

LECTURE 33

BUILDING THE WRITING HABIT

Topics	Topic Names	Books	Pages
176	Introduction Building the Writing Habit	Harmer, J. (2006). How to teach writing. Pearson Education India.	p. 55
177	Building Confidence and Enthusiasm (I)	Harmer, J. (2006). How to teach writing. Pearson Education India.	pp. 55-56
178	Building Confidence And Enthusiasm (II)	Harmer, J. (2006). How to teach writing. Pearson Education India.	P 57
179	Instant Writing	Harmer, J. (2006). How to teach writing. Pearson Education India.	p. 58

180	Collaborative Writing	Harmer, J. (2006). How to teach writing. Pearson Education India.	pp. 58-59
181	Writing in Groups and Pairs	Harmer, J. (2006). How to teach writing. Pearson Education India.	pp. 60-61
182	Writing to Each Other	Harmer, J. (2006). How to teach writing. Pearson Education India.	p. 62
183	What to Do with Habit Building Writing	Harmer, J. (2006). How to teach writing. Pearson Education India.	pp. 62-63

5 Building the writing habit

'Begin at the beginning,' the King said, very gravely, 'and go on till you come to the end: then stop.'

from 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' by Lewis Carroll

- Building confidence and enthusiasm
- Instant writing
- Collaborative writing
- Writing to each other
- What to do with 'habit-building' writing

Building confidence and enthusiasm

Although some students are always happy to have a go at writing in English, others can be less keen. This unwillingness may derive from anxieties they have about their handwriting, their spelling, or their ability to construct sentences and paragraphs. And if these insecurities are reinforced because they are unable to complete writing tasks successfully, then the students' attitude to writing is likely to become more and more negative.

The students' reluctance to write can also be because they rarely write even in their own language, and so the activity feels alien. Another powerful disincentive is the fear that they have 'nothing to say' – a common response of many students when asked to write. Finally, writing just does not interest some students; such people seem to be unwilling to invest the time and effort that they think a writing task demands.

With students like this who lack familiarity or confidence with writing (or indeed enthusiasm for it) we need to spend some time building the **writing habit** – that is making students feel comfortable as writers in English and so gaining their willing participation in more creative or extended activities. This will involve choosing the right kinds of activity – with appropriate levels of challenge – and providing them with enough language and information to allow them to complete writing tasks successfully.

Choosing writing tasks and activities

It is important that we choose writing activities which have a chance of appealing to our students – and which have, if possible, some relevance for them. Writing fairy stories might appeal to children but could fail to inspire a group of university students (though that is not necessarily the case, of course, as we shall see on page 79).

If we are lucky we will have a good idea of not only what kind of writing students are likely to have to do in English in the future, but also what kind of subjects and tasks they will enjoy – or have enjoyed in the past. This will help us choose writing tasks either because students need them or because they are likely to be motivated by them because the tasks are engaging in themselves.

An **engaging** writing task is one that involves students not just intellectually but emotionally as well; it amuses them, intrigues them, or makes them feel good. When students are 'switched on' by engaging tasks there is a good chance that some of their doubts about writing will disappear.

What engages people may be different for different students, but clearly the stimulus we provide (to encourage them to write) will make a difference. Music, for example, can be used to awaken the students' creativity, especially if they respond particularly well to **auditory** input. Pictures can have the same effect for those who are stimulated by **visual** input. Having students write jointly on the board or swap papers around caters for those who respond to **kinaesthetic** stimulation (to movement and physical activity). Writing tasks can be initiated and conducted in a number of different ways, in other words, and if we are to build the writing habit in the greatest number of our students we need to be aware of the variety of tastes and interests they have.

Except in the most goal-focused ESP classes, students are likely to respond best to a wide variety of tasks, topics, and genres over a period of time. Though we may want to revisit a writing genre – so that students can apply what they learned first time round for this second try – we will want to give students the widest range possible. Variety is as important in writing tasks and the activities that go with them as it is for other areas of language learning such as speaking, listening, and reading.

What students need

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, there are many reasons why students may not be confident or willing writers. In order to counteract these potential problems we have to identify what our students need if they are to have a reasonable chance of success:

- **Information & task information** – students need to have the necessary information to complete the task. This means that they need to understand clearly what we want them to do and they need, also, to be absolutely clear about any of the topic detail that we give them. If we ask them to respond to an invitation, for example (see page 36), they need to have understood the details of the invitation, who they are writing to, and what it is they are trying to achieve. If we ask them to write a poem, they need to have a clear understanding of the topic(s) they will be dealing with. If they are involved in a collaborative writing activity they need to know what they are writing about, who writes what, and how the writing sequence is going to progress.

- **Language** – if students need specific language to complete a writing task we need to give it to them (or help them to find it). This may involve offering them phrases, parts of sentences, or words.

Of course there are times when we just get students to write 'without thinking', to provoke their use of all and any of the language they know. But where a task depends on certain written formulae it would be pointless not to offer these to the students.

- **Ideas** – teachers need to be able to suggest ideas to help students when they get stuck. For some this may be just a word or two. For others we may need to dictate a half sentence or even something more substantial. One of the skills of a good writing teacher is to be able to throw out suggestions without crowding out the individual students with too much oppressive detail. In order to do this we have to be aware of which students need more or less help and stimulation, especially where students are working on their own rather than collaboratively (see below).
- **Patterns & schemes** – one way of helping students to write, even when they may think they do not have many ideas, is to give them a pattern or a scheme to follow. In 'worked-on' writing this will frequently happen when students first study a writing genre and then create their examples of the same genre (e.g. 'an advertisement', 'a postcard', 'a curriculum vitae', etc.). Even with more instant writing, however, the students' lives will be made much easier if there is a pattern or scheme to follow. The poetry activities we will look at in this chapter bear this out, as do some of the collaborative writing procedures. In these cases students are given a frame to write in and, while this may make the task less creatively free, it does offer the writers support. It is often easier to write when constrained than it is when there is nothing in front of you except for a blank piece of paper or a blank screen.

When students are involved in the kind of process writing or genre-based construction we talked about in the first two chapters of this book, the identification of suitable topics and tasks and an analysis of what they need to complete the tasks successfully are both absolutely vital. They are important, too, for tasks which aim to build the writing habit – that is tasks whose principal aim is to have students writing fluently and enthusiastically, often with more spontaneity and less actual preparation than in process and genre approaches. Two such areas of habit building are **instant writing** and **collaborative writing**.

Instant writing

There are stages in any lesson where students can be asked to write on the spot, without much in the way of preparation or warning; this is **instant writing**.

Because instant writing is not part of a long writing process, it can be used whenever the teacher feels it is appropriate. The tasks may each take only ten or fifteen minutes or be even shorter; but a regular diet of such tasks will boost students' confidence, if they are appropriate, since each time

they will have something worthwhile and interesting to show for their efforts.

The following activities provide some examples of instant writing.

Sentence writing

As we have seen, students can be asked to write sentences either as language reinforcement or in preparation for a forthcoming activity. The following activities could also be used for such purposes, but their purpose here is to make reluctant writers feel more comfortable and to remove the problems of those who think they have nothing to say:



Dictating sentences for completion – a very simple way of getting students to write creatively is to dictate part of a sentence which they then have to complete about themselves. For example, we can dictate the following:

‘My favourite time of day is ...’

And students have to write *the morning*, or *the evening*, etc. This can be extended of course. The teacher can say: ‘Now write one sentence saying *why* you have chosen your time of day.’

Just about any incomplete sentence can be used in this way, as the following examples demonstrate:

‘The one thing I would most like to learn is how to ...’

‘The best film I have ever seen is ...’

‘One of the most exciting things that has ever happened to me is ...’

Teachers can also dictate sentence frames (or write them up on the board). If the topic is ‘animals’, we can say:

‘Although I like ..., I’m not very keen on ...’



Writing sentences – students can be asked to write two or three sentences about a certain topic. For example, suppose students have been working on the topic of ‘hopes and ambitions’, they can write three sentences about how they would like their lives to change in the future. If they are discussing education, they can write sentences about why exams are a good thing or a bad thing. If they have been discussing anti-social behaviour, the teacher can ask them to write three *don’t* sentences (e.g. *Don’t listen to loud music after eleven o’clock*).



The weather forecast – at the beginning of the day the teacher asks students to write about themselves and their day as if they were writing a weather forecast: ‘What’s the “weather” like now? Are you happy or tired, listless or energetic? How are you likely to feel later on, in the afternoon?’

Activities like this work extremely well for some students, because they allow them to be creative in an amusing and thought-provoking way.

Sentence writing is one way of getting students to write quickly while at the same time allowing them to write things that mean something to them personally.

Using music

Music can be a very effective way to stimulate a writing activity since it often provokes strong feelings and ideas. There is a universality about music which means that much of it is easy for everyone to understand. You don't have to be a musical expert for a piece of music to make you feel happy, or sad, or wistful.

Choosing the right music is vitally important. Much of the best music (for writing purposes) is instrumental. We don't want students to be distracted by listening out for words. On the contrary, we want the music to speak to them directly. We need music they can respond to. A lot of classical music from around the world is very descriptive both in terms of mood and also because composers, both past and present, have tried to describe events and people with their compositions.

Among the many ways music can be used to stimulate instant writing are the following:



Words – one activity is to play a piece of music and have students write down any words that come into their heads as they listen. Any emotive piece of music will do for this, such as – in the Western classical tradition – *Mars: the god of war* from Holst's *The Planets*, Barber's *Adagio for Strings*. We can also use music from films such as that in *The Piano* by Michael Nyman, in *The Mission* by Ennio Morricone, or just about anything by John Williams.

When students have written down the words which the music has suggested to them, they can share their words with the rest of the class to see how others have reacted.



What is the composer describing? – a lot of music is written to describe particular scenes or places. The piece *Vltava* by the Czech composer Smetana describes a river. Rachmaninov's *Isle of the Dead* describes a bleak and desolate island. Vivaldi famously describes the seasons. Maxwell Davies in his piece *Highland Wedding* describes a drunken party with a dawn hangover. The music in *The Lord of the Rings* by Howard Shore is highly descriptive.

