

DIFFERENTIATING BEGINNING ESL UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE
STUDENTS' WRITING NEEDS

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Abstract

In order to facilitate improvement of an effective academic writing curriculum, this study analyzes the separate and/or overlapping writing needs of beginning undergraduate students and graduate students in an intermediate academic writing course. Data sources included surveys, student and faculty interviews, course syllabi, guidelines on writing assignments, and student writing samples. Analysis of the data indicated that most of the writing the graduate students do is discipline-specific and complex, whereas undergraduate students may write for assignments for general courses. Graduate students encounter greater expectations; they are treated as active participants in their fields and are expected to make contributions to the field. The implications of the findings for developing EAP writing curriculum are discussed.

Differentiating Beginning ESL Undergraduate and Graduate Students' Writing Needs

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental question ESL program administrators and teachers should constantly ask themselves is, “Are we satisfying the language learning needs of our students within our institute?” A mismatch between the institutional, teachers’, and students’ perceptions of student needs could result in severe consequences, ranging from skeptical or critical student attitudes to complete failure of the curriculum. Hence, sound analysis of the needs of academically-oriented ESL students is essential for the development and improvement of an effective academic writing curriculum (Brown, 1995).

This study investigates the academic writing needs of entering undergraduate and graduate students in the English Language Program (ELP, a pseudonym) at a large American university. Good writing is critical to achieving academic success at U.S. universities because students are often evaluated through some form of written text. Writing instruction in English for academic purposes (EAP) classrooms is concerned with preparing students by focusing on students’ composition needs so that students can function well in their major fields of study (Jordan, 1997). This needs analysis examines and evaluates how the EAP class under investigation can better facilitate the transition of beginning ESL undergraduate and graduate students into the American university.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Native English-Speaking College Students' Writing Needs

Both L1 and L2 research are concerned about student writing needs in the academic setting. Competing models have been proposed, emphasizing distinct aspects of academic writing. As Herrington (1985) states, "writing can function as a way of introducing students to what it means to think and act in various disciplinary forums" (pp. 354-355). The methodology frequently adopted in L1 writing needs analysis research is large-scale surveys.

Stemming from what is called the deficiency perspective, faculty surveys conducted by Sherwood (1977) and Darrell (1980) uniformly indicated that all of the writing subskills, such as organization and sentence structure, were important, and over two-thirds of the respondents of both studies found native English-speaking students' writing ability inadequate. The faculty members most often administered short-answer exams, essay exams and objective tests, and the most common out-of-class writing tasks were reports, research papers, and critical reviews.

Refining the instrument used by Sherwood, Behrens's survey (1978) clearly indicated the ambiguity of faculty evaluation of student writing. Instructors, on the one hand, emphasized the content of the paper, yet were plagued by native English-speaking students' surface errors such as grammar, usage, and mechanics. Instructors in humanities, social sciences, and professional disciplines had a much higher tendency to downgrade errors in word usage and syntax than the science faculty. Similarly, the survey study by Eblen (1983) drew a distinction between

“problems associated with communicative maturation” (e.g., organization, development, clarity, and coherence) and “problems associated with standards of edited American English” (e.g., grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and diction). In addition, Brigeman and Carlson (1983) investigated the frequency of diverse academic writing tasks required of first-year native and nonnative undergraduate and graduate students across disciplines. They found that in the seven disciplines from 34 institutions which responded to the questionnaire, “‘descriptive’ writing tasks were considered important for engineering, computer science, and psychology, while ‘argument’ was identified as very important for undergraduates in general, MBA students, and psychology and graduate levels” (p.24).

Since the 1990s, the focus in academic writing research has shifted from identifying student deficiencies to an emphasis on the unique characteristics and development of individual students as well as the student’s accommodation to discipline-specific genres. The process approach to writing and the writing across the curriculum (WAC) approach lead to a stronger emphasis on out-of-class writing, which aims to foster intellectual development and overall writing abilities of the students. Flower (1989) and some other writing researchers emphasized the mental processes of writing and held that academic writing instruction should help students adapt to the demands of the academic community through the mastery of a particular way of thinking. WAC programs, likewise, emphasize familiarizing students with specialized forms of particular discourse communities, i.e., specific disciplinary styles.

Some scholars did not consider in-class writing for evaluation as “real” writing, despite the high frequency of in-class exam writing requirements. In fact, few scholars recommended focusing on developing instructional strategies, probably because of the negative connotation associated with “transactional” college writing—writing to display mastery of content. However, as Ginther and Grant (1996) pointed out, “emphasis on out-of-class writing may reflect a decidedly composition-instructor-type bias—a bias that may not be shared by noncomposition undergraduate faculty” (p.11). One significant characteristic about undergraduate writers is that they do not have to publish and may not share the goals of their instructors. The undergraduate students in the studies by Anderson et al. (1990) and Chiseri-Strater (1991) were not interested in membership in the academy but were more concerned about meeting the requirements for getting their degree. Berkenkotter and Huckin (1993) argued that unlike graduate students who need to master discipline-specific genres, undergraduate students were merely exposed to different discourses and not treated as a member of the academic community.

Although surveys provide useful information, one potential problem includes the difficulty of interpreting the results. The respondents may understand the pre-determined categories differently or they may report what they think the researcher wants to know rather than what they actually do. Therefore, one approach researchers have recently adopted so as to identify students’ writing needs is to examine the tasks students are required to perform in terms of the functions, features, and contexts of the tasks. A number of studies have examined the writing tasks in

academic settings, either from a single discipline or a few selected disciplines (Carson, 2001; Carson et al., 1992; Horowitz, 1986; Rose, 1983). This research has mainly focused on science and engineering (Braine, 1995; Jenkins, Jordan, & Weiland, 1993) as well as business communication (Canseco & Byrd, 1989; Knight, 1999; Zhu, 2003).

The most comprehensive study on writing tasks in academic degree programs was done by Hale, Taylor, Bridgeman, Carson, Kroll, and Kantor (1996). They examined assignments and course syllabi of 162 undergraduate and graduate courses in seven disciplines at one Canadian and seven U.S. universities, and a classification scheme was developed. Their findings show that instructors of physical/mathematical sciences and engineering (chemistry, civil engineering, and computer science courses) assigned more short writing tasks, which typically consisted of questions on tests and involved less than one-half page of writing. Social sciences and humanities (business, economics, history, and psychology courses) courses required longer essays more frequently. Short writing tasks, both in-class and out-of-class, were assigned more often at the undergraduate level than the graduate level. Library research papers were more commonly assigned in graduate classes than undergraduate classes.

Non-native English-Speaking College Students' Writing Needs

Ostler's (1980) study reported a clear distinction between academic skills deemed most useful by ESL undergraduate and graduate students for successful completion of college studies. The academic skills related to academic writing included note-taking skills and summarizing

sources for both undergraduate and graduate students. Undergraduates indicated a greater need for learning to write laboratory reports, whereas graduate students expressed a need to be able to write critiques, research proposals, and research papers. According to Ostler, the skill of writing research papers “ties the needs of juniors and seniors closer to graduate students than to freshmen and sophomores” (p. 494). In terms of overall writing proficiency, undergraduates tended to need more work in sentence combining and grammatical skills; graduate students, in comparison, were more proficient.

In 1994, Leki and Carson surveyed 77 ESL students who received academic writing instruction. They found that these undergraduate students focused on the need for more language skills, even though they claimed their professors did not focus on sentence-level features of writing and ignored spelling or grammar errors. Additionally, students sought to expand their vocabulary in order to facilitate more precise expression of their thoughts. They were discouraged by how their limited vocabularies alienated their thoughts from free expression of those thoughts. Given their awareness of their lack of control over grammar and vocabulary, students regarded English classes as places where they could learn to mitigate their deficiencies in English and improve their proficiency. The authors also discussed writing teachers’ concern that students misplaced their focus on superficial, low-level language skills while many writing teachers have been expanding the content of EAP to “include critical thinking as well as a focus on the heuristic functions of writing” (p. 91).

