the growing recognition among writing specialists that L2 students would be massively assisted if they had a clearer understanding of the structure of the texts they were expected to write. Under the hegemony of process approaches, writing teaching and research have, almost paradoxically, sought to deny the importance of applied linguistics to the study of writing. Early process work was important in introducing L2 writing teachers to the theories of cognitive psychology and L1 composition, both refining the ways we understand and teach writing and serving to instill greater respect for individual writers and the writing process itself. A more unwelcome legacy, however, has been a dread of returning to the constraints of formal accuracy and a reluctance to move beyond general principles of thinking and composing. This has meant an over-reliance on intuition long since abandoned in other areas of L2 pedagogy. More recently, driven by Writing Across the Curriculum programs and ESP, there has been increasing awareness of specialized discursive competence as a measure of professional and academic expertise in a range of activities, and this has led to greater attention being given to learners' writing needs and the imperatives of research-based language education. So, with the emergence of L2 writing instruction into the post-process era (Hyland, 2003a), there is a recognition that tasks and materials must be grounded in the analysis of real texts.

Closely related to attempts to describe writing is a more comprehensive understanding of what needs to be described. The growing interest in the relevance of discourse to L2 writing issues is in large part due to the increasing attempts to situate discourse in the purposes, identities, and contexts within which it is constructed and which it helps construct. Current interest in discourse has shifted attention from an interest only in surface lexico-grammatical features to the dynamics of writing as interaction and to ways of characterizing it as both system and strategy. All writers are seen as writing for a purpose, co-constructing their texts in an interactive and collaborative way with a particular target audience. This means moving away from forms alone to look at the actions these forms are used to accomplish and so to unpack the complex relations between texts and their contexts (Bazerman, 1994; Hyland, 2000; Swales, 1998). An interest in real language has thus been accompanied by a similar interest in language use and a conception of literacy as social practice, encouraging an understanding of language that moves beyond cognitivist paradigms to see writing as social interaction. DA does not just look at how sentences fit together; it tries to show how they are related to their contexts. This means linking discourse features to issues of writer purpose, identity, audience expectations, cultural schemata, disciplinary perceptions, and so on.

The third reason for interest in L2 discourse is a growing curiosity about the ways students actually write. DA gives us a theoretical and research platform to study the meanings learners are trying to express through their choice and arrangement of forms. By providing information about differences between

learners and native speakers, analysis of student texts provides insights for more effective teaching, helping teachers to target students' more frequent and intractable errors (Biber & Reppen, 1998; Granger, 1998; Milton, 1999). More interestingly, it also encourages us to explore student writing as a valid form of discourse in its own right, rather than as a hybrid interlanguage of L1 interference. Current conceptions of discourse shift attention from correctness to the resourcefulness of writers as social actors who bring personal and cultural histories to their writing and particular understandings of the texts they are asked to write. This has paved the way for important insights into students' perceptions and practices, such as how some student groups understand functions such as cause and effect (Flowerdew, 1998) and the ways they may see academic acknowledgements as a rhetorical strategy of self-promotion (Hyland, *in press*).

Finally, our approaches are influenced by available technology. The fact we can now compile, store, and interrogate corpora of students' writing opens up new possibilities for discourse analysis by revealing how particular groups of students typically express certain meanings and approach rhetorical problems (e.g., Hunston, 2002). Frequency counts can expose the features that students often over- or under-use, while collocations reveal typical patterns of co-textual association, indicating how particular groups of learners understand and use various features (Hinkel, 2002; Hyland, 2003b). Accompanying technological changes there has also been a shift in the ways the technology is used, moving from an almost exclusive focus on lexico-grammatical features to studies which emphasize discursual patternings of moves and functions (e.g., Upton & Connor, 2001). Overall, the value of corpora of learner language is that it gives us the power to go beyond the instance of the individual case to explore systematic variation in authentic learner language with greater confidence.

Some current research

While discourse analysts have examined the writing of secondary school learners and L2 academics, most research has focused on university students. Clearly, this group offers a convenient sample, but it also reflects an urgent practical imperative to better understand ways we can increase instructional support to novice tertiary-level writers. In the U.S., this is partly driven by the first-year composition requirement, but more generally it is a consequence of the massive growth of EAP worldwide (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). As a result, there has been a lot of work on expository genres of various kinds with an emphasis on the development of topic and argument, features of cohesion and coherence, and pragmatic and interpersonal aspects of language. Some generalizations from the work on learner corpora show that second language writers make greater use of a smaller range of vocabulary, that they overuse items of high generality, and that they favour features which are more typical of spoken English (see Granger, 1998; Hinkel, 2002).

