How Writing Teachers' Beliefs about Learning Transfer Impact Their Teaching Practices: A Case from L2 Academic Writing

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Questions regarding the extent to which students can and do transfer writing knowledge and skills to disciplinary and workplace writing are of obvious importance for WPAs. Recent research has examined various factors affecting students' transfer of writing knowledge including student disposition, institutional climate, and curricula. However, one factor that deserves more attention is the transfer beliefs of writing teachers. The present study addresses this gap by investigating the transfer beliefs expressed by six teachers of second language writing. Drawing on a variety of data[1], we examine what these teachers believe about learning transfer and how their beliefs shape their teaching practices. The findings demonstrate that the teachers frequently commented on issues of transfer, that their transfer beliefs did not always align with the official curriculum, and that their transfer beliefs impacted their curriculum adaptation, assignment design, and attempts to motivate their students.

Learning Transfer and Teacher Beliefs

Learning transfer, or the ability to use knowledge and skills learned in one context in a different context, has been a central concern for educators and psychologists over the last century (Salomon & Perkins, 1989). Transfer is foundational to the entire premise of education, as learning is not considered entirely successful unless students are able to use their knowledge in some other setting or activity. This is why, according to Salomon & Perkins (1989), "Basic questions of transfer simmer beneath the surface in numerous areas of psychological and educational inquiry" (p. 114).

Research on learning transfer has recently surged within writing studies in light of questions regarding the extent to which students successfully transfer writing knowledge and skills from their writing classes, especially first-year composition (FYC) to disciplinary and workplace writing. Such questions are pressing for FYC programs because such programs are justified (and often funded) for the goal of preparing students for future writing in their studies and professional careers. Investigations of transfer from FYC, however, have yielded mixed results, finding that while transfer is

possible, it is often unpredictable (Beaufort, 1999; James, 2009; McCarthy, 1987; Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014).

To better understand and improve learning transfer from FYC, researchers have investigated the factors that affect students' ability to transfer writing knowledge. Research has shown that students who perceive the learning in FYC as connected to disciplinary and workplace writing are more likely to transfer such learning. In contrast, students who perceive the learning in FYC as disconnected from disciplinary and workplace writing will not identify opportunities to engage in learning transfer (Bergmann & Zepernick, 2007; Driscoll, 2011; McCarthy, 1987). In an early study McCarthy (1987) followed a focal student, Dave, through writing experiences in three courses across his first two years of college. Though the writing assignments in the three courses had many similarities, Dave perceived them as "totally different from each other and totally different from anything he had ever done before" (p. 245), severely limiting his ability to transfer potentially useful knowledge. Driscoll (2011) has, moreover, shown that this perception is shared by many other students who are often unsure of how writing might be important in their futures. Related to students' perceptions of the transferability of writing knowledge are their more general dispositions, which may have a major impact on students' abilities and willingness to engage in the self-reflection and monitoring required for learning transfer (Driscoll & Wells, 2012; Perkins & Salomon, 2012; Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014).

Differences between the type of writing students complete in FYC and the writing required of them in other classes are another significant factor impacting transfer. In research with multilingual students, James (2009, 2010a; 2010b) found positive evidence of transfer from writing classes to new contexts, but also notes that students were more readily able to transfer learning to other humanities courses, which required a similar type of writing, than to courses such as the sciences (James, 2010a). Wardle (2009) takes these critiques further, noting that many of the writing assignments typically used in FYC do not promote transfer because they bear so little resemblance to writing done outside of the FYC classroom.

While a significant body of research has focused on the impact that both curricular and student-related factors have on learning transfer from FYC, less attention has thus far been paid to the potential role of teachers as a factor influencing transfer. While there is a general assumption in the literature that what teachers believe and do in their classrooms will affect student transfer, relatively little research has directly investigated teachers' beliefs. The research that does exist demonstrates that students and teachers may hold quite different ideas about transfer. Lightner, Benander, &

Kramer (2008), for instance, found that students and faculty disagreed about the overall importance of transfer and cited different barriers to transfer. Beyond just mismatched beliefs, teachers may not always have clear ideas about transfer. For example, Scharff et al. (2017) surveyed students and teaching staff at multiple colleges and universities to assess their perceptions of metacognition and learning transfer. They found that "many staff and a majority of students do not have a clear understanding of what learning transfer entails" (p. 1).

