

October 12, 2004

Dear the School of Education Dean,

We, graduate students of the Language Education Department of the School of Education at Indiana University, are writing this letter to express our positions and concerns regarding the newly proposed department name and official description of the doctoral program. Before turning to the issues, we would like to express our gratitude for your seeking for the students' feedback on the draft of the new department description at the 4<sup>th</sup> SLED symposium. Regrettably, however, we have found that the reconceptualization of our department, as reflected in the new name and description, conflicts with our goals and interests of study to some extent. Concerns that we would like to share are as follows:

***1. The new department name, Language, Literacies, and Culture, omits language education:***

One of our biggest concerns is that the newly proposed name does not include 'language education,' which succinctly reflects what many of us are interested in or studying in this department. Even though the new name embraces more areas, particularly currently popular terms in the academic field, we feel that something essential is missing. We would like to ask you to reconsider maintaining the current name or at least adding 'language education' to the new name.

***2. The new department description excludes ESL/EFL/ FL (hereafter, L2) education:***

One of the big shifts from the current description of the doctoral programs is the focus on the research and study of educational questions related to language, literacy, and culture. We agree that the focus on research should be pursued by any doctoral programs, we, however, are concerned that the new description is not comprehensive enough to include the specialty of those primarily devoted to L2 education for research and practices. More than half the doctoral students in our department have chosen to focus their studies on L2 education and we do not understand why our interest has not been given more visibility. This is apparently contradictory to what the substance of the new description advocates, such as social justice, social responsibility, and respect of funds of knowledge, skills, and experiences of diverse students.

We have the feeling that the new focus is more related to cultural studies, critical literacy, and sociology. In addition, considering the differences in the nature, focus, and processes between the first language (hereafter, L1) learning/education and L2 learning/education, it seems that the issues and assumptions portrayed in the description are more relevant to those interested in L1 education.

We also have the impression that the interest in American educational, social context is foregrounded. This may not be your original intention, but the use of terms, such as *nonmainstream students, linguistically and culturally diverse students in a multicultural society, and national and state standards*, and the overall tone of the description (of the

2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraphs) could possibly remind the readers of the American context. Actually, many of the international students try to make what we are learning here at IU relevant to our own domestic contexts, paying primary attention to our home countries. The seemingly exclusive focus on American context makes us feel that we are marginalized and disregarded.

Taken together, it is a great pity to say that we feel left out of the focus of the department. This issue matters much, considering a great portion of international students in terms of the sheer number and the contribution not only to the department but also to the School of Education and Indiana University. Presently, as the description stands, we have the impression that international students are not part of the future plans of the departmental mission.

**3. Possible impacts on prospective international students:**

According to the results of a survey conducted by a research team composed of Dr. Pugh and several doctoral students in Language Education in 2002, about thirty percent of the SOE international students interviewed responded that they chose IU after looking at the official description of the department, either website or paper. It points out that the department description has a substantial impact on the prospective students' decision on their school. We are afraid that the points mentioned in 1 and 2 above may deter international students from considering applying for IU. It will lead to difficulties in gathering academically potential international students and establishing strong alumni network, particularly in the field of L2 education.

**4. No prior official notice about the change in the department name:**

Graduate students constitute an indispensable, essential element of the department. And as mentioned above, the name of the department that we belong to is partially related to our academic identity. In this situation, it is regrettable that we, graduate students, have been excluded from the decision-making process. We think that graduate students could have been consulted earlier, during the deliberations on the name change. This process could have made us feel that we are valued and respected as a member of the community.

Finally, we would like you to understand that we wrote this letter out of our sincerity and concern for our department as well as our credentials after the graduation.

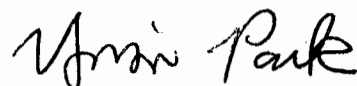
We very much appreciate your efforts for the improvement of our department and also time for reading this letter.