Analyzing the writing needs of nonnative English speakers, Leki and Carson (1994) commented on undergraduate writing: “For undergraduates, writing within the academy is a unique genre, neither the same as the kind of free-flowing personal writing favored (often for quite appropriate reasons) in many writing classes nor the same as professional or even graduate writing within specific disciplinary communities....Undergraduates are not expected to engage in or contribute to the ongoing professional discourse. The ‘discourse community’ of undergraduate writers, particularly in courses outside their majors, is peculiarly short-lived and is not reproduced elsewhere. It is an educational discourse community affording these students the opportunity to sample knowledge from different disciplines, most of them will never include these students as actual members or even as apprentices” (p. 96).

Wright (2001) conducted a study on how native English-speaking business professors evaluate university ESL students’ English writing. Her findings imply that ESL students will benefit more if the writing instruction focuses their attention on producing not only well-organized, reasonably grammatically correct essays, but also information-rich, factually correct essays. Wright claims that authentic academic writing will better accommodate the needs of ESL students and help prepare them for academic writing by challenging students to write on topics more central to their academic and intellectual lives, rather than interesting but nonacademic topics.

Benesch (2001) presents two positions about EAP writing instruction for non-native

speakers of English, especially those enrolled in English-speaking universities. Some ESL compositionists, e.g., Raimes (1991), Spack (1988) and Zamel (1995), believe that ESL composition courses should help students develop general English writing skills, which can later be transferred to writing tasks required in other content courses. They advocate that ESL composition courses should concentrate on the writing process and intellectually engaging writing. ESP specialists, however, argue for teaching genres of specific academic disciplines. Swales (1990) suggests instructing ESL students through genre analysis in order to prepare students for their future academic classes. Therefore, the specificity of EAP instruction remains a controversial issue, and two divisions of EAP, English for general academic purposes (EGAP) and English for specific academic purposes (ESAP), represent the contentions between the common core, also known as “study skills,” and subject-specific English (Jordan, 1997).

Previous research suggests that graduate students not only need to be familiar with the content or topic knowledge but also write at an acceptably high level of rhetoric. Graduate students seek to assimilate into and become members of the academic discourse community through acquiring discipline-specific genres. Their motivation to succeed is much stronger than that of undergraduate students, and the writing tasks required of graduate students are much more complex than those of undergraduate students. Noting the distinction between graduate writing and undergraduate writing demands in academia, Swales and Feak (1994) considered it necessary to assist second-language learners of English in mastering graduate writing.

It has been shown that international graduate students are strong in generating ideas, but weak at phrasing the ideas in logical and precise ways (West & Byrd, 1982). They need more help with certain lexicon and genre norms that apply to their writing tasks. Biggs, Lai, Tang, and Lavelle (1999) believe that instruction of L2 graduate-level writing may need to be more didactic than writing instruction of the undergraduate level. Their survey on the writing difficulties of 32 Hong Kong graduate students shows that “at the micro level, they were overly concerned with spelling and grammar.... [at the macro level], developing logical discussions, organising an argument, giving opinions and summarising source materials were especially difficult” (p. 301). From students’ feedback at the end of a trial 2½ day workshop, which focused on dissertation writing and writing for academic journals, Biggs and associates found that ESL graduate students particularly appreciated didactic instruction within the context of formal requirements of academic writing.

Angelova and Riazanteseva (1999) conducted a case study of four international graduate students learning to write according to American academic norms. Their results suggest that international students need assistance in adjusting to the requirements and expectations of the English-speaking academic community, since they all bring different writing experiences and cultures with them to U.S. classrooms. Additionally, students from the same country may share common problem areas. Writing teachers can assist international students by explicitly specifying rhetorical patterns and academic writing conventions commonly used in American

universities, which may very likely differ from those they were used to in their native country.

Common academic discourse, basic organizational patterns and phrases for introducing, concluding, summarizing, comparing, and so forth can be directly addressed in classroom instruction and practice so as to assist students in producing effective writing.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to distinguish the separate and/or overlapping writing needs of beginning undergraduate students and graduate students at a large university in the USA. Based on their TOEFL score (ranging from 500 to 550) and performance in the in-house placement test, undergraduate students and graduate students are placed together into the ELP intermediate writing course because they are unfamiliar with and inexperienced in academic writing. In the following semester, they are divided into different courses at the advanced level—one for graduates and one for undergraduates. However, no prior study examines whether such an arrangement is appropriate to promote fluent academic competence commensurate with the university faculty expectations or if the curriculum appropriately accommodate student needs in their first semester at a foreign college. Using the framework of the study by Hale et al. (1996), analyzing course syllabi, guidelines on writing assignments, student writing samples, and conducting student and faculty interviews, I will investigate the writing needs of first-year undergraduate and graduate students within this ELP class. Such a specific focus is crucial in that students in the class are unaccustomed to the academic conventions foreign to them. Most of

them experience differences in language learning contexts, making transitions from EFL to ESL environments, which may significantly support or hinder the acquisition of L2 competence. Meanwhile, students in this EAP course consist of various ethnolinguistic groups, and in this respect resemble many other ESL classes in American universities. By comparing and contrasting similarities and differences in the writing needs of undergraduate and graduate students, it is hoped that this needs assessment will provide a solid basis for future development of materials, teaching activities, and criterion-referenced tests suitable for the instructors, learners and the ELP program.

The research questions were:

1. What are the writing needs of international students in the ELP intermediate writing course? How do students perceive their communication needs in terms of strengths and weaknesses in academic writing? What are faculty members' perceptions of international student writing in their respective disciplines?
2. What types of writing tasks are expected of undergraduate and graduate students in their regular university courses? What types of competence is required in order to complete the writing assignments?
3. Are there significant similarities or differences between undergraduate and graduate writing? Are the similarities or differences discipline-specific?

METHOD

ELP Background information

The needs analysis was conducted at a large American research university in the Pacific region with a large number of international students. As the university's International Student Service in-house report (2002) indicated, of the 1500 enrolled international students, 42% were at the undergraduate level and 58 % at the graduate level. Nearly two thirds of the international students came from the East Asian countries ($n=969$), and the top three countries were Japan, China, and Korea. The top four majors for undergraduate students were travel industry management, business, information and computer science, and psychology. The fields of study with the largest numbers of international student enrollment at the graduate level were social sciences, natural sciences, language, linguistics and literature, and business/travel industry management.

The English Language Program (ELP) provides English instruction for international and immigrant students so as to facilitate their academic studies at this particular university. Non-native English-speaking students who have limited proficiency are required to finish the EAP courses in their first year of study. Courses in academic listening/speaking, reading, and writing areas are taught during the regular 16-week Fall and Spring semesters, and students take these English language courses concurrently with other university coursework or their

mainstream subjects. The ELP courses contain students of mixed nationality, interest, and maturity.

Two levels of each language skill are offered by the ELP—intermediate and advanced. Students in the intermediate academic writing course are later bifurcated into either advanced writing course for foreign graduate students or advanced writing for undergraduate students after receiving one semester of writing instruction. Only students in the advanced writing course for undergraduate students get credits which count toward graduation.

In fall 2003, a total of 255 students took ELP courses, Japanese being the biggest subgroup ($n=114$) followed by Korean. Sixty-five of them were placed into three sections of the intermediate writing course: 18 graduate students, 22 undergraduate students, and 25 other (including unclassified undergraduate, special unclassified, post baccalaureate, and non-degree).