Despite the lack of clarity of some teachers' transfer beliefs, there is evidence that teachers' attitudes toward writing transfer can affect students' ability and willingness to transfer writing knowledge (James, 2010b; Lightner, Benander, & Kramer, 2008; Nelms & Dively, 2007). We know, for example, that teachers can promote learning transfer through a variety of instructional strategies (Downs & Wardle, 2007; Fishman & Reiff, 2008; Green, 2015; Wardle, 2009; Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak 2014). Green (2015), for example, indicated a moderate relationship between instructors' use of transfer-focused teaching practices and students' self-perceived ability to transfer writing skills into their disciplinary studies. On the negative side, however, instructors can implicitly discourage learning transfer through the climate they foster in their classes. James (2010b), for instance, examined the effect transfer climate had on students as they moved from intensive English courses into mainstream academic classes. The students perceived a lack of support for learning transfer among their disciplinary instructors and their peers, which demotivated their attempts to transfer learning.

Overall, existing research presents compelling evidence that teachers' beliefs about learning transfer matter and may affect the ultimate outcomes of their students. More research, however, is needed, particularly on what teachers already believe about transfer and how it impacts their teaching. Attention to FYC teachers' transfer beliefs is particularly important in light of the curricular innovations being proposed to promote transfer. Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak (2014) have noted that implementing a transfer-oriented curriculum is highly dependent on the diverse background knowledge of writing teachers and that their "long-held beliefs and attitudes about writing courses might also prove a barrier to improving the way college writing is taught" (p. 147).

To address this need, our study investigates both *what* writing teachers believe about transfer and *how* their beliefs influence their teaching practice. We examine the transfer beliefs of six teachers of ESL 101, a credit-bearing second language (L2) FYC course at a university in the United States. [2] We found that they had strong beliefs about what kinds of writing

knowledge and skills their students could and should transfer—beliefs that did not always align with the required curriculum. Moreover, evidence from video-recordings of the teachers' classroom interactions and their reflections on these interactions demonstrated that their transfer beliefs impacted how they adapted the required curriculum and motivated their students to engage in the course. These results have important implications for WPAs and others who are engaged in writing teacher supervision and curriculum development.

Method: Examining Teachers' Transfer Beliefs

The data we analyze in this paper were not originally collected with the goal of examining teachers' transfer beliefs, but rather of examining changes in teachers' pedagogical content knowledge over time (Worden, 2015, 2018). For this study, Dorothy Worden-Chambers followed six teachers of ESL 101 through a semester of teaching. All six teachers had academic backgrounds in Applied Linguistics and TESOL. Three of the teachers, Anna, Jennifer, and Sergei[3], were graduate students with less than one year of previous language teaching experience. Of the remaining three teachers, Sonja, a graduate student, had the most previous teaching experience, having taught Russian as a foreign language for nine years. Gabriela and Pat were both non-tenure-track instructors with three and six years of prior language teaching experience respectively. Two of the teachers—Pat and Sergei—were returning to higher education after pursuing careers in business and agriculture, respectively.

Each teacher participated in five audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews focusing on their beliefs about teaching. Additionally, Worden-Chambers attended and video-recorded the teachers for the duration of one instructional unit during which the teachers participated in three stimulated recalls, in which they viewed videos of their teaching and commented on their thinking. Finally, programmatic documents, including the required syllabus and the teachers' handbook, were included in the data. Because of the mix of self-reporting of beliefs in the interviews and the direct observation of classroom teaching practice, these data offer us a window into both what transfer beliefs teachers express and how those beliefs are demonstrated (or not) in their classrooms.

