The Development Of An In-House Writing Program For Seminarian Students In English As Second Language Program

Candice A. Castellano
THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN IN-HOUSE WRITING PROGRAM FOR
SEMINARIAN STUDENTS IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
PROGRAM

BY

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Thesis Advisor

Donald N. Lombardi, Ph.D.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in
Corporate and Public Communication
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

While walking pass the Immaculate Conception Seminary here at Seton Hall, one can hear the diverse languages spoken by the seminarians. Serving as a house for formation, the Seminary offers their students the preparation that is needed for priesthood. The Seminary provides them with the academic, minstrel and spiritual formation essential for conversion to Jesus Christ and their commitment to a life of service to the Church (Graduate Catalogue 2000-2001).

To better assist seminarian students whose native language is not English, the University currently provides a wide range of on campus resources and classes, such as the writing center and language lab. Due to the shortage of Priests in New Jersey, the author notes the urgency for our future pastoral leaders to learn basic skills, especially in writing, so they too can further their endeavors to the Christian community.

Introducing daily culture to students in the English as a Second Language Program (ESL) is extremely vital to various aspects in academics, especially in writing. Not only do ESL students need to learn how to read and write in English, but they also need to understand American culture, life, and spirit. By experiencing these aspects, the way and style of their writing will become more natural and easier to achieve their aims. Foreign students coming to an American university, may find their instructor's writing expectations to be difficult to understand. Many instructors are unaware of the differences in the approach of writing that the other nationalities and cultures have, and even if they were aware, ESL students would still be expected to write academic essays in an “American” fashion (Purdue University, 2001).
Having Priests from various countries serve Mass in America can compel the American Catholic community to learn about diverse nationalities and cultures. Without proper enunciation for sermons and writing skills for the parish bulletin, the Catholic community may lose the full meaning of what is being stated verbally and written. The implement of a culturally based professional skills development program for future pastoral leaders will better assist the ESL students in becoming more confident in their writing.

The ESL Program at Seton Hall University provides various resources preparing students with the basic learning skills needed to write a coherent paper. Along with these resources is of a multitude of websites professors use to serve as aids. Although technology is a form of education, the author suggests other alternatives such as developing a writing program solely for seminarian students in ESL will support them in learning different areas of writing.

Separate from the Education Department, the ESL program at Seton Hall University has been in existence for over twenty years. The program is offered to non-native English speaking students who take a placement test to see if they meet the standards of Seton Hall academics. If they do not meet the requirements in certain academic areas, they are placed into the English as a Second Language Program. The concentrated classes range from beginner to advance classes focusing on the areas of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and American culture. (Seton Hall University, 2002).
The author’s study will focus on the creation of a newly proposed program directed solely for seminarian students in the ESL program at Seton Hall University. The direction of the study was lead by data from interviews and observing other universities ESL Program’s. Many factors (see research question) were taken into consideration due to the research and the creation of alternatives to help direct the target group in becoming more confident writers. In addition, the study will consist of a sequence of previous and new classes, course descriptions, possible solutions, resources, and newly proposed workshops incorporated into the writing program.

Research Question

Will the implementation of the new in-house writing program assist the ESL seminary students with their writing skills? In order to answer this question, many factors were given to lead the author towards new approaches. These factors included research, questionnaires, and interviews to conduct this question with the proposal of resources, courses, and possible solutions. Since challenged seminarians in the ESL program are in need for further assistance, additional options are discussed in the new writing program to meet the needs and resources of the student’s.

Subsidiary Questions

In order to get a better understanding of the ESL seminary student’s needs and ways to enhance the in-house program, a list of questions were directed towards students.
1) How do other Catholic Universities compare to Seton Hall University’s ESL program?

2) What areas of writing do the students need more assistance on and how can Seton Hall meet their needs?

3) What previous and future writing resources are available for students on campus?

4) What ways do other departments on campus play a role in the ESL Program?

5) How can an in-house program progress into something more effective for the future?

Purpose of the Study

Because challenged seminarian ESL student’s need more assistance to fulfill their writing standards, an effective in-house writing program was requested to meet this need by the University. In addition, students must meet certain requirements to practice as a Priest and by implementing more resources and approaches can assist those who seek it.

Due to other methods that were not successful in helping students with their writing, a more in depth research in finding more diverse approaches was conducted. By conducting interviews with Professors and Priests at Seton Hall, as well as outside the University helped to provided feedback to determine specific needs and compare results. As a coordinator of this newly created program, elaborate approaches were sought to improve the students’ chances to succeed in writing. Moreover, without offering and trying new aspects in implementing ideas, approaches, and resources to students forfeits the purpose of any University.
Objectives

The purpose to develop this program was to gather resources and approaches in helping to benefit the seminarian students in the ESL Program. In order to complete this research, the first objective was to gather data from interviews conducted to professors and ESL Directors at Seton Hall, as well as outside the University. In addition, interviews were also given to clergy to get a better insight into the professional needs for priests. The author’s purpose was gain knowledge from the faulty, in order to get information on what student’s concerns and specific needs are. The second objective was to implement their needs and resources in ways that they can pursue them through the program. To meet these objectives for the in-house writing program, the author gathered data from all the interviews conducted.

Definition of Terms

1) ESL - English as a Second Language
2) "American" fashion: Relating to American culture and way of life
3) In-house Writing Program: On campus program develop solely for seminary ESL students
4) Pastor: A spiritual overseer, clergyman serving a local church
5) Priest: In many Christian churches, a member of the second grade of clergy ranking below a bishop but above a deacon and having authority to administer the sacraments.
6) Seminary: Training of candidates for the priesthood or ministry
7) **Culture**: The totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought.

8) **Bilingualism**: Expressed in two languages

9) **Literacy**: The condition or quality of being literate, especially the ability to read and write.

10) **Shadow Class**: A class that shadows a different class in material.

