

Final Written Report

Professional Development Grant

“The Nature of Learning in ESL Composition: A Bridge Between the Intensive English Institute
and Mainstream Freshman Composition Courses”

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This is the final report for a professional enhancement project funded by an ATU Professional Development Grant.

A. Title page (provided above)

B. Restatement of Professional Enhancement Opportunity

Abstract of Conference Paper Presented:

In the 2009-2010 academic year, 274, 431 international undergraduate students were enrolled at universities across our nation (Institute of International Education). Some of these students were high achievers in their Intensive English Institutes at their respective colleges and met or even exceeded their universities' required score on the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). Now on the first day of a new semester, these same students are enrolled in ESL Composition offered through the English department at their university. Being students in ESL Composition, they are in an awkward position in the academy. They are neither mainstream college students yet as far as placement in their English class nor are they skilled writers of the English language yet. Therefore, in order to adequately prepare these ESL students for the next step in their college journey, the first section of freshman composition, the ESL Composition teacher needs to help these students acquire two different types of knowledge, cultural and skills-based. The students need to learn both about the culture of the mainstream freshman writing classroom and about how to become better writers. In addition, they need to learn all of this information in the span of one semester and in the context of the English department, not an Intensive Language or English Institute. This paper will explore methods addressing the nature of this extensive challenge.

C. Brief Review of Professional Enhancement Opportunity

I attended the National College English Association (NCEA) Conference where I presented a paper on April 6, 2013. The conference ran from April 4 to April 6, 2013. Therefore, I traveled to the conference on April 3, 2013 and arrived home from the conference on April 7, 2013.

D. Summary of Experiences

I teach undergraduate ESL students in our department and upper-level undergraduate and graduate students who are training to be ESL teachers. Therefore, I am continually exposed to the struggles of both students and teacher trainees in the area of ESL, and am constantly seeking classroom methods to make both groups of students' struggles a little lighter. For two years now, at the CEA Conference, I have presented papers on academic challenges that international undergraduate students face when studying in the States. Every time I attend the CEA Conference, I gain invaluable critical feedback from colleagues regarding future directions for my research.

E. Conclusions and Recommendations

Presently in both of my specialty fields, Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) and Composition and Rhetoric, there is not enough research or training commentary addressing what helps need to be given to international students as they enter this middle stage of language development in the academy; they have left the comfort of the English Language Institute at their colleges for all purposes, but they are not yet assimilated into most mainstream college courses. Their writing skills are still weak. In most cases, they are not enrolled in a lot of mainstream courses yet.

As a result of this shortage of scholarship in my fields and both positive and negative commentary that I have received on my scholarship at national conferences, including the 2013 College English Association (CEA) Conference, I will continue conducting inquiry in this area and searching for better classroom methods than we currently have in place. I can envision creating a series of articles from this endeavor.

Thank you for your continued support.