Because the focus of the original study was not on learning transfer, the teachers were not directly asked about their transfer beliefs, yet all six teachers frequently commented on issues of transfer to justify and explain their instructional decisions. Our focus on transfer emerged as an unexpected area of interest based on these spontaneous comments. To better

understand this unexpected theme, we re-examined the entire data set with the goal of specifically answering the following research questions:

1. *What* are these L2 writing teachers' beliefs about learning transfer?
2. *How* do these beliefs about learning transfer impact teachers' instruction?

We adopted a qualitative approach, which fit both the complex nature of our data and the goal of our study, "to get at the inner experience of participants . . . and to discover rather than test variables" (Corbin & Strauss, 2012, p. 12). More specifically, we drew on principles of grounded theory to analyze the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2012; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). This approach relies on "a series of cumulative coding cycles" with the goal of "theory generation" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 8). Our coding process involved several rounds of analysis and was conducted collaboratively. In general, our goal was to identify the teachers' expressed beliefs about transfer and create conceptual labels (i.e., codes) which captured "the experiences, spoken words, actions, interactions, problems, and issues expressed by the participants" to the best of our ability (Corbin & Strauss, 2012, p. 51). Through regular meetings and discussion, we refined and elaborated our codes and negotiated points of confusion and disagreement. This collaborative process aided us in creating "definitional clarity" of our codes and provided "a good reliability check" to ensure "more credible and trustworthy findings" than would have been achievable with a single analyst (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 84).

Our resulting coding scheme focused on several aspects of teachers' transfer beliefs. First, we identified all teacher mentions of learning transfer in the data. Based on the previous research literature, we defined learning transfer as any knowledge, skill, or disposition developed in one context being used in another context. For teacher beliefs about transfer, we included all mentions by the teacher of knowledge, skills, or dispositions the students were learning in the context of ESL 101 that the teachers hoped or believed the students would use in another context. Because the expectation of transfer is so central to the goals of education, all the teachers' instructional goals and practices could be interpreted to rest on an assumption of transfer. Our interest, however, was those moments when teachers explicitly focused on learning transfer. For this reason, we were conservative in what coded as a transfer belief, including only those mentions of learning goals and practices that the teachers explicitly marked as being relevant outside of the immediate context.

Once we had identified these transfer mentions, we examined their content and formed more detailed codes based on what knowledge and skills

the teachers believed the students would transfer. Various theoretical models regarding the knowledge students may transfer from FYC exist (e.g., CWPA, 2014). For our analysis however, we derived our codes based on the teachers' own comments in the data rather than relying on an external framework. This process resulted in a total of nine categories of knowledge the teachers identified as transferable (see table 1). We additionally coded the teachers' handbook (TH) using these same codes in order to examine how the teachers' beliefs about transfer did or did not align with the standard curriculum they were required to use (see table 2). To answer our second research question, we examined each mention of transfer which the teachers used to justify or explain an instructional decision. We then formed descriptive codes to categorize the aspect of instruction that the teachers justified in terms of transfer. This portion of the analysis resulted in four codes (see table 3).

Findings: What Teachers Believe Students Will Transfer

Our analysis yielded over one hundred explicit mentions of learning transfer, demonstrating that the teachers were aware of transfer and considered it actively in their pedagogy. Their attention to transfer is even more striking given the fact that the teachers were never directly asked to comment on learning transfer.

We further examined the substance of teachers' transfer beliefs. Our codes, along with definitions and examples, are displayed in table 1.

The transfer goals identified are likely familiar to many WPAs. It is not difficult, for instance, to categorize most of these transfer beliefs into the CWPA's (2014) *Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition*. The teachers' beliefs about genre and structure, for example, align closely with the statement's outcome of "rhetorical knowledge," and the objectives that students be able to write "in several genres" and understand "how genre conventions shape and are shaped" by rhetorical purposes. Similar alignments can be found between the teachers' goals of process and the statement's "processes," and the teachers' goals of thinking and research and the statement's "critical thinking." Finally, the teachers' focus on grammar and citation falls within the statement's "knowledge of conventions." In fact, only two of the categories of teachers' transfer beliefs—attitude and acculturation—do not fit neatly in one of the four main outcomes endorsed by the CWPA. When taken as a group, these teachers, by and large, agree with the CWPA on what outcomes are transferable from FYC.

