

WAC/WID and ESL:
Beyond the Deficiency Model of
Multilingualism

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What is a deficiency model?

- Linguistic diversity as obstacle, rather than asset
- Punitive policies and discriminatory practices—especially toward multilingual students (MLLs)
- Writing programs to “remedy” linguistic deficiencies (and serve as institutional scapegoat)
- More attention on assessment and gate-keeping than on advocacy and reform
- Fragmented model of academic support

E.g., Fox, Ignash, Rose, Soliday, Van Meter, Williams

How does “division of labor” reinforce a deficiency mindset toward MLLs?

L2 Writing (ESL)	L1 Writing (WAC/WID)
‘Language’	‘Content’
‘Remedial’	‘Regular’
Institutional Margins	Institutional Mainstream
Decontextualized curriculum	Collaborative curriculum
Minimal investment	Institution-wide investment
Short-term solution	Long-term vision

- Matsuda, Atkinson & Ramanathan, Leki & Silva, and others

Case study of a deficiency/division model (in transition)

“Northern Green University” (Fall 2007)

- “Public ivy” on the West coast
- 25,000+ undergraduates
- ~8% non-native speakers (mostly U.S. residents, but some international students).

WAC/WID program: Housed largely in English dept. W courses linked to lectures in a variety of departments. One of several options for fulfilling College Writing requirement.

ESL Program: Housed in Office of Extension (not academic dept). Required of only one segment of the student population (non-U.S. citizens without test scores)

Data Sources

ESL Students

- paper survey (collaboratively-designed, taken by 25% of students enrolled in Fall 2007)
- focus groups (pilot only)
- 10 interviews with representative sampling
- additional interviews with “student advocates” in administration

AEP (ESL) Instructors/Administrators

- email listserv discussions
- interviews and surveys (collaborative, curriculum-focused)
- programmatic documents (manuals, meeting minutes, etc.)
- participant observation (my work with ESL program’s curriculum committee)

Non-AEP Instructors (Faculty and TAs from a variety of depts)

- online survey (89 respondents)
- institutional documents
- participant observation
(my work with other depts, writing centers, & working groups)

Central Questions

1. How are students in NGU's ESL program constructed as "deficient"?
2. How is the need for "remediation" constructed and reinforced at NGU?
3. How do multilingual students (MLLs) respond to this deficiency model?
4. How might (will) an alliance between ESL and WAC/WID contribute to an ideological shift?

How are (were) MLLs constructed as deficient?

Policies that

- Alien-ated U.S. residents from U.S. citizens
- Invalidated students' high school and/or community college achievements
- Interrupted students' academic, financial, and social integration

Courses that

- Offered NO academic credit
- Cost additional tuition—at a higher rate than in-state tuition.
- Focused almost exclusively on “structure” or “basic skills”
- Counted testing (a final exam) as the only valid form of assessment

How has the need for remediation been constructed...

“[W]e are not able to compensate any student who knew the answer in their head, but could not express it correctly.” (Faculty in Biology)

*“Stricter prerequisites for entry into the University, and into certain classes, would help students whose language skills still need remediation”
(TA in Engineering)*

*“Many of our students who fail in the very large intro [biology] series are ESL students. Staff limitations prevent our department from dedicating additional resources to help [them]...so I think it is key that ESL students identify when they need to go back and take extra English courses before entering the [Biology] courses”
(Faculty in Biology)*

...and then taken up by the ESL program?