Participants

In spring 2003, 8 undergraduate students and 6 graduate students participated in the needs analysis survey. The majority of the students were from East Asian countries, with the biggest subgroup of Japanese ($n = 7$). The average length of residence in the U.S. was eight months, with a range from three to 24 months. Ten of the fourteen students were in their first semester in college; three students had been attending for two semesters and one student three semesters. Of particular interest for the study, the students majored in the disciplines of business, natural science, or social science (See Appendix A). Among the 14 participants, five agreed to have

one-to-one interviews with the investigator and discussed their views of their own difficulties and needs in writing. Two ELP writing instructors and the assistant director of the ELP were interviewed, answering questions regarding their assessment of the students' needs and their observations of students' difficulties and performance in class as well as the necessity of developing separate tracks for undergraduate and graduate students.

During academic year 2003, three beginning undergraduate students and three graduate students (four Japanese, one Taiwanese, and one Vietnamese) out of the 65 students who enrolled in the intermediate writing course participated in the second wave of data collection. The participants' majors consisted of three pairs of related disciplines: biology and nursing, social work and education administration, pre-business and executive management of business administration (See Appendix B). The six participants were interviewed to discuss their perceptions of writing demands in their content courses and their major fields. In addition, three professors of three respective disciplines, i.e. nursing, education administration, and business, were interviewed on their assessments of international student writing and their views on the writing skills needed for their discipline as well as its disciplinary culture.

Materials

A questionnaire on academic writing (see Appendix C) was developed based on the guidelines for designing a survey instrument (Brown, 2001). Student needs were viewed in terms of language abilities or skills required in the writing process. The questionnaire consisted of four

sections: biographical data, students' opinions on developing separate sections, the types of writing tasks students currently encounter, and student perceptions of their academic writing needs. The biographical data section primarily surveyed the population distribution according to their academic status, majors, native language and length of time in the United States and in this particular institute. Students were then asked to identify their concerns in academic writing and to report the writing tasks assigned in their non-ELP courses. Finally, students were to choose from thirty-four skills related to academic writing which they currently need or will need soon in order to achieve their academic objectives. The last section investigated students' perceptions of the relationship between the writing instruction in the intermediate writing course and the English writing skills required in their undergraduate and graduate programs.

Interview schedules for students and faculty members were designed on the bases of the research questions (see Appendix D and E). The interviews were semi-structured, i.e., interview questions were open-ended and loosely structured, with an aim of eliciting participants' perceptions and allowing for spontaneity and flexibility. Students were asked to evaluate the ELP writing course and reflect on the writing tasks of their regular courses and the expectations of their instructors. The instructors were asked to describe their experience in teaching international students and the similarities or differences in the requirements or performance of undergraduate and graduate students. The consent forms for surveys and interviews were designed and approved by the Committee of Human Studies.

Thirty-four course syllabi and descriptions/guidelines on writing assignments of the regular university courses which the six participating students took in academic year 2003 were collected as well as student writing samples. Analysis was conducted to examine the writing requirements the students encounter in their first year of studies at the U.S. university.

Procedures

A triangulation approach was adopted so as to ensure the information gathered from multiple sources and methods was as complete and reliable as possible. A variety of procedures were used in this needs analysis. Information was obtained from the following sources: survey of related literature, information from students through interviews and questionnaires, course syllabi, samples writing assignments, sample student writing, and interviews with both ELP and non-ELP instructors.

The first part of the study consisted of questionnaires and interviews. In spring 2003, questionnaires were administered in the two sections of the intermediate ELP writing course. From students' responses in the questionnaire, basic understanding of the academic writing needs of nonnative-English-speaking undergraduate and graduate students' was developed. Next, a total of five student volunteers were recruited for further in-depth interviews. The interviews were open-ended questions which elicited information regarding the students' previous writing experiences, current writing activities in the university regular courses and the students' experience of learning academic writing in the ELP. Then the ELP assistant director and two

instructors were interviewed on their opinion regarding the necessity and rationale of developing separate tracks for undergraduate and graduate students. The interviews lasted 30 to 60 minutes.

In the second part, course syllabi and handouts on writing assignments encountered by six students in fall 2003 and spring 2004 were collected and examined. The six students (three undergraduates and three graduates) enrolled in the intermediate writing course in fall 2003 and advanced writing course in spring 2004 were selected to represent different fields of study at this particular university. The examination of writing assignments was focused on the differences in five of the dimensions of the classification scheme developed by Hale et al, including the locus of writing, length of product, genres, cognitive demands, and patterns of exposition. The investigator confirmed the analysis of writing tasks and skills required of the students with the participating students and professors in the student and faculty interviews.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Part I. Spring 2003

Questionnaire surveys and ELP instructor-student perceptions. Questionnaires on academic writing were distributed and collected in the two sections of intermediate academic writing offered in spring 2003. Fourteen questionnaires were usable, 73% of the 19 questionnaires distributed. As shown in Table 1, the writing tasks required by ELP writing students' regular

(non-ELP) courses belonged to similar types, with research papers, short answers in exams, and essay exams being the most common requirements. In short-answer exams and essay exams, students needed to produce specified quantities of composition with clear, convincing content, clear organization, and standard grammar within a limited timeframe. The speed or fluency of students' writing had important consequences on the grades they received. This perceived need by most of the students surveyed corroborated the course's priority objective of developing written fluency. Frequent in-class essays would help students to develop techniques necessary to succeed on essay exams.

Table 1

Writing Needs of Students in ELP Writing, 2003 Spring

	Undergraduate students	Graduate students
Types of writing in regular university classes	7—essay exams	3—essay exams
	5—a research paper	4—a research paper
	4—short answers in exams	3—short answers in exams
	2—a reaction paper	2—an argumentative paper
	2—a summary-analysis	2—a critique
	1—an argumentative paper	1—a summary-analysis
	1—a lab report	1—a lab report
	1—a book report	1—a book report
Three aspects of academic writing most concerned about	1—a literature review	
	2—vocabulary	1—vocabulary
	1—word choice	1—word choice
	1—grammar	2—paragraph structure

3—structure	1—skill of discussion
2—logical reasoning	1—fluency
1—creative writing	1—content
1—spelling	
1—accuracy	
1—format	

When asked to list three aspects of academic writing they were most concerned about, undergraduate and graduate students expressed divergent views. It appears undergraduate students were more concerned about micro-language skills than graduate students. This may be attributed to common expectations of undergraduate students to demonstrate content knowledge learned in their curricula, while graduate students are typically expected to demonstrate critical thinking and analyzing skills. It could also mean that foreign graduate students were more confident with their grammar.

Tables 2 and 3 each show three areas in writing graduate and undergraduate students, respectively, felt an urgent need to improve in their writing. Undergraduate and graduate students were similarly concerned about the issues of fluency and word choice. Graduate students, in comparison to their undergraduate peers, wanted to learn more about mechanics and form. Undergraduate students, on the other hand, showed stronger desire to improve their grasp of sentence structures and accuracy.

Table 2

Three Areas Graduate students Felt an Urgent Need to Improve in Writing

Rank	Listed first (Most urgent)	Listed second	Listed third (Urgent)
Areas to improve			
Fluency	4		
Accuracy			1
Reasoning and evidence	1		1
Sentence structure		1	
Paragraph structure			2
Word choice	1	2	2
Mechanics and form		3	

Note. Numbers represent the frequency students prioritized particular “areas to improve” from most urgent to urgent.