Students are told that in the piece – or pieces – of music they are about to hear the composer is trying to describe something specific. As they listen to the music they should write down whatever they 'hear' in the music.

When they have finished they can read out what they have written (or show it to their classmates). The teacher can then say what the music was intended to describe.

This activity can be made more specific by the teacher asking for example: 'What animal is the music describing?' (Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals* is useful for this.) 'What kind of a person is the composer writing about?' (e.g. Juliet in Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*).

'How do you think the composer was feeling when he or she was composing this?' (The last movement of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* symphony is useful for this.)



Film scores – in this activity students listen to a piece of music and then create the opening scenes for a film that the music suggests to them – they should describe the scenes before the dialogue starts. They can write in note form if they wish.

Film music can be used for this, but so too can any piece of evocative music such as the third movement from Debussy's string quartet, slow saxophone music, solo violin or cello music by Bach, or rock, trance, or folk music, for example.

Once again, when students have written the scene they imagined, they can compare what they have written with their classmates.



How does it make me feel? – teachers can play students musical excerpts and get them to write their reactions as they listen. They can be given prompts which will help them to do this, such as: 'What colour do you think the music is?' 'Where would you most like to hear it, and who would you like to have with you when you do?'



Musical stories – students can write stories on the basis of music they listen to. If the music conveys a strong atmosphere it will often spark the students' creativity and almost 'tell' them what to write.

One way of showing students this in an amusing way is for the teacher to dictate the first line of a story (e.g. *He turned and looked at her*). Students are told that they should continue the story when the music starts. 'The music will tell you what to write.' Students then hear a piece of music which is particularly nostalgic, or sad, or frenetic, for example.

The teacher tells students to turn their pieces of paper over and then dictates the same sentence again. Once again students are told to write the story based on some music, but this time a contrasting piece of music is played.

When all students have written their two stories, they show them to colleagues who then read out one of the stories. The class have to decide which bit of music it was written to.

Teachers should use musical activities sparingly, for two reasons. First, the activities mentioned here work best when they are unusual – something which gives them their special quality and which, as a result, allows them to provoke students' creativity. Second, not all students can respond immediately to music.

We need to be careful, also, not to play too long a piece of music. Students may well get something out of an excerpt which lasts for between two and three minutes but they may well lose interest in an excerpt which goes on for much longer than that.

Using pictures

Just as music can provoke creativity in students – especially those who are particularly responsive to auditory stimuli – so too pictures work really well as spurs to written production.

Pictures are often used to present situations for grammar and vocabulary work. But their ability to transport students to different worlds means that they can also be used to incite students to creative flights of fancy. As with music, you don't need to speak the language of pictures in order to be stimulated by them.

Among the many ways of using pictures for writing are the following:



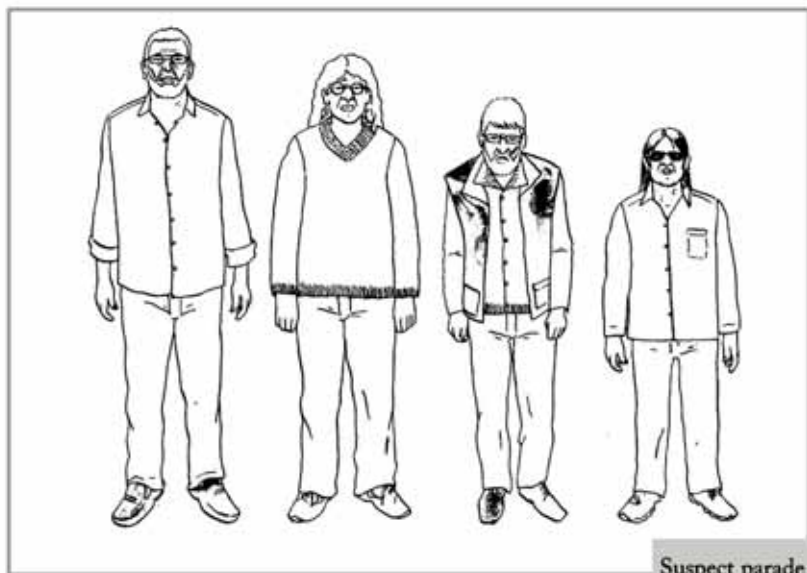
Describing pictures – one way of getting students to write about pictures is simply to ask them to write a description of one. If you give them a complex picture and a time limit, they have to write quickly to get down as much information as they can.

We can make the activity more engaging by asking students to write a description for someone who is unable to see the picture, either because they cannot get to see it or, perhaps, because they are blind.

When getting students to describe pictures we need to be sure they have the vocabulary necessary for the task.



Suspects and objects – a variation on picture description is to give students a variety of pictures and ask them to write about only one of them. Students could be shown the pictures of the people below, for example, and they have to write a description of one of them:



Suspect parade

When they have written their descriptions, the pictures are put up on the board. The students then give their description to another student who has to identify which picture is being described and, perhaps, stick the description under the correct picture.

The same activity can be used with any pictures or photographs that are similar to each other. Students can write descriptions of (pictures of) recovered stolen objects, for example. The class has to match the descriptions with the objects.



Write the postcard – we can give students postcard scenes and then ask them to write the postcard which they would expect to write to an English-speaking friend from such a location.

Any holiday picture can be used for this activity. For example, we might show students photos of people in holiday locations and then ask them to write the postcard which those people would write.



Portraits – whether students are actually looking at portraits in a gallery or see reproductions of them in a book or on the Internet, these can be used for a number of stimulating writing tasks. Students can write a letter to a portrait, asking the character questions about his or her life and explaining why they are writing to them. Here are two portraits (from the eighteenth and twenty-first centuries) which can be used in this way:



The teacher will tell the students to study the portrait and think about the person they see there. Do they look happy or sad, extrovert or introvert? When they have studied the portrait they will know what kind of letter they want to write.

Other students can write back as if they were the character. As with the original letter, they can get the clues they need by studying the subject's face, expression, clothes, and any actions they are doing.

We can also ask students to write a 'day in the life' diary of one of the characters. They can imagine what someone who looks like that does for a living and how they might spend their day.

These activities can be done with photographs too, of course, provided that they go some way to capturing the personality of the subject in the same way that good painted portraits do.



Story tasks – pictures are really useful ways to prompt students into writing stories. There are a number of different tasks which students can be asked to undertake. Four which work well are the following:

- for dramatic pictures (such as a man crossing a canyon on a tightrope, people in a street protest, or someone who has come face-to-face with a wild animal) students can be asked to write what happened next.
- students can be given a series of pictures of random objects (an aeroplane, a bicycle, a pack of cards, a dog, a fireplace, etc.) and told to choose four of them, and write a story which connects them.
- students can be given a series of pictures in sequence which tell a story. They have to write the story which the pictures tell.
- students can be given a picture and a headline or caption and asked to write a story which makes sense of the picture and the words.

Writing poems

Many teachers have students write poems because 'poetry' allows students to express themselves in a way that no other genre does. Something really meaningful and powerful can be written in a much shorter space and time than a 'report', 'narrative', or 'essay' might take. Poetry writing also allows students to play with new vocabulary in a way that other genres do not.

Poetry-writing activities can be immensely satisfying for students precisely because they can express themselves at a much deeper level than in other writing activities, even where the poem is based on a pre-established pattern of some kind. Pre-established patterns are often necessary because without them some students will complain of having nothing to say or write. But just as with sentence-writing activities, the existence of a pattern gives them security within which to be creative.

The following activities show how pre-established patterns can be used to help students write poetry:



Acrostic poems/alphabet poems – an acrostic poem is one where the first letters of each line, when read downwards, form a word, e.g.

Blue sea, sunshine on waves
Easy days
Afternoons of heat and playfulness
Charm of summer, anger of the storm
Home, and the itch of sand

Students can be given any number of words to write acrostic poems for, such as *love*, *mother*, *school*, *football*, or *freedom*. If necessary the

teacher can further circumscribe the activity by asking for the same grammatical pattern to be followed each time, e.g. adjective + noun.

The same technique can be applied to the alphabet with just about any topic. At low levels, students might just be asked to come up with one word for each letter. The topic could be anything from 'animals', 'things in the house', or 'people I admire', as here:

A actors
B business women
C chemists
etc.

At higher levels, students could be asked to write a 'my favourite things' alphabet poem with the pattern *A is for ... that ...*, like this one:

A is for armchairs that make me comfortable
B is for butter that I spread on my bread
C is for children that laugh
etc.

Other 'list'-type poems include giving students a list of colours and they then have to write sentences like *Red is the sun sinking, Blue is the morning sea ...*

Although such student productions are unlikely to achieve the status of high art, nevertheless, they allow students to use language in a playful and different way.



Stem/frame poems – many teachers give students sentence or phrase stems or frames for them to complete and which, when completed, make something that is almost a poem. We can give students a frame like this:

I like because
I like because
I like because
But I hate because

Students choose a topic, say 'fruit', and then have to complete the stems to make something like this:

I like apples because they keep the doctor away.
 I like oranges because they taste fresh.
 I like pineapples because they look interesting.
 But I hate bananas because they're yellow.

Other stems might be *I think, I believe, I wish, I hope*, or indeed anything that will encourage students to express their thoughts and feelings.



Metaphor generators – one of the reasons why poems are attractive to students is that they allow them to write about things using metaphor – instead of always having to describe things literally. However, using language metaphorically in English is a significant challenge for any student whether or not they are native speakers.

Some time ago a series of poetry workshops with 9–11 year olds in a Cambridge primary school produced poetry such as the following:

To Philip

You are creamy garlic cheese
 Wind as it rushes in the trees.
 You are an untidy desk with paper spilling on the floor
 A friendly train, old and dirty
 Boots in a shade of green, torn at the edges.
 You're a door that needs oiling
 In a musty shade of blue.
 You are home-baked bread
 A long haired monkey swinging in the trees
 An October morning when grass is crisp.

