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ESL Writing Support
A Major Qualifying Report

Submitted to the Faculty of
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Science

Submitted By:

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April 2011

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LDH-PW22

Abstract

As the English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) population at WPI grows, WPI will need an ESL-centric curriculum as well as trainings and workshops for tutors and tutees that will address the gaps in ESL education. This paper reviews expert literature on ESL writing support to answer (1) what obstacles ESL students face when learning to write at the college-level and (2) what sort of help with writing ESL students need. It also reports on existing online writing support at other academic institutions and professional ESL websites, and it inventories writing support in various programs at WPI and at the WPI writing center. Drawing on these data sources, this paper provides recommendations on how to improve and expand upon current resources. These recommendations include reinforcing an ESL curriculum or introductory course on academic writing and reading, creating a workshop where students can practice editing their own work, creating resources/workshops on plagiarism for ESL students, creating training/workshops for tutors on how to structure sessions with ESL students, creating training/workshops for tutors on techniques/tools for helping ESL students organize their paper, and coordinating ESL resources with the help of a campus-wide ESL director.

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Introduction

English is more and more becoming the standard language of communication in many professional fields. As a result, the number of people learning English as a second language is also increasing. One of the main resources that universities and colleges in the United States have to support ESL students is a writing center. Writing centers provide support for a variety of different communication projects to a variety of different students, but ESL students especially lean on the writing center.

WPI has a large and growing ESL population, many of whom need help with writing. As of fall 2010, WPI enrolled a total of 757 international students: 347 International Undergraduate Students (10% of the total Undergraduate Enrollment) and 410 International Graduate Students (30% of total Graduate Enrollment). The undergraduate international population has increased 12% since fall 2009 and the graduate international population has increased 14%. WPI's writing center serves many of these students. A small sample of students attending sessions at the writing center taken over a two week period between September 9, 2010 and September 26, 2010 indicated that 24 ESL students visited the writing center for help with their assignments, ranging from course papers to lab reports¹. This represented 31% of all registered tutoring sessions during this time period. A later sample of attendees at the writing center taken over a two week period between February 6, 2011 and February 13, 2011 indicated that 9 ESL students visited the writing center for help with their assignments, representing 29% of all registered tutoring sessions during this time period. The two samplings of attendees over the course of two terms suggest that about 30% of the population the writing center serves is made up of ESL students. This percentage is much higher than the percentage of ESL students in either the

¹ Numbers may be skewed since ISE 1811 Writing for Non-Native Speakers of English course is offered in A term, and many of these students are encouraged to visit the writing center

undergraduate or graduate population. This suggests that it is important to focus on ESL students and to offer services that cater to this population at the writing center.

WPI's writing center sessions are conducted by peer tutors who have general training in tutoring in writing, but limited training in working with ESL students specifically. Before students can be hired as writing center tutors, they are required to take and receive a B+ or higher in a seven-week "Peer-Tutoring in Writing" course. As a part of this course, potential tutors do read some literature about ESL and international students, but this reading is limited to two or three articles. Professor Higgins, who teaches this course, says she is "generally able to assign two articles for background reading on ESL culture and one handout summarizing how to work with ESL students" during the course; she also gives one workshop a year on an ESL-related issue during a staff meeting. Given the time constraints of the tutoring course as well as limited resources, the specific training tutors receive on ESL students is not as comprehensive as it could be, and there is no attempt to provide special resources for tutors to use with ESL writers so that tutors can learn more about how to work with ESL writers.

Besides the writing center, WPI offers the following resources to ESL students: two elective academic courses offered through the Humanities and Arts Department (ISE 1811: Writing for Non-Native Speakers of English and ISE 1812: Speech for Non-Native Speakers of English); and supplementary non-credit courses offered by the International House (a course for International TAs, an ESL Seminar, and the ESL Summer Institute) that are not part of WPI's curriculum.

In general, even though ESL students are a large part of its clientele, WPI's writing center has no specialized resources for working with ESL students, and we wonder if there is anything more that the writing center could or should do to improve ESL support and coordinate with other on-campus ESL resources. The goal of this MQP is to learn about these students' needs, to assess the current ESL resources available at WPI, to explore what other writing centers offer and to provide some recommendations for the writing center. In doing so, I address the following research questions:

1. What obstacles do ESL students face when learning to write at the college-level?
2. What sort of help with writing do ESL students need?
3. What types of services and/or resources for ESL writing are offered online, at WPI, and at other institutions similar to WPI?

My interest in this project stems from two places. First, as a writing tutor in the writing center at WPI for the past three years, I have encountered many ESL students who have looked for guidance in writing their papers. I've often felt as though my tutoring and teaching tactics haven't always gotten through to these ESL students, and I've wondered if there were a different approach I should be taking. Having more knowledge and resources available on-campus to both ESL students and those involved with tutoring or teaching them would provide both groups more opportunity to collaborate successfully.

Additionally, as a first generation American, I have spent years helping my Iranian parents (whose first and dominant language is Farsi) with their writing in English, and I am familiar with the confusion that comes with learning English as a second language.

If WPI's writing center had more resources to help both ESL students and tutors and if it were better connected with other on-campus resources, it might help diminish, at an early point, the confusion that many ESL students encounter with English, providing them with the support they need to successfully learn and practice their writing in English.

Methods

Each of the research questions presented in the Introduction was addressed by looking at a variety of resources.

QUESTION 1: What obstacles do ESL students face when learning to write at the college-level?

In order to learn about what obstacles ESL students face when learning to write, I read expert literature on common methods for teaching ESL students writing at the college level and existing theories on how ESL students learn. I read books from WPI's writing center, and I used the WPI Library's online reference databases to search for articles (using the search terms "ESL," "writing" and "writing center").

I looked for literature that would account for how ESL students learn English and writing in their native countries. I also looked for information on how ESL students are taught English –specifically how they are taught writing – once in college in the United States. With this information, I identified background factors that affect how ESL students learn.

Finally, I looked for literature that covered the different genres of academic writing and which genres were most used in academia. I also looked for literature that showed what ESL students struggle with within these particular genres.

To supplement the information gathered from the literature, I conducted interviews with Svetlana Nikitina, professor of the ISE 1811 Writing for Non-Native Speakers of English course and Billy McGowan, ESL director of the International House.

Billy D. McGowan of Milford, N.H., was hired in 1997 to plan and implement the ESL Summer Institute at WPI. McGowan earned a master's degree in international relations at Troy State University and a graduate certificate in teaching ESL at Clark University. Previously, McGowan taught English as a

Second Language and served as assistant academic director at the New England School of English in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He previously taught ESL in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Germany.

Professor Svetlana Nikitina has been teaching at WPI since 2005. She has a Ph.D. degree in Philosophy & Comparative Literature and a Masters of Education degree in Human Development and Psychology.

The interview questions used were:

- What is your ESL class for (what do you hope to teach and why)?
- Who is the class for?
- How is the course taught (what kind of assignments and skills do you cover and how are they covered)?
- What are the biggest challenges these students face in writing?
- Are students' needs/requests for writing instruction and help being met on campus?

QUESTION 2: What sort of help with writing do ESL students need?

I looked for literature that would account for what type of writing help ESL students most think they need as well as what type of writing help ESL instructors at the college level most think their students need. I also used the information from the interviews I conducted to supplement this data.

In addition to the literature review and the interviews, I also gathered data from the writing center database on what sort of help ESL tutees request versus what sort of help the tutor actually supplies. When tutees sign up for a session, they are asked to specify the type of assistance they want by checking boxes selecting the type of project they are working on (tutees are allowed to check more than one type of help) (Figure 1).

PLEASE SELECT THE TYPE OF PROJECT :	<input type="radio"/> MQP <input type="radio"/> IQP <input type="radio"/> SUFF <input type="radio"/> course paper <input type="radio"/> dissertation/thesis <input type="radio"/> application essay <input type="radio"/> resume ¹ /cover letter <input type="radio"/> creative writing <input type="radio"/> lab report or technical writing <input type="radio"/> oral presentation <input type="radio"/> visual design project <input type="radio"/> professional article/manuscript <input type="radio"/> other
SPECIFY TYPE OF ASSISTANCE:	<input type="checkbox"/> organizing the paper or document <input type="checkbox"/> critiquing / developing ideas <input type="checkbox"/> reviewing grammar or punctuation <input type="checkbox"/> interpreting assignment requirements <input type="checkbox"/> planning or rehearsing a presentation <input type="checkbox"/> quoting/citing sources <input type="checkbox"/> reading/researching strategies <input type="checkbox"/> improving sentence style <input type="checkbox"/> designing visuals <input type="checkbox"/> other

Figure 1. Writing Center Session Registration Questions

The specified assistance ESL tutees requested was then compared to the assistance writing tutors reported they gave during the session (also specified using a check-box system like that in the tutee registration).

QUESTION 3: What types of services and/or resources for ESL writing are offered online, at WPI, and at other institutions similar to WPI?

To answer this question, I looked at other schools’ writing center websites to see what sorts of resources they offered ESL students. I looked at a total of eleven schools, ten of which are schools that

are known for their engineering or science programs (like WPI) and one (Purdue) which is known for its writing center's online writing lab. These eleven schools are:

- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
- Rochester Institute of Technology
- Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
- California State Polytechnic University Pomona
- California Institute of Technology
- Polytechnic Institute of New York University
- Stanford University
- University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign)
- Texas A&M University
- Purdue University

To determine whether these writing centers took on the responsibility of creating their own resources or whether they outsourced, I looked at whether their websites had onsite materials or links to external sources. I also examined whether the available learning materials were static (such as handouts) or interactive (such as multimedia and interactive quizzes). I also listed popular referenced websites to see what kinds of topics these commonly “outsourced” materials covered as well as whether these resources were static or interactive.

I also contacted the writing center director at RPI since of all the schools I surveyed it was the most like WPI. I asked the writing center director the following questions about their ESL resources and programs:

- Do tutors at your writing center receive any training on how to help ESL students?