Table 3

Three Areas Undergraduate Students Felt an Urgent Need to Improve in Writing

Rank	Listed first (Most urgent)	Listed second	Listed third 3 (Urgent)
Areas to improve			
Fluency	3		1
Accuracy	1	2	1
Reasoning and evidence	1		
Sentence structure	1	4	1
Paragraph structure		1	1
Word choice	1	1	2
Mechanics and form	1		1

Note. Numbers refer to the frequency students prioritized particular “areas to improve” from most urgent to urgent

It appears that all respondents had strong interest in grammatical accuracy. This may reflect the grammatical approach that most of them had been exposed to when learning English. This finding resembles that of Leki and Carson, despite the small sample of the current study.

Interviews with three students confirmed this assumption. Moreover, students in the writing course considered themselves already having certain writing or writing-related skills, such as the ability to conduct research and identify the audience and purpose of a paper. They wanted to learn to write the American way, specifically with regard to language proficiency (grammar and appropriate vocabulary) and rhetorical skills (e.g., organization, transition). This could also imply that these skills, unlike global writing skills, can not be easily transferred from their L1.

More research would have to be conducted to further investigate this issue.

Table 4

Opinions on the Necessity of Dividing ELP Writing into Separate Sections

	Undergraduate students	Graduate students
Question 1		
Should ELP intermediate writing	1—Yes	3—Yes
divided into separate sections?	7—No	3—No
Question 2		
Willing to adjust schedule to take	2—3	1—1
separate sections for undergraduate	4—4	1—2
and graduate students?	1—6	1—3
Number of students : degree	1—7	1—4
1(Very willing)-7(Very unwilling)		2—7

Opinions were solicited regarding students' views on developing separate sections for undergraduate and graduate students (see Table 4). Four out of the fourteen students (29 %) answered yes and gave the following reasons: were ELP intermediate writing divided into two sections, the class could not only focus more on what the students needed but also could have adjusted to students' levels. Ten students (71%) did not see it necessary to develop separate

tracks for the class. However, it should be noted that half of the graduate students are in favor of divided sections. The Assistant Director of ELP responded that although there are logistical constraints in developing separate sections, it was possible to develop separate tracks for undergraduate and graduate students in terms of material design and assigned tasks. In the second round of interviews, two of the five interviewees, both of whom undergraduate students, expressed their opinions that ELP intermediate writing students have comparable English skills and are more or less at the same level in the process of English acquisition. Yet, 71% of the students were also willing to adjust their schedules to take the special sections specifically designed for either undergraduate or graduate students.

Both the undergraduate and graduate students' perceptions of the writing skills necessary for their regular courses as well as those needed to be taught in ELP writing course were explored. Research has indicated the skills students will most willingly learn and apply to real life situations are those they identify during the course of interactions. Students in ELP writing found most of the skills listed in the questionnaire essential for a writing curriculum. Nevertheless, it appears that nearly half of the graduate students did not consider it necessary to learn about topic selection, idea-generating strategies, detail-listing, library skills, targeting audiences, and peer revision. Around half of the undergraduate students regarded it unnecessary to learn detail-listing, identifying audiences and the purposes of their papers, detecting logical fallacy, and peer revision.

However, the findings of this study should be interpreted with caution. Students' responses may not correctly reflect their needs and may contain some inaccurate information. The findings of a need to possess a skill must not be equated with not having acquired that skill, and vice versa.

ELP student interviews. Students' evaluations of the ELP writing course varied. Two found it to be devoid of challenge and applicability for other disciplines. One of the students even commented the teacher had turned the writing course into a reading course. The other three viewed ELP writing as useful; they found it helpful learning about citations and how to organize essays. One noticed that after she took ELP writing, she could write longer, more complex sentences.

All of the students interviewed stated that professors of their fields typically emphasized content. What they needed to do was to express their ideas clearly and support those ideas with evidence, specific details and cogent arguments. They were not worried that grammatical mistakes would adversely influence their grades. Depending on the objectives and instructors of a course, the writing requirements varied accordingly. For general, lower-level or business-related courses, students were often asked to write two or three short-answer exams and one 10-page team project/research paper, with the paper accounting for 20-30% of the overall grade. For higher-level or graduate courses, the writing load was much heavier; students were often required to hand in three papers, each ranging from eight to 20 pages. For these papers,

students were given the freedom to choose a research topic that interested them. Sometimes the essay exams consisted of five questions, with study guides; sometimes students composed take-home essay exams of five questions.

Students who participated in the interviews were quite confident of their idea-formation skills. They, undergraduate and graduate students alike, felt no qualms about approaching the professors and classmates for clarification of the assignments and for help with the identification of pertinent writing conventions. What concerned them most was the rhetoric: how to improve ways of expressing their ideas according to academic expectations and norms. Instruction on sentence variety and rhetorical grammar, rather than on grammar, was what students hoped to come across in academic writing classes. Listed below are the weaknesses students identified in their writing and wished to improve:

- I want to know how to write the formal way.
- When reading my classmates' work, I discovered that we used same sentence patterns without variation.
- My lack of English proficiency prevents me from expressing my meaning properly.
- My vocabulary is limited. I want to know how native speakers write differently.
- I'd like to learn more about transitions and cohesive devices. I'd also like to expand my vocabulary.

When asked why certain skills currently taught in the ELP writing curriculum were

considered trivial, such as library skills and topic brainstorming, students replied they already possessed such skills and did not need to be taught. Besides which, they could seek help individually from instructors/professors or librarians if they experienced trouble in such matters.

Of the five students who were interviewed, two considered it helpful to divide the course into separate sections for undergraduate and graduate students. These two graduate students thought division of graduate and undergraduate students would allow the class to concentrate more specifically on the needs of these disparate groups. The other three, one graduate and two undergraduate students, did not consider it necessary to separate undergraduate and graduate students. They believed these groups belonged together due to their comparable writing competence. After listening to the researcher's explanation of the potential benefits of separate tracks in ELP intermediate course during the second round of interviews, the three students who had previously opposed such a division later conceded they might benefit more from a writing class specifically designed for undergraduate or graduate students.

ELP staff interviews. One of the ELP writing teachers had two-semester experience of teaching writing. The first semester was hectic, as he was informed of which class to teach only two days prior to instruction. He found teaching writing interesting and challenging. In his opinion, both undergraduate and graduate students in the ELP intermediate writing course needed to develop fluency, but the intensity of writing needs differed. Undergraduate students had just been initiated into the academic community as they began to learn to write for academic

purposes; whereas graduate students faced the much greater challenge of demonstrating analytical and critical writing in English right from day one.

According to his observation, graduate students in his class were more studious, because their English proficiency was often lower than their graduate peers, yet they were held to the same standards as other students whose native language is English; they had to write lengthy research papers and prepare lectures. The graduate students in the intermediate writing course were generally overwhelmed by the immediacy of graduate-level pressures, and thus sought to learn graduate-level specific skills to cope with such academic demands (like citation and paraphrasing methods). Since the students were immediately required to produce big academic papers, they could not wait to learn how to cite and paraphrase sources until they attend the advanced writing course. Undergraduate students, on the other hand, may just need to write short essays or express opinions with supporting ideas.

He commented on why he believed there should be separate tracks for undergraduate and graduate students. He cited his observation that graduate students suffered from bruised egos as a result of placement with undergraduate students in an English class as impetus to divide the intermediate level academic writing course into undergraduate and graduate sections. Different sections, in his opinions, catering to students' specific writing needs would motivate students to learn more actively. Based on the above-mentioned reasons, he supported developing separate tracks for the course.

The other ELP writing instructor also believed in the necessity of separating the course into two tracks even if the students' scores on the placement test fell into the same range. The reasons she cited are as follows: different levels of maturity, different types of writing assigned to them, and different guidance needs from teachers.