A productive line of inquiry has been followed by those working within the broad field of Contrastive Rhetoric (CR) which identifies the differences in rhetorical preferences between cultural and linguistic groups. Discourse-based research by Connor (1996), Hinkel (2002), Mauranen (1993), and others has explored the persuasive practices of different language groups, for example, and shown how credibility is differently negotiated, how patterns of argument make use of different appeals to objectivity or personality, and how control over reader awareness features — such as questions, directives, and inclusive and second person pronouns — differ. Outside of CR, work focusing on L2 writing which draws on functional and systemic perspectives are emerging (e.g., Ravelli & Ellis, 2003) and my own work are beginning to indicate some of the ways that L2 students establish relationships with their readers through patterns of stance, engagement, and the construction of academic identity (Hyland, 2002, 2003b). Interestingly, this discourse research undermines some established cultural stereotypes about L2 writing. In a study of 1700 school leavers in Hong Kong and U.K., for instance, Hyland and Milton (1997) found that Hong Kong writers didn't conform to the stereotype of Asian indirectness but made far stronger commitments and used about half the number of hedges than the L1 writers.

Some DA work has been criticized for reinforcing deficit models by comparing L2 texts with “expert writer” models. But given comparable samples, the study of parallel corpora can provide information about what different groups of language users actually *do*, revealing their linguistic and interactive schemata. In turn, this throws light on student perceptions of academic conventions and how they accommodate or assert their own cultural practices within new contextual constraints. An increasing amount of work has, therefore, supported analyses of texts with interview data to go beyond description and link surface patterns to particular cultural or social schemata — how students understand English and how they use it to express particular meanings and concepts.

The most important outcome of DA research has been to demonstrate that texts show patterned variability within genres and communities, reinforcing the view that writing always occurs in a social context and is always associated with particular domains of cultural activity. This has consequences for both understanding and teaching writing.

In terms of research, the fact that the texts of different L2 groups have systematic variation puts culture back on the agenda. Long banished as too deterministic as an explanation of writing behaviour, DA shows culture to be an important contextual constraint on the expression and interpretations of meanings. We have to be careful not to see culture as monolithic or deterministic. No contexts are static or homogeneous and the fact that we all belong to multiple groups means that communities cannot be distilled down to sets of discourse features. However, DA emphasizes that both texts and the activity of writing are embedded in culture and are inseparable from linguistically encoded cultural meanings. By showing that writing always takes place in and for particular social groups, DA provides an empirical basis for the idea of multiple literacies. There is no single, self-evident,

and non-contestable literacy, as dominant ideologies suggest, but a wide variety of practices relevant for particular times and purposes. Recognizing these pluralities not only reveals that potentially contested cultural assumptions underlie texts, but replaces the native versus non-native writer distinction with one emphasizing the variable expertise of novices and experts in particular contexts.

DA also presents us with some perspectives for teaching writing. First, it pursues the social constructivist agenda to move us beyond narrow process views which represent writing as the act of isolated individuals struggling to create personal meanings. DA encourages us to see writing as the social actions of community-situated members and to explore text-based teaching procedures, providing a conceptual and empirical means of doing this. Second, DA cautions us against treating L2 writing as a deficit, assisting us to take the student's culture and perspectives seriously and to treat discursive deviations with tolerance. It also helps explain why both L1 and L2 students have difficulties and reservations about using an alien discourse of "academic Englishes." Third, it provides learners with ways of looking at their own texts. This creates possibilities for demystifying prestigious genres to reveal them as just other ways of writing, a practice which was hard to convey when writing teaching was seen as simply mimicking universal, context-independent expert strategies of drafting and revision.

Some future directions

Many areas of L2 discourse remain to be explored. First, we need to consider areas of learner preference and difficulty. We know little about the lexical, syntactic, or rhetorical features of writing by particular learners in a range of different genres and professional and institutional contexts. We also require research on the extent to which these features differ from those of other learners or native speakers, and investigations into whether patterns can be explained by proficiency, by L1 conventions, or by cultural assumptions. Second, we should study areas of overlap and difference. DA research has the potential to expand our understanding of the hybridity and heterogeneity of communities and cultures, revealing the ways that communities influence writing and how these vary. Third, we can focus on areas of change and manipulation. This concerns questions of generic integrity and flexibility, the extent to which individuals can successfully challenge the conventions or ethos of the L2 by manipulating its discourse conventions. DA can tell us more about the ways L2 writers draw on their vernacular rhetoric and what is required for these features to become recognised as new conventions.