Table 1. Codes: What Learning Will Transfer

Code	Working Definition	Examples
Genre	Teacher describes some element of genre as being a goal for learning transfer. Includes general mentions of the term genre as well as names of specific genres	Anna: I really want them to know first that writing's not that hard, as you know, you can write, but second, you do need to communicate in certain formats . . . There's the genre, the format that is widely accepted in the academic world. Gabriela: If they had to write a response to a reading in college that they'd be able to do it. So I looked at that as kind of a genre experience, teaching them the genre of response to reading.
Attitude	Teacher describes some change in student attitude, disposition, or emotional state as a goal for transfer.	Gabriela: Well first, with the attitude, sort of get over this, "writing is stupid, and I hate writing" ((laughter)) kind of attitude. Jennifer: Understanding the reasons behind that structure and the building is going to make it clearer, help them not freak out as much about a writing assignment perhaps.
Process	Teacher describes increased knowledge of or facility with any aspect of the writing process as a goal for transfer.	Gabriela: So that they can discover what process works best for them. Sergei: The other thing that I would want them to remember is that good writing, excellent writing, involves revision.
Thinking	Teacher describes some aspect of critical thinking as a goal for transfer. Includes mentions of thinking, critical thinking, exploring own ideas, and thinking rigorously.	Pat: The idea that you have to think rigorously and with some degree of precision and specificity when you're trying to articulate yourself in the language. Sonja: It produces this effect on your thought. It kind of makes you think in a more organized manner.

Table 1. cont.

Acculturation	Teacher describes increased familiarity with any aspect of "American culture" or "academic culture" as a goal for transfer.	Anna: It is not really related to writing, in one way of course they are they are writing American academic essay, but I feel they understand more about how do they adjust to this environment. Pat: these are my own little creation these last two are my little thing . . . adopt American culture expectations such as punctuality, productivity, attention to detail and striving for continual measurable improvement.
Research	Teacher describes knowledge of research procedures as a goal for transfer.	Anna: In their junior or senior years, they really need to write a lot. They really need to search for reliable resources instead of just google the random article from the internet.
Structure	Teacher describes general structure, format, or organization of academic writing as a goal for transfer.	Anna: If you really want to get your idea to your readers in the academic field, you need to follow certain structure and follow certain things in order, so that your reader will easily get what you say. Pat: I hope they'll come back and say, oh you know, like even the stupid things like they format the papers it has served me well.
Grammar	Teacher describes knowledge or use of grammar as a goal for transfer.	Sergei: The thing I struggle with is they're going to have to work in an American academic community. . . . If I give them a B+ or an A- with horrible grammar, what's that going to do to them in the future, when they're writing?
Citation	Teacher describes knowledge of citation principles and practices as a goal for transfer.	Gabriela: They can participate in the academic community knowing what is expected of them on a general kind of level, like that's where citation comes in, that's where the plagiarism talk comes in. Sonja: I also want them to understand that how you cite, again, impacts the kind of the meaning basically.

When we examine the teachers' transfer beliefs in finer detail, a more complicated picture emerges. The frequency[4] with which each individual teacher mentioned a particular category and how the teachers' beliefs compared to the official curriculum in the teachers' handbook (TH) are found in table 2.

Table 2. What Learning Teachers Believe Students Will Transfer

	Anna	Gabriela	Jennifer	Pat	Sergei	Sonja	TH	*Total*
Genre	6	6	8	1	4	1	2	*28*
Attitude	2	9	4	4	1	0	0	*20*
Process	0	9	0	2	1	0	6	*18*
Thinking	3	2	3	2	0	5	0	*15*
Acculturation	7	3	0	4	0	1	0	*15*
Research	1	2	0	1	4	0	3	*11*
Structure	1	0	0	3	2	2	1	*9*
Grammar	0	0	0	0	5	0	3	*8*
Citation	1	1	0	0	1	2	2	*7*

As table 2 shows, the teachers' beliefs about what kinds of learning students would transfer include elements not reflected in the curriculum. The teachers frequently cite changes in students' attitude, thinking ability, and their process of acculturation as goals for transfer, while the official curriculum never mentions such goals. What is more, these codes were among the most consistent across the teachers, with attitude and thinking being mentioned by five of the six teachers and acculturation by four teachers. In addition to being unmentioned in the official curriculum, these three goals are also not strictly writing skills, a fact that was noted rather apologetically by several of the teachers. These transfer goals, particularly attitude and acculturation, could instead be classified as "soft skills" or "the cluster of personality traits, social graces, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism" that complement technical skills and mark "the people that most employers want to hire" (Menochelli, 2006, as cited in Urciuoli, 2008, p. 215).