It was her observation that graduate students were more mature and knowledgeable than their undergraduate peers. Students in ELP courses were allowed to take regular university classes; therefore, they usually registered for any available section to accommodate their schedules. Such practice has resulted in ELP writing course whose students varied greatly in interests and maturity. Placing them together for group work and other classroom activities caused problems. Besides, graduate students have to write with more depth and length. Graduate students tend to engage more in primary research, writing literature reviews and research papers. Undergraduate students, on the other hand, are often required to take essay exams, write lab reports, book reviews, journals, and research papers based on secondary sources, not conduct graduate-caliber research. Finally, she thought that undergraduate students generally need more help with fluency and clarity in writing, while graduate students need more guidance in synthesizing the literature and writing at a level that demonstrates their expertise in a particular area.

Part II. Fall 2003-Spring 2004

Examinations of writing tasks and student-faculty perceptions of writing needs. As shown in

Table 5, the pre-business freshman had been taking pre-business courses to fulfill the program admission requirements of the College of Business Administration. In the two required pre-business courses, ECON 130 and 131, the major method of evaluation was multiple-choice tests, which accounted for between 85% and 100% of the grade. Very little writing was demanded; more emphasis was put on developing analytical skills and an understanding of the economics principles. Other than the academic writing he did for the ELP writing courses, the only writing assignments he encountered were one 500-word response paper to a video clip and a short essay (three to five pages) on slang terms (15% of the total course grade) for the linguistics class during his first two semesters.

Table 5

Courses Taken by Business Students in Fall 2003-Spring 2004

	Undergraduate (Pre-business)	Graduate (EMBA)
Courses taken in fall 2003	ELP 70, ELP 72, ELP 73 ECON 131, LIN 102	ELP 72, ELP 73 BUS 610B, 610C, 610D, 613
Courses taken in spring 2004	ELP 80, ELP 82, ELP 83 ECON 130	ELP 82, ELP 83 BUS 614B, 614C, 615B, 615C

Note. LIN = linguistics, ECON = economics, BUS = business

Compared with the beginning undergraduate student, the EMBA student faced much higher writing demands. For all eight EMBA core courses, he had to write for individual assignments or

group projects. He was expected to express his ideas clearly and concisely. One special feature of the business assignments was a strong problem-solving orientation. Students worked with actual business problems and used decision-making processes in team environments. Students were either provided the cases or asked to use outside sources. Moreover, students were expected to integrate the course content with other course modules (e.g., integrating financing and management) as well as to apply the principles, theories, and models later in their professional life. The higher-level cognitive ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information which was of different natures and from different (primary and secondary) sources was essential for completion of the writing tasks. The written work made up an average of about 40% of the course grade (18% to 60%). The syllabi of the graduate business courses provided specific directions as to the focus, coverage, organization, and required length of the writing tasks. Sometimes the assignments were accompanied by an issues/questions sheet to guide the students' analyses. The most common types of writing assignments were case studies, business plans/proposals, and executive summaries. The required length of individual assignments was usually three to five pages, and 10-20 pages for term papers and group projects.

Table 6 lists the courses taken by two students majoring in natural science. In the five general introductory courses taken by the first-year undergraduate student who declared biology as her major, the method of instruction was lecturing, and the methods of evaluation were primarily multiple-choice and true-false tests. The chemistry lab reports, which constituted 70 %

of course grades, required mostly calculation and simple brief clarification (no more than three sentences) instead of writing. However, in the biology lab courses, each week she had to maintain records in a lab notebook (5%) and complete lab reports (25%) after carrying out experiments. One important characteristic of the lab reports was the formulaic pattern constituted by description of the purposes of an experiment, a summary of the work completed, and a discussion of results. Another apparent feature was the attempt to establish cause-effect relationships through testing hypotheses. It was important for students to be able to combine visual materials such as drawings and graphs with text paragraphs to clarify ideas. Because the standards of different teaching assistants grading the reports varied, her lab summaries were more detailed and better developed in the first semester, usually two to three pages conforming to the introduction-data-discussion formula starting with a purpose statement. In the second semester the lab summaries were usually one to two pages consisted of collections of answers to the discussion questions listed in the lab manual. The biology lab course in her second semester was a writing intensive course; thus, she was required to write a research paper (15%) with a minimum of 10 pages, including a proposal, one draft and one final copy with at least ten references. The guidelines for writing the lab summaries and research papers were clearly explained in the appendices of the manual.

Courses Taken by Natural Science Students in Fall 2003-Spring 2004

	Undergraduate (Biology)	Graduate (Nursing)
Courses taken in fall 2003	ELP 70, ELP 72, ELP 73 BIOL 171, BIOL 171 L CHEM 161, CHEM 161L	ELP 80, ELP 82, ELP 73 NURS 739, EDEP 610
Courses taken in spring 2004	ELP 80, ELP 82, ELP 83 BIOL 172, BIOL 172 L CHEM 162, CHEM 162 L ICS 101	ELP 83 NURS 751, PH 656, PH 751

Note. BIOL = biology, CHEM = chemistry, ICS = information and computer science, NURS = nursing

EDEP = educational psychology, PH = public health

On the other hand, the beginning nursing doctoral student took two statistics courses and three seminars during the first two semesters. Little writing was required in the statistics courses, whereas the writing requirements of each seminar were worth over 50% of the grade. The writing tasks included a group proposal, a problem statement paper, a statement of philosophy, and a literature review at the frequency of two major papers per semester. The writing tasks were specifically designed to prepare the students for future journal publications and usually related strongly to the students' area of research interest. There was a tight conceptual-theoretical-empirical structure, and students were expected to manifest the higher level cognitive ability to analyze concepts, paradigms, and research literature, and to develop or critically evaluate theories. The final term papers for her classes should be 15 pages or more while the group paper

should not exceed 25 pages. The focus was more on interpretation and integration of research results, rather than clinical practice skills and write-ups of case studies and problem-treatment plans, which were the most common writing tasks required of undergraduate nursing students.

Table 7

Courses Taken by Social Science Students in Fall 2003-Spring 2004

	Undergraduate (Pre-Social Work)	Graduate (Nursing)
Courses taken in fall 2003	ELP 80, ELP 82, ELP 73 POLs 110	ELP 72, ELP 73 EDEA 610, EDEA 620
Courses taken in spring 2004	ELP 100 PHIL 260, ANTH 152, SW200	ELP 82, ELP 83 EDEA 601, EDEA 630, EDEA 670

Note. POLs = political science, PHIL = philosophy, ANTH = anthropology, SW = social work

EDEA = educational administration

The undergraduate student decided to come to the U.S. to study social work after studying agriculture in a Japanese university for two years. She took the prerequisite courses for social work majors and meanwhile tried to get transfer credits for the course work she had done in Japan. Three out of the four content courses (see Table 7) she had taken so far required a large amount of writing, even though none of these were writing intensive courses. The political science course evaluation was based on two five-page essays and one presentation. The other

two courses had some essay questions in the exams. Moreover, the anthropology course required six writing assignments (one to three pages) related to participant-observation projects and one ethnography project which included a proposal, an outline, a draft paper and a final paper, while the social work course required two reflection/reaction papers (four to five pages) and one research paper (10 pages). Each anthropology writing assignment was scored according to three categories: references (two points), content (two points), and grammar (one point). For the social work assignments, very specific directions were given as to what the papers must include, and the number of references required from journal articles, books, or web sites. Most of the writing assignments called for some field or library research and analysis of a certain political or social issue. Twenty-five to thirty-five percent of the total course grade was writing assignments.