Tanya (aged 9)

From *Poets Live in Cambridge* edited
 by H Cook and Y Bradbury

This poem was produced in line with specific instructions. The children were first asked to think of someone they loved/liked and to write that person's name at the top of the page. They were then told to start the first line with the word *You* and write about their person as if they were a kind of food (hence the line *You are creamy garlic cheese*). Next they had to write about the person as if they were a kind of weather. In subsequent lines participants had to write about their person as if they were a kind of furniture, a kind of transport, a kind of clothing, etc.

The point about this kind of activity is that students end up with something which can often be extremely meaningful. By being given a framework for the poem, it is probable that they will be able to

produce such poems fairly quickly, and then exhibit their work both for their own pleasure and that of their classmates and the people they have written about.

Although the activity being described here was used with primary school students, it can be used with students of all ages and all levels to great effect.



Model poems – in her book *Writing*, Tricia Hedge describes how young Chinese poets frequently chose to emulate their elders by writing about the same themes and/or using the same poetic forms. Writers have always imitated and borrowed from each other, of course, and our students can do the same if we or they can find an appropriate poem for them to work with. Roger McGough's poem *In two minds* – although only suitable for relatively advanced students – provides an example of such a model:

In two minds
 What I love about night
 is the silent certainty of its stars
 What I hate about stars
 is the overwhelming swank of their names
 What I love about names
 is that every complete stranger has one
 What I hate about one
 is the numerical power it holds over its followers
 What I love about followers
 is the unseemly jostle to fill the footsteps
 What I hate about footsteps
 is the way they gang up in the darkness
 What I love about darkness
 is the soft sighing of its secrets
 What I hate about secrets
 is the excitement they pack into their short lives
 What I love about lives
 is the variety cut from the same pattern
 What I hate about pattern
 is its dull insistence on conformity
 What I love about conformity
 is the seed of rebelliousness within
 What I hate about within
 is the absence of landscape, the feel of the weather
 What I love about the weather
 is its refusal to stay in at night
 What I hate about night
 is the silver certainty of its stars

From *Everyday Eclipses* by Roger McGough

Because this poem follows a rigorous scheme (the alternation of *love* and *hate*, the last word of each couplet becoming the topic of the next, and the last topic being the same as the first but after *hate* rather than *love*), students quickly pick up the design when you first read them this poem. Although they may not understand all the phrases (*overwhelming swank of their names*), they soon know which verb is coming next and what will follow *love about ...* or *hate about ...*. They can then write their own versions on any topic they choose following the same basic scheme.

All the poetry activities in this section have been designed for fairly instant writing. The students quickly understand a model and then follow it by producing similarly formed writing of their own. Poetry does not have to be this 'formulaic', however, and in Chapter 6 we will be looking at longer poetry-writing sequences which offer students greater freedom for creativity.

Collaborative writing

The car designer Sir Alec Issigonis is credited as the originator of the phrase 'a camel is a horse designed by a committee', and it may well be that in the world of design too many people do, indeed, get in the way of sensible decision making. Yet group activities in a language classroom have a very different flavour. Successful collaborative writing allows students to learn from each other. It gives each member of the collaboration access to others' minds and knowledge, and it imbues the task with a sense of shared goals which can be very motivating. And in the end, although the collaborators may have to share whatever glory is going (rather than keep it for themselves individually), still, any less-than-successful outcome is also shared so that individuals are not held solely responsible for any shortcomings in what they produce. For these reasons **collaborative writing**, as exemplified in the following activities, has the power to foster the writing habit in a unique way.

Using the board

One way of making collaborative writing successful is to have students write on the board. This gets them out of their chairs; it is especially appropriate for those who respond well to kinaesthetic stimuli. It also allows everyone to see what is going on. Two activities show how the board can be used in this way:



Sentence by sentence – in the activity on page 37 we saw how students built up a letter in reply to an invitation on the board, sentence by sentence. Each time a new student goes up to the board in such activities, the rest of the class (or the group that student represents) can help by offering suggestions, corrections, or alternatives.

This kind of writing activity has the great advantage of creating a clear focus for everyone in the room, and can create a feeling of shared achievement.



Dictogloss – in his book *How to Teach Grammar*, Scott Thornbury describes a procedure called **dictogloss**, in which students re-create a text or story that the teacher reads to them. One purpose of the activity is to focus the students' attention on specific items of language by getting them to analyse the difference between their written recreations and the original which they have heard.

Dictogloss is useful for vocabulary acquisition too in very much the same way. And on top of that it is especially appropriate for building the writing habit.

In the following example the teacher uses their own words to tell students the story of a boy called Jesse Arbogast who was attacked by a shark. The first time they hear the story students are told just to listen and not to make notes. The teacher uses whatever language, mime, or gesture necessary to ensure that the students understand the main facts of the story.

In pairs, the students now discuss what they have heard and try to establish the main facts of the story. Once this has been done the teacher tells them that they are going to hear the story again, and that this time they should make notes – although they are advised not to try and write down too much. Now they will be able to concentrate not only on the facts, but also the language. This is what the students hear:

How Jesse got his arm back

Eight-year-old Jesse Arbogast was playing in the sea late one evening in July 2001 when a 7-foot bull shark attacked him and tore off his arm. Jesse's uncle leapt into the sea and dragged the boy to shore. The boy was not breathing. His aunt gave him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation while his uncle rang the emergency services. Pretty soon, a helicopter arrived and flew the boy to hospital. It was a much quicker journey than the journey by road.

Jesse's uncle, Vance Folsenzier, ran back into the sea and found the shark that had attacked his nephew. He picked the shark up and threw it onto the beach. A ranger shot the fish four times and although this did not kill it, the shark's jaws relaxed so that they could open them, and reach down into its stomach, and pull out the boy's arm.

At the Baptist Hospital in Pensacola a plastic surgeon, Dr Ian Rogers, spent eleven hours reattaching Jesse's arm. 'It was a complicated operation,' he said, 'but we were lucky. If the arm hadn't been recovered in time, we wouldn't have been able to do the operation at all. What I mean is that if they hadn't found the shark, well then we wouldn't have had a chance.'

According to local park ranger Jack Tomosvic, shark attacks are not that common. 'Jesse was just unlucky,' he says, 'evening is the shark's feeding time. And Jesse wasn't in a lifeguard area. This would never have happened if he had been in a designated swimming area.'

When reporters asked Jesse's uncle how he had had the courage to fight a shark, he replied, 'I was mad and you do some strange things when you're mad.'

Students once more discuss in pairs what they have heard and then, for the last time, the teacher reads exactly the same text again, while the students make more notes.

The class is now divided, randomly, into groups of 3 or 4. Each group is given marker pens and rolls of paper. Their only task is to recreate the story in writing – as far as possible using the words and language they have heard. The only help the teacher needs to give them is to write some names (*Jesse Arbogast*, *Vance Folsenzier*, etc.) up on the board.

When the groups have finished, their versions can be stuck up on the board or the walls. Here are two versions that were written by students (in a significantly mixed ability group) doing this activity:

How Jesse got his arm back

There was an 8-year boy named Jesse Arbogast. In July 2001, he was playing on the beach with his uncle's family in Florida. He paddled in the sea, suddenly the shark ^{attacked} ~~attacked~~ him and ^{tore off} ~~took~~ his arm.

His uncle ^{dragged} ~~dragged~~ him to the shore, meanwhile the boy was ^{not} ~~couldn't~~ breathing. His ~~an~~ aunt gave him CPR, and called 911. Luckily, there ~~is~~ was a ~~hand~~ helicopter near ~~their~~ ~~are~~ this area. Before Jesse went to hospital, The ranger ~~he~~ shot the shark and the mad uncle took the shark and ~~p~~ threw it on the beach, opened its mouth, reached ~~it~~ to the stomach, and took Jesse's arm.

The helicopter took them to the Pensacola Hospital. There ^{was} ~~were~~ an 11 hours operation, they ~~a~~ reattached Jesse's arm. He was a very lucky boy.

According to the ~~n~~ local news "Jack Tomosvic" evening is shark's ~~e~~ feeding time, and the area where Jesse went is not designated swimming area. Jesse's uncle said "I was mad. When you were mad, you do strange things."

Students' versions of *Jesse's story*
Group A

How Jesse got his arm back

In July 2001 a boy named Jesse was attacked by a bull shark at the beach while he was paddling. The shark tore off his arm. When his uncle and aunt found him, he was not breathing at all. His aunt gave him the mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Luckily, there was a helicopter hovering around, and it came along as soon as the crew heard the news. The boy was sent to the Pensacola Hospital right away. And his uncle was so mad that he went back to the beach and saw the shark that attacked his nephew, he picked it up and threw it onto the beach. The ranger came and shot the shark 4 times. And the shark's mouth was relaxed. They opened its mouth, ~~and~~ reached down the stomach and pull out the boy's arm. The plastic surgeon Ian Rogers, spent 11 hours reattaching his arm. The surgery was complicated but successful. The operation wouldn't have been successful if his arm hadn't been recovered in time. One of the local park rangers said, evening is the shark's feeding time, and Jesse wasn't at the designated swimming area at that time. His uncle said, "I was so mad. And you do strange things when you are mad."

Students' versions of *Jesse's story*
Group B

The students are then shown the original 'Jesse's story', which they had heard read to them, and are asked to amend what they have written.

In trying to write a text collaboratively the students have been provoked into using what they have heard, and any other language they know, to help write the story. At the end of the activity they have something to display and look at, they can compare different versions, and then they have an opportunity to compare what they have written with a correct version.

Writing in groups and pairs

There are many activities which are suitable for students writing in pairs and groups. Some of them depend on a **scribe** to write the final version of the piece, while some of them involve every single person writing their own version of the text.