- What sorts of resources/help do you provide ESL students (whether at your writing center or through your website)?
- Do you create your own handouts/quizzes for ESL students to use or do you draw from an existing source? If you draw from a source, which source do you use?
- Do you collaborate with any other ESL-based organizations/people (such as an International House, ESL professors, etc.)?
- Is there anything you wish you could offer ESL students (either at your writing center or through your website) that you currently do not?

I also conducted interviews with Professor Nikitina and Billy McGowan and asked them the following question:

- Do you talk to other ESL resource staff? Are you aware of their approach? Are they of yours? Do you influence each other?

Finally, I looked at the writing center's ESL resources. I especially looked at the writing center's website to see if there were any links or online resources specific to ESL students featured.

Results

Obstacles

ESL students in American Universities face obstacles when becoming proficient in English academic writing due to their inexperience with academic writing and to cultural differences in their rhetorical approach to writing.

ESL students do not have extensive experience in academic writing.

In general, ESL students do not have as much exposure to written English as to spoken English. An ESL student receives much exposure to spoken English through the media, conversation, and other kinds of spoken English. Thi Minh Phuong Nguyen (2009) from the University of New South Wales studied Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, and other Asian students from the Meridian International School in Surrey Hills, Sydney and noticed that these students had been taught conversational English since they were young and were familiar with the slang that they saw in American movies. Because many international students are more comfortable with spoken English, learning formal written English can be similar to learning another language for these ESL students since the language style used in writing is different from that used in conversation (Malia, 2006).

In addition, ESL students have not had a lot of training in academic writing. Even though many international college students have had a great deal of English instruction, it has mostly been focused on vocabulary and grammar. For example, most students from China and Korea study English for as long as eleven years in their home countries, but that study mostly consists of memorization of vocabulary words and basic grammar tests (Murphy & Sherwood, 2007). This emphasis on grammar drills is not limited to schools outside the United States. Thomas Nowalk (2010) reviewed ten classrooms in Northern Virginia Community College and found that “a consistent priority ... has remained grammar:

practicing grammar, comprehending grammar rules, and conducting frequent feedback through quizzes” (p. 54). Zen (2005) asserted that “while these activities are necessary and even important in a language class, they are not *writing in its real sense*, nor do they lend themselves adequately to the development of students’ writing competence – the ability to use written language for communication” (p. 3). At best, knowing all these rules can only serve as a sort of "monitor" for language learners and while learning these rules can prepare students to score high on standardized tests, it does not prepare them for writing college-level papers.

Since most English instruction in foreign countries focuses on vocabulary and grammar, writing activities in these classes solely consist of exercises that consolidate lexical and grammar knowledge or exercises that check students’ reading comprehension, not exercises that allow the students to learn about and practice academic writing. Accordingly, Zen (2005) stated that it is not uncommon to see students who have had years of English language instruction have difficulty when writing in English. As an example, Zen (2005) wrote that Chinese students who go to English speaking countries for undergraduate or graduate work have some initial difficulty in writing academic papers even if they scored high on the TOEFL test. Zen (2005) stated that while the reason for this failure is multifaceted, the largest part of the problem is that these students have not received sufficient or appropriate training. In general, high school students in the U.S. (even those who are not ESL) do not do a lot of extensive writing other than personal opinion writing, reports, or analysis of a single (usually a literary) text. Lorraine Higgins (1993) found that high schools students are normally asked to report on or respond to texts and do not have much experience using multiple texts to argue a position. In college, students are frequently asked to synthesize source ideas into consistent claims. However, the type of writing most practiced in high school doesn’t encourage students to adapt the information they gain from their sources for argument and analysis purposes.

One reason why ESL students may not have significant training in collegiate academic writing is because many of their schools may “teach to the test”. In this case, many ESL students and educators solely focus on passing the TEOFL exam. However, writing only plays a small role in this test, and the type of writing it tests is stance/position and response/reaction writing in which students are asked to compare/contrast on a lower level (fewer sources to draw from, asked to make a simple argument) than typical academic writing. This type of writing is not sophisticated and does not match the kind of writing analysis and argument from multiple sources that is often assigned at the college level, such as literary essays, analytical reports, laboratory, and scientific research reports.

The TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is used by more than 7,500 colleges, universities and agencies in more than 130 countries, including WPI. At WPI, ESL students applying to WPI must receive a minimum score of 213 (computer based test), 550 (paper-based test), or 79-80 (internet-based test) on their TOEFL in order to be admitted and higher scores are required for graduate students who will be teaching assistants. International students whose score results are less than those above may still be admitted, but will be required to attend WPI’s English as a Second Language Program during the summer prior to their enrollment.

TOEFL test is given in English and is taken online. The TOEFL test consists of four sections: listening, reading, speaking and writing. The whole test takes a total of four and a half hours to complete. A breakdown of the different sections can be seen in Table 1 (ETS TOEFL iBT™ Test Content).

Table 1 Different sections of the TOEFL test

Section	Time Limit	Question	Tasks
Listening	60-90 minutes	34-51 questions	Listen to lectures, classroom discussions and conversations, then answer questions
Reading	60-100 minutes	36-70 questions	Read passages from academic texts and answer questions
Break	10 minutes	--	--
Speaking	20 minutes	6 tasks	Express an opinion on a familiar topic; speak based on reading and listening tasks
Writing	50 minutes	2 tasks	Write essay responses based on reading and listening tasks; support an opinion in writing

The directions for the writing section can be seen in Figure 2. As the directions show, students have to complete two writing tasks – one in response to a passage and a lecture and the other is an opinion question where students must pick a side and defend it.

The image shows a screenshot of a test interface. At the top left, there is a navigation menu with 'Test Section' and 'Writing' buttons. In the top center, there is a yellow 'Quit' button. At the top right, there is a 'VOLUME' logo. The main content area is titled 'Writing Section Directions' and contains the following text:

These sample tasks in the **Writing** section measure your ability to write in English in an academic environment.

- There will be 2 writing tasks.
- For the first task, you will read a passage, listen to a lecture, and then answer a question based on what you have read and heard.
- For the second task, you will answer a question based on your own knowledge and experience.

Figure 2. Writing Section Directions

Figure 3 shows the directions for the first writing assignment. For this writing assignment, students first read a passage presenting one side of an issue, then listen to the lecture which presents an alternative side to the same issue, and then answer a question about that issue. For the passage presented in Figure 4, the question the students must answer is, “Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to explain how they oppose specific points made in the reading passage.” This writing task asks the student to compare/contrast two sources. While this type of writing brushes the surface of the type of writing from sources that occurs in the college-level, it does not fully encompass it. On the college/university level, writing from sources requires the use of more than two sources. It also requires the development of a stronger argument than to simply compare/contrast.

Test Section	Question Number			
Writing	1 of 2	Quit	CONTINUE	VOLUME

**Writing Based on Reading and Listening
Directions**

For this task, you will read a passage about an academic topic. A clock at the top of the screen will show how much time you have to read. You may take notes on the passage while you read. The passage will then be removed and you will listen to a lecture about the same topic. While you listen you may also take notes. You will be able to see the reading passage again when it is time for you to write. You may use your notes to help you answer the question.

You will then have to write a response to a question that asks you about the relationship between the lecture you heard and the reading passage. Try to answer the question as completely as possible using information from the reading passage and the lecture. The question does not ask you to express your personal opinion. Your response will be judged on the quality of your writing and on the completeness and accuracy of the content.

Immediately after the reading time ends the lecture will begin, so keep your headset on until the lecture is over.

Figure 3. Directions for Writing Based on Reading and Listening Question

Critics say that current voting systems used in the United States are inefficient and often lead to the inaccurate counting of votes. Miscounts can be especially damaging if an election is closely contested. Those critics would like the traditional systems to be replaced with far more efficient and trustworthy computerized voting systems.

In traditional voting, one major source of inaccuracy is that people accidentally vote for the wrong candidate. Voters usually have to find the name of their candidate on a large sheet of paper containing many names—the ballot—and make a small mark next to that name. People with poor eyesight can easily mark the wrong name. The computerized voting machines have an easy-to-use touch-screen technology: to cast a vote, a voter needs only to touch the candidate's name on the screen to record a vote for that candidate; voters can even have the computer magnify the name for easier viewing.

Another major problem with old voting systems is that they rely heavily on people to count the votes. Officials must often count up the votes one by one, going through every ballot and recording the vote. Since they have to deal with thousands of ballots, it is almost inevitable that they will make mistakes. If an error is detected, a long and expensive recount has to take place. In contrast, computerized systems remove the possibility of human error, since all the vote counting is done quickly and automatically by the computers.

Finally some people say it is too risky to implement complicated voting technology nationwide. But without giving it a thought, governments and individuals alike trust other complex computer technology every day to be perfectly accurate in banking transactions as well as in the communication of highly sensitive information.

Figure 4. Reading Passage in Writing Based on Reading and Listening Question

The directions for the second writing prompt can be seen in Figure 5. This prompt requires students to use their own knowledge and experiences to support an opinion. Similar to the last writing prompt, this prompt does not ask students to synthesize from different sources or practice or create an argument or thesis. An example question can be seen in Figure 6.