Also apparent in table 2 is that many of the teachers in the study, while mentioning several aspects they hoped would transfer, focused most of their comments on only a few areas. Anna focused primarily on genre and acculturation, Gabriela on attitude and process, Jennifer on genre, Pat on acculturation and attitude, Sergei on genre, research, and grammar, and Sonja on thinking. These specific focuses occurred despite all of the teachers working in the same program with identical curricular guidelines. This finding echoes Shi & Cumming's (1995) finding that teachers' conceptions of L2 writing are deeply shaped by their individual beliefs about teaching.

Our data demonstrate that teachers' transfer beliefs are similarly varied and individualized and speak to the importance of investigating such beliefs if we hope to promote changes in the teaching of writing.

Findings: How Teachers' Transfer Beliefs Affect Their Classroom Instruction

While we believe that there is value in simply investigating what teachers believe about learning transfer, the question of how their transfer beliefs affect their teaching practices is likewise important. Our data for this question are somewhat more anecdotal given the fact that the study was not initially designed to investigate transfer beliefs, and thus in the stimulated recalls teachers were not explicitly prompted to connect their teaching practices to their beliefs about transfer. Despite this shortcoming, in our analysis we note several intriguing trends across teachers. We offer these now as a starting point and potential inspiration for further research.

In our analysis on this question, we particularly examined those instances in which teachers explained or justified their teaching practices with reference to learning transfer. The definitions of the four categories we identified, as well as relevant examples, are summarized in table 3.

As table 4 shows, teachers' conceptualization of the curriculum, in how they justified, resisted, and even changed it, was one of the most commonly noted impacts of teachers' transfer beliefs. Such interpretations of the curriculum almost always also became apparent in teachers' assignment design and assessment practices, so for the sake of this discussion, we will address these three categories together.

Table 3. Codes: Impact of Transfer Beliefs on Teaching

Code	Working Definition	Examples
Curriculum	Teachers describe considerations of transfer as affecting their interpretation or adaptation of the required curriculum at the syllabus level (e.g., goals, objectives, etc.).	Sonja: I also want them to understand that how you cite, again, impacts the kind of the meaning basically. . . . This whole focus on technical part of citing sources is definitely something that was not my idea.
Assignment Design	Teachers describe considerations of transfer as affecting how they design assignments and activities for their students.	Jennifer: So here is trying to make it sort of specific enough that they could see the difference between analytic and argumentative when we get there, when I highlight the argumentative essay next unit. Gabriela: I wanted to give them a tool if they're stumped or if they're confused about something or if they feel like they need to write but they just can't get anything down on the page, this is a technique they can use.
Assessment	Teachers describe considerations of transfer as affecting how they assess their students. This includes both summative and formal assessments.	Sonja: Most of them won't use APA anymore because they use different formats and different majors, so I kind of don't want to punish people for technical things like that. . . . I'm not bothered by things like that.
Motivating Students	Teachers describe using explicit discussions of transfer with their students as a means of increasing student motivation and investment in the class.	Pat: I like to encourage them on the concept of this class being a preparation for another class. This class is not an end and of itself. It's meant for the future.