The advantage of having a scribe is that the other students have more chance to concentrate on the language, think about what is being written, and evaluate it in a more objective way, perhaps, than they judge their own individual efforts. The disadvantages are that not everyone is getting actual writing practice, and the scribe may make little contribution to the construction of the text but rather act only as a secretary taking dictation. One way round these problems is for the teacher to make sure that different students take on the scribe role in the course of an activity. However, the main objective of writing activities done in groups or pairs is to involve everyone in the creation of written text, whoever does the actual writing.

Although all of these activities are suitable for use with paper and pen, they can also be done at a computer with students crowded around a screen. This can be particularly motivating, because correction can be instant through the use of a grammar and/or a spell-check and because any problems with hard-to-read handwriting are removed.



Rewriting (and expanding) sentences – in one sentence-rewriting activity, students are presented with a stereotypical statement and asked to amend it to reflect the opinions of the group. This provokes discussion not only about the topic but also about how to write a consensus opinion appropriately.

The teacher (with the class) has chosen a topic for the students to consider. The students are then presented with some examples of stereotypical statements, like these on the topic of gender differences:

Boys like football.
Girls like shopping.

They have to rewrite the sentences so that they accurately reflect the views of the group. One group might think, for example, that while some boys are crazy about football others are considerably less interested. They might want to say that lots of girls like football as well, or that many boys feel pressured to like football even if, in reality, they are not that interested. Another sentence-rewriting activity is to take a sentence and put far more detail into it. For example, we can give students a short sentence like this:

The woman saw the man.

The students then have to expand the sentence with as many words as possible, e.g.

When the pale, red-headed woman, who had arrived not less than an hour earlier than the time they had agreed on the night before, saw the tall, bearded man leaning unhappily against a poster advertising a new perfume which had just been launched onto the market, she knew at once that ...

But the final elongated sentences have to make sense and be reasonably natural. In other words, a list of ten adjectives before a noun is, except in highly exceptional circumstances, not natural English.

This activity can be made competitive by making the winning pair or group the one which produces the most words with the fewest mistakes.

The sentences which the students produce in both these activities will obviously depend upon the level they are writing at. But in both cases the mixture of discussion ('What do we think about the topic?' in the first activity; 'How can we add more words and clauses?' in the second) and written execution helps students build good writing habits.



First lines, last lines – just as pictures can be used to provoke story writing, so first and last lines of possible stories can also be used to get students' imaginations going.

Students can be given either the first line of a story (e.g. *When she looked out of the window she saw a red car parked across the street*) or the last line (e.g. *He told himself that he would never go to the cinema by himself again*). They then have to write a story to include one or the other. They discuss the situation in their pairs or groups and create a story which follows on from the first line or ends with the last line. A scribe writes the story they come up with.

This activity needn't be confined to lines, however. We can give students opening and closing paragraphs and ask them to write the middle portion of a story. We can tell a story up to a certain point and then have them develop the story from that point.

A common group-writing activity which has all the students writing at the same time is the **story circle**. This starts with all the students in a group sitting in a circle. Each student has a blank sheet of paper in front of them. The teacher dictates a sentence (for example, 'Once upon a time a beautiful princess lived in a castle by a river', if the teacher and students had been talking about fairy stories and legends). They all write it at the top of their piece of paper. Each student is told to write the next sentence of the story. Once this has been done, they all pass their piece of paper to the left and each student writes the next sentence of the story they now have in front of them (which is different from the one they started with). The papers are then passed

one place to the left again. Each student writes the next sentence of the story in front of them.

This procedure continues until each student has their original piece of paper in front of them. They are then told to write the last line of the story.

Here is one such story produced by a group from a multilingual, lower intermediate class (the participating students were Chinese, Turkish, Mexican, Spanish, and Korean):

Once ^{upon} a time a beautif ^{cess} prinses ~~leat~~ lived in a ~~cas~~ castle by a river.

She was very clever. She always read and studied.

However she has~~n't~~ seen the gergous nature around her, where she was living, she had an stem~~o~~ther that he hate her very much. She had a lovely dog, it's was very loyalty. One day, her stepmother bought a basket of red apples from the local market.

The stepmother putted poison in apples.

Her dog ~~seen~~ saw ~~of this the~~ what the stepmother do, ~~u~~ so, when the stepmother ~~give~~ gave the apple to her, her dog jumped and ~~este~~ ate the apple. then, the dog ~~u~~ died.

Student-generated fairy story

This story is full of language mistakes (we will look at ways of using these mistakes on page 118 in Chapter 7) and as a story it has its limitations, as it was produced under considerable time pressure. But it made the rest of the class laugh when they heard it and, more importantly, it made writing enjoyable. Despite problems of expression, the participants had produced something in writing without much preparation and they had taken pleasure in doing it.



Directions, rules, instructions – a really useful activity is to ask students to write 'instructional' text for others to follow. This could take the form of writing directions to a place (how to get to their school from the station or the airport, for example).

Students can be asked, in groups, to write the four (or five, or six) principal rules of a game they like and know how to play. They are told that the rules must be as clear as they can make them so that there is no uncertainty about what is meant (though asking people to provide

a clear statement of the current off-side rule in football would provide a significant challenge to anyone however good their language was!).

Groups can be asked to write instructions for an activity (anything from a dance, to assembling a piece of furniture) or computer process (how to download a document, how to use a particular software program). If possible, other groups in the class then have to follow the instructions carefully to see if they work.

This kind of writing is clearly not suitable for beginners. However, at intermediate levels and above it forces students to think carefully about what to write and in what order. Teachers may want to offer appropriate vocabulary either before the activity starts or by going round the groups while they are writing.



Story reconstruction – we can enhance the value of the story activities which involve a sequence of pictures (described on page 69) by adding a jigsaw element. This means that each student is given a different piece of a 'jigsaw' and, by sharing what they have seen or heard, they have to reassemble the bits into a coherent whole.

A classic use of jigsaw techniques is the story reconstruction activity. Here students are divided into, say, four groups (A, B, C, and D). Each group is given one of this set of pictures which they have to talk about and memorise as many details of as possible:



The pictures are then taken away. Students are now regrouped so that each new group has a student from the original groups A, B, C, and D.

In their new groups students have to work out a sequence for the four pictures and then create a written text which tells the story of that sequence.

This activity works well. It provokes a lot of discussion which, in turn, gets students to write with enthusiasm.

It is worth pointing out that many of the earlier activities in this chapter could also be worked on collaboratively with all the advantages we have suggested for such an approach. Nevertheless we will not want all writing tasks to be collaborative. Individual students need individual space sometimes.

Writing to each other

A further way of provoking student engagement with writing is to get students to write to each other in class time. They can also correspond with people outside the class. Some writing, when done in this way, becomes genuinely communicative and has a real purpose – even if it only gets going when a teacher sets the process in motion.

At its most basic level, such writing involves students writing notes to each other. The teacher can ask individual students to write a question to another student in the class. This can be anything from *Where are you from?* to *What do you find most difficult about learning English?* The note is addressed to another student and the teacher delivers it.

Teachers have been using this kind of note-writing for years as a way of encouraging lower-level students to put words down on paper. But writing to each other can go a lot further than this.



Pen pals, e-mails, and live chat – teachers have always encouraged students to correspond with pen pals from different towns or countries. This is significantly easier and more immediate with e-mail exchanges between ‘key pals’ or ‘mouse pals’.

Some teachers get in touch with classes from a school in a different country and, with their foreign colleagues, instigate initial exchanges to get the ball rolling. Teachers in Japan, for example, might get their English students to communicate with students of English in Colombia. They could start the process by getting their students to think of five questions about Colombia (maybe addressing stereotypes) that they would like to know the answers to. The Colombian students could do the same with questions about Japan. Alternatively, they could write e-mails about their lives or their families to start with.

Setting up a ‘key pal’ exchange system does not guarantee its success. Whereas one or two students may really get the bug and continue to mail their opposite numbers, others will get bored by the whole thing – unless, that is, the teacher monitors the procedure and helps with suggestions, comments, and encouragement.

The ‘key pal’ system does need computer access, of course. But if necessary we can still simulate e-mail exchanges on paper, using the same basic technique as the exchange of notes that we started this section with. On page 82 there is an example of a simulated e-mail exchange (between two intermediate students) using a form developed by the teacher John Hughes.

As with the fairy story earlier, the English in the simulated e-mails may not be especially correct, but the students participated with enthusiasm and found writing a congenial activity.

E-mail dialogue sheet

TO: Lin
FROM: Carolina
SUBJECT: Weekend plans

Hi Lin! How R U ? I hope good. I write you because me and my friends are going to london this saturday to see a play, come with us if you want, answer me. see you then.
wbw Carolina.

TO: Carolina
FROM: Lin
SUBJECT: The time of play

Hi Carolina,
I'm fine. I like to attend your inviting but can you tell me the time of this play I can arrange my schedule.
Bye
Lin

TO: Lin
FROM: Carolina
SUBJECT: Time play

Lin, there are two functions if we want to see "lion king" it's at 3 o'clock, and if we want to see "mama mia" it's at 4 o'clock.
please tell me which one you like to see. I wait for your answer. Bye, Cas

TO: Carolina
FROM: Lin
SUBJECT: where and when we meet

Carolina,
The time of "lion king" is suited for my schedule.
where and when will we meet?
Lin

A simulated e-mail exchange
between intermediate students

A logical extension of e-mail exchanges is the live chat environment, where students are talking to each other in real time and writing becomes more and more like a conversation. Here students may well be extremely motivated to key in their contributions. There is still something exciting about being in communication with people who are any number of miles away. The fact that words appear on the screen (which all participants can see) lends this activity an immediate excitement that even a two-way phone call may not have.