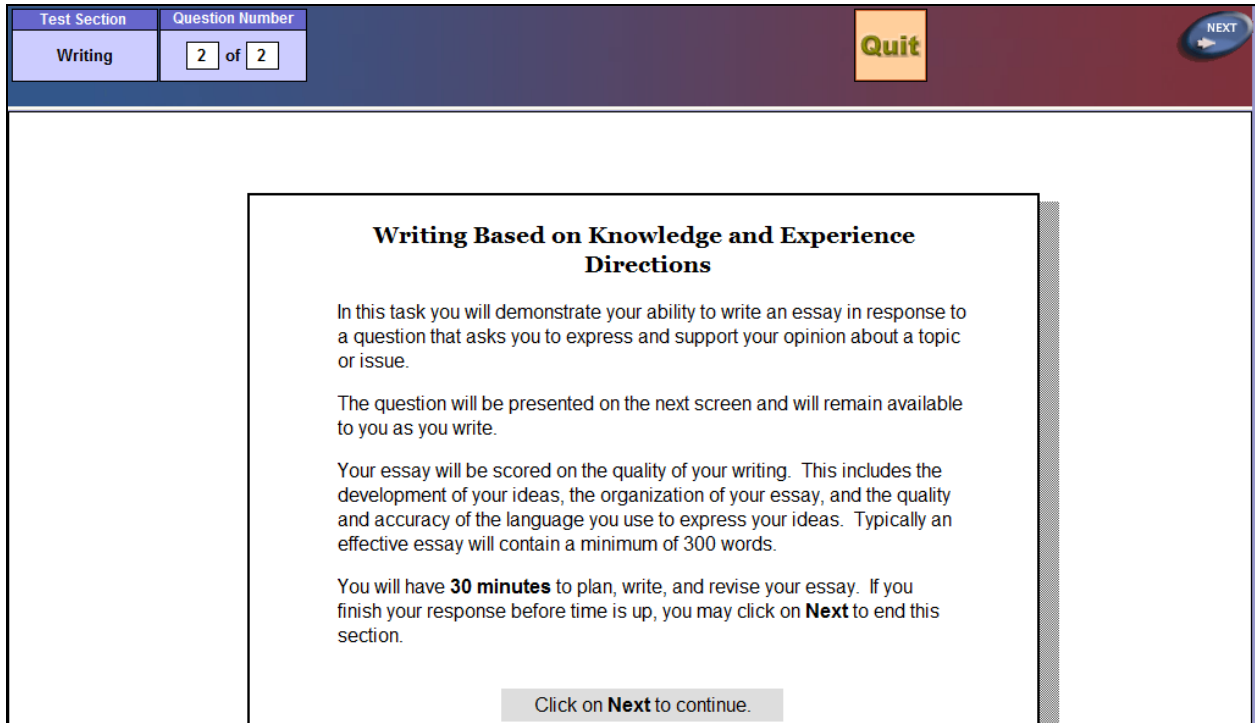


Figure 5. Directions for Writing based on Knowledge and Experience Question

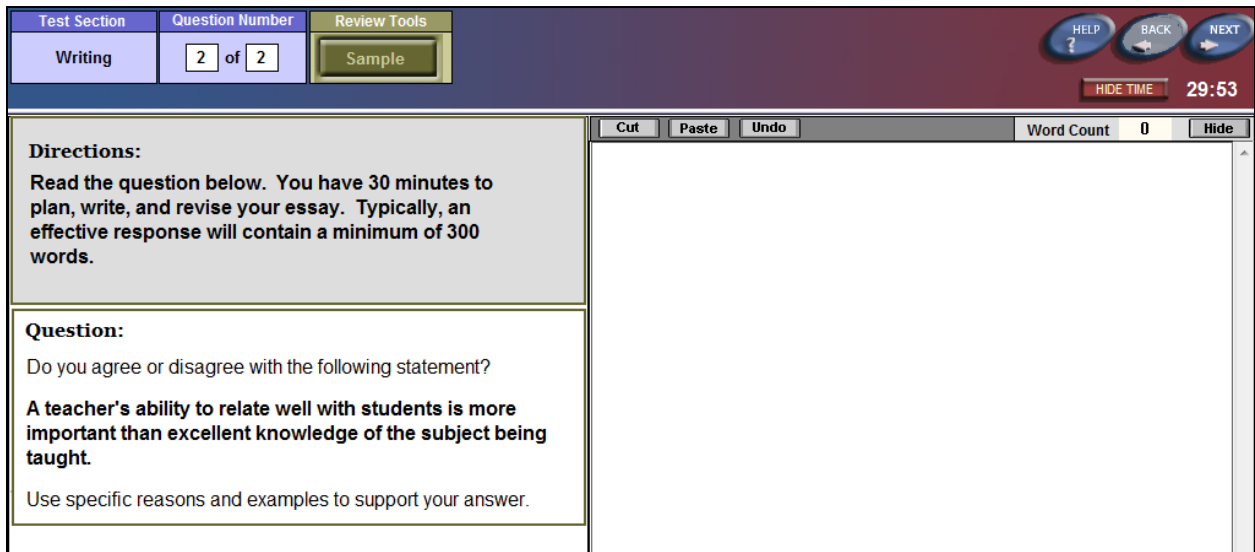


Figure 6. Prompt for Writing based on Knowledge and Experience Question

Given that these students spend much of their education preparing for the simplistic writing prompts featured on the TOEFL, it is not surprising that they struggle with complex argumentation and analysis based on multiple sources. These students have not been given the opportunity to properly study the more sophisticated types of writing required of them at the university level and so need a course, a series of courses, or further instruction in their current courses that covers this background.

Cultural background affects ESL students' rhetorical approach in writing.

In addition to lack of experience with the more difficult academic writing tasks, ESL students may also struggle with writing because of cultural factors that influence how they write in English. Jinyan Huang (2009), an Assistant Professor in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and Assessment at Niagara University, stated that there are many cultural factors that can affect an ESL student's writing, including their English proficiency, mother tongue, home culture, and style of written communication. The interviews with Professor Nikitina and Billy McGowan reinforced the idea that the challenges ESL students face when writing are closely linked with their cultural background. Nikitina mentioned that the types of problems the ESL students have in her class vary based on their backgrounds. These cultural differences affect the transferability of writing skills across languages since different cultures have different expectations for writing (Malia, 2006). Paula Gillespie and Neal Lerner (2007) wrote that some examples of culturally based rhetorical patterns are

- In Western countries linear and direct argument is favored
- In Asian countries much of the writing is indirect and is sensitive to the writer's status
- In some Arabic countries the rhetorical approach is circular (p.118)

Nancy Hayward (2004) found that cultural rhetorical differences may be manifested in many ways throughout an ESL student's writing: in a paper's organization (such as in different reasoning patterns), in the sentence style, in the forms of address or register (such as issues with formality), in an apparent

lack of cohesive ties, and in the amount or type of information that is included. Hayward illustrated this by providing examples of how different cultural groups' rhetorical differences manifest themselves in their writing. Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, and Thai students approach a topic from a variety of viewpoints in order to examine it indirectly; French and Spanish writers have more freedom to digress and introduce extraneous material; and Arabic speakers report that their writing is less direct than writing in English (Hayward, 2004).

Because of these different rhetorical patterns, the writing ESL students have done throughout their academic career in their home countries might be very different from what is expected from them in American academic institutions. For example, Silva (1993) cited a study which reported that native speakers of Arabic less often stated and supported their arguments fully, had less paragraphing, less rhetorical connectedness, and looser segmental (introduction, discussion, conclusion) structure than native speakers of English. However, once in American universities, ESL students are suddenly expected to write like American students. Ganguly (2004) noted that this can be difficult for ESL students because they have to learn to write in a new way and make a conscious effort to not write as they have always written. Harris and Silva (1993) maintained that tutors need to keep in mind that "not all members of a particular group may manifest all of the problems or cultural preferences associated with that group; and not all problems will be a result of transfer of [first-language] patterns" (p. 528). Nevertheless, in some cases, culture can account for challenges in their writing.

Cultural differences also play a role when it comes to plagiarism. Plagiarism does not have one universal meaning, and according to Kurt Bouman (cited in Bruce & Rafoth, 2004) it can be used in the U.S. to describe:

- Using ideas from a source without acknowledging the source
- Copying specific words or phrases from a source without using quotation marks

- Doing a word-for-word substitution in an attempt to paraphrase a source, but keeping the source's basic ideas and sentence structure intact
- 'Patchwriting,' or building a paper by patching together sections of text from one or more sources
- Submitting a paper downloaded off the internet (p. 106).

Bouman stated that the important thing to remember about ESL students and plagiarism is that "most students who plagiarize do so inadvertently: they don't intend to break any rules, but their language skills or knowledge of citation conventions may not allow them to work with sources in ways appropriate to the context they're writing in" (p. 112). This is especially true of Asian students. Cultural beliefs unique to Asian cultures, such as the Confucian heritage, imply that the individual only exists to others and recommends the sharing of ideas as communal property. This can provide some perspective on the different understanding Asian students have about textual ownership and plagiarism (Maxwell, Curtis, & Vardanega, 2008).

ESL Students may not be able to identify their own writing errors.

Because of their educational and cultural backgrounds, ESL writers can often cite grammar rules and apply them correctly in an exercise, but they can have difficulty in utilizing them when they write an essay and are often not able to identify errors on their own in their own writing (Hayward, 2004).

Accordingly, ESL students are very often aware of the different types of usage and punctuation errors, but they do not know how to fix them. Therefore, tutors/instructors need to spend time developing strategies that increase the students' awareness of their errors. Gillespie and Lerner (2007) explain that the typical process of error correction has the following three steps:

1. Spotting the error
2. Understanding why it is a problem

3. Identifying the appropriate fix
4. Applying that fix (p.125)

While ESL students may be able to spot the error in their writing (step 1), they are less proficient at understanding why it is a problem (step2), identifying the appropriate fix (step 3), and applying that fix (step 4).

ESL writers make common local writing errors.

Harris & Silva (1993) report that the most common errors that ESL writers make are the following:

- Verbs
 - Inflectional morphology (agreement with nouns in person, number, etc.)
 - Verbal forms (participals, infinitives, gerunds)
 - Verb complementation (the types of clauses or constructions that must follow a particular verb)
- Nouns
 - Inflection (especially in terms of singular/plural and count/mass distinctions)
 - Derivation (deriving nouns from other parts of speech), e.g., quick-quickness, which often seems quite arbitrary to non-native speakers)
- Articles (related to problems in classifying nouns)
 - Use of wrong article
 - Missing article
 - Use of an article when none is necessary or appropriate
- Prepositions (primarily a result of limited lexical resources)
 - Knowing which one goes with a particular noun, verb, adjective, or adverb(p. 534)

Nikitina and McGowan reported that in their classes, they see that students have the hardest time with such sentence level issues as number, tense, pronoun agreement, wordiness, dangling modifiers, and spelling. They also have a difficult time with syntax (the arrangement of words in a sentence) and conveying a message through their writing.

ESL students typically learn a lot about usage, grammar etc. in their schooling. Despite this, they still have some trouble using this knowledge in their writing skills. So, in addition to these usage and grammar issues, it is important to help ESL students with how to apply these to their writing and to cover more global issues such as organization. This is best done through writing practice and collaborative editing.