**Limitations**

Due to the limitation of insufficient time in gathering data in implementing them, conduction and a recorded session were not reviewed for the duration of this development. In addition, Professor's reviews were not inclusive in this program.

The author had difficulty attaining a report that was completed years ago, regarding the ESL Program. Therefore, leaving many results unobservant and comparison to this program. The author also lacked information regarding why the English department is separate from the ESL Program at Seton Hall University. Other universities that offer an ESL Program, are affiliated with the Education Department, they have more resources and assistance towards their ESL students. In addition, the original questionnaire for seminarians in the ESL program was never completed (see Appendix A). In order to receive knowledge on the academic view of ESL, the author contacted various Catholic universities to observe the structure their ESL Program's.
Chapter II

STRUCTURE OF THE ESL PROGRAM

Developed over twenty years ago, the ESL program assists students whose native language is not English. The purpose of this program is to become competent in using spoken and written English. The ESL Program consists of 120 seminarian students who want to pursue their education in order to gain recognition as a Priest. Out of the 120 students, there are 64 students from various countries and 13 students whom are enrolled in the ESL program. After seminarian students complete the ESL Program, which is estimated to 4-5 years, it is crucial this targeted group develops the necessary writing skills. This is needed so they can communicate effectively on paper, as well as verbally to the church community. Although the ESL Program is separate from the English Department, there is an affiliation where the same concepts are taught in basic English classes for non-foreign exchange students as well. Moreover, a study was completed years ago to evaluate the ESL Program, which was destroyed to uncertain reasons.

Resources

For the first year, the seminarian students in the ESL Program are using the writing center as a resource to assist them in their writing skills. The writing center helps to provide any students who have difficulty with any aspect in writing. This serves as a base for the students to have another student critique their papers and to make them into better writers. Positive feedback was received from ESL professors whose students attended the writing center. The language lab is another resource ESL students are
recommended to use for assignments and personal use. The Director of Theology, Rev. C. Anthony Zaccardi, discussed a need for an “in-house” writing program for seminary students, because some students do not always become better writers by attending classes and using other sources. Another reason to implement a writing program for this targeted group is that some seminarian students complete the ESL program unable to write a basic English composition. Without this necessary skill of writing, creditability of the Priest and the message on paper will be lost.

The Need for Writing

ESL students need to learn and comprehend English writing, because certain writing requirements are needed for Priesthood, such as writing a parish bulletin and reports. However, there are various reasons why students are unable to comprehend basic writing skills. For instance, some faculties at other universities are not primarily trained to teach writing skills, so facility with an effective preparatory training is not achieved. In addition, writing classes may be too large, prohibiting students from getting the individual, meaningful practical instruction necessary for their future roles. Finally, the difficult task of measuring writing skills must be undertaken with experienced insight in order to establish “baselines” that are necessary to progressive student development. Noting these limitations has assisted the author with insight into other resources and approaches for this new program.

When one writes a letter, they are trying to convey a meaning from the readers mind to the mind of the reader. Clearness in writing a letter or in this case a parish
bulletin consists of what the student's wishes to say and how they wish their readers to receive it. The reader needs to gather the content and facts without any effort, to make the reading successful. The more clearly the students write, the more clearly the reader will understand what they are writing about. For instance, if a Priest is writing a bulletin regarding a new charity, it is necessary for the Priest to convey the facts and the important information to motivate the community to donate. Without the proper wording and sentence structures, it will be difficult for the readers to comprehend the message, therefore, losing their interest to the subject. Like any good writer, the goal for them, as well as ESL students is the need to establish an air of grace on paper to raise the procrecy in the eyes of the reader.

What is Good Writing and Ways to Improve It

Writing is more than putting words on paper. It is a final stage in the process of communicating that begins with "thinking." Writing is an especially important stage in communication, the intent being to leave no room for doubt. As stated before, many Priests must perform writing requirements such as; evaluations, bulletins, reports, documents, thank you/sympathy cards, and contracts.

Writing well requires clear thinking to have the student's memory refreshed about a past event in order to write about it. For instance, if a Priest is writing out his homily, they may want to recall a past or recent event to write out before they communicate it verbally. By allowing sufficient time assists the student to think out their thoughts, facts, stories, etc. through to write down. Writing classes are not long enough for the student's
to write down what they are fully trying to say, especially when they are trying to convert it to another language. Therefore, having the student to complete class assignments outside of the classroom, where they may feel more relaxed and less stressed when relating to time. Also, reading can stimulate the students to write about their experiences, therefore practicing their writing. Books, in general can provide the student in becoming a better writer, because they can observe the various aspects of writing such as: vocabulary, sentence structure, expressions, grammar, and verbiage within the book. A meaningful task will always be a priority in a seminarian students writing, because they are preaching the word of God and to the Catholic community, God is someone who is meaningful and serves a purpose. In connection with a meaningful task, relates to the interest of the topic the students are writing about. Because Priest’s mission is to serve God, they are already stored with motivation and interest to communicate what they know to the Christian community. Without practice there is lack of interest and without interest there is no purpose. Students need to understand the importance of practice, whether having another student critique their papers or by writing in journal everyday. Lastly, students need experience in revising their work and observing what they can do to make the writing clearer, more descriptive, more concise, and overall becoming more confident writers.

Seminarian Needs

Because time is one of the main problems seminarian students encounter, a time efficient program where they can tie their studies with the writing program can assist
them. It is also necessary students have effective resources on campus. To have a program designed to meet the language needs of seminarians, whose goals include ministry within context of an American parish, as well as the needs of students who wish to acquire the various skills, especially writing to succeed in the academic and Church setting. Some students rely on their papers to be critiqued by Professors, rather than to be tutored. Students take the revisions without fully comprehending their errors, therefore, never learning what was corrected.

In addition, the multi-level sequences of ESL classes are non-credited, so students put more effort and focus on accredited classes.