The masters of educational administration student faced much more writing demands as compared to when she was an undergraduate chemistry student. Writing assignments constituted the major EDEA course requirements, worth over 60 % of the grades of all five courses examined. Reflection papers, position papers, and take-home essay exams were the most common tasks students were given. The short assignments took one to five pages, whereas one final paper was 10-15 pages in length. In a few cases the required length was not specified by the instructors. In one elective course, there were two group projects for which students had to collaborate in presenting current research, identifying key issues of a specific case, and offering

suggestions. With a focus on the effective communication of personal understanding and reflection in writing, guidelines for the papers and, at times, grading rubrics were supplied together with the course syllabi, or in a separate sheet.

Comparison between beginning undergraduate and graduate students' writing needs. A number of issues emerged from the data collected. The three beginning undergraduate students were both taking lower-division knowledge-base requirements for their intended or chosen majors and trying to fulfill the general education core requirements. Since the bachelor programs involve a two-year course of study which begins in the junior year, the writing demands in their first year would not be the same as those of college-level major courses (300⁺ level), not to mention graduate level courses. On the other hand, the beginning graduate students encountered writing tasks which were very discipline-specific. They were required to read professional journal articles and be able to critically evaluate and synthesize the readings and communicate their viewpoints, preferably at the professional level. In addition, the graduate course grades were determined to a higher degree by students' writing and its quality. Writing in English was more central to graduate students' professional lives and more critical to their success.

Another major difference was the formal training and assistance in writing to which international students had access. Though writing was integrated into the graduate course work, no separate writing course was offered. As for undergraduate students, five writing intensive courses were required for the bachelor's degree. In other words, the undergraduate students were

given more chances to polish their writing skills with teachers' guidance and feedback, while the international graduate students were required to work on their writing independently except for the ELP writing courses.

The writing skills required of the undergraduate and the graduate students were found not to differ greatly. Fundamental writing skills such as summarizing, describing, analyzing, and organizing were vital to the successful completion of the writing tasks at different levels. At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, students were required to do independent thinking, research specific issues, integrate concepts with real-world practices, and demonstrate their learning in the written form clearly. However, graduate students obviously faced higher academic writing expectations. Graduate students were expected to perform at a higher level of sophistication and more profound understanding of the subject matter, and eventually contribute to the fields. One important dimension of graduate writing in the field of educational administration was to write according to a theoretical framework and to apply or relate abstractions or theories to practice. Graduate science majors must conduct research and report the results. In contrast, undergraduate students merely touch on research methodology. It was particularly essential that graduate students have the ability to synthesize across studies and draw overall conclusions. In addition, graduate students were required to be more concise, (e.g., having the ability to summarize a 50-page article to a one-page summary in the business discipline).

Students' perceptions of the writing needs and the ELP courses. The students' perceptions of their writing needs and the ELP writing courses were strongly influenced by their individual agendas and histories, current writing activities, and, to a lesser degree, future expected writing tasks in their studies and careers. Without any previous training in language schools, the pre-social work undergraduate student was thankful that the ELP courses smoothed her transition into the American university while the pre-business undergraduate student thought that the instruction of the ELP writing courses highly resembled his preparatory courses in intensive language programs and thus repeated what he already knew. The undergraduate biology major was concerned about writing research papers and preparing citations, as she was, at that time, required to write a research paper for the lab course. The nursing student noted that the faculty and classmates at the U.S. university were concerned with the length of the paper, which in her view severely restricted the way she would have liked to develop the paper. The undergraduate pre-business student's belief that writing was not as significant as personality in the business world was confirmed since he did not have to do much writing for the content courses he had taken so far. In contrast, based on his own extensive working experience, the EMBA student considered writing critical for his future career since he was frequently required to write up reports, memos, meeting minutes, proposals and other kinds of business documents. He expected that he would encounter more writing tasks after starting his company in the future.

The content course instructors' approach to grading and responding to student writing also

played a central role in the six students' perceptions of academic writing. The fact that the business professors commented on the content of the EMBA student's written assignments was in line with his belief that content and analytical thinking skills were the main criteria for a piece of good writing. Despite the fact that some professors checked his sentences for grammatical mistakes, he did not think his grades were affected by such errors. The undergraduate student who intended to major in social work perceived writing to be critical in her regular courses, as she inferred from the grading policy that writing carried a great weight. From the teaching instructors and assistants, the biology major learned that clarity in scientific communication was of great significance. In brief, the students' approach to the writing tasks was highly affected by the breakdown of the grade for writing assignments.

Overall, the beginning international students found the writing tasks of content courses challenging. One undergraduate student felt that writing assignments assisted her in clarifying her understanding of the subjects which were obscure and difficult to grasp at first. Yet that also meant long hours sitting in front of the computer writing. In another case, even though the instructor announced the test questions before the essay exam, she still did not have enough time to write down her answers. The nursing student noticed the concurrent increase in the level of abstraction of the content and the level of academic studies. Information in the textbooks which had been accepted as truth in undergraduate studies now had to be questioned and considered from different angles. Composing in a second language inevitably took longer for the students.

They tried to come up with the appropriate expression for their intended meaning. This process was quite a struggle. One student said she still had to think of ideas in Japanese and then translate into English for the major assignments, a practice, she worried, would lead to awkwardness in her writing. Aware of the different discourse patterns of Japanese and English, she wanted urgently to develop the ability to think and write in English. The Taiwanese student started to pay more attention to how English transition words provided organizational cues and reflected the flow of logic since she was not experienced with English academic writing. In addition, three of the students conscientiously consulted the instructor for advice on topic choice and asked for feedback on their written work. These three female students also recruited help proofreading their papers before submitting them.

While four students perceived their process of getting a degree to have been considerably slowed by the ELP course requirements (four to six ELP courses), all six students appreciated the improvement derived from the academic writing courses. The writing courses were more beneficial than reading or listening/speaking courses in terms of expanding their capacity to use academic English. The intermediate academic writing course specifically helped them develop fluency in academic writing and familiarity with academic writing. They actively applied the writing skills they acquired to the writing assignments of regular content courses. Nevertheless, taking ELP courses along with their content courses concurrently was considered very demanding and time-consuming, especially for the graduate students. With definite career plans

in mind, all the three graduate students took on heavy course loads, either equal to or exceeding the maximum. On the other hand, none of the undergraduate students expressed a strong sense of urgency or keen desire to finish the degree programs within the shortest amount of time. Undergraduate students were more likely to reduce their course loads in consideration of the language requirement than graduate students.

Faculty perceptions of international students' academic writing and disciplinary writing.

The three professors representing the three disciplines all indicated that international students, in general, were strong in relating the course materials to cultural issues and situations outside the U.S. As the international students examined the issues through cross-cultural lenses, they introduced new insights in their writing. The professors were very positive about international students' intellectual ability and creativity.

Although individual variation in writing skills existed depending on the students' nationalities and educational and working experiences, international students seemed to share some areas of difficulty in their writing. The business professor observed that international students from Asian countries were weak at connecting concepts to self. Unaccustomed to giving personal evaluations, Asian students needed more encouragement and guidance regarding expressing personal opinions in their writing in the beginning stage. Similarly, the educational administration professor mentioned that entering international students required more prompts and specific directions and required some assistance in developing the skill to define the scope of

writing, because they were uncomfortable with selecting their own topics.

Poor grammar skills and limited vocabulary were viewed by the three professors as the foremost factors which obstructed the international students from expressing themselves clearly in writing. Yet none of the professors penalized students for lower language proficiency, as they expected that the students' writing would improve with experience and exposure to extensive reading and writing. The professors would include a note for students directing them to seek editing help. They all were willing to go over students' preliminary drafts and offer additional assistance with language issues when asked. To improve their writing, international students were advised to get feedback and criticism on their drafts from native speakers in their own disciplines, or proficient writers of English. Sometimes due to their language proficiency and occasionally cultural upbringing, international students were assigned to do number crunching or information gathering rather than participating actively in the writing of the group report. This situation was particularly serious in the business team-oriented writing tasks. In response to the possible uneven distribution of work, the professors recommended that international students be more active by taking the initiative and volunteering to write part of the paper.