ESL writers may be prioritizing their grammatical mistakes over global issues such as content development and organization.

Malia (2006) found through a survey of writing instructors from USC that ESL students feel that in order to be successful academically and write like a native English speaker, they must perfect their grammar, punctuation, and usage. Nowalk (2010) agreed that ESL students see learning proper grammar as the most important skill for writing well. In general, ESL students are more eager to correct their errors than native speakers (Leki, 1992). So ESL students are aware of all the problems raised in the previous section. However, when ESL students are concerned with local issues such as word choice, grammar and punctuation at the expense of attending to larger issues such as content development and organization, it can negatively affect their ability to write complex academic papers because they do not pay as much attention to such global issues as organization and meaning-related errors (writing errors that impede the meaning of the writing) that come from the misunderstanding of a cultural rule or content. Research shows that a fixation with local errors does not improve the quality of the written product and instead may actually obstruct the writing process. ESL students are interested in fixing their grammatical mistakes and want their English teachers to point out their grammatical errors (Leki, 1992).

Therefore, rather than worrying too much about grammar errors, ESL students should focus on the piece of writing as a whole and look at the text from a global perspective (including elements such as the development of ideas or content, focus, genre, argument, thesis, development, organization, clarity of purpose, awareness of audience (Malia, 2006). Surveys and observations conducted by Nowalk(2010) with the students in Virginia Community College classes have shown that ESL students have the aforementioned perspective on writing. In surveys, ESL students indicated that they believed that rules for grammar and vocabulary usage are most critical to follow in their writing (p.54).

Help Needed

In order to improve their proficiency in written academic English, ESL students might benefit from course or a series of courses that will allow them to learn about and practice all facets of academic writing. In addition, they could benefit feedback on their writing in the form of one-on-one conferencing/tutoring sessions.

ESL students could benefit from academic writing courses.

As discussed in the previous section, learning how to write often receives less attention in a foreign language class than learning grammatical lessons and vocabulary. In fact, despite the growth of the ESL population, teaching second/foreign language writing in the university is a relatively new venture (Matsuda, 1998). Currently, most writing activities presented in an ESL class at the college level are still focused on vocabulary and grammar exercises. However, recent research has shown that writing extends far past this lexical and grammatical knowledge. Instead, it involves many complex processes and needs to be taught as its own entity (Zen, 2005).

It is important for ESL students to have some instruction about different academic writing genres (especially regarding its general organization and structure) before having to write. Many ESL college students have problems with academic genres (such as lab reports, research papers, scientific articles, etc.) because, as noted earlier, they have little experience with such writing in the past, and because specific disciplines have different expectations for writing (Malia, 2006). And their cultural backgrounds may favor certain organizational patterns that are in conflict with western academic genres. Nguyen (2010) defines genre writing by saying that a genre “represents how writers typically use languages to respond to specific tasks in given situations” (p. 17). Reviewing the common features of academic genres with ESL students before they actually write a paper would help them immensely. When ESL students can fully understand the different requirements (such as format, vocabulary, style, tone, references, assessments, quotations, etc.) of different genres of academic writing, they will be better able to produce a similar piece of writing. An important part of understanding a genre is understanding its purpose and audience. A genre’s purpose and audience explain why a text is formatted as it is, and are also context and culturally specific, so discussing purposes/audience in western contexts seems critical to an ESL student’s education.

ESL students should take courses that help them enhance their writing skills and allows them to master the different reference styles and genres. However, many institutions do not have any ESL writing specialists within their writing programs or do not offer special ESL sections (Matsuda, 1998). Furthermore, many freshman composition courses are literature courses and do not teach a wide range of genres. Additionally, a great deal of research suggests that writing should not be taught in a separate course but each disciplinary genre should be taught in that field. Some have argued ESL students should not take English and writing courses alongside native speakers prior to taking the proper ESL course(s) because their lack of background in academic writing will cause them to not be prepared for the types of upper-level writing required in these classes (Malia, 2006). Although non-ESL

students may also lack background in many types of academic writing, such a course geared towards ESL students could combine instruction on the more basic writing skills that ESL students need with instruction on how to switch from the rhetorical moves of writing in their native language to those of writing in English. It is especially important since many non-ESL writing courses are generally taught by teachers with limited or no ESL background. Instructors with ESL backgrounds better know what sorts of tools work best for ESL students and what sorts of things ESL students need to learn and how they can learn them (Matsuda, 1998). As Billy McGowan stated, although international students may not necessarily like taking writing classes, they do see the benefit of these classes because they help students receive the writing help necessary for completing college-level work.

An example of existing courses that prepares ESL students in academic writing are the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes held in the United Kingdom and Australia. EAP courses have a different educational approach than General English courses. EAP courses focus on reading and writing while General English courses for ESL students concentrate on speaking and listening. In EAP courses, formal, academic genres are taught rather than conversation, thereby better preparing their students for college writing tasks by practicing their writing. Developing a writing repertoire of strategies for genres, knowledge about cultural expressions is an essential feature of an EAP course along with mastering reference styles (APA, Harvard, or Chicago Manual of Style) and understanding these styles, and improving reading skills. With regard to reading skills, Nguyen (2010) wrote that students in the EAP course at the Meridian International School in Sydney are required to read hundreds of pages on technical issues and are thus instructed on how to obtain information quickly from reading materials since the ability to select and remember necessary information is considered to be essential for the survival and thriving of these students.

Nguyen (2010) wrote that in most Australian universities “EAP is the pre-sessional pathway where learning skills are provided to students to engage them into the academic environment” (p.

18).According to Nguyen (2010), the skills, genres, and strategies taught in EAP courses are:

- Essay writing
- Report writing
- Research skills(including reading from sources)
- Critical thinking
- Effective listening and note-taking skills
- Oral presentation skills
- Active participation skills in group and classroom discussions (p.17)

These academic writing courses should also teach students academic vocabulary. If students are not taught the vocabulary associated with academic writing, they will not understand the meanings of the terms presented in the genre or how to use them in their own writing (Nguyen, 2010). Although the vocabularies students may use differ depending on their major, just the seemingly simple rule of using more formal language in writing (what Hayward referred to as the forms of address or register) is a lesson that should be taught and reinforced.

In addition to important humanities knowledge and writing (such as ways of thinking about culture and self), ESL students may benefit from knowledge about technical genres more immediately related to their profession. ESL students would welcome this additional knowledge since they recognize its relevance. Since at WPI, students mostly write lab reports, scientific research papers, and projects papers (like for the IQP and MQP), these are the genres that should be emphasized in writing courses at WPI along with the Humanities and literature essays that are already taught. Nguyen (2010) states that at the undergraduate level “writing activities can range from a laboratory report to an extended essay of 10,000 words” (p. 17). Therefore, providing just as many writing courses for technical and scientific

writing as for literature and humanities writing would be beneficial especially at an institution where most students major in a science or engineering field

ESL students need feedback in the form of one-on-one conferences.

For ESL students, one-to-one conferences are a more beneficial method of providing feedback to a piece of writing because not only can the tutor or instructor explain elements of writing in much greater detail during a one-to-one conference, but the student can also ask questions if he or she is confused and can communicate their ideas orally which may help them phrase things better in writing (Ganguly, 2004).

One-to-one conferencing provides an interactive environment in which ESL students receive active help in proofreading. In general, adult ESL writers are not able to proofread their own work based off what “sounds” right like native English speakers can because they are unable to revise by ear (Harris and Silva, 1993). Therefore, ESL students need active help from a writing tutor or instructor in order to more effectively revise their writing.

By talking their ideas out with tutors in one-to-one conferences, ESL students are better able to reword and clarify their ideas. Ganguly (2004) noticed that when an ESL student is asked to explain his/her writing he/she “usually talks about the idea he/she is trying to convey in much greater detail. They use three sentences to explain what they have said cryptically in one” (p. 12). So when talking their ideas through with the tutors/instructors, ESL students can better choose what words best represent their ideas (Nguyen, 2010). In this way, the feedback given to ESL writing is like collaborative problem-solving that eventually gives the student increased competence and independence.

Conferencing one-on-one is also advantageous when discussing issues about plagiarism with ESL students. Bouman stated that the best way for tutors to catch and correct plagiarism is to do the following:

- Be direct and explicit when discussing problems with using sources
- Ask the writer, “Did you consult any sources as you wrote this paper?”
- Ask the ESL writer about his understanding of plagiarism, and about how he is accustomed to writing with sources
- During a consultation, look at a writer’s sources side-by-side with her papers (p.110-111)

The aforementioned steps are best accomplished during one-on-one sessions where both the tutee and the tutor can fully express their ideas and communicate what is or is not considered to be plagiarism.

Given the aforementioned advantages of one-on-one conferencing, it is clear that is important that instructors take the time to conference one-on-one with their students. This has implications in favor of small classes and also for having an ESL-specific class where ESL students can receive this increased support from their instructor. In the absence of such instructor support or to augment it, writing tutors become important for their ability to also effectively conference one-on-one with ESL students.

Writing conferences should be directive and focus on global issues as well as local issues.

In these sessions, tutors and instructors should take a more directive approach. This approach consists of using declarative statements rather than questions (Murphy & Sherwood, 2007). To illustrate, Donald A. McAndrew and Thomas J. Reigstad (2001) discussed an example from Judith Powers. Powers reported that the tutoring at her writing center underwent a large change when the number of ESL writers increased dramatically. Powers noticed that the tutors had to intervene more directly with ESL writers and that teaching ESL writers may involve “teaching them directly what their writing should look like ... informing them of what their audiences will expect” (as cited in McAndrew &

Reigstad, 2001, p.97). This is because tutors cannot ask ESL students to provide knowledge that they don't have in the first place (Harris & Silva, 1993). Muriel Harris and Tony Silva (1993) say that this may mean that tutors will have take on the role of "teller" during the session because they will need to provide "cultural, rhetorical, and/or linguistic information which native speakers intuitively possess and which ESL students do not have, but need to have to complete their writing assignments effectively" (p. 533).