Priest Needs

Excellence in academics and personal spiritual information God needs imaginative, able, knowledgeable, spirited, prayerful, and personal leaders for the many needs in God's church (Wartburg Theological Seminary, 2002). A leader who can incorporate personal experiences verbally and written into their teachings to the church community. In discussing the pastoral needs and requirements with Rev. Paul A. Holmes, Vice President for Mission and Ministry explained the three major tasks in Priesthood. The tasks relate to the roles of being a Priest, Prophet, and King. As a Priest, one must communicate verbally and written by preaching to make the world a holy place. For example, without proper writing skills, the written message may be lost to the reader. As a prophet, one takes the teaching of God and passes it to others. For instance, serving as a prophet by teaching and leading Bible Studies. As a king, one is
taking on a supervisor role, which consist of a governing role. For example, observing and taking notes of what is positive verses negative. In order to accomplish these three major tasks, Fr. Paul Holmes stated, “The mastery of the English language is needed to communicate effectively, because one is expressing God’s words.”

Monsignor Robert F. Coleman states three crucial points when speaking the word of God. First, we should always assume that our words, however feeble, might be the instrument and occasion of grace for God’s people. Second, as evangelizers, we should speak as if we can see the invisible. And third, our lives should always demonstrate charity, humility and prayer to our people. (CornerStone, 2001).

Findings from a National Evaluation

The current adult ESL learner population is primarily Hispanic (69%) and Asian (19%). Adult education clients in ESL programs are overwhelmingly (98%) foreign born, with most (72%) speaking Spanish in the home (Fitzgerald, 1999). The demographics of the seminarians in Seton Hall ESL program are (24%) South Americans, (28%) Central Americans, (12%) Western Europeans, (12%) Eastern Europeans, (12%) Africans, and (12%) Asians (see Appendix B). The statistics regarding the ESL learner population appears to be similar to Seton Hall’s ESL program, in which the most learning population derives from a Hispanic background.

In addition, completed reports show that ESL clients indicated participation in adult education helped a majority (60%) of them to improve their Basic English skills. Certain program factors are strongly related to high levels of ESL attendance:
1) Learners who use support services provided by their programs (such as counseling and transportation).

2) Learners who attend day classes only tend to persist than those who study at night; and

3) Learners who participate in computer-assisted learning labs or whose instruction includes independent study persist longer than those whose instruction is only classroom-based. (Fitzgerald, 1999).

In addition to these factors, Seton Hall offers housing on campus, The Immaculate Conception Seminary in Lewis Hall and one off campus, Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Kearny, New Jersey. Also, Seton Hall offers resources, facilities, and services that give their students the variety that is needed such as, writing center, language lab, computer labs, library, campus ministry, book store, advisement, counseling, and transportation around South Orange.

New Jersey is one of the six states that have the highest concentrations of immigrants; therefore, ESL services are in the greatest demand among those seeking adult education (Fitzgerald, 1999). The ESL population has grown in many universities across the nation and is projected to continue. However, due to cultural backgrounds and education levels, research is needed on topics such as instructional approaches and strategies at every academic level. (Fitzgerald, 1999).

**ESL Program Models**

ESL programs are likely to be used in districts where the language minority
population is very diverse and represents many different languages. ESL programs can accommodate students from different language backgrounds in the same class, and teachers do not need to be proficient in the home language(s) of their students.

Other program models such as “Sheltered English” or content-based programs group language minority students from different language backgrounds together in classes. Teachers use English as the medium for providing content area instruction, adapting their language to the proficiency level of the students. (Rennie, 1999). They may also use gestures and visuals aids to help students understand. Although the knowledge of English is one of the goals of sheltered English and content-based programs, instruction focuses on content rather than language. (Rennie, 1999).

Researchers have identified a number of attributes that are characteristics of effective programs for language minority students. (Rennie, 1999).

1) Supportive whole-school contexts

2) High expectations for language minority students, as evidence by active learning environments that are academically challenging

3) Intensive staff development programs designed to assist all teachers (not just ESL or bilingual education teachers)

4) Expert instructions leaders and teachers

5) Emphasis on functional communication between teacher and students and among classmates

6) Organization of the instruction of basic skills and academic content

7) Frequent student, interaction the use of collaborative learning techniques
8) Teachers with a high commitment to the educational success of all their students

9) Principals supportive of their instructional staff and of teacher autonomy while maintaining an awareness of district policies on curriculum and academic accountability

Successful program models for improving academic achievement of language minority students are those that enable these students to develop academic skills while learning English. The best program organization is one tailored to meet the linguistic, academic, and affective needs of students; provides language minority students with the instruction necessary to allow them to progress through school at a rate commensurate with their native-English speaking peers; and makes the best use of district and community resources. (Rennie, 1999).
Chapter III
INTERVIEWS ON PASTORAL REQUIREMENTS AND SEMINARIAN NEEDS

Description of the Interview questions

Due to questionnaires being uncompleted by the targeted group, (seminarian students in the English as a Second Language Program), the author presents research from interviews with clergy and the ESL Program. The Priests interview questions consisted of four specific questions that were closely analyzed in order to highlight priest requirements. In addition, clergy interviews were followed by interviews from the ESL Program. The author also incorporated five questions to acquire better knowledge about the seminarian needs. The author’s purpose was to attain information about both areas to gain a more intuitive overview.

In addition, writing samples from the students in the ESL Program were observed to support the need of the improving their writing skills. With this data at hand, the author gained information regarding the seminarians needs. By observing the writing samples, assisted the author in knowing what areas of writing needed improvements.

Sample

The goal was to interview as many Priests and the ESL Department in order to receive responses that would assist the development of the new in-house writing program. All participants teach at Seton Hall University and are highly active in either the clergy or the ESL Program. Because the focus group is highly selective, the author’s intention was to interview participants whom are solely connected to either area and whom have worked many years in their current position.
Purpose of the Survey

The reasoning for developing these questions was to help support the need for a new in-house writing program and evaluating the requirements and needs for seminarian students. What can be developed to assist seminarians in their writing? Although a set amount of questions were asked, the author also encouraged the interviewees to add any additional information or questions that may be beneficial towards the new in-house writing program. Because the interviews were open in every direction, there were no limitations to any questions being asked or answered.