Ken Hyland quotes an example of two Hong Kong students chatting online; here is an example of their interactions:

Jj: hi, i just go and check e-mail and after that i will go to sleep, how about u?
 Kk: so late wor!!!!? i'm working ar!!
 Jj: o ic in a hurry?
 Kk: no really!! u ?!
 Jj: just to check if there is any e-mail to me
 Kk: oic why so late online?! study late?! when 's ur lesson tom ar?! how's ur life (mum & sister not here wor) ?!
 Jj: 11:30, but have hw to work tom morning
 Kk: oic till when ar?!
 Jj: 4:30
 Kk: oh. . . so long . . . time?!
 Jj: 2 hrs is vacant
 Kk: oic u remember to take mobile with battery wor!!! maybe i'll call u gar!!!
 Jj: Yes ar, to bring my mobile phone ma
 Kk: fine
 Jj: i offline la ,bb :-)

Two students chatting online

This extract shows both the advantages and the limitations of online chatting. It is clearly done with enthusiasm and immediacy – two of the characteristics we have identified for a successful building of a writing habit – but it also uses a ‘chat’ register (with all its attendant abbreviations and informalities) as well as mixing English with Cantonese and written abbreviations to create, in Ken Hyland’s words, ‘a new hybrid form of discourse’. Students need, as we have said, to be aware of when and where this kind of written communication is appropriate and when it is not.



Letters backwards and forwards – we can move on from the kinds of notes and e-mails we have been looking at by getting students to write letters to each other – and reply to letters too. We have already mentioned the popular ‘agony column’ activity (see page 40), but other letters are possible too. Students could read an article and then write a letter to an imaginary newspaper giving their opinion. The letters are

then given to different classmates who each have to write to the same imaginary newspaper either agreeing or disagreeing with the letters in front of them. When the letters have been completed, the teacher can display them on the class noticeboard or, better still, the teacher and the students together, using a computer (and if possible, a page-making program), can create their own mocked-up letters page.

Such invented-purpose tasks can be extremely motivating since they give students a reason, however unreal this may appear to be, to write to each other. Just as role-playing can have immense benefits for some students in the development of their oral competence (and give them good rehearsal practice for real-life communication), so too this kind of written role-play can have the same effect.

Any kind of letter where a reply might be expected can be used in this way. A letter of enquiry can be answered by a student who has some information (perhaps provided by the coursebook or the teacher) to send back. A letter of complaint can be answered by someone trying to be emollient (if they want).

Getting students to communicate with each other in writing is one way of building the writing habit in a motivating and realistic way.

What to do with 'habit- building' writing

Although we will deal with responses to student writing in detail in Chapter 7, we should make some comments here about what teachers can do with the results of 'habit-building' writing.

We have stressed that one of the purposes for the writing activities we have been looking at in this chapter is to give students engaging writing tasks that will help them become fluent writers. We have mentioned the benefit that successful production has for students' confidence as writers. And we have seen how students enjoy their own and each other's efforts in examples like the fairy story on page 79 and the poetry activities on pages 69–73.

One answer, therefore, to what we should do with the results of this kind of writing is to let students enjoy them. Let them read and see each other's work; encourage them to read out what they have done or let them put it up on a class website, for example.

Yet, as we have seen, the kind of writing fluency we have been encouraging may well bring mistakes with it. We may not be keen for our students to show work that has such mistakes (for their sake). And because quickly produced work like this presents ideal opportunities for students to have a go with the language at their disposal, it would be silly not to engage in some form of feedback which focused on more formal aspects of grammar and written style.

What teachers need to be able to do, therefore, is help students enjoy their work and take pride in it and, at the same time, use what they have produced for correction without destroying the positive atmosphere which the tasks, hopefully, have created. It is this balance between appropriate acknowledgement and language improvement which we will consider in detail in Chapter 7.

Conclusions

In this chapter we have:

- discussed the desirability of building the writing habit, especially for those who are unused to writing and fear they cannot do it.
- shown how by choosing the right tasks (bearing in mind the need for engagement) students will be keen to write.
- talked about the need to help students to have 'something to say' by giving appropriate task information, necessary language, and, on occasions, patterns and schemes to follow.
- discussed the need to make writing worthwhile – through sharing and displaying written work in some way.
- detailed a number of activities for instant writing including sentence writing, using music, pictures, and poems.
- looked at examples of collaborative writing, stressing the beneficial effects of students working together to produce written text, with or without a scribe.
- looked at ways in which we can get students to write to each other whether by passing notes, by e-mail, in live chat, or by writing simulated letters.
- said that teachers need to give positive acknowledgement as well as more formal language feedback.

Looking ahead

- In the next chapter we will look at writing tasks which involve studying genre and which concentrate more fundamentally on the writing process itself.
- In Chapter 7 we will look in detail at the options available to teachers who want to respond to students' work in a number of different ways.
- The final chapter will look at other uses for writing, including journal keeping.

LECTURE 34

SYLLABUS DESIGN AND LESSON PLANNING FOR L2 WRITING

Topics	Lecture Name	Topics	Books	Pages
184	Syllabus Design and Lesson Planning for L2 Writing	Introduction Syllabus Design and Lesson Planning for L2 Writing	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 72-74
185		Understanding the Learner Population	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 74-87
186		Setting and Meeting Goals for L2 Writing	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 87-90

187		Nuts and Bolts of L2 Writing Syllabus	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge. pp. 91-96
188		Lesson Planning: Practices and Procedures	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge. pp. 97-98
189		Mechanics of Lesson Planning	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge. pp. 99-102

Chapter 3

Syllabus Design and Lesson Planning in ESL Composition Instruction

Questions for Reflection

- *Recalling your experiences as a student, think about syllabi presented in courses you have taken. What made the useful syllabi useful? What was missing from the weaker ones? What elements do you consider to be essential in a course syllabus? Why?*
- *In what ways should the design of a writing course accommodate students' sociocultural backgrounds and educational needs? The requirements and philosophy of the educational institution?*
- *What features do you think makes the planning for a writing course distinct from that for other types of courses? How are composition courses like or unlike other courses in terms of how they are structured?*
- *In your view, what are the essential components of a successful lesson in a composition course? What activities should form the basis of such a lesson? How should they be sequenced? What skills should be practiced, and why?*
- *On the basis of your experience as a student and as a teacher (if applicable), identify the hallmarks of effective classroom instruction and management.*

The ESL/EFL writing class is perhaps best seen as a workshop for students to learn to produce academic essays through mastering techniques for getting started and generating ideas . . . drafting papers which they will anticipate revising, and learning to utilize feedback provided by the teacher and other students in the class to improve the writing assignment at hand. The goal of every course should be individual student progress in writing proficiency, and the goal of the total curriculum should be that student writers learn to become informed and independent readers of their own texts with the ability to create, revise, and reshape papers to meet the needs of whatever writing tasks they are assigned. (Kroll, 2001, p. 223)

SYLLABUS DEVELOPMENT: PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES

In keeping with the principles so clearly outlined by Kroll (2001) in the preceding excerpt, this chapter outlines a concrete yet flexible approach to planning instruction in ESL composition courses and provides tools for developing effective lessons. Rather than address global principles concerning the design of entire curricula, we concentrate chiefly on the day-to-day planning tasks of writing teachers: constructing course syllabi, sequencing components of a writing cycle, and designing lessons.¹ In the first section, we address the needs assessment process in detail, because understanding the unique characteristics of ESL writers is essential to shaping effective L2 composition instruction.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT: A TOOL FOR SYLLABUS DESIGN

In broad terms, needs assessment consists of “procedures for identifying and validating needs, and establishing priorities among them” (Pratt, 1980, p. 79). Because of the particular expertise required to teach writing to non-native speakers (NNSs) of English, we need a systematic way of inquiring into the diverse background features, skills, schemata, and expectations of ESL writers so we can take this information into account when planning instruction (Benesch, 1996; Johns & Price-Machado, 2001; Spack, 1997b). Generally, some of this information (e.g., institution type, students’ target disciplines, their immigration status) is obvious to teachers and requires no data collection.

Specific demographic and proficiency-related characteristics of the learner population, however, may be available only by eliciting specific information directly from the students themselves and perhaps from institutional authorities.

Although other effective needs analysis tools exist (Brown, 1995; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Graves, 2000; Reid, 1995a), we concentrate in this chapter on those that are easy to construct, practical to administer, and simple to analyze in the context of an individual program or course: written questionnaires, informal interviews, and ongoing observation. Instead of presenting a static “one-size-fits-all” survey or interview format, we offer the variables in Fig. 3.1 and the explanations that follow as elements to consider in constructing needs analysis instruments tailored to your learner population, institutional setting, and teaching style.

Understanding the Learner Population

Figure 3.1 provides a general starting point for identifying students’ instructional requirements by requesting information about factors known to influence the effectiveness of L2 composition instruction. This information should ultimately be used to design course syllabi and classroom tasks.

Institution Type. For the same reasons that we should not make pedagogical decisions without considering the diversity of learners in our classrooms, we should be mindful of the types of students described in the research literature (Browning, 1996; Graves, 2000; Nieto, 2002; Silva, 1993). One of the most obvious characteristics to consider is the type of institution in which students receive their English-language instruction. We can generally assume, for example, that college- and university-level ESL writers have had more experience with English and have developed more extensive academic literacy skills than high school ESL writers, simply by virtue of the length of their exposure to the language through formal schooling. Likewise, postsecondary students, by virtue of having elected to continue their studies beyond compulsory secondary education, may have varied educational and career goals in mind.