In commenting on early drafts, teachers or tutors might focus on global errors over local errors. Ganguly (2004) recommends that "tutors may want to focus on global issues like organization or transitions during one session, and on local issues like comma splices and subject-verb-agreement during another tutorial session" (p. 12). If the tutor attempts to cover too much during one session, they run the risk of overwhelming and discouraging the tutee which would get in the way of the tutee learning anything at all (Ganguly, 2004).

Writing conferences should utilize visual tools.

ESL students learn well through the use of visual tools. Most often for ESL students, showing is better than telling. For example, Ganguly (2004) wrote that providing students with examples of properly written essays better teaches them how to write their own essay. Furthermore, once ESL students have their thoughts down on paper, they are able to analyze them better. Ganguly (2004) found that "Mind-mapping" is an exercise that works well with ESL students because it allows them to clarify their thoughts, how their thoughts should be organized, and how their thoughts relate to the question. It also helps them put the topic/issue they are dealing with in perspective, giving them a clear idea of what their own opinion is.

Mind-mapping gives the students a visual that displays an overview of both sides of the argument. Mind mapping is a technique where you start with a main idea and draw out connections

between it and subtopics, examples and other ideas to organize your thoughts before you write. Mind maps can be used in argument papers, but they can also be used for lots of other types of papers. It does so by asking students to write the main idea of the issue in the middle of a piece of paper. They then write all supporting evidence on one side of the paper and all opposing evidence on the other side of the paper (Ganguly, 2004).

Another strategy for structuring ideas credited to U. Connor and M. Farmer has writers circle each independent clause in a paragraph and then has the instructor/tutor ask the writer to notice how many new ideas are introduced in each paragraph (Leki, 1992). This is a good way for students to make sure each topic sentence has its own paragraph and support. Furthermore, it allows students to work on the organization of their paper by making sure their topic sentences transition well.

Although handouts are often seen as a helpful tool in teaching ESL students about writing, and especially for learning grammar, handouts may not actually benefit ESL students as much as they would native English speakers. Handouts often require the user to have some basic idea of the language and are therefore better suited to native English speakers (Ganguly, 2004). Although the writing center has a database of various handouts, tutors should understand that these handouts may not necessarily help ESL tutees understand the problems in their writing. Tutors should instead learn and utilize other tactics/tools to help their tutees such as talking about or explaining a writing rule in person or using visual tools such as mind-mapping or gist and list.

During writing conferences, tutors act as cultural informants.

Teachers and tutors can also provide comments about cultural norms by acting as cultural informants. Sharon Myers (2003), director of the Academic ESL Program at Texas Tech University, stated that culture “refers not only to the contours of personal space, the educational role of teacher and student, the sense of time, the politeness conventions and the discourse conventions of a given group,

but to language and its forms” (p. 55) She continues by saying that culture includes “the way a given language determines, subordinates, complements, coordinates, pluralizes, counts, modalizes, interrogates, lexicalizes” (Myers, 2003, p. 55). Myers (2003) wrote that the greatest cultural writing problem many ESL students have is controlling the syntax and lexis of English vocabulary and that lexis is not limited to what is thought of as “vocabulary” such as multi-word units and phrases such as “in some ways,” “on either side of,” “make arrangements for,” and “highly significant.” Such cultural sayings in English are phrased very differently than they would be in a different language and there is no set of rules explaining how these sayings should be regulated. So this is an area of written English that is especially difficult for ESL students to master and also an area in which a tutor must act as a cultural informant and tell the tutee what is correct.

ESL writing help at the WPI writing center.

Table 2 Type of Projects ESL students requested help with (A-Term)

Type of Project	Number of Students
MQP	0
IQP	4
SUFF	0
course paper	18
dissertation/thesis	0
application essay	1
resume/cover letter	0
creative writing	0
lab report or technical writing	1
oral presentation	0
visual design project	0
professional article/manuscript	0
other	0

To better understand what sort of help ESL students request (what they think they need) and how that compares with the type of help they receive (what readers perceive they need), I looked at a sampling of sessions of ESL students at the writing center from September 9, 2010 to September 26, 2010 (A Term). During A-term, twenty-four ESL students visited the writing center for help with their assignments, ranging from course paper to lab reports². The most common type of project (75%) they wanted help with was help on course papers (Table 2). The most common type of project native speakers wanted help with was also course papers (52%) (Table 3).

² Numbers may be skewed due to the ISE 1811 Writing for Non-Native Speakers of English course

Table 3: Types of Projects Native Speakers requested help with (A-Term)

Type of Project	Number of Students
MQP	1
IQP	7
SUFF	3
course paper	18
dissertation/thesis	1
application essay	3
resume/cover letter	0
creative writing	0
lab report or technical writing	0
oral presentation	0
visual design project	0
professional article/manuscript	0
other	1

During the sessions surveyed in February (C-Term), nine ESL students visited the writing center for help with their assignments. The most common type of project (56%) they wanted help with was help on course papers (Table 4). The most common type of project native speakers wanted help with was also course papers (62%) (Table 5). So, even in a term where no ESL course was offered, ESL students still mostly focused on course writing; however, some students did come in looking for help on their IQPs and application essays as well as other projects.

Table 4 Types of Projects ESL students requested help with (C-Term)

Type of Project	Number of Students
MQP	0
IQP	0
SUFF	0
course paper	5
dissertation/thesis	0
application essay	2
resume/cover letter	0
creative writing	0
lab report or technical writing	2
oral presentation	0
visual design project	0
professional article/manuscript	0
other	0

Table 5 Types of Projects Native Speakers requested help with (C-Term)

Type of Project	Number of Students
MQP	0
IQP	1
SUFF	0
course paper	13
dissertation/thesis	0
application essay	3
resume/cover letter	2
creative writing	0
lab report or technical writing	1
oral presentation	0
visual design project	0
professional article/manuscript	0
other	1

In the surveyed sessions in September, of the ten different types of help that students can request at the writing center, the most common type requested was reviewing grammar or punctuation (71% of them requested), followed by sentence style (63%) (Table 6).³ Since these students may not really know how to define grammar versus style, this may suggest that students wanting help on style are requesting help on grammar and vice versa. Comparatively, the most common type of requested help by native speakers was critiquing/developing ideas (56%) and organizing the paper/document (50%) (Table 7). This echoes Nowalk's findings in the literature review which stated that ESL students are mostly concerned with such sentence-level issues, especially grammar. However, these students did request help with global issues such as organization (50%) and idea development (42%). A number of ESL students (33%) also requested help in interpreting assignments. This could be relevant in terms of the cultural transfer problems that ESL students experience when learning to write in English. As previously mentioned, different cultures have different expectations of writing, so these students may be confused as to what is expected of them from the writing assignment.

In comparing their requests to what the tutor actually helped with, a similar pattern emerged. Tutors helped with the same top 4 issues the students had requested help with (organizing the paper or document, critiquing/developing ideas, reviewing grammar or punctuation, improving sentence style) just in different order; they worked on style more than grammar problems. This could suggest that usage of language and wording were the real focus. This may correlate with the fact that many ESL students do not know the difference between grammar and style—they just know they need help at sentence level. The research shows that usage problems are far more common than actual grammatical or punctuation problems. Only 50% actually received help in reviewing grammar or punctuation from their tutor. This may suggest that both groups (tutors and ESL tutees) slightly prioritized sentence level issues, but they did also attend to global issues a lot of the time. The data suggests that tutors mostly

³ Since students can ask for more than one type of help, these percentages do not add up to 100

gave help on improving sentence style (to 63% of the students), reviewing grammar or punctuation (to 50% of the students), and critiquing/developing ideas (to 46% of the students). The style and usage help may be used to help ESL students with the aforementioned meaning-related errors. On the other hand, while 50% of the ESL students requested help with “organizing the paper or document,” only 38% of the students received that help. This may mean that tutors may be forgetting to focus on organization and global issues or if they may simply be running out of enough time to cover these issues.

Table 6 Type of help ESL students requested/received (A-Term)

Type of Help	Number of Students Requesting Help	Number of Students Receiving Help
organizing the paper or document	12	9
critiquing / developing ideas	10	11
reviewing grammar or punctuation	17	12
interpreting assignment requirements	8	6
planning or rehearsing a presentation	0	0
quoting/citing sources	5	5
reading/researching strategies	1	0
improving sentence style	15	15
designing visuals	0	0
other	0	0

Table 7 Type of help Native speakers requested/received (A-Term)

Type of Help	Number of Students Requesting Help	Number of Students Receiving Help
organizing the paper or document	17	15
critiquing / developing ideas	19	18
reviewing grammar or punctuation	5	1
interpreting assignment requirements	7	5
planning or rehearsing a presentation	0	0
quoting/citing sources	1	1
reading/researching strategies	1	1
improving sentence style	3	6
designing visuals	0	0
other	1	0

In the surveyed sessions in February, of the ten different types of help that students can request at the writing center, the most common type requested by ESL students were organizing the paper or document, critiquing/developing ideas, and improving sentence style(56% of them requested), followed by reviewing grammar or punctuation (33%) (Table 8). This shift in requested help may be because students are no longer in an ESL class and may no longer be focusing on local issues that they have learned in their class as much. Comparatively, the most common type of requested help by native speakers was critiquing/developing ideas and organizing the paper/document (Table 9). While these findings do show that ESL students are more concerned with organization and idea development than

the September findings showed, it still reinforces the idea the ESL students are more concerned with sentence style than native speakers.

Table 8Type of help ESL students requested/received (C-Term)

Type of Help	Number of Students Requesting Help	Number of Students Receiving Help
organizing the paper or document	5	5
critiquing / developing ideas	5	3
reviewing grammar or punctuation	3	4
interpreting assignment requirements	1	
planning or rehearsing a presentation	0	
quoting/citing sources	0	1
reading/researching strategies	0	0
improving sentence style	5	7
designing visuals	0	0
other	1	0

Table 9Type of help Native speakers requested/received (C-Term)

Type of Help	Number of Students Requesting Help	Number of Students Receiving Help
organizing the paper or document	12	16
critiquing / developing ideas	11	17
reviewing grammar or punctuation	7	2
interpreting assignment requirements	2	3
planning or rehearsing a presentation	0	0
quoting/citing sources	3	2
reading/researching strategies	0	0
improving sentence style	7	7
designing visuals	0	0
other	2	2

Current Resources

Online resources for ESL students.