Conclusion

While discourse analysis is centrally concerned with language, it has much to tell us about interaction. Researchers and teachers are becoming interested in DA

for what they can learn about how students construct texts, how their rhetorical choices reflect their purposes and relationships with readers, and how these texts compare with those of other groups. Discourse analysis reminds us that writing involves writers making language choices in social contexts peopled by readers, prior experiences, and other texts. Bringing together action, activity, and language in a single concept, discourse analysis is an indispensable tool for understanding second language writing.

Metadisciplinary inquiry in second language writing

Paul Kei Matsuda

The emergence of the field of second language writing is a relatively recent phenomenon. Although formal inquiry into L2 writing issues has been taking place since around 1960, it was some 20 years later that the study of L2 writing became a significant force in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). L2 writing research was also beginning to take place in other fields in the 1980s, but it was scattered across various fields of inquiry — such as composition studies, applied linguistics, TESOL, foreign language education, and bilingual education, among others. A number of researchers have documented the development of L2 writing research in the 1980s in various intellectual traditions, including composition studies (Matsuda, 2003b) foreign language education (Reichelt, 1999), and bilingual education (Matsuda & De Pew, 2002; Valdés, 1992).

While insights were occasionally transplanted across disciplinary boundaries, rarely was the interaction reciprocal. Toward the end of the 1980s, the number of L2 writing researchers in various fields finally reached a critical mass. At the same time, the need for interdisciplinary cooperation was increasingly felt (Johnson & Roen, 1989; Kroll, 1990). As a result, second language writing began to move toward the status of an interdisciplinary field with its own disciplinary infrastructure for scholarly communication.

The emergence of the field is marked most conspicuously by the appearance of publications that included the term “second language writing” in their titles. In 1990, Cambridge University Press published *Second Language Writing: Research Insights for the Classroom*, edited by Barbara Kroll, as part of its applied linguistics series; it was followed by *Assessing Second Language Writing in Academic Contexts*, edited by Hamp-Lyons (1991). The creation, in 1992, of the *Journal of Second Language Writing*, edited by Ilona Leki and Tony Silva, also helped to solidify the status of the field. The appearance of these landmark publications is important because they have contributed to the development of the disciplinary infrastructure, providing a sense of material reality to the field.

What is even more significant, however, is the rise of what may be called *metadisciplinary inquiry* — the study of a particular discipline or field of study — during this period, signaling the rise of a collective sense of identity among members of the emerging field. The first chapter of the Kroll collection was “Second Language Composition Instruction: Developments, Issues, and Direc-

tions in ESL” by Silva (1990), which explored the historical development of major pedagogical approaches and considered the implications for the development of principled pedagogical practices; likewise, the inaugural issue of the *JSLW* began with “Ideology in Composition: L1 and ESL” by Santos (1992), which considered the interdisciplinary relationship between composition studies and ESL writing. The appearance of these and other works of metadisciplinary inquiry is an indication that the field of second language writing has come of age.

What is metadisciplinary inquiry?

Metadisciplinary inquiry can be defined as inquiry into the nature and the historical development of a field of inquiry as well as its philosophical and methodological orientations (Matsuda, 1998). The term does not signify a particular methodology; it uses various modes of inquiry — philosophical, historical, and empirical — and considers a wide range of issues, including the definition and historical development of the field as well as its methodological orientations. As the prefix “meta-” suggests, it is defined in relation to disciplinary inquiry, the *raison d’être* of the field. The goal of disciplinary inquiry in the field of second language writing is the construction of knowledge about the nature of second language writers and writing (both processes and texts) as well as literacy acquisition and instruction. Metadisciplinary inquiry takes a step back and examines how the disciplinary inquiry works; in other words, it focuses on questions such as who we are, what we do, and how we do what we do.

Metadisciplinary inquiry may be external or internal to the field under question. *External metadisciplinary inquiry* is situated in such fields as the philosophy of science, the history of science, the sociology of science, and the rhetoric of inquiry, whose subject of inquiry is the metadisciplinary issues in various other fields. Perhaps the most well known example of external metadisciplinary inquiry is Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (1962), a major contribution to the philosophy of science. Although Kuhn’s focus was on hard science, his notion of paradigm — or its various interpretations — has influenced the way researchers in social and human sciences considered the development of their own fields. External metadisciplinary inquiry provides a general sense of how various fields of inquiry “work” from a broad, interdisciplinary perspective. However, they are often too general to be directly applicable to particular fields of inquiry. Furthermore, newer, interdisciplinary fields of inquiry are often left unexamined. Even if external metadisciplinary inquiry into the field of L2 writing existed, it may not serve the needs of the field because what it provides is an *etic* perspective — its object would be to understand the nature of disciplinary practices in the field from an outsider’s perspective but not necessarily to understand or improve those practices from the participants’ standpoint.