Analyzing the Results of the Survey

Over the course of five months, clergy and participants associated in the ESL Program were able to respond to the questions by interviews, email and phone. Each individual responded to all the questions and additional comments. In analyzing the answers to the questions, the author noticed most of the responses were the same for the Priests and the ESL Program participants. The author also measured the results by going back to all the interviews and observing the similar answers.

Question 1: What are some of the professional skills for Priesthood?

All three Priests responded that communication, counseling, and writing skills are necessary for a Priest. A Priest needs to preach the word of God, and without this skill, the Priest is not fulfilling their obligation to God and the Christian community. In
addition, Priests are taught and required to counsel persons who request it. Writing also plays a crucial role in Priesthood, because writing is used in an everyday situation, especially when trying to communicate through paper. Without these abilities, Priests would not be fulfilling their obligation and requirements for Priesthood.

**Question 2: What do Seminarians need to know when they enter Priesthood?**

They need to be prepared for many tasks, especially in writing. Not only to they serve mass, but are active in various aspects outside of the mass. For instance, communicating with the archdiocese by phone, mail, or email. Fr. Holmes states that Parish Priests do an abundance amount of writing (examples in Question #3). Writing is communicating a message and is crucial that the written word is clear and readable to readers.

**Question 3: What are some writing examples Priests do?**

- Thank you /sympathy cards
- Reports to the Parish/Archdiocese/Annual
- Contracts
- Narratives
- Parish bulletins
- Evaluations
- Writing out homilies

**Question 4: What do you recommend may help the students with their writing skills?**

Two out the three Priests stated that new resources and a writing program was heavily needed, so students do not feel overwhelmed with their workload. Another source suggested more classes centered on American Culture, would provide them in
improving their writing skills. By becoming familiar with American values and morals, may give them a clearer understanding, therefore, assisting their writing. In addition, it gives students a clearer understanding to our culture, as well as academically. Another recommendation was to enroll all students in an etiquette class to introduce them to what is and not appropriates an in America University.

Questionnaire for the ESL Program

Question 1: What do you feel is the biggest issue facing the students in their writing?

The Professors stated the biggest issue facing the students in their writing was time management. Students become overwhelmed because they are required to carry a certain amount of credits between their Catholic Studies and the ESL Program.

Question 2: Do students put their effort in their writing knowing that ESL is non-accredited?

A majority of students do not put their best effort into their ESL papers, because these credits do not count towards graduation.

Question 3: What on campus resources to the students use?

For the first year, the students are recommended to attend the writing center to improve their writing skills. No other resources are required for ESL students.

Question 4: What writing areas need improvement?

- Composition
- Reading
- Conversation
- Grammar
• Accent correction for Seminarians
• American Culture
• Vocabulary Development

Question 5: What do you recommend that may help the students in their writing?

The ESL Professors also recommended a new writing program to enhance their students writing. Also, to encourage their students to go to the writing center when not required.

Questions for ESL Director’s

The author also contacted outside Catholic Universities that offered an ESL Program, to get a better understanding how their programs run. Out of the ten contacts, five ESL Director’s replied back to the author. The Universities included: Catholic University of America, Duquesne University, Fordham University and Xavier University. The questionnaires consisted of the same questions in the ESL questionnaire. Anea Nemoianu, Ph.D. is the Lecturer and Director of the Intensive English Program at Catholic University of America, Ms. Jona Hammer, Associate Director of ESL Program at Duquesne, Ms. Irene Badaracco, Director of Institute of American Language and Culture at Fordham University, and Jane Conzett, M.A., Director of Intensive English Program at Xavier University. The goal to contact other Universities was to compare and contrast various ESL program to Seton Hall’s. Due to limitations from Seton Hall’s ESL students and Professor’s, the author also wanted to gain more insight into the student’s needs in ESL.
Question 1: What is the structure of your ESL program and are ESL courses accredited?

*Catholic University of America:* The structure of the courses range from low intermediate to advance courses. Classes at the highest level, high intermediate and classes at a lower level are not accredited.

*Duquesne University:* The program is on three levels, Basic, Intermediate, and Advance. Each level consists of courses in reading, writing, grammar, speaking, and note taking. Courses follow the university calendar and are offered three times a year, 15 weeks in fall and spring terms, and 12 weeks in summer term.

*Fordham University of America:* Intensive students enroll in writing and grammar, speaking and listening, reading and vocabulary. The ESL program is also accredited.

*Xavier University:* Xavier University is members of the American Association of Intensive English Program, and will pursue The Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) accreditation at some future date. CEA is a not-for-profit corporation, focuses on the accreditation of English language programs and institutions in the United States (C.E.L.P.A., 2002)

*Seton Hall University:* ESL Program is dedicated to thirty-one courses, from beginning, through intermediate and advanced, to academic levels, the offerings range from traditional skills to specialize areas: Classes are offered in speaking/listening, reading/vocabulary development, writing/grammar skills, accent improvement and
American culture, toward academic proficiency and social communication. Special emphasis is placed on professional preparation: business and professional writing, vocabulary expansion, and accent correction. Class levels range from beginner to advanced and graduate level. Small classes (8 to 15 people) enable students to advance rapidly.

In general, the consensus seems to be that all five Universities have similar ESL structure for their students. A multitude classes include different levels of reading, writing, grammar and listening. While Catholic University of America, Duquesne University and Seton Hall University are not accredited, Fordham and Xavier University are.