Even within postsecondary institutions, we also find diverse types of students. Students at Japanese universities enrolled in EFL writing courses, for instance, may have received little or no preparation as writers of English, despite continuous

Institution Type	
☐	Secondary school
☐	Community college
☐	College- or university-based intensive ESL/EFL program
☐	Four-year college
☐	Lower division (freshman/sophomore)
☐	Upper division (junior/senior)
☐	Comprehensive research university
☐	Lower division (freshman/sophomore)
☐	Upper division (junior/senior)
☐	Graduate degree/diploma
☐	Other
Prior L1-Medium Educational Experience	
☐	None
☐	Primary/elementary school
☐	Secondary/high school
☐	Adult school
☐	Vocational/technical/trade school
☐	Community college degree/diploma
☐	College/university degree/diploma
☐	Graduate degree/diploma
☐	Other (e.g., Nondegree):
Prior English-Medium Educational Experience	
☐	None
☐	Primary/elementary school
☐	Secondary/high school
☐	Adult school
☐	Vocational/technical/trade school
☐	Community college degree
☐	College/university degree
☐	Graduate degree/diploma
☐	Other:
L1 Literacy Skills*	
	Reading proficiency: ☐ High ☐ Mid ☐ Low
	Writing proficiency: ☐ High ☐ Mid ☐ Low
English Language Proficiency and Literacy*	
	ESL/EFL proficiency: ☐ High ☐ Mid ☐ Low
	Reading proficiency: ☐ High ☐ Mid ☐ Low
	Writing proficiency: ☐ High ☐ Mid ☐ Low
Immigration Status	
(For students in anglophone settings)	
☐	Immigrant/permanent resident
☐	International (student visa holder)
Traditional/Nontraditional Status	
(Check one, if applicable)	
☐	Traditional (no interruption in secondary or postsecondary education)
☐	Nontraditional/returning (one or more interruptions in secondary or postsecondary education)

* These crude proficiency ratings are presented only for illustrative purposes. As we suggested in chapter 2, responsible treatment of learners' literacy skills requires attention to a wide range of influential sociocognitive and educational variables.

FIG. 3.1. Inventory of institutional and educational variables.

study of English throughout secondary school. Meanwhile, other Japanese students, particularly those who have studied in English-medium institutions at home or abroad, may enter university EFL writing courses with rather extensive experience as writers of English. In the North American context, high schools and community colleges often serve a high proportion of immigrant students, depending on geographic location. In contrast, four-year colleges and research universities may attract a high proportion of international students. Many North American four-year and research institutions maintain steady populations of both types of student, although it is common for institutions in some areas to be dominated by either immigrant or international students with nonpermanent resident status. Community colleges often serve higher numbers of immigrant students because these institutions offer low-cost education and opportunities for students to transfer to four-year colleges and research universities upon completion of basic education requirements (Ching, McKee, & Ford, 1996).

We make a distinction between immigrant and international students in this discussion because immigrant students (some of whom may be the children of immigrants or immigrants themselves) may have permanent resident status. Meanwhile, international students usually enter English-speaking countries on student visas, complete their college or university studies, and subsequently return to their home countries.

Further distinctions are to be made between students taking courses in intensive English programs (IEPs) and their counterparts in traditional degree programs. Frequently, IEPs in anglophone settings are housed on college and university campuses, but may not award students college or university course credit (with the occasional exception of certain advanced-level courses). Many IEPs offer both academic and nonacademic ESL courses for international students as well as immigrant learners. Academic-track IEP courses often are geared toward providing students with the linguistic and academic skills they need to matriculate as regular students and to enter traditional degree programs (Gaskill, 1996). Nonacademic courses, meanwhile, frequently serve international students who intend to spend a limited time in an English-speaking environment to improve their English proficiency and then to return to their home countries. Clearly, the teaching of ESL writing in IEP courses needs to be geared specifically toward students' educational, professional, and personal goals.

In many English-medium educational institutions, ESL students may be assessed and placed into pre-academic, basic, or “remedial” courses designed to bring their oral–aural and literacy skills to a level at which they can enroll in regular content courses with students who are native speakers (NS) of English (Braine, 1996; DeLuca, Fox, Johnson, & Kogen, 2001; Harklau, Losey, & Siegel, 1999; Silva, Leki, & Carson, 1997). Frequently, students assigned to these courses are identified as weak in specific skill areas and allowed to take courses that count toward a degree or certificate only after they successfully pass these courses, successfully pass an in-house language proficiency test, or achieve a specified score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or other criterion-referenced test.

The implications for the teaching of writing in these circumstances are clear. Instruction must furnish students with the skills required to perform in subsequent ESL, “mainstream” English, and content courses in the disciplines, and for better or worse, to succeed on tests. In a number of institutions, successful completion of these courses entitles students to make the transition from the ESL track to the regular or “native” track, where no distinction is made between NNS and NS students, and where classes are made up of both learner types.

Other institutions, meanwhile, may offer ESL- or NNS-stream writing courses that parallel NS courses in terms of curriculum and assessment criteria. In principle, such courses are designed specifically with NNS learners’ needs in mind and, like their mainstream counterparts, enable students to earn credit toward a degree. Instructors with ESL training or experience working with NNS writers often (and preferably) teach courses designated for ESL students. In NNS-stream courses that parallel NS courses, instruction often is determined largely by the mainstream curriculum and guided by the principles and techniques featured in equivalent courses. In some such cases, conflicts may arise between philosophies and approaches to the literacy tasks and writing processes that students must practice and master (Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Johns, 2003; Kroll, 2001; Silva et al., 1997).

Prior Educational Experience. In addition to the numerous factors influencing the extent and type of writing instruction offered and required by schools, colleges, and universities, ESL students’ formal educational backgrounds also must be considered. The inventory of student variables shown in Fig. 3.1 includes two broad categories aimed at capturing this

information: prior L1-medium educational experience and prior English-medium educational experience. For each of these categories, students' levels of education or years of formal schooling offer only a rough index of students' experience and expertise as classroom learners, note-takers, discussion participants, readers, writers, test-takers, and so forth. Teachers of ESL need to bear in mind, of course, that their students' prior educational experiences might vary considerably from those provided by the ESL or EFL setting in which they currently are receiving instruction. Immigrant and international students pursuing an education in an English-medium institution, for example, may find that their prior training contrasts considerably with the form of instruction embraced in the ESL and EFL courses they are offered. Educational systems around the world vary widely in terms of approach, philosophy, and cultural orientation (Feagles, 1997; Reagan, 1996). Anticipating and understanding learners' prior experiences can be tremendously valuable to writing teachers, because many ESL students come from educational traditions in which school-based texts exemplify rhetorical patterns that are fundamentally distinct from those valued in English-medium Discourses and communities of practice (see chapters 1 and 2).

Moreover, in some non-Western educational models, writing processes may not be explicitly taught if, in fact, writing is even featured in the curriculum. Students trained in those traditions may sometimes view composing as incidental to the mastery of discipline-specific subject matter or enhancement of language proficiency (Leki, 2003). Such students may thus be unfamiliar (and possibly uncomfortable) with the numerous ways in which texts and iterative composing processes are used and taught in English-medium academic settings (Corson, 2001; Duszak, 1997; Matsuda & Silva, 1999; Raimes, 1985, 1998; Scollon, 1997; Scollon & Scollon, 1981).

Knowing about students' English-medium educational experiences can be equally informative, as teachers may need to accommodate their learners' familiarity with composing skills and strategies to prepare them effectively for writing at a more advanced level. For the university freshman composition instructor, for example, it is important to understand the extent to which his or her ESL writers are prepared to undertake the formal, academic writing often required in freshman-level courses, including personal and academic essays, literary analysis, and the like (see chapters 1 and 2). Students with a U.S. high school or community college background may already be familiar with these

English-based genres, although their level of proficiency in producing them is bound to vary. Students with no English-medium educational experience, on the other hand, may come into the freshman writing course with little or no explicit awareness of these pervasive rhetorical forms or knowledge of how to reproduce them, thus presenting underequipped composition teachers with potentially daunting challenges.

Language Proficiency and Literacy. Along with information regarding the type and extent of students' formal schooling, indications of their general ESL proficiency as well as their L1 and L2 literacy skills can offer ESL writing teachers vital information about where composition instruction should begin and how it should proceed (Benesch, 1996; Johns, 1997, 2003). Adult ESL learners, regardless of their L1 literacy level, have at least two bases of knowledge from which to draw in building their L2 proficiency: L1 knowledge and emergent L2 knowledge. Moreover, many classroom ESL and EFL learners are, in fact, fully multilingual, able to function in several languages. If they have attained a threshold of L1 literacy, L2 learners also can "draw on their literacy skills and knowledge of literacy practices from their first language (*interlingual transfer*), and they can also use the input from literacy activities—reading and writing (*intralingual input*)—in their developing second language" (Carson, Carrell, Silberstein, Kroll, Kuehn, 1990, p. 246). As noted in chapter 2, some researchers have maintained that L2 learners use both of these knowledge bases as they develop L2 literacy skills. Others, meanwhile, have claimed that the transfer of literacy skills from the primary language to an L2 is not automatic and that the relationship between the two literacies is complex and in need of extensive research.

It is nonetheless intuitively appealing to assume that text-based input influences the development of both reading and writing proficiency in a given language. For developing L2 writers, of course, the situation involves multiple dimensions of knowledge and skills: "One must take into account not only the learner's L2 . . . proficiency, but also the possibility of interaction of first language literacy skills with second language input" (Carson et al., 1990, p. 248). Clearly, these interactions cannot possibly be captured with a crude instrument such as a questionnaire, although a rough measure of students' current L1 and L2 literacy skills can provide basic information about their literacy profiles, as can a characterization of students' learning styles and study habits (see chapter 2).

Immigration Status. An additional background factor that we have set apart as a distinct factor concerns students' immigration status. Although relevant only to international and immigrant English-language learners, this ostensibly trivial piece of demographic information can be a tremendously significant determinant of an individual student's educational pathway. A student's immigration status can consequently present important implications for ESL writing instruction. Immigrant students' linguistic and educational histories, instructional needs, and career plans may differ widely from those of international students, who, as we have already noted, generally intend to return to their home countries upon completion of their studies in North America, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, or any other English-medium environment (Brindley, 2000; DeLuca et al., 2001; Harklau et al., 1999; Murray, 1996; Schleppegrell & Colombi, 2002; Silva et al., 1997).