I looked at eleven other schools' writing center websites to see what sorts of online resources they offered ESL students(grammar and writing handouts, quizzes, etc.). Seven of the websites (64%) had at least one online resource geared toward ESL students. Most notable was Purdue University's writing center online writing lab (O.W.L.) which had many ESL resources created by the center itself. This page contains grammar and mechanics instructional handouts, grammar exercises, links to professional resources, tips for workplace writing in different countries, and much more. Purdue's ESL page is so exemplary that many other schools resort to simply adding a link to Purdue in their own ESL online page. Four of the seven schools (57%) that had online resources provided links to Purdue on their websites. WPI's writing center website, on the other hand, does not have its own ESL webpage. Instead, all that is available to ESL students online on the writing center website is a few links hidden in a list of "Web-Based Writing Centers and Resources" under the "Writing Resources" tab. There are links to general writing resources (such as Purdue's OWL website), but only two links listed direct to an ESL specific page (a link to WPI's Scientific English as a Foreign Language site and a link to Gallaudet University's ESL site).

Each of these eleven schools' writing center online ESL resources were checked against a list of potential online writing center resources (Table 10):

- **Links to instructional ESL sites:** Links to other online resources, either associated with a school or other websites specializing in ESL writing, with instructional materials such as handouts, definitions, lists, and explanations.

- **Links to ESL sites with activities and quizzes:** Links to other online resources, either associated with a school or other websites specializing in ESL writing, with activities (such as crossword puzzles, etc.) and quizzes (fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, etc.)
- **Links to school based ESL service programs:** Links to services provided for ESL students by the academic institution. For example, the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) provides links to information about private tutors from the Linguistic Department and to the university's ESL Service Courses website which has information on ESL Writing Courses, ESL Pronunciation Courses, and International Teaching Assistant (ITA) Courses
- **Instructional handouts:** Instructional materials such as handouts, definitions, lists, and explanations created by the owner(s) of the website.
- **Quizzes/Activities:** Activities (such as crossword puzzles, etc.) and quizzes (fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, etc.) created by the owner(s) of the website.
- **Links to ESL Journals**
- **Links to ESL Professional**
- **Links to teaching resources:** Links to resources such as lesson plans, references, etc.

Table 10 Writing Center Online ESL Resources

School	Links to instructional ESL sites	Links to ESL sites with activities and quizzes	Links to school based ESL service programs	Instructional handouts	Instructional multimedia	Quizzes/Activities	Links to ESL journals	Links to Professional Organizations	Links to teaching Resources
MIT	✓	✓					✓		
RPI				✓					
RIT	✓								
Virginia Tech									
CalPoly Pomona									
CalTech	✓								
NYU Poly	✓	✓							
Stanford									
University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign)	✓	✓	✓				✓		
Texas A&M				✓	✓				
Purdue				✓		✓		✓	✓

The most common element across sites was the presence of links to other ESL websites. Of the eleven schools, five provided links to other ESL websites rather than offering their own ESL materials. Only three out of eleven schools’ writing center websites had their own quizzes and activities on their websites. On the other hand, the number of instructional handouts was higher (provided by three out of eleven schools) which suggests that this is still the primary way of dispensing writing help even though research has shown that handouts are not particularly helpful to ESL students. As a culture we are moving towards being more technologically proficient and more and more technological/multimedia tools are being developed for use in the classroom. However, only one school provided multimedia resources on their website. Multimedia resources could be a good antidote to the ineffective monotony of handouts. Multimedia resources, such as video modules, that engage students and encourage them to interact with the material increase learning of the material.

Many of these schools featured links to other websites with ESL resources, so I examined the kind of materials on those sites. In sum, I found a range: dictionary, discussion board for students, instructional handouts, quizzes/activities, pronunciation help, separate resources for different language ESL students, teaching tips/ideas, discussion board for teachers, links to ESL publications, links to other ESL websites/resources, and multimedia resources (Table 11).

Table 11 ESL Websites

Website	Dictionary	Discussion Board for Students	Instructional handouts	Quizzes/Activities	Pronunciation	Separate Resources for different language ESL students	Teaching Tips/Ideas	Discussion Board for Teachers	Links to ESL Publications	Links to other ESL websites/resources	Multimedia Resources
GoEnglish	✓										
Dave's ESL Café	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Activities for ESL Students				✓		✓			✓		✓
ESL Common Errors Workbook			✓	✓							
OneLook	✓										
Linguistic Funland							✓		✓	✓	
Diana Hacker				✓							
English as a Second Language	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓

Many of these websites had the resources that were lacking on the writing center websites, such as ESL dictionaries, quizzes/activities, links to ESL publications, etc. Despite the presence of these resources, there were still not a substantial number of multimedia (i.e. video modules, online tutorials etc.) resources and only one website had specialized resources for the different first-languages of ESL students. The results showed us that ESL students from different cultural backgrounds may also follow different rhetorical patterns in their writing. Therefore, resources geared towards specific groups of ESL students are useful because they may provide specific instruction or explanation on the differences between their rhetorical strategies and those used in English and help facilitate a student's transfer of writing skills.

One website, Dave's ESL café, had an online discussion board. The discussion board was a place for ESL students to post questions about vocabulary use, verb conjugations, sentence style and other

writing questions. In response, ESL educators from around the world respond to these questions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In this way, students would receive a timely answer to their question that would help them with their writing before getting too far into the process. The discussion board was clearly very widely used as the site states that “Our users have posted a total of 112224 articles.”

In conclusion, it seemed as though most online writing labs outsource by mainly referring to existing online resources. Additionally, it seems as though most online resources in general rely on static (not interactive) instructional materials and do not take advantage of available multimedia to supplement interactive exercises. This does not follow the expert literature that states that visual and interactive tools are the most helpful.

Writing center resources at other institutions.

In addition to looking at website resources, through email interviews, I also looked at the services the RPI writing center offer ESL students specifically, how their tutors are trained for ESL issues, and whether they have ESL resources outside the writing center that they coordinate with. Writing center sessions at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) are led by student tutors. Tutors at RPI’s writing center have to take a four credit writing course to be eligible for the job and as a part of that course, similar to WPI, students read articles about how tutoring someone who is working in English as a second language often changes the dynamics of a tutorial and alters the context of a tutoring conference.

Other than offering general tutoring sessions for its entire student body, RPI also has online resources for all their students. RPI’s writing center website offers one handout on article usage aimed toward ESL students (which is currently being revised) as well as links to other sites. They rarely hand out paper copies because it’s not easy to make copies and everyone has their laptop readily available to look up materials. According to RPI’s writing center director, RPI’s writing center draws from sources

such as the Purdue OWL website and from DianaHacker.com (the website that accompanies her pocket style manual).

RPI's writing center does refer students to their Advising and Learning Assistance Center. This center offers no-credit courses in oral communication, workshops on speaking English and other assistance to international students. However, they have no other formal ESL resources such as credit bearing courses on campus or ESL courses on academic writing to serve their large international student population. Therefore, one of their needs is to have more resources and people to help international students as well as more funding. As director Barbara Lewis states,

I wish we had more resources (people) to help international students, period. Many students come needing help in improving their spoken English, and we help them when we can, but we are not trained for that. We also have very little funding: we are supported by one of the smallest departments in the School of Humanities, yet we support students--and often visiting faculty from other countries--from the entire school.

This information shows that WPI is not alone in its amount of resources for ESL students and suggests that outsourcing for different ESL specific resources might be most effective.

Resources at WPI.

At WPI, other than the writing center, which provides help in writing and oral presentations to international students in fifty minute sessions, international students can receive help from the International House and from a series of humanities classes for international students.

Professor Nikitina teaches a writing course in A-term. This class is an elective course, although students are encouraged to take the class by the International House. The description of the course (as written in the course syllabus) is as follows:

This course offers, through conferences, tutorial sessions and extensive writing practice, a review of English composition principles for international students. The following topics are included: the writing process; organization of the paragraph and transitional words, sentence structure and problems (wordiness, fragments, subject-verb agreement, dangling modifiers), and overall essay or report composition; vocabulary

and word choice; compiling a bibliography and documentation style. Much emphasis is given to the development of effective revising techniques. This is a course for those electing the "Basic Sufficiency for International Students.

There is also a speaking course offered in B-term taught by Professor McCarthy.

In the writing class, Nikitina focuses on composition. She structures the class like a seminar or workshop with a lot of free writes and edits. According to the course syllabus, the course is designed to:

- Organize the writing process – from topic development, free writing, draft editing, and final paper submission complete with a bibliography and proper citation standards
- Polish English skills – address grammar; syntax, punctuation, and paragraphing challenges
- Develop an understanding of different styles of writing accepted in different disciplines.

The class consists of shorter essay writing assignments (that are not technically based or based on sources) as well as a longer term paper. The three shorter essays students have to write include a narrative essay (in which students are asked to narrate an animal encounter or a garbage adventure), a description essay (in which students are asked to describe a place or a meal), a cause and effect essay (in which students are asked to write about nature and industry, choice of major and shaping life, or move to the U.S. and change of lifestyle), a compare and contrast essay, and an argument and counterargument essay. The final paper is the cumulative product of the whole course, the topic of which is chosen by the student and touches upon any aspect of the relationship between nature and technology in their country (such as logging and the rainforest; real estate development and tigers, etc.) While writing this paper, students work on outlining their thesis, developing an argument, gathering data to support their view, incorporating any relevant prior assignments, and proofreading it for compositional and logical coherence.

The International House offers three main programs. One of the programs is a course geared toward international TAs. This course is offered in the fall and can be offered in the spring depending on demand. Graduate students who don't pass a speaktest are required to take this course. The second

program is a non-credit ESL seminar that is free for undergraduates. Graduate students and others have to pay for the class. The class is mostly made up of mostly graduate students and there are also some community members (usually those who are married to WPI graduate students) who take the class. The third program is the ESL Summer Institute which is open to both undergraduate and graduate students. The program takes place over five weeks in the summer. ESL students whose standardized test scores in English or English verbal sections of a standardized test suggest to the admissions office that these students might be weak in aspects of English (such as not receiving a minimum score of 79-80 on the TOEFL) are asked to attend the ESL Summer Institute or retake these standardized tests. During the ESL Summer Institute, students do practice writing a research paper and are given instruction on how to format/organize lab reports for the scientific disciplines.