Another survey may be conducted to see results of students enrolled in accredited classes compared to students enrolled in non-accredited classes. As a student enrolled in non-accredited classes, the author believes students who are enrolled in accredited classes may be more motivated and achieve better test and paper results because credits count towards their graduation.

Question 2: What are some on campus resources/services?

Catholic University of America: The on campus resources and services are the writing center, computer center, library, international students, and campus ministry.

Duquesne University: Primarily for ESL students, Duquesne provides their students with student tutors. For the general population there is a writing center in addition to various
web sites and a learning skills tutoring center. In addition, free tutoring and some computer access for ESL students, as well as the Institutional TOEFL and various social activities. The University as a whole offers a range of services to all students.

_Fordham University:_ Fordham offers two libraries, computer labs, and the language lab. In addition, they have access to the two gymnasiums, Olympic-size pool, tennis courts, and basketball courts.

_Xavier University:_ The resources include the writing center and ESL classes throughout the semesters.

_Seton Hall University:_ The Office of International Programs (OIP) offers support and services for international students, research scholars, and U.S. students planning to study abroad, faculty members and the general Seton Hall community with international interests. As an international student who is studying in the U.S. or an American student who wants to study abroad, the Office of International Programs is here to assist you. (Seton Hall University, 2002).

All ESL students are given an e-mail account and have free access to several computer labs. On-campus housing is available for ESL and undergraduate students. Off-campus residences are available for graduate students. Students also have access to recreation and sports facilities, campus activities, excursions, and community events. (http://education.shu.edu/es/).

All Universities offer their students similar resources that are needed for them to gain assistance. Although, there are numerous resources, there is proven results that one
excels over the other. The author believes all resources used will guide ESL students to a better understanding the English language.

**Question 3: How many seminarian students are enrolled in ESL?**

*Catholic University of America:* 6

*Duquesne University:* 2

*Fordham University:* 2-3 priests from the Graduate School of Religion each semester

*Xavier University:* 2 Jesuits from Columbia come every summer and fall term; they are generally here only for English, and attend our classes’ full term.

*Seton Hall University:* 13 seminarian students are enrolled in ESL.

Because a classroom environment is essential to any student, students whose native tongue is not English, a classroom setting is extremely important. Due to one of limitations, the author did not observe an ESL class in session to observe the lesson and the students. However, studies have shown that students do better in smaller classes due to more attention that is given to them. The author attributes that to students not feeling timid to ask questions. Also, professors can spend more one-on-one time with each student.

**Question 4: What areas of writing do students need improvement in?**

*Catholic University of America:* Not any different from the other ESL students.
Duquesne University: International seminarians have to learn how to present research in writing and follow American copyright laws and bibliographic conventions, apart from gaining satisfactory control of English.

Fordham University: The student's biggest issue in terms of writing is organization, grammar, syntax, semantics, structure for writing research papers, and speaking practice.

Xavier University: The Jesuits this semester all have been Spanish speakers, so their writing difficulties tend to be word order problems related to the Spanish language and other typical interference from their native language. In addition, problems relating to generalization versus specific details expected in American academic writing.

Seton Hall University: Professor interviews state (see interviews) that writing areas vary among the individual students. The author received copies of writing assignments from four ESL students and notes these areas of improvement: grammar, idioms, sentence structure, punctuation, citations, and organization.

Overall, there is not one specific area of writing students need improvement in. Depending the individual, Seton Hall professors work on student's areas of improvement while monitoring the students with a status sheet.

Question 5: Is there Writing Program solely for seminarian students?

Catholic University of America: No

Duquesne University: No

Fordham University: No

Xavier University: No
Seton Hall University: No

Because there is not a writing program dedicated for the seminarian students, the author believes with the implementation of some new classes and a combination of Theology and writing classes, students will get a better comprehension of English language. (See Chapter IV).

Question 6: Are there any other resources/classes you feel that can better assist your students?

Catholic University of America: Taking classes in their field along with ESL at the highest level of proficiency that we offer in the program.

Duquesne University: There should be trained tutors available for more one-on-one sessions; we would probably see more improvement among the weaker students who have problems following classroom instruction.

Fordham University: The writing center edits the matriculating students’ writing, but does not teach or explain what is wrong. The students must read and write equally to improve their writing skills at the advances level.

Xavier University: The Jesuits seem to have been satisfied with their experience; and I cannot think of any services they might need.

Seton Hall University: Having an “on-site” faculty member at the writing center to attend to student writing needs (see recommendations). Similar to Fordham University improvements, students need to distinguish the difference between editing versus
tutoring. In addition, have "shadow classes" that parallel Theology classes (see possible solutions).

Among of the Universities, one-on-one appears to be the most noted whether it be by a tutor, professor, or an "on-site" faculty member in the writing center. Overall, assistance is a necessity for challenged students, in order to guide them and to answer questions that may be raised from their end.

**Interviews with Priests:**

Fr. Holmes stated the professional requirements needed for Priesthood, such as the importance of communicating effectively to the Parish. In addition, he expressed the need to be a proficient writer in the church setting, because priests serve as administrators by writing reports, parish bulletins, and completing other paperwork. Priests also serve as leaders by writing evaluations, terminating and hiring positions, and writing documents. As stated, most Priests write out their homilies before they present, because it is crucial that sentences and thoughts are organized. Fr. Holmes also stated writing requirements are necessary for Priesthood, such as writing parish bulletins.

The other two participants expressed the extreme need of this newly proposed in-house writing program for seminarians in ESL to the author. With 147 Parishes and 168 Priests in New Jersey, one can note the need for Priests to serve the Catholic community.

Fr. Zaccardi, Seton Hall University Assistant Professor in the Biblical Studies Department, works closely with the seminarians and is aware of their academic needs.
The purpose of this program was to have the seminarians finish ESL with the confidence and ability to write a clear English composition. Because there are different writing levels, the attention to specific areas have not always been met in the classroom. Discussions may lead to another direction, due to the difficulty between the student’s academic studies versus their Theology classes. The issue of time remains to be a consistent problem among the seminarians, due the abundance of classes they are enrolled in. Other roles of Priesthood inside the church community, as well as outside were discussed. Not only do priests serve as leaders within the church community, but also as mentors outside the community. As a mentor, the importance of effective communication inside a church community, as well as outside of one needs to be demonstrated.