As a supplement to information about students' prior educational experience, language proficiency, and literacy skills, immigration status can tell teachers a great deal about their students' personal histories and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as the educational and professional futures they may envision for themselves. As we indicated earlier, immigrant students have (or may be in the process of obtaining) permanent residency status in the host countries where they are studying. In some cases, these students have lived in an anglophone setting for extended periods, in contrast to their nonimmigrant counterparts, who generally enter the host country on temporary student visas and do not intend to make the host country their permanent home. Immigrant students also may have left their primary language environments as refugees or may be the children of refugee parents. Such students may consequently be members of sizable and well-established ethnic and linguistic minority communities.

In many ethnolinguistic minority communities, ESL students' primary language or languages also may predominate in the home and in community-based Discourses. These broader Discourses may include formal communities of practice (e.g., cultural organizations, social clubs, religious institutions, aid agencies) in addition to less formal—although equally influential—social aggregations, from circles of family and friends, to neighborhoods, to street gangs, and so forth (Rampton, 1995; Romaine, 1995). This multilingual, multi-discursive situation may promote the development of bilingual (or multilingual) proficiency and multiliteracies among some learners (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000;

Fairclough, 2000). For others, meanwhile, competition can arise between languages, literacies, and Discourses, posing challenges in the educational setting (Grosjean, 1982; Harklau et al., 1999; Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988; Stewart, 1993).

To illustrate the potential range of such educational challenges, some immigrant students who have resided for many years and have attended school in an anglophone setting may achieve a highly functional level of linguistic proficiency and academic literacy in English, enabling them to advance through ESL courses quickly and transition to NS-track courses. These students may complete their postsecondary education while maintaining, and even strengthening, their bi- or multilingualism and cultural ties to their home communities (Hakuta & D'Andrea, 1992).

For many other immigrant students, however, achieving bilingualism and biliteracy can be considerably more difficult and frustrating. Those with strong ties to a cohesive ethnic and linguistic community in which English is seldom or never used may find that the school, college, or university campus may be the only place in their daily lives where English is the primary medium of communication (August & Hakuta, 1997; Rampton, 1995). Consequently, such immigrant learners may have limited opportunities to use English for purposes other than those directly related to formal education and may therefore require substantial instructional support to compensate for these limitations. International ESL students enrolled in colleges, universities, and IEPs frequently report an analogous sense of social and linguistic isolation from English-speaking students and the wider community, often because both international and immigrant students may tend to socialize and find solidarity with peers from the same linguistic and sociocultural background. A result of this tendency is that ESL students may use their primary languages in their social interactions nearly everywhere but the educational setting.

This dualistic situation can pose problems of a slightly different nature for immigrant students than for international students. Immigrant students are faced with having to use English not only to complete their formal studies, but also to seek and secure employment, and to pursue careers and livelihoods in an English-speaking workplace. Many immigrant students also perform the difficult role of interpreter and translator for parents and extended families with severely limited English language skills. Moreover, the majority of immigrant students enrolled in educational institutions often struggle with economic and social

hardships that their international peers may never experience. Many international students, for example, come from developed nations and have the economic resources to cover the cost of their foreign study, thanks to government sponsorships, family resources, or both. Immigration laws in most host countries, in fact, require student visa holders to demonstrate proof that they possess these financial means and that full-time student status is maintained throughout their course of study.

The circumstances of many (perhaps even most) immigrant students contrast sharply with those of international students. Because of the need to contribute financially to their family incomes or to support families of their own, immigrant learners enrolled in ESL programs at all levels of education may hold part- or full-time jobs. These financial and family-related obligations may place heavy demands on ESL students, for whom educational achievement may also be a palpably strong social value in their home communities. Not only may resident students face ever-present financial and educational pressures and hardships; they may likewise confront problems associated with being members of ethnolinguistic minority communities that do not enjoy equal, let alone privileged, social status with respect to dominant (anglophone) cultures and Discourses.

These divergent experiences clearly set resident student populations apart from international student populations and suggest the need for ESL teachers to adjust pedagogical assumptions accordingly. The content and assignments in a writing course designed for international students may be largely inappropriate for immigrant students. Consider, for example, a syllabus in which North American culture and literature serve as core content, in conjunction with writing tasks that involve students in making comparisons between the cultural practices of the target culture and the home culture. Whereas such a curriculum would probably serve the needs of newcomers to an English-medium cultural and educational environment, it would be of marginal relevance to ESL students who have lived and studied in the United States for quite some time, and for whom the "home country" is a distant memory. Recognizing and understanding the current personal, social, and economic conditions of immigrant and international students can help ESL teachers develop a sensitivity to the constraints that their students must overcome in their efforts to improve their linguistic and academic skills, including their composing proficiency (Valdés, 1992, 2000).

Traditional and Nontraditional Students. An additional factor that frequently is overlooked but can influence the character of learning and teaching in a given ESL setting has to do with learners' status as so-called "traditional" or "non-traditional" students. Traditional students (both NS and NNS) are sometimes described as such if they have experienced few if any interruptions in their progress from secondary school to (and through) postsecondary education. That is, traditional students are those who upon completion of secondary school proceed directly to a community college, four-year college, or research university, and from there, perhaps to a graduate or professional program. Because of this rapid progress from a secondary to a postsecondary institution, traditional students usually are young adults in their late teens or early twenties when they begin their postsecondary education.

Nontraditional or "returning" students, on the other hand, may have experienced one or more interruptions along their educational pathways. These interruptions can include substantial periods of full-time employment (and sometimes the pursuit of a new career), as well as considerable time devoted to caring for children, elderly family members, or both. These students, whose numbers are increasing rapidly in many educational institutions, thus represent a variety of age groups (Peterson, 1995; Stewart, 1993). Moreover, many nontraditional students reinitiate their formal studies while working and may likewise have personal, financial, and family commitments to fulfill.

These circumstances can sometimes have a direct and obvious impact on students' participation, motivation, confidence level, and performance in a composition course. Consider, for example, a returning immigrant student who undertakes part-time coursework toward an undergraduate degree after having successfully completed her ESL composition requirements 10 years before. Such a student may have decided to return to college for compelling personal or economic reasons, such as no longer having young children to care for, coupled with a desire to pursue a career outside the home. A student in this situation might understandably need special assistance and guidance in readjusting to the academic environment. It may also take time for her to reactivate literacy skills that have not been practiced in a long time. With a sensitivity to such circumstances, teachers can anticipate the academic, linguistic, sociocultural, and psychological obstacles faced by their students and can appreciate the challenging experiences that might strongly influence their students' progress as writers.

Learner Preferences, Strategies, and Styles. A final but crucial dimension of needs assessment involves accounting for learners' predispositions toward aspects of classroom instruction and independent learning. Whereas the information targeted in Fig. 3.1 is primarily demographic, the learner variables included in the writing styles questionnaire (Fig. 3.2) address aspects of learners' predispositions, preferences, strategies, and styles that are subject to considerable change over time and that may be most productively measured locally in the classroom context. Research on learner strategies and styles (which is, unfortunately, too extensive to consider in detail here) consistently shows how these highly personal and dynamic variables affect learning processes in the classroom and beyond (Cohen, 1998; Gass & Selinker, 2001; Graves, 2000; Reid, 1995b; Skehan, 1989, 1991, 1998). This work also now suggests ways in which teachers can diagnose their students' styles and preferences, raise awareness of maximally productive strategies, and facilitate the acquisition of new strategies.

The sample questionnaire in Fig. 3.2, inspired by several instruments presented in Reid (1995b), was developed by an instructor who administered it on the first day of an advanced university course in Writing English for Academic Purposes (EAP) offered to international students. The prompts are clearly geared toward nonimmigrant students with limited experience in English-medium classrooms. The questionnaire items are specifically aimed at inviting students to report their perceived expertise as readers and writers, in addition to their views regarding collaborative work, drafting procedures, feedback, and revision. The instructor was able to use his students' responses to address these issues explicitly in the course and to plan instruction to accommodate the reported needs and preferences of the class. In other words, the questionnaire results not only served to guide the instructor's instructional planning, but also provided data on which students could subsequently reflect as a measurement of their literacy development as the course progressed. During periodic writing conferences, the teacher informally interviewed students' about their level of satisfaction with the course. At the end of the course, the instructor devised a retrospective assignment in which students wrote a comparison of their initial perceptions and their cumulative achievements.

By regularly considering formally and informally gathered self-report data about their students' work patterns, study habits, drafting styles, task type preferences, and so forth, teachers can

**A. Student background information**

Name: _____

Native country: _____

Native language(s): _____

B. Classroom work styles

DIRECTIONS: This portion of the survey will help your instructor understand the ways in which you prefer to complete class assignments. Think about your most recent experiences in college or university classes. For each statement below, place a check mark (✓) in the cell that best describes your habits and preferences. Please be honest! Candid responses will give your instructor valuable information.

1 = Strongly agree

3 = Somewhat agree

5 = Disagree

2 = Agree

4 = Somewhat disagree

6 = Strongly disagree

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. In my native country, I had many opportunities to work with fellow classmates on projects and assignments.						
2. Outside my native country, I have had opportunities to work with fellow classmates on projects and assignments.						
3. In general, I enjoy working with other students in planning and completing academic assignments.						
4. When I work with a partner or a small group, I usually produce better work than I do when working alone.						
5. When I work with a partner or a small group, I usually concentrate better and learn more.						
6. I am comfortable working with partners who are also nonnative speakers of English.						
7. I prefer working with a partner or with a group when the teacher assigns specific roles to group members.						
8. I hope we will do a lot of pair and group work in this course.						

C. Strengths, styles, and preferences

DIRECTIONS: This portion of the survey is designed to help you and your instructor understand the ways in which you prefer to plan and complete writing assignments in English. Think about your most recent experiences in classes where you wrote academic papers. For each statement below, place a check mark (✓) in the cell that best describes your habits and preferences. Again, be honest! Candid responses will give your instructor valuable insight.

