

## **An Interview with APPLE Lecture Speaker Dr. Paul Kei Matsuda**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

On February 22, 2019, the *Studies in Applied Linguistics and TESOL (SALT)* journal had the great pleasure of interviewing Dr. Paul Kei Matsuda, the invited speaker for the 2019 APPLE Lectures Series hosted by the Applied Linguistics and TESOL Program at Teachers College, Columbia University. Dr. Matsuda was kind enough to take the time, during a very busy day, to speak about his research, his work on writing instruction and assessment, his thoughts on World Englishes, and his advice for new scholars working in the fields of Applied Linguistics and TESOL.

Dr. Matsuda is Professor of English and Director of Second Language Writing at Arizona State University, where he works closely with doctoral students specializing in second language writing from various disciplinary perspectives. He is also Concurrent Professor of Applied Linguistics at Nanjing University and Zhengzhou University. Dr. Matsuda is Founding Chair of the Symposium on Second Language Writing and Series Editor of the Parlor Press Series on Second Language Writing. Former President of the American Association for Applied Linguistics, he has also served as the founding chair of the CCCC Committee on Second Language Writing and the chair of the Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL (NNEST) Caucus. He has published widely on various topics on language, writing and professional development in applied linguistics, rhetoric and composition and TESOL, and has received a number of prestigious awards for his publications. He has been invited to present keynote and plenary talks as well as lectures and workshops in more than 27 countries.

We thank Dr. Matsuda for his participation in an engaging interview. We'd also like to thank Carol HoiYee Lo for videotaping and Dr. Payman Vafaei for coordinating the APPLE Lecture Series Interview.

### **THE INTERVIEW**

Here is [the link](#) to the full interview.

### **Looking Back**

- 1) We'd like to start off on a more personal note, Dr. Matsuda. What got you interested in Applied Linguistics and specifically Second Language (L2) Writing? What have you enjoyed the most about teaching L2 writing? [[Q1 Video](#)]

## Writing Instruction

- 2) It seems that L2 writing instruction is often tied to correcting ESL students' grammar. What would you recommend for L2 English writers that are struggling with notoriously difficult grammar points such as articles, prepositions, tense and aspect, etc.? [[Q2 Video](#)]
- 3) Even though many (L2) writing instructors take the roles of “grammar police” (Atkinson & Tardy, 2018), written feedback goes beyond treating grammatical or form-related errors. It expresses feelings, suggests new ways of approaching the topic, conveys agreement or disagreement with ideas, or indicates alternative arguments. What are some suggestions you could give to instructors for balancing form/structure on the one hand and content/meaning on the other as they provide students with written feedback? And how can instructors teach students what to read, look for, and apply in the written feedback they receive? [[Q3 Video](#)]
- 4) Despite their controversies, the traditional five-paragraph essay templates are still prevalent in a range of ESL learning materials and ESL writing courses—in middle schools, high schools, and university Intensive English Programs (IEPs). What are your thoughts on such templates? Why do you think they are still so popular even though many L2 writing researchers and practitioners have explicitly argued against them? [[Q4 Video](#)]
- 5) Much of your work has explored issues of voice and identity in writing. What do you think is the L2 writing teacher's role in developing a learner's voice? Are voice and identity something that teachers should explicitly focus on? If so, how might they do this and in what kinds of teaching contexts? [[Q5 Video](#)]

## Writing Assessment

- 6) Next, we would like to ask you about differences in how certain elements of written discourse are valued in L1 and L2 writing assessment. For example, there is a mismatch between L1 writing in the US educational context and EFL/adult ESL settings is the emphasis on audience awareness. This concept is commonly found in rubric descriptors of ELA and ESL writing assessments in American secondary schools, but it is often absent from descriptors of writing rubrics in L2 proficiency examinations (e.g., TOEFL and IELTS). Moreover, many commercial ESL textbooks are inconsistent in their specification of an intended audience in their instructional writing tasks. Should audience awareness be explicitly included in the criteria for success of L2 writing assessments? What might be some benefits or challenges to including it in these rubrics? [[Q6 Video](#)]
- 7) One issue that has been pointed out by L2 writing researchers is that we assess writing very differently from how we teach it. While instruction emphasizes the writing process, most assessments (particularly summative assessments) are cross-sectional, providing snapshots of learners' ability. Recent technological developments have resulted in new test methods, such as Scenario-based Assessment, allowing for the inclusion of multi-step

tasks and standardized assistance (e.g., models or feedback) as part of a test. What do you think are the potential benefits of computerized tests for L2 writing assessment? What problems might arise from the current trend of moving towards computer/web-based tests? Do the benefits in terms of authenticity outweigh threats to fairness (being unfair to learners who are not tech savvy or have limited access to technology)? [[Q7 Video](#)]

- 8) One of our recent graduates, Dr. Saerhim Oh, set out to investigate the possible effects of embedding assistance in a writing assessment (Oh, 2018). To do so, she compared four testing conditions (i.e., four groups of test-takers, three with access to a tool: a dictionary, a thesaurus, a grammar tool; and one without access to any tool). Her study aimed to explore the inclusion of these tools in order to better reflect how L2 learners write in real life. In your opinion, is there room for the inclusion of linguistic tools as part of writing assessment? What aspects should be considered in order to align writing assessment tasks with current writing practices which include the use of various linguistic tools? [[Q8 Video](#)]

## Writing and Language

- 9) We'd now like to focus on the relationship between the languages we speak and our writing. How much influence (both negative or positive) do you think our L1 has on our L2 writing? Do you believe that there is an L1 effect much like what Slobin (1992) calls "Thinking for Speaking?" Do we need to learn how to "think for writing" in our L2 in order to be better L2 writers? [[Q9 Video](#)]
- 10) The age-old issue of whether academic discourse is or should be treated as a "second" language is still regularly brought up by scholars, writing instructors/tutors, and graduate teaching assistants. Do you think that all student writers need to acquire academic written discourse as a "second" or "additional" language, regardless of their first language backgrounds? [[Q10 Video](#)]
- 11) You have previously highlighted the challenges of considering the implications of World Englishes in the teaching of L2 writing and have provided some guidelines for teaching both dominant and nondominant forms and functions (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010). While learners' awareness of dominant forms and functions might be more easily identified in ESL contexts, challenges are found in EFL contexts given that (a) models used in class often represent the only English variety that students are exposed to in the instructional context, and (b) learners are exposed to deviational features through social media and web-based resources but may fail to understand the appropriate context of use of such features. Do you have any recommendations on how EFL writing programs and their teachers may embrace World Englishes in their curricula and at the same time set realistic learning goals for their students? [[Q11 Video](#)]

## Looking Forward

- 12) To wrap up, we'd like to ask you a couple of questions regarding recommended practices and the future of the field. Firstly, based on all your experience, what advice would you give to all eager ESL/EFL writing instructors (both novice and veterans) on how to effectively teach writing? [[Q12 Video](#)]
- 13) Finally, one of your ongoing scholarly agendas is to professionalize the landscape of Second Language Writing, "creat[ing] an identity for the field" (Matsuda, 2013, p. 449). Doing so is never an easy task. What are some of the challenges you have encountered in pursuing this agenda? How have you addressed them? What would be the top priorities for us to focus on in this endeavor? [[Q13 Video](#)]

## REFERENCES

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