One of the courses taught by Billy McGowan that is closest to the EAP courses previously mentioned is the ESL Technical Writing Course. This course uses the book Writing on the Job by J. C. Brereton and M. A. Mansfield (W. W. Norton Company) and covers such writing assignments as:

- Memos
- Newspaper Articles
- Short Term Research Paper
- Resume
- Business Letter Writing

However, none of these aforementioned genres are technical writing. It is more like business writing with some academic research paper writing. Technical genres and disciplines are not being taught in the way recommended above.

The class reviews academic versus technical writing; writing memoranda, informal report writing; capitalization, punctuation exercises; documentation; research bibliography for research paper; and outline form, use of numerals vs. numbers.

Combined, Writing for Non-Native Speakers and the ESL courses offered by the International House, do cover a number of the skills in the EAP curriculum (such as essay writing, research skills, and lab report writing taught by a graduate student in the sciences). All of these programs are taught through a combination of instruction and practicum. The classes are considered to be a skills class with not as much content as there is practicing writing clear sentences and revising. The objectives of these classes are to get students ready to go into the writing and speaking classes offered by the Humanities and Arts department.

While the writing center, the Humanities and Arts department and the International House all separately offer resources for ESL students, there is a lack of communication and association between the three. They have all admitted that they do not keep in touch with the others and do not collaborate on presenting a united front for ESL students other than Professor Nikitina referring her students to the writing center. There is no ESL coordinator on campus to bring these resources together.

Recommendations for WPI

Reinforce a Curriculum that Focuses on Teaching and Practicing Academic Writing

Nguyen (2009) suggested that students learning English have more exposure to speaking English than to writing English, especially due to exposure to the media, and so they can be especially unprepared for writing lengthy academic papers that go beyond simple report or personal experience. I therefore recommend that ESL students could benefit from specific courses that introduce such academic genres as literary essays, informative reports, scientific reports, and laboratory reports. These courses should also allow students to practice and get feedback on these assignments. A list of academic genres provided in *Academic Writing: Genres, Samples, and Resources* by Mary Kay A. Mulvaney and David A. Jolliffe (2005) include:

- Response or Reaction Papers
- Stance or Position Papers
- Reviews
- Literary Essays
- Abstracts or Annotations
- Informative Reports
- Laboratory Reports
- Scientific Research Reports
- Field Observations
- Case Studies
- Proposals or Prospectuses
- Professional Action Plans

My review of the literature suggests that the general current curriculum used at most colleges for ESL students has a mixture of learning grammar and practicing writing. Writing for non-native speakers covers organization of the paragraph and transitional words; sentence structure and problems (wordiness, fragments, subject-verb agreement, dangling modifiers); a term-long essay in which students must choose a book on an environmental subject to report on an environmental problem in

their native country; vocabulary and word choice; and bibliography and documentation style. While the course does cover shorter essay writing and one term paper, the course does not teach students about other genres of academic writing (such as lab reviews and scientific research papers or even arguments or critical analyses or problem analyses) they will need to use while at WPI. ESL Summer Institute also covers research papers and covers the format and organization of such technical pieces as the lab report. However, not all ESL students take this class and a class that is offered for credit by WPI's Humanities and Arts department may reach more students and thereby help more students. So, it would be helpful if Humanities courses could cover more of these genres of writing.

To supplement the basic writing skills and simple essay formats taught in this curriculum, I would recommend a course that covers the genres and vocabulary that WPI students use the most. Since it would be hard to teach genre outside the content of the course (i.e. it would be difficult to write a lab report without data from a lab experiment), this course would be more on reading or studying the different genres rather than actually writing them. However, by studying the genres, students will better understand the organizational features of the genre and will better replicate it when they need to. To most effectively create such a curriculum, it would be helpful to survey all the classes at WPI to ascertain what writing tasks, if any, are required of its students. A new curriculum could then focus on teaching the genres of writing most required of WPI students. This curriculum could draw from the following books that cover the different academic genres and their requirements:

- Academic Writing for Graduate Students, John Swales
- Introduction to Academic Writing, Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue
- Academic Writing: Genres, Samples, and Resources, Mary Kay A. Mulvaney and David A. Jolliffe
- A Guide to Writing in the Sciences, Andrea A. Gilpin and Patricia Patchet-Golubev
- Read, Research and Write: Academic Skills for ESL Students in Higher Education, Caroline Brandt

Since different majors most likely require their students to partake in different writing tasks, it would ultimately be beneficial to have writing courses aimed toward specific majors or groups of majors

available for all students, such as is being started in the writing-intensive courses now being piloted by Communication Across the Curriculum in Civil Eng, Biology and other departments. In these courses, content and procedure in the field are taught through writing. However, in lieu of individualized courses, a more general course that does focus on the most popular genres of writing at WPI would work. Such a generalized course could also work in conjunction with writing workshops held by the writing center that allow students to further practice and learn about the different genres of writing. Ultimately, a course that emphasizes both reading and writing academic genres would be best. Such a course would not only be helpful to ESL students, but also to native speakers of English.

Coordinate ESL Resources

My interviews with the International House, the ESL course instructor, and the writing center suggested that these resources are not always coordinated nor do they always communicate their goals and approaches to each other. Moreover, there is no overarching plan for how these three resources can work together to serve WPI's ESL population. A lack of an ESL director contributes to this problem.

By hiring an ESL director, WPI would make strides towards reorganizing and improving its ESL program. An ESL director could also help with the implementation of the recommendations in terms of curriculum design, coordination of designated tutoring with ESL courses, etc.

Another step towards improving the communication between the different ESL resources would be yearly meetings between the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Graduate Studies, ESL course (such as "Writing for Non-Native Speakers") instructors, the head of ESL at the International House, the Writing Center Director, and an ESL director (if hired in the future). During these meetings, the individual could discuss planning class visits to inform the students about what resources are available to them and advertising for the writing center/international house/humanities department's services. They could also work towards having the writing center follow the course work in these classes and offer matching

workshops around the same time. This would allow students to receive any extra help or reiteration of concepts presented in class.

Recommendations for the Writing Center

Create a Workshop Where Students Can Bring In Their Papers from a Particular Course and Practice Editing Their Own Work or Checking It against Guidelines with a Tutor Who Is Familiar with the Course

Zen (2005) revealed that ESL students spend most of their time in their English and writing classes learning grammatical lessons and practicing their writing. Practicing their writing is the best way for students to perfect what they've learned about the different specifications about the different genres of writing. These students need opportunities to work and practice with complex forms.

Workshops could be set-up in the writing center in tandem with writing assignments that occur in ESL courses. These workshops could focus on students bringing in assignments that they are working on. A tutor (or tutors) could go over a check-list of what students should cover in their paper (depending on the genre) and then help students revise their papers by providing possible solutions to writing problems. It would be most helpful if the tutors leading these workshops were designated tutors for the course. In this way, the tutors working with these students would be familiar with the course and its assignments and could also become familiar with the different students and their needs.

A workshop where students can bring in their papers and practice editing their own work or checking it against guidelines can be hosted by the writing center and led by one or multiple writing tutors. If these workshops are set-up to correlate with an ESL course (either during the school year with "Writing for Non-Native Speakers" or over the summer with the ESL courses offered by the International

House), the tutors who lead these workshops could also potentially act as designated tutors for the course. The workshop(s) could consist of two parts: an instructional part and a practice part. During the instructional portion, tutors could instruct about a particular genre being used, about a type of citation or sentence style, or whatever is currently being covered in the ESL course. Tutors could also pass out a checklist that covers what they've instructed. During the practice portion, students could use the checklist and the information they learned from the instructional portion to revise their own papers with help from the tutors.

Create Resources/Workshops on Common Local Errors for Students

ESL writers make many common local writing errors that have been studied and listed. Additional research on the different local writing errors that different cultural groups of ESL students make would help with teaching ESL students how to recognize and fix these errors. From such information, different workshops, tutorials, and video modules could be made that teach both tutors and tutees about these errors.

Create Resources/Workshops on Plagiarism for Students (Explain What It Is and How to Avoid It)

Kurt Bouman (2004) showed that ESL students have a general problem with understanding and identifying plagiarism. Current workshops given by the writing center focus on different citation types and how to use them properly to prevent plagiarism, but it's important for students to first understand what plagiarism is before they can work to avoid it.

When working with students on plagiarism, tutors should realize that most ESL students plagiarize inadvertently. The results showed tutors should be trained to catch and correct plagiarism by doing the following:

- Be direct and explicit when discussing problems with using sources
- Ask the writer, “Did you consult any sources as you wrote this paper?”
- Ask the ESL writer about his understanding of plagiarism, and about how he is accustomed to writing with sources
- During a consultation, look at a writer’s sources side-by-side with her paper.

A workshop explaining plagiarism could use the different definitions of plagiarism provided by Bouman (2004, p. 106):

- Using ideas from a source without acknowledging the source
- Copying specific words or phrases from a source without using quotation marks
- Doing a word-for-word substitution in an attempt to paraphrase a source, but keeping the source’s basic ideas and sentence structure intact
- ‘Patchwriting,’ or building a paper by patching together sections of text from one or more sources
- Submitting a paper downloaded off the internet) to provide examples

With these examples, the workshop group could then individually work to provide their own solutions to the plagiarism errors. The students could even bring in their own work and then attempt to find plagiarism using their new knowledge.