There was a heavy emphasis on writing in all the respective fields, in that writing generated a product by which the student's capabilities could be judged. Both the business and educational administration professors emphasized the importance of making personal, meaningful associations to the course materials and actively seeking ways to utilize the knowledge and skills

acquired in class. They deemed writing a tool for maximizing the effects of learning by helping students carefully clarify concepts, evaluate their readings, and then internalize the course contents. Reflection papers and position papers were the common methods of evaluating students' ability to contextualize the theories and gain insights into the events or learning experiences.

Critical thinking abilities and content were the two major criteria when the professors evaluated international students' academic writing with each carrying approximately equal weight. The education administration professor stated that what she looked for in students' writing was related to the nature of the course. If the course was content-driven, she would check students' understanding of the fundamental concepts. Otherwise, she placed the emphasis on the depth of critical thoughts. The business professor referred to critical thinking as the imperative component of business writing, since business professionals were frequently called upon to evaluate or recommend courses of action.

In the professors' opinions, the difference between business communication and scientific writing lay in the fact that the latter communicated research results to people in the field and was more stringent with its specific methodology and introduction-method-results-discussion format. In light of the necessity of dealing with people, business students must be able to adapt their writing style to the intended business audiences across organizations such as supervisors, clients, investors, business owners. Adjusting the messages according to the audience analysis was

crucial to business communication success. In contrast, writing in the social science discipline was more likely to revolve around personal critical reflection, with some elements of the concise style of business writing and interpretive theoretical style of humanities.

DISCUSSION

The ELP intermediate writing has been concentrating on engaging students in authentic academic writing activities and helping them develop written fluency. The fact that the students were aware of their need to improve fluency supported the ELP's approach to teaching writing as a process—continuous planning, composing, revising, and editing. Also, as the students realized the distinction between content and language, they needed to improve their skills in areas that directly influenced content, such as organizing, developing, and supporting their ideas and arguments. Instructors can give students checklists to aid in the production and reworking of drafts as well as checklists for composing introductions and conclusions so that students can reflect upon their process of writing.

The development of fluency—an important area which ELP intermediate writing course already addresses—also serves another important function. According to the survey, two of the common writing tasks students do are short-answer and essay exams. In such situations, students are required to produce writing which has clear, convincing content, clear organization, and standard grammar within a limited amount of time. The speed or fluency students write with has

important consequences on the grades they receive. It seems more class time could be allotted to helping students develop fluency. Students have to practice writing some essay exams under time limitations. However, it should be noted that there may be groups of students who need more coaching in this area than others, so *flexibility* about the extent to which this aspect of writing is covered is important.

Another issue with regard to process writing emerges from an interview with an undergraduate student. In the writing class, students write several drafts and make revisions for the class, but once outside the classroom, students, especially those whose English writing is not so good, often lack the time or motivation to write multiple drafts. Thus, writing instruction should make it a priority to help students acquire fluency in writing so that they can apply the revising, proofreading, and editing skills they have learned in the course. Students, meanwhile, should manage their time effectively in order to absorb the details of a process approach and respond to feedback. It is worth noticing that focusing on students' fluency does not necessarily motivate them to write drafts and get feedback.

Units on vocabulary building and lexical selections should be incorporated into the writing course to address students' concerns. As Santos (1988) discovered in her investigations of the reactions of professors to student compositions, lexical errors were rated as the most serious problems, owing to the influence vocabulary exerts over content. Her suggestions for vocabulary building activities can be adopted by ELP writing students. Requiring students to keep a

vocabulary notebook based on their readings and lectures, practicing lexical selections and using synonymous forms of expressions, doing vocabulary exercises, and employing supplementary materials that deal with vocabulary for academic purposes are all helpful suggestions. Additionally, though grammar is not and should not be the focus of the ELP writing course, regular five-minute mini-lectures to review common ESL students' errors (run-ons, fragments, relatives, passives) in the context of authentic student essays would also help meet students' needs for grammar instruction.

Contrastive rhetoric (rhetorical patterns across cultures) may be an area that writing instructors in ELP writing would benefit from developing further in their curricula. Since international students bring different writing experiences and cultures to U.S. classrooms, further development of contrastive rhetoric in ELI curricula would provide international students, particularly those from East Asia, with more opportunities to adapt to the rigors of American academia. Additionally, students from the same country may share common problem areas. Although the makeup of ELP classes varies from year to year, most of the students are generally Japanese, Korean, and Chinese L1 speakers. ELP writing teachers can assist international students by explicitly specifying rhetorical patterns and academic writing conventions commonly used in American universities, which may very likely differ from those they were used to in their native country. Thus, common academic discourse (basic organizational patterns and phrases for introducing, concluding, summarizing, comparing, etc.) could be directly addressed in classroom

instruction and practice, raising students' awareness and accelerating acquisition.

ELP has been surveying faculty on students' writing needs and investigating students' perceived needs in writing. It is essential for ELP writing instructors to continue to justify the philosophy behind the writing course to students. Students must realize improving grammar is not the priority in learning writing; instead, their focus should be on content and organization. Students tend to rely on peer revision skills more readily when they become aware of how writing includes seeking out advice and feedback from others. Once students realize the usefulness of the writing skills they are to acquire in class, they will participate in class with much more enthusiasm and practice the skills in their authentic academic writing. The ELP has also been actively making inquiries before class about students' academic histories and needs, as well as their anticipated writing tasks. In so doing, the ELP can facilitate students' acquisition of writing ability by evaluating how students' experiences in ELP writing courses relate to and contribute to their writing requirements in their fields.

Development of separate tracks within ELP intermediate writing course for undergraduate and graduate students could be approached by adjusting the difficulty level of the reading input. Students do not have to write on a uniform topic, but they can write on topics related to their own academic discipline. Or they could bring their writing assignments from regular courses to the writing course for activities on assignment analysis and peer conferencing. The separate writing tasks for undergraduate and graduate students in Table 8 are adapted from pedagogical

suggestions made by Horowitz (1986) and Leki's book on academic writing (1999).

Table 8

Different Assignments for Undergraduate and Graduate Students

	Undergraduate students	Graduate students
Topics of writing assignment	Thematic units of general interest (e.g. pollution, computer revolution, adolescence, etc.)	Topics of the individual's field (e.g. business, social science, science, etc.)
Take-home readings	General reading texts	Articles from journals, encyclopedias, research sources Example research papers
Writing tasks	Take notes, Write outlines Analyze main ideas and support Distinguish useful data from multiple sources Write reaction papers Write brief article summaries Write participatory reports Write expository essays Write surveys and questionnaires Write brief informational reports	Write annotated bibliography Analyze lexicon and conventions Distinguish/quote useful data from a disorganized body of data Respond to written arguments Write critical reviews Write argument papers Write interpretive essays Write proposals/case studies Write brief research papers

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The present study examined two separate student groups, which contributed to general and specific understanding of beginning international students' perceived writing needs. The collection of authentic writing assignments and guidelines of non-ELP courses provided insights

into the cognitive and rhetorical demands required of the actual university writing tasks encountered by first-year international undergraduate and graduate students. Analysis of the writing tasks students encountered in one academic year indicated the varying writing needs of students. Interviews with ELP and non-ELP faculty gave indication to how the ELP writing course could better accommodate international students. Nevertheless, this study suffers from a few limitations. The student samples were from a limited population. Interviews with ELP writing students did not represent the shared opinions of all students. Some students who participated in the interviews were more vocal and more willing to discuss their opinions and experiences, but each individual's experience and interpretation was unique and did not allow generalization. Finally, a major problem for this study was the fact that the questionnaire required certain technical metalinguistic knowledge to answer the questions. Without clear definitions, students may have understood the items differently. Clearly, further research is essential.