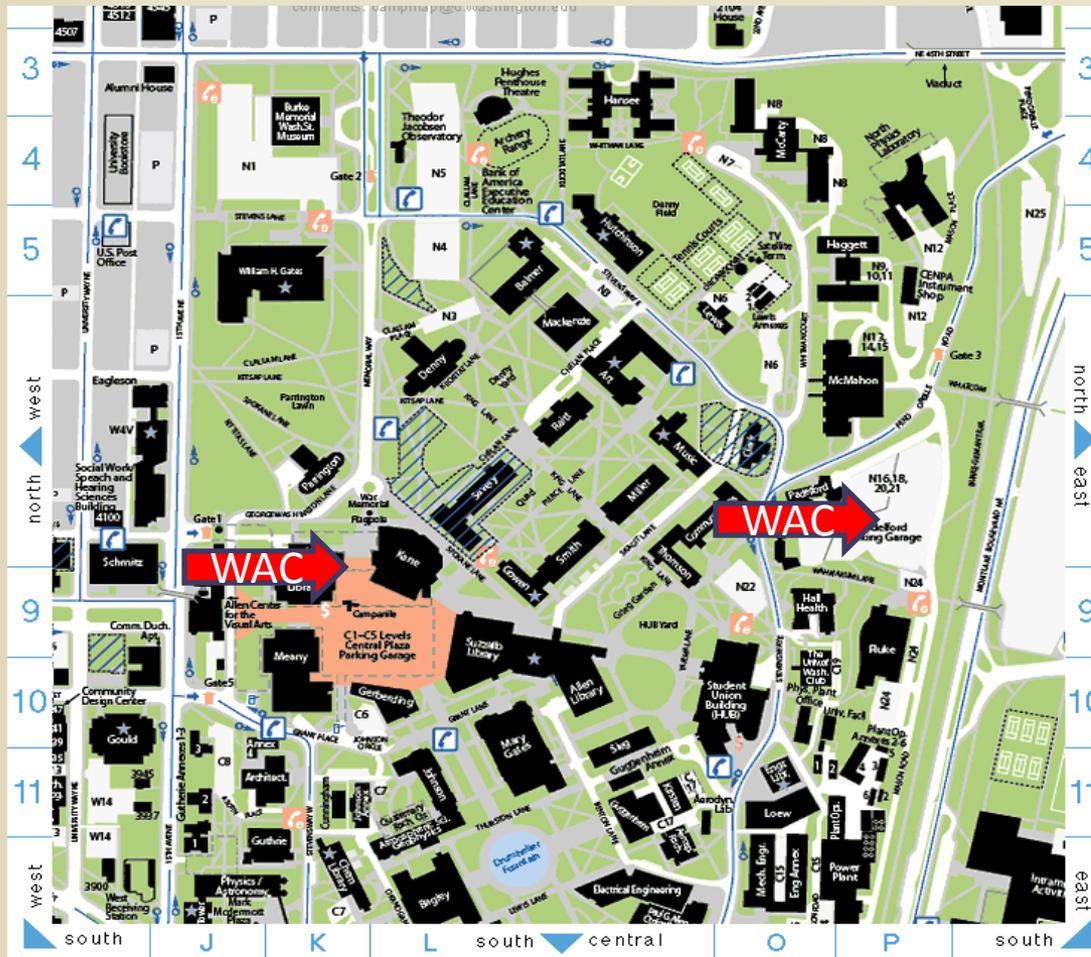
The Academic ESL Program (AEP) aims to

“bring [students’] English skills up to a level where they do not pose an excessive burden to [non-AEP] instructors. . . ensuring that students possess adequate English language skills that maintain the university’s academic standards and reputation.”

- AEP Operations Manual (2007-2008)

Locations of WAC and ESL Programs on NGU Campus

ESL (new) X



ESL (old)

X

How is division of labor reinforced?

“With large classes of 300+ in the intro level and 100+ at the 400 level, we don't have the resources needed to provide ESL students [with] individual support.” (Faculty in Biology).

“I try to evaluate them relative to their background, but I don't think it is appropriate for me to actually change the class to accommodate the ESL students.” (Faculty in Business School)

“Without a request there is little effort to adapt to an ESL students’ needs when it comes to the preparation and delivery of in-class materials.” (TA in Communication, also Faculty in Anthropology)

“With writing classes in particular, paying special attention to ESL students means losing the non-ESL students.” (Faculty in Business School)

How do the students feel?

“When I failed the final, I just wanted to quit school. I know that somebody, who does not take AEP classes, doesn’t understand AEP students feelings” (student survey)

“My roommate is American, and she asks me, ‘Why do they make you learn this?’ It’s not relevant.” (student focus group)

“I think now a lot of students start to feel like ‘This is a hoop I have to jump through. I fill out these little exercises, get the right answers, and then get out of here as quickly as I can.’” (learning center administrator)

The AEP [diagnostic] test is bias. It seeks our failure, not our success.”
(student survey)

“Are you guys trying—I mean the program—to make more money out of the international students?” (student interview participant—one of several)

“Stop stealing students money!” (student survey)

A mutually-recognized need for alliance

“I think there needs to be better coordination of resources across campus. The AEP, for instance, operates in relative isolation [from] other writing programs. So we need to share resources better and learn from each other.” (Faculty in English)

“[I would like] more collaboration on supporting the students...with the rest of the university...realizing that we have a place at the table, that we have expertise. We also need to realize that we’re [only] one part of it. We’re not the whole piece.” (Instructor/administrator in AEP)

What does the alliance look like? (thus far)

- **Collaboration and consulting**
 - Training and resources for TAs, tutors, faculty, and administrators
 - AEP presence in WAC-related councils and initiatives
 - A revises AEP curriculum
 - A new two-credit studio course for MLLs in Writing courses
- **Policy-making**
 - Institution-wide task force (some changes, but not all)
 - Vision for more equitable model of support

An New Mission for the AEP

REMEDICATION

Deficit Ideology

- 'fixing' students
- 'error' focus

Culture of Passivity

- exam-driven pedagogy
- lack of vision

Decontextualized Curriculum

- grammar focus
- 'generalist' literacy tasks
- isolation from other depts

e.g. Fox, Ignash, Soliday, Van Meter

MEDIATION

Diversity Ideology

- supporting students
- 'resources' focus

Culture of Professionalization

- research-driven pedagogy
- advocacy

Integrated Curriculum

- literacy, metacognition, growth focus
- authentic tasks informed by disciplines
- collaboration with other depts

e.g. Bazerman, Benesch, Bizzell, Johns, Lunsford, Soliday & Gleason, Swales, Zamel & Spack

Possibilities

- Increased advocacy efforts
 - Admissions, Registrar, Office of Diversity, etc.
 - Academic Colleges and Departments
- Collaborative research and assessment
- Changing discourse—and eventually ideology?

Pitfalls

- Incremental reform or total revolution?
- Concerns about institutional territory
- Institutional inertia (and budget cuts)

Shifting the institutional ideology...

DEFICIENCY	DIVERSITY
What do students lack?	What do students bring?
Institution's needs prioritized	Students' needs prioritized
Linguistic Remediation	Institutional Mediation (among students, faculty, departments, support programs, etc.)
ESL program as gate-keeper	ESL program as advocate
Short-term, isolationist "fix-it" mechanism	Long-term, integrated network of support

e.g., Harklau, (1994,1999); Leki (2007); Soliday (2002); Tinto (1975, 2006);
Tinto & Engstrom, (2008); Van Meter (1990).

Thank you!!!

These slides, bibliography, and other
info will be available at

<http://shawnashapiro.com/>

Or contact me at

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