When explaining how to avoid plagiarism, the workshop could draw from the existing workshops on citations and from the following resources in addition to the ones that already exist on the writing center’s SharePoint site:

- The Bedford/St. Martin’s Workshop on Plagiarism <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/plagiarism/default.asp?s=&n=&i=&v=&o=&ns=0&t=&uid=0&rau=0>
- Anti-Plagiarism Strategies for Research Papers <http://www.virtualsalt.com/antiplag.htm>

A workshop covering plagiarism for students could be hosted by the writing center and led by one or multiple writing tutors. These workshops could be given at the beginning of a new academic year or term (and advertised by the Humanities Department and the International House) or could be given at a corresponding time with an ESL class. The workshop could consist of two parts: an instructional part

and a practical part. During the instructional portion, tutors could give information about and examples of the different types of plagiarism. They could also go through strategies for finding and avoiding plagiarism and end with some instruction on citation styles. The practical portion would exist if the workshop were following an ESL class and their written assignments and could then have the students work with the sources used for the class and the specific citation style needed for the class.

Create Training/Workshops for Tutors on How to Structure Sessions with ESL Students

If writing sessions with ESL students are routinely directive, focus on global and meaning related issues, and utilize visual tools (as recommended by Ganguly (2004) in the results), they are more productive and more helpful for an ESL student. While tutors do receive some training on how to work with ESL students, strategies and tools that would better organize these sessions would augment the session's effectiveness.

The following three resources were created to help structure a writing session.

The training sheet in Figure 7 helps explain, to both the tutor and the tutee, what they should be looking for as they go through the paper. This training sheet allows the tutor and the tutee to first discuss what a specific paper should look like before actually looking at the paper. The first part of the training sheet explains the difference between an error (a wrong response made without the writer realizing it is wrong that results in a pattern that obstructs meaning) and a mistake (a wrong response that if the writer thought about, they would realize it is wrong and does not disrupt meaning). Some tutors may be currently focusing on any mistake patterns present in an ESL student's paper. By looking for patterns of error, tutors will be using a different strategy of looking for at parts of the students' paper that impede meaning. Fixing these errors will then become the focus of the tutoring session. This training sheet can be modified to better fit different genres of writing. For example, this specific training

sheet could only be used for thesis papers. Ultimately, it would be ideal for different genres to have their own checklist. Many genres do not have theses, so the first thing the tutor and writer should do is decide what genre it is, and together, list some of the features of the genres and check to see if they have covered those features, thereby modifying the training sheet to their own purposes. Once that is done, tutors and tutees can go over topic sentences, support and explanation since these three elements are important in any genre.

<p><u>Understanding Errors and Mistakes</u></p> <p>Error: A wrong response made without the writer realizing it is wrong</p> <p>Mistake: A wrong response that if the writer thought about, they would realize it is wrong</p> <p>An error results in a pattern that obstructs meaning.</p> <p><u>Understanding the Structure of a Paper</u></p> <p>Thesis Statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Can appear in the beginning or end of the introductory paragraph- Should be written as a supportable claim <p>Topic Sentences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Should be written as a definite claim (not tentative)- Each topic sentence should relate back to the thesis statement- Topic sentences normally appear in the beginning of their own respective paragraphs- Each topic sentence represents one idea that needs support, so there should only be one topic sentence per paragraph <p><u>Support and Explanations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Each topic sentence should be accompanied with support- Each piece of support should be accompanied with a proper explanation <p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Should not simply be a summary of the paper- Should not simply restate the thesis statement- Should be written around "So what?", "What if?", "Now What?", etc. questions

Figure 7. Training Sheet

The checklist in Figure 8 provides a structured way for the tutor and tutee to go through the paper. Currently, tutors do not have a documented visual method for helping the tutee see and improve their organization. By asking the tutor/tutee to identify and highlight thesis/topic sentences and their corresponding support, the tutee has a visual of what organizational components they may be missing and/or if they are located in the right place. This is important since Ganguly (2004) revealed that visual techniques are particularly useful for ESL students since it allows them to see their errors. Again, this specific checklist assumes that the tutee has brought in a thesis paper; however, this checklist could be modified to fit other genres of writing. Since this checklist is for a thesis paper it checks for the format of the thesis and topic sentences, specifically the tone they are written in. Since it is important that thesis papers work towards making a supportable claim, the written thesis and topic sentences should be persuasive and confident. However, as the results showed, different cultural groups are not as explicit when writing their thesis/topic sentences and this checklist helps to find and fix this.

<p><u>Checklist for Analyzing ESL Paper</u></p> <p>Identify Errors</p> <p>Step One: Read the paper</p> <p>Step Two: Underline sentences that get in the way of meaning</p> <p>Step Three: Find 2-3 patterns of error in these sentences</p> <p>Identify Thesis Statement</p> <p>Step Four: Highlight the thesis statement. Take note of where it is appearing.</p> <p>Step Five: Describe tone of thesis statement. Is it persuasive, tentative, etc?</p> <p>Identify Topic Sentences</p> <p>Step Six: Highlight all topic sentences. Take note of where they are appearing.</p> <p>Step Seven: Count the number of topic sentences in each paragraph.</p> <p>Step Eight: Describe tone of each topic sentence. Is it persuasive, tentative, etc?</p> <p>Step Nine: Do the topic sentences relate to the thesis statement.</p> <p>Step Ten: Highlight (in a different color) the evidence for each topic sentence.</p> <p>Step Eleven: Is there explanation for how the evidence proves the topic sentence</p> <p>Identify Conclusion</p> <p>Step Twelve: Is there a conclusion?</p> <p>Step Thirteen: How is the conclusion structured/written?</p>
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Figure 8. Checklist for Analyzing ESL Paper

Similarly, the chart of errors found in Figure 9 provides a visual for the tutee as well as a way to organize their errors in one location so that they can keep track of the types of errors they are making. The chart takes advantage of the fact that ESL students best express themselves verbally and draws from their verbal skills to improve their writing skills. It also provides a resource that students can take home and use when editing their own papers. This way the student is continuing what they've learned at the tutoring session and learning how to work on their own mistakes.

Instructions: Fill out the following chart based with the patterns of error found using the checklist. For “What is the student trying to say?” ask the student to express their idea verbally while you transcribe what they say in this box. For “Classification of grammatical error,” take the time to look up the error with the student and write what you find in this box. For “Possible solutions,” list any solutions that will help eliminate the problem and use the solution in the context of the sentence.

Pattern of Grammatical Error	What is the student trying to say?	Classification of error	Explanation of cultural rule	Possible solutions

Figure 9. Practical Chart

Training/Workshops for tutors on how to structure sessions with ESL students could be given by the writing center director or capable tutor during writing center meetings. This training/workshop could consist of handouts explaining different tools tutors can use or it can have video modules showing how the tools are used. If video modules are created, this would put WPI on the cutting-edge of ESL resources since there are few existing interactive or multimedia tools used for ESL help or instruction. These training/workshops materials can be borrowed from existing materials or can be developed by a tutor or a student completing an ISP or MQP.

Create Training/Workshops for Tutors on Techniques/Tools for Helping Students Organize their Paper

The results showed that ESL students learn best when using visual tools. Most often for ESL students, showing is better than telling. Therefore it is beneficial for tutors to be well-versed in the different visual tools (such as mind-mapping, gist lists, highlighting/circling main ideas, etc.) that will allow them to better help their ESL tutees. The majority of these techniques should be taught to tutors during the peer-tutoring class, but it would also be beneficial to go through them again during tutor meetings. Some of these are currently taught; however, they could be reviewed and expanded upon regularly in staff meetings. If presented during the peer-tutoring class, this training can take the form of video modules. Otherwise, this training can be used through demonstrations, instructional handouts, etc.

Training/Workshops for tutors on techniques/tools for helping students organize their paper could be given by the writing center director or capable tutor during writing center meetings. This training/workshop could consist of handouts explaining different tools tutors can use or it can have video modules showing how the tools are used. If video modules are created, this would put WPI on the cutting-edge of ESL resources since there are few existing interactive or multimedia tools used for ESL help or instruction. These training/workshops materials can be borrowed from existing materials or can be developed by a tutor or a student completing an ISP or MQP.

Create Online Links and Resources for ESL Students

The WPI Writing Center has many handouts and resources created for ESL students throughout the years. However, we do not offer these resources directly to students online. Instead, they are stored on SharePoint or in the writing center and the tutors have to provide them to the tutees. It might be beneficial to create a repository of these resources directly on the writing center website in order to reach and help more ESL students.

Conclusion

As previously stated, part of my interest in this project stems from my experience as a writing tutor in the writing center at WPI. I've often felt as though my tutoring and teaching tactics haven't always gotten through to these ESL students. At the beginning of this project, I set out to learn about the main struggles ESL students have, how we can help ESL students, and how the writing center and the university might help ESL students.

Through this project, I have learned that ESL students mostly struggle with identifying and fixing their writing errors, prioritizing global issues over local issues, and transferring their cultural writing ideas. I now better know what sorts of tactics and tools should be used during a tutoring session in order for the session to be more effective and to tackle these issues that ESL students have. I've learned to focus more on global issues, even if the students are more concerned with their local issues. I've learned that visual tools that outline the student's paper and verbally communicating the paper's ideas are two of the best ways to ensure that students' organization and idea presentation are done well. While certain tutoring tactics (such as focusing on both global and local errors) are taught in the peer-tutoring course, data from the writing center reports showed that tutors may not always be reinforcing this idea during sessions. So it is apparent that further training and accountability may be required from writing center tutors.

I've also learned that, compared to other schools, WPI as a whole seems to be on par in terms of ESL resources. It has comparable on-campus resources to some schools, although more online resources such as outsourced links to more popular ESL websites (such as the Purdue website, the ESL Café website, etc) would be helpful. Specific workshops that encourage ESL students to interact with their writing and writing tutors would provide a dynamic environment that would encourage learning. An ESL director in charge of all ESL efforts throughout the campus would help unify all the resources WPI has

and even further strengthen the ESL program, focusing on academic genres of reading and writing, academic language and usage, cultural expectations about ownership and conventions of arguing about data and publishing.

While this project provides general recommendation to make WPI more ESL-friendly, this project generally tackled a large number of issues instead of focusing on smaller issues. Further research that goes more in-depth on the different tactics and teaching methods that can/should be used in ESL classes and on the types of writing assignments and textbooks ESL students should rely on in their classes that goes more in-depth and on other issues presented here would be necessary in the future. This can be done by examining other actual ESL classes, doing more in-depth literature research, interviewing ESL professionals and interviewing ESL students, all of which were not done by this study.

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