Table 4. How Transfer Beliefs Impact Teacher Practice

	Anna	Gabriela	Jennifer	Pat	Sergei	Sonja
Curriculum	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Assignment Design	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Assessment	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Motivating Students	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N

For example, let us examine the case of Pat, who made the most aggressive changes to the curriculum based on his beliefs about transfer. Pat, the teacher with the most experience teaching ESL 101, focused on attitude and acculturation. The influence of these transfer beliefs was readily apparent in Pat's teaching, starting with his syllabus. While all the teachers were

provided with a standardized syllabus, they were allowed to make minor changes to reflect their beliefs. Pat took these liberties further than most teachers, adding two original objectives:

1. Practice time management skills such as prioritizing of workload that will aid them in their university life
2. Adopt American cultural expectations such as punctuality, productivity, attention to detail, and striving for continual, measurable improvement

These objectives, which explicitly mention transfer (1) and acculturation (2) were unique to Pat's syllabus. As he reflected on these objectives, Pat explained why he had decided to include these objectives and what they meant to him:

> A lot of these kids are kids. . . . I feel like I need to mommy them a little bit . . . and when it comes to, you know, prioritizing your workload and getting things done and then adopt American cultural expectations such as punctuality, productivity, attention to detail, and striving for continual measurable improvement, this is my business background. . . . And the American cultural expectations, punctuality, productivity, attention to detail, well, I think that's important. That separates the men from the boys.

As Pat describes, his decision to include these objectives arose first from his understanding of his students' age and maturity level. Pat saw his students as "kids" who needed someone to "mommy them" by providing clear expectations and regulating their work practices. He further equates the ability to adapt to American cultural expectations as being a marker of maturity—what "separates the men from the boys." Additionally, Pat cites his own background in business, in which productivity, detail, and quantifiable improvement were valued, as a source of his transfer beliefs.

When asked specifically how he incorporated these objectives into his teaching, Pat described the pervasive impact they had on his teaching:

> I fit it in everything. I mean punctuality, you know, if you don't turn things in time your grade suffers. Productivity, you know, and again it's another thing, you know, my little homework assignments, you got to just do them.

Pat's transfer beliefs in acculturation and student attitude lead him to emphasize small homework assignments. The value in these assignments, as Pat describes, was not necessarily in the writing skills or content that they would teach, but rather simply in the development of American cultural values.

While other teachers did not go as far as Pat, their beliefs about transfer impacted their interactions with the curriculum in less obvious but still pervasive ways. Sergei's case is a good example of this. Sergei is unique within the study because he is the only teacher who emphasizes grammar as the primary learning students could and should transfer. Sergei's emphasis on grammar puts him in conflict with the required curriculum. While the official curriculum does not entirely discount grammar knowledge as transferable learning, teachers are admonished to emphasize other writing skills ahead of grammar. For instance, the teachers' handbook emphasizes that ESL 101 "is not an editing service or a grammar class" and encourages teachers to "focus primarily on the organization and content rather than the grammar of a student's text." Sergei, however, frequently expresses his skepticism of these policies, a skepticism that is based largely on his beliefs about learning transfer and what would be expected of his students in their future careers. As he explains, "You got to write so people can understand you and so your boss won't say, 'I can't promote that person. Look at the reports and emails I get'" (Sergei). Unlike Pat, however, Sergei did not make any official changes to the curriculum, stating that he would "go with what I have been told and that's not to consider grammar." Despite his verbal assent to this curricular mandate, Sergei's teaching illustrates a significant grammar focus. In the focal unit he devoted one class period completely to grammar, and he commented on grammar extensively in his feedback. Thus, though he did not make overt changes to the curriculum, Sergei's resistance to this curricular guideline manifests itself in his teaching practice in other ways.

The final impact of teachers' transfer beliefs on their teaching evident in the data were explicit discussions of transfer with students for the purpose of motivating them. These kinds of exhortations were present in multiple teachers' interactions. For example, during a peer review activity, Anna paused to discuss the purpose of the assignment with her students:

> Anna: I want to ask, why am I asking you to do this? Why am I asking you to find the quotation and then find the relationship for another person? Or why I'm giving another person your work to let them identify the quotation ((calling on student)) Yeah?
>
> Student: You're trying to get views from people's—from other people's experience.
>
> Anna: Yeah, different person has a different interpretation.