During the interview, a suggestion of arose about incorporating an etiquette class for new seminarian’s living in America for the first time (see recommendations). The importance of new students coming to America engaging into an etiquette class and learning about the American culture, will prepare them for their residency America.

Interviews with Seton Hall Professors and Acting Dean of College of Education Studies Department

The ESL Program has been in existence for over 20 years at Seton Hall University and offers various course sections to their students. Previously discussed, the author noted the biggest challenged facing students are between their academic and career studies. Due to the non-accreditation of the ESL program, many students do not put their
full effort into ESL assignments. Since this serves as a base for future and more advanced writing, students lack the proficiency in their writing. Moreover, when placed at a higher writing level, some students still lack the writing skills that are needed to progress into priesthood.

Serving as a major factor in advancing to the next writing level, students need to learn how to better utilize their time for all their areas of studies. This writing program helps to serve the students with time and their academic and career studies. Due to positive feedback from the students who attended the writing center, the author recommends students attend the writing center on a weekly basis. The reason for this is because some students rely on papers to be edited by professors and tutors, rather than fully understanding the true meaning of the edits.

Biographies

Rev. Paul A. Holmes: Ordained a priest in 1981, Father Paul Holmes is Vice President for Mission and Ministry, and Associate Professor of moral and sacramental theology, at Seton Hall University. A native of Newark and West Orange, New Jersey, he graduated from Seton Hall with a B.A. in sociology (1977) and, in five years of study at the North American College in Rome, Father Holmes earned an S.T.B from Gregorian University (1980), and an S.T.L. in moral theology from the Lateran University (1982).
Rev J. Patrick Ryan: Parochial Vicar and teacher at St. Cecilia in Rockaway, New Jersey. On September 16th was supposed to be a day of celebration for Fr. Ryan, marking his 25th anniversary as a Catholic Priest. A festive program had been planned at St. Cecilia, with a visit from the archbishop if St. Paul – Minneapolis (Hull, 2001)

Rev. C. Anthony Zaccardi: Seton Hall University Assistant Professor in the Biblical Studies Department and also received his S.S.L., at the Pontifical Biblical Institute.

Joseph De Pierro, Ph.D.: Serving as Acting Dean of College of Education and Human Services.


Adrian Demuro, M.A.: Assistant Director of ESL in the Education Studies Department.
Chapter IV

WRITING PROGRAM DESIGNED FOR SEMINARIES IN ESL

Background

The Seton Hall Writing Program offers courses at three proficiency levels. The different levels specifically focus on a variety of writing areas. Listed below, illustrates the course offerings and the content for each course. The author suggests that a mandatory writing sample such as, Program Exit Writing Sample becomes a requirement when a student is ready to advance into an accredited College English course. This sample will determine what writing areas were improved on, as well as noting the areas that still need improvement. (Georgia Perimeter College, 2002).

Typically, Seton Hall University ESL Program has seven writing classes that are offered for their students. Below, the new writing program offers five writing classes, plus two workshops. This will assist the 21 writing credit hours that ESL students are requested to take. This program has classes run parallel with both their academic and Catholic courses, where writing will always take part in both areas of classes. The elements of writing learned in ESL classes, will be used in their Catholic studies classes as well. The author designed this program solely for the purpose of time management and utilizing the connection between catholic and academic studies. Therefore, students relate what is being taught from one class and use it in another.

Upon their first two weeks in America, students can make new friends and become involved in Seton Hall campus life through student orientation. This will give those studying for priesthood an opportunity to become proficient in English and familiar
with American customs and cultures in the seminary environment. Orientation will consist of an etiquette class, events/socials, lectures on American culture and college life, attending American Mass, and introducing on campus Priests. In addition, different on campus departments will assist students in the areas of housing, academic classes, card services, answering questions, and giving a tour of the campus. This will benefit the students as they begin their new journey in an American University.
Writing Program Designed for Seminarians in ESL

BEGINNER ENGLISH WRITING AND GRAMMAR (beginner)
1) Sentence level
2) Punctuation
3) Simple sentences
4) Grammar-parts of speech
5) Verb tenses
6) Negative forms
7) 4 C's (clear, concise, clarity, and compassion)

BECOMING A MORE EFFECTIVE WRITER (Intermediate)
1) Research
2) Preparation
3) Organization
4) Writing
5) Revising content/organization
6) Presenting the text (should I leave this step out, because the focus is on writing?)

MASTERING WRITING AND GRAMMAR (Advance)
1) Compositions
2) Grammatical structures
3) Verb tenses
4) American idioms

BUSINESS/PARISH WRITING (Have ESL Professor & Priest team teach)
1) What is appropriate and what is not
2) Persuasion tactics

CREATIVE WRITING
1) What is creative writing?
2) What do students want out of this class
3) Writing fiction vs. nonfiction
Course Descriptions:

Beginning English Grammar and Punctuation

Primary focus for students will consist of grammar and punctuation. Daily exercises will be conducted independently and as a group. The goal of this class is to become a better and clearer writer. Students will also be asked to keep a journal throughout all courses.

Becoming a More Effective Writer

This course is designed to provide intensive practice in the conventions of academic English, emphasizing practice in writing essays in response to readings. Course content includes accurate and appropriate use of grammar, sentence structure, usage, vocabulary, idea development, organization, and style. Existing knowledge of grammar, structure and helps students to acquire new ones. Discussion topics will consist of content, audience, sentence structure, and idioms. Taking assignments from the first class and developing them into compositions. Professors and students may follow these steps when evaluating and writing papers.