For this reason, members of new fields often develop metadisciplinary inquiry of their own — or *internal metadisciplinary inquiry* — as they begin to gain a

sense of identity. Many of the interdisciplinary fields that became institutionalized in the mid to late 20th century — such as composition studies and TESOL — have developed elaborate bodies of metadisciplinary knowledge about its identity, historical development, and methodologies. More recently, new fields of inquiry — such as computers and composition, English for academic purposes, and second language acquisition — that have traditionally been subsumed under larger fields have begun to develop their own metadisciplinary inquiry. Second language writing is no exception.

Metadisciplinary inquiry in second language writing

Within the field of second language writing, metadisciplinary inquiry has taken many different shapes. One type of metadisciplinary inquiry is the definition of the field — its status, scope, and characteristics. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the field, the status of the field is often articulated in relation to various other fields, including composition studies (Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Matsuda, 1998, 1999; Matsuda & Jablonski, 2000; Santos, 1992; Severino, 2001; Silva, Leki, & Carson, 1997; Valdés, 1992), foreign language studies (Homstad & Thorson, 2000; Reichelt, 1999), bilingual education (Matsuda & De Pew, 2002; Valdés, 1992) and applied linguistics (Harklau, 2002; Leki, 2000; Silva & Matsuda, 2002). Note, however, that few attempts have been made to discuss the relationship between TESOL in general and second language writing, perhaps because second language writing is often considered to be a subfield of TESOL by default. This assumption, though historically accurate, is limiting because it has tended to limit the scope of the field to L2 writing in English.

Another type of metadisciplinary inquiry is historical. In order to better understand and critique current practices, it is important to understand where the field came from, how it developed over time, and why it developed the way it did. Early attempts at historicizing the field (Raimés, 1991; Silva, 1990) focused on the development of pedagogical approaches, which had been the main focus of the L2 writing literature until well into the 1980s. More recent historical studies have examined the development of the field from a broader, interdisciplinary perspective, raising some fundamental questions about the origin and nature of the field as well as its relationship with other fields of inquiry (Matsuda, 1999, 2001a, 2003a, 2003b).

Metadisciplinary inquiry also examines how the field accomplishes its objectives — that is, methodology. In the early years, researchers borrowed methods of inquiry developed in various other fields such as applied linguistics, composition studies, education, and TESOL. As the body of knowledge specific to L2 writing grew, however, researchers in the field began to consider methodological issues specific to L2 writing research (Connor, 1996; Goldstein, 2001; Krapels, 1990; Polio, 2001). Some researchers have also begun to consider the philosophical bases of inquiry (Grabe, 2001; Silva, 2002). The third Symposium on Second Language Writing, held at Purdue University in October 2002, sought to con-

tribute to this discussion by focused on the question of various approaches to inquiry in the field.

Metadisciplinary inquiry may also take the form of reflections on and assessment of the development and the status of the field (and its infrastructure) as well as the discussion of future directions (Blanton & Kroll, 2002; Kapper, 2002; Leki, 2000; Matsuda, 1997; Santos, Atkinson, Erickson, Matsuda, & Silva, 2000). This colloquium also exemplifies this tradition of inquiry.

Implications and future directions

Why is it important to have metadisciplinary inquiry — or more specifically, internal metadisciplinary inquiry? As I have suggested, one of the most important reasons is that, without it, the field may be left unexamined — or worse, constructed by others in unproductive ways (Lunsford, 1990). In other words, having its own internal metadisciplinary inquiry is important if the field of second language writing is to establish and maintain its status as a legitimate field of inquiry, and to address the needs of second language writers who are subjected to the disciplinary and instructional practices of many other related fields. Metadisciplinary inquiry is important also because it serves as a mechanism for self-reflexivity. By making disciplinary practices of the field more explicit, metadisciplinary inquiry opens the possibility for critical self-understanding that can help the field maintain its integrity and rigor. By making its own practices explicit, it also makes visible the tacit understanding about the field shared by its established members, thus opening up the field to newcomers. Metadisciplinary inquiry is especially important for an issue-oriented, interdisciplinary field such as second language writing because the context of second language writing research and instruction is constantly shifting. In order to develop research practices that are responsive to the needs of second language writers in various instructional contexts, it is important for the field to constantly assess and reassess its own disciplinary practices from multiple perspectives.

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