Anna's decision here to pause and reflect on the purpose of the activity was motivated by her beliefs about transfer and her own experiences as

a student. She explains that "I feel it is so important to let students know why they are doing this to let them be more motivated" (Anna). In this case, Anna viewed the purpose of peer review as explicitly transfer related, "because this is not writing for the professor. Your writing could serve as something in the future." Not only does Anna believe it is important to reveal the transferability of writing to her students to motivate them, the goal of motivating them to engage in the class pushed her to consider transfer more deeply, or as she says, "this is not actually that I realized how important this is for them. This is because I forced myself to think how important it is for them, so I can tell them and motivate them" (Anna). For Anna, then, the desire to motivate her students is what pushes her to consider the transfer value of the content she is teaching.

Implications: Taking Teachers' Transfer Beliefs into Account

Since this study was exploratory in nature, its findings are more suggestive than conclusive. Moreover, this study focused on the specific populations of postsecondary L2 writing instruction, so some of the themes may not apply to all other contexts. Despite these limitations, the beliefs about learning transfer expressed by these teachers and the evident impact on their teaching practices illustrate some noteworthy trends that can inform future research and teacher supervision efforts.

One important finding this study demonstrates is the various ways teachers' transfer beliefs influenced their adoption, adaptation, or resistance to the required curriculum. If teachers' transfer beliefs do not match the existing curricula, they are likely to adapt (or subvert) the required curriculum directly or covertly. The covert resistance Sergei enacted is particularly concerning as it was largely invisible to both the WPA and to his students. Unlike Pat, Sergei did not draft new learning objectives that made his transfer beliefs explicit to his students. Instead, Sergei's official curriculum documents followed the programmatic policies which de-emphasized grammar, yet his classroom practices, including his feedback and grading, heavily emphasized grammatical correctness. This practice essentially created a situation in Sergei's classroom where students were presented with one set of learning objectives in the official classroom documents but taught and assessed based on a different, often unspoken, set of criteria. While this study did not include data on student performance, the question of how such a hidden curriculum may impact student success is certainly worth further research.

This finding of adaptation and resistance among teachers is important given the many recent efforts to address transfer through creating

transfer-focused curricula (e.g., Downs & Wardle, 2007; Green, 2015; Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014). These curricular efforts are certainly laudable, but our data suggest that such efforts must take teachers' existing transfer beliefs into account if they are to be successful. Our findings here concur with research that has found that curricular innovation is frequently rendered less than successful due to insufficient training for teachers and mismatches between the values of the curriculum and teachers' beliefs (e.g., Shi & Cumming, 1995; Wedell, 2003). By building on teachers' existing transfer beliefs, such curricula may be more faithfully implemented by teachers. Ignoring or directly contradicting such teacher transfer beliefs may, however, lead to teachers adapting or resisting the intended curriculum in ways that are unexpected, undesirable, and difficult to detect.

In order to take teachers' transfer beliefs into account, WPAs must first learn what these beliefs are. However, starting a sustained and open dialogue with teachers can be difficult for administrators due to their supervisory role. Teachers may be unwilling to share their transfer beliefs with their WPAs, particularly if those beliefs contradict the official curriculum or policies, as was the case with Sergei. Administrators will need to be particularly creative about how to elicit teacher beliefs in an unthreatening way. Anonymous surveys, for example, could be used to gather basic information about teachers' transfer beliefs. A richer but more involved option would be to follow the example of Estrem and Reid (2012), who relied on anonymized transcripts of focus group interviews conducted by graduate student research assistants in their study of TAs' principles and practices in teaching composition. A similar approach might be an effective means of gathering information about teachers' transfer beliefs.

In addition to informing curriculum design and implementation efforts, such data could be used to further research. In particular, we believe that research examining the impact of teacher education and professional development on teachers' transfer beliefs would be illuminating. Are these beliefs open to change? If so, what forms of professional development and support best promote changes in teachers' beliefs? Do changes in teachers' transfer beliefs translate into changes in teachers' instructional practices? Do such changes impact the extent to which students are able to transfer writing skills and knowledge to their future contexts? Insights into these questions could inform future program design and curriculum development and, ultimately, improve the value and transferability of writing instruction for students.