Mastering English and Grammar

At the advanced level, students learn to express themselves effectively using grammatically sound simple, compound, and basic complex statements in a wide range of verb tenses. They will also learn to compose paragraphs properly, utilizing the organizing elements of topic sentence, supporting details, and conclusions.
Business/Parish Writing

The focus of this course is on the writing needed for everyday life. This course will examine the tools for a well written reports, letters, notes, bulletins, contracts, and evaluations. Together, a Priest and Professor will teach the fundamentals that integrate both aspects of the academic and Parish. Students will take the skills from previous classes and incorporate them with Parish writing requirements. Writing will entail Evaluations, Contracts, and Reports to archdiocese/parish, bulletins, and reports, and letters. Students will also be introduced to computer labs and learning Word

Creative Writing

After completing the previous classes, students will be asked to write a portfolio and present it to the class at the end of the semester. Topics may consist of life experiences, current events, taking a stance on an issue, their native country, and comparison/contrast. Students will also learn the difference between creative writing and journalism. After each lesson, there may be exercises for the students to do as a group. At the end of the semester, students will have a portfolio of themselves. This may consist of the topics given above.
WRITING WORKSHOPS (2 offered; may be accredited)

Students may receive advisement through an ESL Professor by letting the student have the option of taking two workshop classes. By evaluations and progress reports on the students, workshops may be decided on the individual progress. For example, students whom are displaying great progress may take these workshops on a weekend. However, students whom are having difficulty with writing may want these workshops to have a longer duration. ESL Professors or Teacher Assistants, from the Education Department may teach all workshops.

**Writing:** This course is offered to students who want extra help in gaining English proficiency. Through group work and individualized instruction, students practice the conventions of English grammar, sentence structure, and usage. It is designed is solely designed for writing only with emphasis on writing compositions.

**Academic Reading and Writing:** This course is for students who want to improve comprehension of academic texts and write effectively structured and developed responses. The focus is on developing critical reading strategies, but students also practice using accurate grammar, structure, and wording. This course is designed to
expand the knowledge of organizational patterns used in writing both compositions and paragraphs. Integrated readings serve as models for principal of compositions.

**Academic Speaking and Writing:** This course is for more advanced students who want to become more proficient speakers and writers in an academic setting. Students participate in discussions and give a variety of presentations. They also write texts that prepare for or follow up the speaking tasks.

**Writing for Graduate Students:** This course is for international graduate students and provides practice in the conventions of writing at advanced levels of study. Also, students will become familiar with common grammatical and rhetorical issues but work on writing tasks related to their discipline.

*Writing Center or Tutoring 2 hours weekly. Attendance will be taken at every session with an "On Sight Faculty Staff. Teacher Assistant's from the Education Department may tutor as well.*
Recommendations

- **Shadow Classes**: An ESL class that parallels their Catholic studies. In Theology classes have students write a Parish bulletin or write out a homily. This collaboration offers assurance that the seminarians in the Program are immersed in every aspect of ministry. (interview with ESL)

- Have an "on-site" faculty Professor in the Writing Center during the times the ESL seminary students are there. Because all undergraduate students employ the Writing Center, these students feel more comfortable with a familiar face and someone who is older. (interview with Fr. Zacarrdi)

- Have another seminary student or professor who speaks the native language of the student that is being tutored. The tutored student will get a better understanding of what is being taught, since they may find the translation easier coming from the native speaking tutor. Therefore, making the tutored student may feel more comfortable. Having another student tutor can be more convenient than making an appointment at the Writing Center. In addition, there is a common interest between the students, because of their future occupation.

- Professors can schedule conferences once a week with the student to discuss papers.

- “Writing designation” a contract of what the student wants to accomplish by the last class (all in moderation). (Calvin College, 2002).
• Have seminary students regularly tested before they advance into another class.

• Have an internship towards the last semester or post grad of the Program, where writing requirements will be used. An internship will take place in a congregational setting in the following roles: Ministry Leader, Christian Educator, Youth Minister, and Care Minister (www.cui.edu)

• Paid tutors or specialists sit in the classroom with the student. The tutor can utilize the material from the other classes in the instruction on English. (Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, 2002).

• Need more faculties to cover classes. Have Teacher Assistants (TA’s) from the Education Department teach and to tutor if necessary.

• Paid tutors or Teacher Assistants (TA’s) sit in the classroom with the student. The tutor can utilize the material from the other classes in the instruction on English. While researching into specialized programs, the author observed a particular program, Conversation Partner that is commonly used in other universities ESL Programs.

Conversation Partner Program

Each ESL student that wants to participate is matched with a native English speaker Priest, student, or faculty member. The conversation partners meet regularly once a week, and talk about anything they want. The Conversation Partner program offers ESL students and native speaking students an opportunity to learn about each other
countries and cultures. ESL students can practice their English communication skills and about United States culture and college life. Native speakers of English can learn about another country, another culture, and perhaps practice their foreign language skills. Both conversation partners find a new friend. (http://www/usfca.edu/esl/ESLCourses.html)

ESL Web Sites

Need to log onto http://uwc-server.fac.utexas.edu/esl/esites.html
- Frizzy University Network
- ESL Home Page
- English for the Internet
- The Virtual English Language Center
- Helsinki University of Tech
- Linguistic Funland TESL
- Online MLA Documentation
- Dave’s ESL Café on the Net
- Lingua Center Search Engine Page

ESL site for instructors and students
- U. of Texas Composition Writing/Research Lab
- ESL Virtual Catalogue
- EFL Magazine
- List of Education MOOs
- Internet TESL Journal
- TESL-EJ Online
- Writing Resources & Labs on the Net

Resources for Professors
- OU CALL Lab Teaching Resources
- Franzato’s Guide for ESL/EFL Teachers
CHAPTER V

Summary

The purpose of the in-house writing program was to focus on the selected group and their academic needs at Seton Hall University. This new program offers new courses, workshops, approaches, and recommendations by improving the writing of the challenged seminarian students in ESL. This program will allow students to learn more while utilizing the time allotted and with the appropriate courses for both their academic and career studies.

