

Ruszkiewicz



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

PAR 108 • Austin, Texas 78712-1164 • (512) 471-4991

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Lower Division English Policy Committee,
Kay Halasek, Elisabeth Piedmont-Marton

From: Don Weeda, Lower Division English

Date: October 24, 1988

This is a reminder that the LDEPC will meet Wednesday, October 26, at 3:00 p.m. in the Atwood Library (CAL 300). In addition to the old business listed on the agenda distributed last week, some new business will follow.

Attached is a copy of a document for discussion under "English 306Q" on the agenda. Please review it before the meeting if you have a chance.

Attachment



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MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Lower Division English Policy Committee
From: Don Weeda
Re: An alternative to the English 304(Q) proposal
Date: October 21, 1988

After Robert Twombly's presentation of the proposal concerning an "E 304(Q)" course for foreign students not equivalent to E 306, I offered a suggestion to Dr. Twombly which Wayne Reborn asked me to write down. (I am grateful to Dr. Reborn for his help in developing the following alternative; nevertheless, responsibility for errors is mine.)

The essence of the suggestion is to create a two-semester sequence of courses for foreign students with TOEFL scores of less than 600 as well as certain English-deficient immigrant students graduating from U.S. high schools. The second course would be equivalent to E 306. Let's call the courses E 604QA and E 604QB for convenience, distinguishing this two-semester 604QA/B proposal from the single semester remedial course (hereafter, 304(Q)) designed to feed into regular 306 as recently proposed by Dr. Twombly.

E 604QA would be offered during the Fall, with the current prerequisites for E 306Q. The course would meet MWF during the regular session, with a limit of 20 students per section. The course would bear 3 credits, but would NOT count toward any Area A requirement.

E 604QB would be offered during the Spring with the prerequisite of 604QA listed and strictly enforced. This course would also meet MWF and bear a 20 student limit. This course WOULD be considered equivalent to E 306 and would satisfy that Area A requirement. (We may want to consider the entire sequence 604QA/B equivalent to 306--see below.)

There are three reasons which would justify our use of a sequence of courses:

(1) Dr. Twombly has observed that E 306Q cannot reasonably be considered equivalent to E 306. By switching to a two-semester sequence, foreign students may come closer to the standard of proficiency achieved by students in E 306.

(2) Since an additional semester of work would be required, many fewer foreign students would be expected to apply for the 604QA/B sequence based on an "easy grade" rather than actual need.

(3) It would become possible for the Department of English to develop courses for non-native speakers of English during the Summer session.

Let me expand on (3): A recurrent problem during Summer is the appearance of immigrant students from Texas participating in the provisional

program. Such immigrant students must take 306 due to a legislative requirement. The College of Liberal Arts has determined that 306Q would be an acceptable substitute, but 306Q cannot be taught since during the regular semester it is a daily course; moreover, 306Q is taught by an AI who receives credit for two courses, which is considered a 100% appointment during the Summer (when only a 50% maximum is possible). Therefore, both immigrant students and their Summer 306 instructors have been burdened by the situation.

However, given the 604QA/B sequence, it would become possible to offer a single section of the 604QA course during the second session (better to weed out the individuals with problems) with perhaps a single 604QB during the next Fall for continuity.

Significant advantages in both offering and flexibility are therefore derived through the 604QA/B plan. In particular, by creating the sequence, it no longer becomes necessary to expect regular instructors to become expert in English for Foreign Students (EFS) problems, as would be the probable result of loading 306 from the hypothetical 304(Q). In addition, if 304(Q) would be scheduled similarly to the current 306Q, immigrant Texas residents would continue to be forced directly into 306 during the summer provisional program. In terms of departmental budget, the 604QA/B plan would cost no more than the current 306Q program due to the reduced classroom hours for each part; if in addition, the sequence manages to discourage foreign students who do not need the course, the 604QA/B could in fact cost the department less than the current system since fewer sections would be necessary.

Problems and concerns with the proposed two-semester sequence include the following: More than the current 306Q classroom space would be necessary to accommodate the sequence; under present circumstances, 8-10 small classrooms would be required three days a week per semester as compared to the current 4-5 small classrooms five days a week. In addition, this proposal may be deficient in the area of pedagogy: I understand that a majority of the writing is done in class in certain sections of 306Q; this would no longer be an option under the new system. If the Lower Division English Policy Committee decides that the proposal is worth investigating, the advice of experienced 306Q and 316F instructors should be solicited.

Due to the legislative requirement under which the provisional contract is executed, it might prove problematic to offer provisionals a foreign student course NOT equivalent to E 306. If interested, we should solicit the opinion of Liberal Arts. One possible alternative might be to consider the combination of 604QA and 604B as equivalent to English 306. Since UT is very literal in terms of credit hours, giving students "English 606" for the sequence could be problematic, since we wouldn't want the colleges or students to be led to believe that 306 plus an SWC may be obtainable for the sequence--we'd end up with the inflated EFS enrollment problem again. Some ingenuity may be required to make this part of the proposal work.

Secondly, the attrition of provisional students may prove problematic in setting up the single Fall 604QB section. However, we may be able to fill the spaces from provisional attrition with individuals who for some reason were unable to follow up their Fall 604QA with a Spring 604QB during the previous year.

On the whole, however, I believe the principal shortcoming of 306Q, the "gut" or credibility issue, which motivated the original 304(Q) plan, is addressed in the above 604QA/B recasting.