Another significant finding in this study was the extent to which teachers identified soft skills as their goals for student transfer. The strong, positive relationship between soft skills, such as self-efficacy, conscientiousness,

persistence and success in educational and workplace settings, has led a recent push to include a stronger focus on the development of soft skills in higher education (Heckman & Kautz, 2012). In this study, the teachers' focus on an improved attitude toward writing, acculturation to American classroom norms, and critical and disciplined thinking align with this more general focus in education and with current thinking on the importance of student dispositions to their ability to transfer learning (e.g., Driscoll & Wells, 2012; Perkins & Salomon, 2012). It is also noteworthy that these soft skills were among the most-frequently cited goals for learning transfer, though none of them were explicit in the official curriculum.

Given the importance of transfer in the arguments justifying the continued existence of FYC courses, this broadening of the scope of what is transferable learning may inform future research and help WPAs continue to justify the value of FYC programs to administrators. For example, we already know that success in FYC disproportionately predicts student retention and persistence (Garrett, Bridgewater, & Feinstein, 2017). While developing writing and research skills certainly contributes to this positive relationship, the soft skills identified by these teachers as so central to their goals may also help to explain the role of FYC in student persistence. If, as these teachers believe, students gain more than writing knowledge from such classes, perhaps our research into the outcomes of FYC should likewise focus on these themes. Research might, for instance, examine the extent to which students develop soft skills in their writing classes. What impact do these skills have on their ability to transfer writing knowledge and to their more general academic success and attainment? What teacher practices foster the development of soft skills within writing classrooms? These questions, we believe, would yield valuable results.

Yet while adopting the rhetoric of soft skills might be expeditious in the neoliberal university setting, we would caution both administrators and teachers to remain critical of how skills discourses privilege some students and exclude others. The dispositions and behaviors that are associated with such skills are, after all, neither culturally nor historically neutral but rather have their basis in the neoliberal philosophy and American corporate culture and function to "establish the type of person valued by the privileged system in ways that seem natural and logical" (Urciuoli, 2008, p. 215). While we are aware of the value of the development of soft skills for students, we also have deep concerns about the ways in which an emphasis on soft skills might well marginalize speakers and writers who have different styles, attitudes, and varieties of language (Blommaert, 2005). For instance, the teachers within our study mentioned attitude, thinking, and acculturation as soft skills that specifically align with American corporate culture.

These frequently mentioned soft skills are not referenced within the official curriculum, and the teachers even considered them to not be necessary for developing writing skills, yet the students were expected to demonstrate them. Therefore, it appears that some of the teachers are inadvertently using their personal ideologies about language behavior to impose conformity and assimilation into American society on the students, thus posing risks of alienation or identity issues for the students (Fleming, 2010).

Given the prevalence of soft skills in teachers' beliefs about learning transfer, we encourage administrators to discuss such skills, and their potential value and drawbacks, openly with teachers. Teachers could be invited to reflect, for instance on who, aside from students, are served by soft skills. Teachers could further be asked to unpack the cultural, racial, and classist baggage of the specific dispositions, behaviors, and practices that fall under the umbrella of certain soft skills. Such discussions can help teachers better weigh the utility of soft skills without associating them all as a "natural and logical" good (Urciuoli, 2008, p. 215).

Overall, this study has sought to contribute to the literature on learning transfer in writing education by illuminating the beliefs and practices of writing teachers themselves. Focusing on teachers of L2 writing specifically, this study has demonstrated that teachers hold strong beliefs about transfer which are often based on their personal experiences as writers and have a significant impact on how they interpret and implement the curriculum. What teachers believe about learning transfer, how their beliefs impact instruction, and, crucially, student learning, and how education, supervision, and professional development can impact teachers' transfer beliefs are, we believe, worthy questions for future research.

Notes

1. IRB Protocol #43218

2. Pseudonym

3. All names are pseudonyms.

4. We included these frequency numbers not to make any statistical claims of significance but rather because, as Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña note, "Numbers allow a researcher to 'see' the general drift of the data more easily and rapidly by looking at distributions" (p. 283).

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