CONCLUSION

Information gathered from the parties involved in academic writing classrooms sheds light on the writing tasks international students face, the information-processing problems those tasks entail, and guidance instructors can provide in simulating those tasks. Both previous research and data collected from questionnaires and interviews indicate one significant matter: undergraduate

and graduate students differ greatly in their writing needs, types of writing tasks they are required to do, language skills and expertise expected of them, and the type of instruction suitable for their goals. However cursory, this study nonetheless suggests that it would be beneficial to divide the ELP intermediate writing course into two sections for undergraduate and graduate students, or at least separate tracks within the section, given the constraints the ELP faces. Based on my research and studies cited in this paper, I am convinced that developing separate sections or separate tracks for undergraduate and graduate students would better accommodate students' needs and prepare them for the tasks they will encounter in their academic careers.

Needs assessment provides the basis for curriculum development. From understanding students' experiences and current student issues, students' needs can be more effectively accommodated, and academic writing curriculum can be more efficiently implemented. Research on motivation and linguistic achievement suggests that people learn well if learning is something they desire and need for their own ends, if it makes sense to them within their personal contexts. As Horowitz (1987) notes, what learners perceive they are learning and what they need to learn strongly influences their receptiveness to learning. Students in EAP writing classes should not be passive recipients of writing instruction, but valuable resources for teaching materials and teaching activities. If students are left out of the process of curriculum design and development, students will tend to lack the motivation to learn and improve. It is my hope that the findings of

this study will help the ELP better meet the demands of the international students' immediate, authentic academic writing assignments (task-specific and community-specific) and provide a rationale for further ELP intermediate writing curriculum improvement.

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Appendix A

Demographic Characteristics of Students in ELP Intermediate Writing Course, 2003 Spring

Academic status	Undergraduate students	Graduate students
Student number	8	6
Average age	19-38, Ave: 23	22-30, Ave: 25
Gender (F : M)	3 : 5	5 : 1
Native language	4 Japanese 1 Chinese 2 Korean 1 Hebrew	3 Japanese 1 Tetun 2 Chinese
Time in U.S.	4—three months 3—eight months 1—one year and six months	3—three months 1—ten months 1—one year 1—two years
Time at UHM	5—one semester 2—two semesters 1—three semesters	5—one semester 1—two semesters
Time at other American colleges	6—none 1—two semesters 1—seven semesters	5—none 1—five semesters
Major	3—Natural science (ICS/Biology/Biology) 1—Social science (Social work) 3—Business/TIM (Business administration/ Economics/ TIM) 1—Unspecified	2—Natural science (Public health/Oceanography) 1—Social science (Public administration) 3—Business/TIM (Accounting/Economics/ TIM)

Appendix B

Demographic Characteristics of Participating ELP Intermediate Writing Students, 2004 Spring

Academic status	Undergraduate students	Graduate students
Student number	3	3
Average age	19-22, Ave: 21	28-39, Ave: 33
Gender (F : M)	2 : 1	2 : 1
Native language	3 Japanese	1 Japanese 1 Chinese 1 Vietnamese
Time in U.S.	1—seven months 1—one year 1—one year and eleven months	1—seven months 1—nine months 1—one year and two months
Time at UHM	3—two semesters	3—two semesters
Time at other American colleges	3—none	3—none
Major/Current student Status	1—Natural Science (Biology freshman) 1—Social science (Social work junior) 1—Business (Pre-Business freshman)	1—Natural Science (Nursing PhD program) 1—Social science (Educational administration MEd program) 1—Business (Executive management of business administration EMBA program)

be to adjust your schedule to take it?

Very willing 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very unwilling

If you are willing to participate in a confidential interview, please provide the following information:

Name: _____ e-mail address: _____

Your assistance is highly appreciated.

Please read the following directions:

There are two questions for each of the skills listed below. The first question asks if you need to use a particular skill in your regular university classes. Your choices are () Yes () No () Not sure. The second question asks if you think a particular skill needs to be practiced in an English academic writing course. Your choices are () Yes () No () Not sure.

Please check

() Not sure if you don't know what the skill is or if you don't know whether there is a need to practice it.

Do you need to use this skill in any of your regular university classes?	Do you think this skill needs to be taught in ELP writing course?
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WRITING SKILLS

Not

Prewriting

- | | <u>Not</u> | | <u>Sure</u> | |
|--|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. Understand the assignment | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>Sure</u> | <u>Yes</u> |
| 2. Identify the audience | <u>No</u> | <u>Sure</u> | | |
| 3. Decide on the purpose of the essay | () | () | () | |
| 4. Choose a subject that you are interested in | () | () | () | |
| 5. Narrow the subject to a topic (title) | () | () | () | |
| 6. Collect ideas about the topic | () | () | () | |
| 7. Use idea generating strategies such as listing, brainstorming, clustering, flow chart, etc. | () | () | () | |
| 8. List details that will interest the audience | () | () | () | |
| 9. Use library skills | () | () | () | |

Drafting:

- | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|--|
| 10. Plan the ideas and the structure of the paper | () | () | () | |
| 11. Write an introduction | () | () | () | |
| 12. Write a thesis statement of opinion/intent | () | () | () | |
| 13. Write body paragraph topic sentences and headings | () | () | () | |
| 14. Write supporting sentences | | | | |
| 15. Write concluding sentences | () | () | () | |
| 16. Move smoothly from one paragraph to another | () | () | () | |

Appendix D

Interview Schedule for Students

1. Are you an undergraduate student or a graduate student?
2. What is your major? How long do you expect to get your degree? What factors do you consider when selecting courses?
3. Do you think writing is important in your field?
4. Does the requirement of ELP courses facilitate your academic studies?
5. What do you think of the ELP writing courses?
6. What more would you have liked to learn in ELP writing courses with regard to academic writing?
7. What kind of writing tasks do you encounter in your non-ELP courses?

Type—Frequency—% of grade—Length—Instructor's directions—Evaluation
8. What do your professors (of regular classes) look at in your writing?

Does grammar influence your grade?
9. What are your strengths and weaknesses in writing?
10. Please evaluate the importance of the following categories for a piece of good academic writing, using a 100% scale.

—Content (material, ideas, details, sources)

—Organization (organization, transition, coherence)

—Language Proficiency (vocabulary, grammar, wording)

—Critical thinking Skills (analyze, develop and expand ideas, critique, argue logically)

—Miscellaneous (mechanics, length)

Appendix E

Interview Schedule for ELP and non-ELP Instructors

1. Can you describe your experiences in teaching and dealing with international students?
2. In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of international students' writing?

What are your observations of international undergraduate and graduate students in terms of their class participation and writing ability?

3. Can you describe the writing skills which are important for success in your undergraduate and graduate program?
4. What kinds of writing are undergraduate and graduate students required to do in your course/discipline?

Type—Frequency—% of grade—Length—Instructor's directions—Evaluation

5. What is characteristic of writing in your discipline?
6. Please evaluate the importance of the following categories for a piece of good academic writing, using a 100% scale.

—Content (material, ideas, details, sources)

—Organization (organization, transition, coherence)

—Language Proficiency (vocabulary, grammar, wording)

—Critical thinking Skills (analyze, develop and expand ideas, critique, argue logically)

—Miscellaneous (mechanics, length)