Yours sincerely,

HOHSUNG CHOE



Yunjoo (Nikki) Park



Hideki Hamada

Akiko Hagiwara

Varasiri Sagaravasi

Daniel Craig

Daehyeon Nam

Sheng-Tu Wang

Jianfei Chen

Maria-Therese X Bastos

Wendy Whitmore

Sunny Lee

Hatai Sri-ampai

Jui-ching Peng

Yujong Park

Sun-Yang Hwang

Hideki Hamada 10.13.04

Akiko Hagiwara 10.13.04

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Banu Alfari

Ingrid Graves

Ingrid Graves

MILBURN E. GRIMES

Milburn Grimes

Hsiang-keng Wu

Hsiang-keng Wu

Lee, Young Soon

Lee, Young Soon

Jung ah Hwang

Jung ah Hwang

YU-SHU LIN

Yu Shu Lin

Ha, Soyoung

Ha Soyoung

Choi, Keum Hee

HUI-HUA PAI

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Serim Yalcin

## ***FROM LANGUAGE EDUCATION TO LANGUAGE, LITERACIES, and CULTURE : WHERE HAVE WE BEEN, AND WHERE ARE WE GOING?***

***From the School of Education 2003-2005 Graduate Academic Bulletin***  
***<http://www.indiana.edu/~educate/>***

### ***Language Education Doctoral Degrees:***

The Ph.D. and Ed.D. programs in language education have the following objectives: (1) to prepare teachers of English, English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language, foreign language, and reading for positions of leadership in the field, particularly in the development of improved instructional procedures and improved curricula in language education, (2) to prepare program directors, instructional supervisors, and curriculum specialists in language areas, (3) to prepare college and university personnel to teach, design, and direct programs for the preparation of teachers of language education, (4) to prepare researchers in language education, and (5) to prepare specialists in the development of programs and instructional materials in language education at all levels. The focus of the program is on research and theory in language education and the development of curricula in those areas.

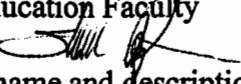
### ***Language, Literacies and Culture Doctoral Degrees—Draft:***

The doctoral program focuses upon research and theory in language and culture, offering programs that concentrate on sociocultural, multicultural, feminist, and critical approaches to educational research and teacher education. Faculty and students focus broadly on reading multiple systems of making-meaning and explore how those systems are intertwined with important cultural ideas about citizenship, identity, agency, globalization, and with the dynamics of the migration of people and ideas in an interconnected world. This department invites teachers and students to explore issues of language and literacy as they resonate in the classroom, the community, and in the culture. Specifically, language educators learn to develop approaches to teaching and research that address issues of social conflict, social justice, social action, and social responsibility.

This department also emphasizes approaches to teaching, learning, and research that apprehend and affirm the “funds of knowledge” or “multiple literacies” of diverse students—that is, the programs offer approaches to instruction that recognize and utilize the skills, abilities and experiences that nonmainstream students bring into the classroom. Creating opportunities to reconceive teaching and learning in school to utilize these funds of knowledge and multiple literacies, graduates are better prepared for teaching and research in settings with linguistically and culturally diverse students in a multicultural society. In short, these programs prepare its graduates to understand their roles as special advocates for children, adolescents, and young adults. Moreover, faculty and students cultivate and sustain partnerships with community organizations as well as schools to reinforce the importance of such organizations to literacy and to learning, especially as they offer opportunities for nonmainstream students. This program invites researchers, teachers and students to explore issues of language and literacy as they resonate in the classroom, the community, and in the culture.



SCHOOL OF  
EDUCATION

To: Language Education Faculty  
From: Sharon Pugh   
RE: Department name and description  
Date: October 14, 2004

As a retired faculty member still actively working with graduate students, I would like to add my voice to the discussions concerning the proposed changes to the name and description of our department. I have read and signed the letter expressing the concern of international and other students concerning the changes, which eloquently communicates their position.

The issue, in my view, concerns the function of the title and text as the first line of communication between our department and a wide range of prospective students as well as the institutions and agencies that sponsor them. These should begin with clear and straight-forward language concerning the full range of programs available within the department. I agree with the students' point that the title and description should not neglect any sectors of our constituency, which is international, nor imply constraint of possible research pursuits to certain areas or kinds of issues. Subsequent text should, certainly, expound on the philosophy or more likely the philosophies of the departmental faculty as a way of communicating our intellectual resources. I believe, however, that as a faculty we should support and guide each student's development of his or her own philosophy of language, literacy, culture, and social justice within a personally meaningful context. Indeed, it would be ironic if a philosophical stance intended to invite inclusiveness, diversity, and personal construction functioned as a barrier.

It is also important to keep in mind that decisions regarding program choice are often made or highly influenced by sponsors who may have even less context for interpreting the proposed title and description. Our students from abroad already face numerous political and financial obstacles to study in the US, and competition from institutions in other English-speaking countries is growing. A title and description that are difficult to understand or seem irrelevant could constitute another obstacle. I strongly urge keeping language that fore-fronts essential information, is inclusive of our entire constituency.