In analyzing the findings, the author found that reliance on editing rather than tutoring and time management was affecting the advancement of some seminarian students in the ESL Program. Because there are certain professional writing requirements needed for Priesthood, students need to attend the writing center more frequently and exercise more of the on campus resources. The writing center is a primary source for student to acquire assistance, but more attention to resources and workshops should also be centered on the student needs. The study also covered areas in which data was retrieved by questionnaires, focus groups, and student analysis sheets to determine student’s needs and how to incorporate them into the new writing program.
Conclusion

As Elaine Maimon of Beaver College, one of the leading figures in the writing across the curriculum movement, states, “writing is a way to learn, not merely a means of communicating to others what has already been mastered. It is a crucial tool of invention and discovery central to all disciplines” (Smith, p.13). Writing is a form of learning and serves to reinforce other skills. In all fields, writing is used on a daily basis to write notes, reports, and compositions. Moreover, writing is used in an everyday situation, such as relating phone messages, writing lists, filling out forms, and questionnaires. Because writing is a necessity, one must acquire this skill to get their message across effectively. As stated before, the English as a Second Language Program and School of Theology had stated that the biggest issue facing the seminarians was time and work overload. This new writing program was developed to meet both of these needs.

Students must be able to read and write about a topic in a way that the members of the academic community find understandable and acceptable. The same is true in any academic discipline (chemistry, biology, computer studies), just as it is in any language culture (Japanese, English, French) (Portland State University, 2002).

Writing is improved when students prepare a series of drafts, with feedback (from peers to professors) concerning content, not just grammar, preceding each revision. Peer-editing can be effective at this stage, encouraging students to be responsible for each other, allowing them to share ideas, and teaching them to read critically. The last point is
especially difficult, since students often do not recognize mistakes. Revision often is synonymous with proofreading, although presentation and organization should not be overlooked. The process approach to writing is ideally suited for foreign language classes since listening, speaking, and reading can be integrated so naturally with it.

Since writing proficiency does not develop at the same rate in all students, or even at the same rate for each skill in the same students, we can not emphasize enough the necessity of professors and priests getting to know their own students’ general level of proficiency in the skills before making assignments. Writing assignments should gradually increase in difficulty, challenging students to expand their skills. Once students have tried a new structure to express a more complex idea on paper, they may find it becoming a part of their spoken language. (Jarausch, 1987).

The newly developed writing program is designed to assist students whose first language in not English, by becoming competent in using spoken and written English. This is an intensive program that focuses in on meeting within the context of an American parish, as well as the needs of future priests who wish to acquire the social and language skills to succeed in academic and professional settings. (http://myweb.rust.net/~deansoff/csl.html).
The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Newark encompasses the northeastern New Jersey counties of Bergen, Essex, Union, and Hudson and the population totals 2.8 million people. The Archdiocese maintains 235 Catholic parishes, 139 elementary schools, 37 high schools, one university and three colleges educating a total of almost 120,000 students. There are another 57,000 students enrolled in parish religious education programs. (Roman Catholic Archdiocese Newark, 2002).

Fr. Paul G. Bootkoski (4th Bishop of Metuchen) said the priests he knew growing up were highly involved with youth and that a childhood pastor inspired him to enter the seminary. Fr. Bootkoski said the challenges of new job include dealing with diverse population with varied needs. “We have 27 languages in Church on a Sunday. I know we have pockets of poverty we have to reach out to.” “Catholic education as one of the prime ways to spread the word.” (Hayden, 2002).

Many inexperienced writers give little thought to style, concerning him or herself only with getting ideas down on paper without making errors. If they adopt this attitude, they are neglecting one major opportunity to make their writing more effective. Of all the weaknesses that distract those whose read technical writing, ineffective style is one of the most damaging (Hayden 2002). Because style is not taught, only developed through writing, students need to learn the basics of writing to develop their own style.

Moreover, last May, Seton Hall had the largest graduating class of seminary students. The Immaculate Conception Seminary School had thirteen men ordained as Priests for the Archdiocese of Newark and nine men were ordained as Deacons. With the
continuous need for Priests, seminarians must be well prepared, as any vocation to handle a variety of responsibilities and the necessity of writing. Because writing skills play a crucial role in Priesthood, the seminarians must also learn writing fundamentals in the college classroom, so they can communicate effectively on paper.

By implementing a program that is centered on the skills of academia and profession, will make students put full effort into their studies, because what they learn in their ESL classes will also be used in their Catholic studies. Although ESL in non-accredited, this will eliminate time and make the students put equal focus into both areas.
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Appendix A

Survey
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ESL STUDENTS

Native Country:
Years Resided in America:
Resident on campus: yes or no

Assign a rating from the following scale relative to the following questions:

SA - Strongly Agree
A - Agree
N - Neutral
D - Disagree
SD - Strongly Disagree

1) I believe that movies are an effective source for learning about the “True American Culture”: SA A D N SD

2) Books are useful and time efficient sources for getting tips on American Culture:
   a. discussion groups/conversations SA A D N SD
   b. social gatherings SA A D N SD
   c. trips to the museums SA A D N SD

3) My writing skills need improvement in the areas of:
   a. grammar
   b. sentence structure
   c. punctuation
   d. expressions
   e. other (please list)

4) What English writing courses have you taken in the past?

5) What English classes are you currently enrolled in?

6) Have you ever written a parish bulletin? If so, in what language?
7) What writing resources have you used on or off campus?

8) Do you prefer working in groups or individually?

9) Is there any other classes or resources you feel can better assist students in their writing?
Appendix B

Chart
Demographics

- South America 24%
- Central America 28%
- West Europe 12%
- East Europe 12%
- Africa 12%
- Asia 12%