1 = Strongly agree

3 = Somewhat agree

5 = Disagree

2 = Agree

4 = Somewhat disagree

6 = Strongly disagree

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. I think I am a good academic writer in my native language.						
2. I think I am a good writer of academic English.						
3. I know how to use source material (e.g., textbooks, scholarly books, journal articles, news accounts, Web-based resources) effectively in my writing assignments.						
4. One of my major strengths as a writer of English is producing interesting ideas.						
5. I am skilled at organizing my ideas and expressing them logically.						

FIG. 3.2. Writing styles questionnaire for classroom use (Continued).

	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I have learned about academic writing mostly through reading.						
7. When I write academic assignments, I am a good typist and an efficient computer user.						
8. I rearrange my ideas a lot when I am planning a text.						
9. When I revise a paper or draft, I often make a lot of changes.						
10. As I revise a paper, I like to add new material.						
11. When I write and revise a paper, I think carefully about what my reader wants to know from me.						
12. Before I revise a paper, I ask a classmate or friend to give me comments on it.						
13. My papers usually state a purpose explicitly.						
14. I use clear and succinct transitions between paragraphs.						
15. The paragraphs of my papers usually contain plenty of examples, explanations, and other evidence.						
16. I try hard to connect each of my paragraphs to my main purposes for writing.						
17. My concluding statements synthesize my main points and the evidence I have presented in my text.						
18. When I turn in papers, they contain mostly minor grammatical errors.						
19. My papers show that I have a strong command of English vocabulary.						
20. When I turn in papers, they have few spelling and punctuation errors.						
21. When I write an academic paper, I know how to use references, quotations, footnotes, bibliographic sources, and so on effectively.						
22. Generally, I learn a lot from the comments I get back from my instructor.						
23. I enjoy sharing my writing with other students and learn from reading the writing of my classmates.						
24. After getting an assignment back from my instructor, I usually learn things that I can apply to future writing assignments.						

D. Self-assessment and goals

DIRECTIONS: Please complete the statements below with at least three points. Be as specific as you can.

- My greatest strengths as a writer of English include ...
 -
 -
 -
- Aspects of my writing that I would like most to improve in this course include ...
 -
 -
 -

FIG. 3.2. Writing styles questionnaire for classroom use.

design syllabi, plan lessons, construct assignments, lead activities that capitalize on students' strengths and overcome their weaknesses, and avoid student resistance to dispreferred task types. Instruments used to collect this information are perhaps most suitably and productively developed by adapting and combining styles and strategies resources already available.²

SETTING AND MEETING GOALS FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Having collected systematic profile data on his or her student cohort, the teacher is minimally equipped to identify, articulate, and negotiate the desired outcomes (global and specific) of a literacy course. Goals are frequently recognized as global targets around which instructional programs and syllabi are designed. Brown (1995) defined *goals* as "general statements concerning desirable and attainable program purposes and aims based on perceived language and situation needs" (p. 71). The goals for a particular program and its course sequence should address the observed needs of the student population and the requirements of the educational institution, as identified by regular, methodical needs analyses (Frodesen, 1995; Graves, 2000; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Nunan, 2001; Walker, 2003).

A goal summary for a premainstream, advanced academic ESL literacy course series, for example, might read something like this: "Students will be able to identify implicit relationships in academic English between parts of a concept: in a flow chart, in a table, and in an outline, as well as in the prose describing a chart or table in an essay" (Brown, 1995, p. 77). Such goal statements ideally reflect cognitive, linguistic, academic, and analytic skills that can be described, practiced, and assessed in the context of an instructional program and the courses it comprises.³

In many ESL and EFL settings, instructional goals are preestablished by administrators and institutions. The role of individual teachers is to work toward and accomplish these goals in the planning and execution of the courses they teach. However, embracing this role should not imply that teachers cannot play a part in shaping institutional, program-level goals or in using these goals to their advantage in developing syllabi and lesson plans. As Graves (2000) pointed out, "clear goals help to make teaching purposeful because what you do in class is related to your

overall purpose. Goals and objectives provide a basis for making choices about what to teach and how" (p. 79). Instead of confining teachers' decision making, therefore, well-articulated goals should be viewed as tools for facilitating literacy instruction in the following ways:

1. Formalized goals articulate the purposes of the course and educational program.
2. Goal statements focus on what the course or program intends to accomplish, indicating the specific skills that students will acquire or perfect upon completion of the course.
3. Goals allow for the formulation of more precise and achievable instructional objectives.
4. Goals are dynamic—they evolve as a function of the changing needs of the students as their skills develop (Brown, 1995; Graves, 2000).

In the sections that follow, we look at procedures for constructing course syllabi and designing lessons. By planning instruction to meet specific learning objectives formulated on the basis of a solid needs analysis, teachers can bring about the realization of broader programmatic goals.

FROM GOALS TO OBJECTIVES: THE SYLLABUS AS A FRAMEWORK FOR INSTRUCTION

Whereas goals typically constitute general statements of a curriculum's purpose, *objectives* articulate "the particular knowledge, behaviors, and/or skills that the learner will be expected to know or perform at the end of a course" (Brown, 1995, p. 73). We use the term "instructional objective" in this discussion to describe the purposes of a course as outlined in a syllabus as well as the tools for devising units and lessons.⁴ Objectives are thus fairly precise. Instructional objectives specify the following essential characteristics: performance (what the learner will be able to do), conditions (procedural and sociocognitive, within which the performance is expected to occur), and criteria (the quality or level of performance that will be considered acceptable) (Mager,

1975). The following sample goal statements illustrate how these components can be spelled out succinctly in a curriculum plan or course description:

- “By the end of the course, students will have become more aware of their writing in general and be able to identify the specific areas in which improvement is needed” (Graves, 2000, p. 80);
- “By the end of the course, students will improve their writing to the next level of the ACTFL [American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages] Proficiency Guidelines Writing scale” (Graves, 2000, p. 80);
- “By the end of the course, the students will be able to write the full forms of selected abbreviations drawn from pages 6–8 of the course textbook with 80 percent accuracy” (Mager, 1975, p. 74).

We underscore the specific, explicit wording of these statements, which articulate observable (and, ideally, measurable) learner behaviors or performances. We maintain that this level of precision is not only indispensable for lesson planning and teacher self-evaluation, but also crucial for fair, meaningful assessment (see chapter 8). The instructional objectives outlined in Fig. 3.3 represent a small but somewhat more extensive sampling of the types of functions that ESL writing syllabi at various proficiency levels and in various institutions might include.

Not all curriculum design experts, language educators, or rhetoricians advocate setting *a priori* instructional objectives. A principal objection to explicit aims relates to their negative association with behavioral psychology and the charge that stating objectives somehow trivializes classroom teaching by forcing instructors to focus only on narrowly defined skills and written products (Gronland, 1985; Hillocks, 1995). A further complaint maintains that explicit objectives limit teachers’ freedom, constrain their decision making, and perpetuate the status quo (Benesch, 1996; Joseph, Bravmann, Windschitl, Mikel, & Green, 2000). We do not find these objections to be particularly persuasive. We argue that teachers should view objectives not as rigid, prescriptive targets, but as flexible guidelines keyed to performative outcomes embedded in the curriculum. As Brown (1995) pointed out, “objectives are most effective when a variety of different types are used and when the level of specificity for different

<i>Course Type & Level</i>	<i>Sample Objectives as Outlined in Course Syllabus</i>
Grades 9–12 ESL or EFL: Intermediate/High to Advanced	- Identify and summarize in writing main ideas of paragraphs and larger units of written discourse, including textbooks and literary passages. - Compose paragraph-length prose responses to specific questions in connected prose form. - Compose original expository and narrative texts (up to 500 words in length) on personal topics, academic content, and current events.
Adult/Vocational ESL: Low to Low Intermediate	- Transcribe simple words in dictation. - Compose lists of words that relate to a theme, semantic category, or pragmatic function. - Complete simple forms and documents, including bank deposit and withdrawal slips, postal forms, and so on. - Use simple illustrations and diagrams to compose simple descriptive sentences.
Pre-Academic Intensive ESL or EFL: Low to Low Intermediate	- Take legible notes on familiar topics. - Respond in complete sentences to personal and academic questions. - Compose simple letters, paraphrases, and summaries of biographical data as well as work and school experiences. - Compose descriptive, narrative, and expository paragraphs of 100 words or more based on simple, authentic texts.
Community College/University ESL: Intermediate to Advanced	- Take detailed notes on familiar and unfamiliar topics. - Respond in connected written discourse to text-based questions. - Compose summaries of biographical data and work/school experiences. - Compose paraphrases and summaries of extended academic prose (texts of up to 10 pages in length). - Compose descriptive, narrative, and expository essay-length texts (up to 500 words in length).
College/University ESL: Advanced (NS-track equivalent)	- Take detailed notes on familiar and unfamiliar topics. - Respond in connected written prose to text-based content questions. - Compose summaries of statistical and graphic data. - Compose paraphrases and summaries of extended academic or technical discourse (texts of up to 20 pages in length). - Compose descriptive, expository, analytic, and argumentative texts of 1,500 words or more.

FIG. 3.3. Sample course objectives: ESL writing skills.

objectives is allowed to diverge” (p. 95). The explicit presentation of instructional objectives in a course syllabus enables teachers to

1. transform student needs into teaching points that can be organized into a teaching sequence
2. identify for students target skills that underlie instructional points
3. decide on the level of specificity for the teaching activities in the syllabus

4. adopt or adapt teaching materials that appropriately accommodate student needs and expectations
5. map out a blueprint for assessing student performance and progress
6. evaluate their own teaching effectiveness (Frodesen, 1995; Graves, 2000; Richards & Lockhart, 1994).

SYLLABUS DEVELOPMENT: NUTS AND BOLTS

Conducting a needs assessment can be an informative and rewarding process leading to the development and establishment of clear, measurable, and achievable course objectives. These objectives and their operationalization, of course, need to be formalized in writing on the course syllabus.

It is useful to think of a course syllabus as a document comprising two main parts. First, it can serve as a contract between the instructor and the students, summarizing course objectives and how they will be met (Hafernik, Messerschmitt, & Vandrick, 2002; Kroll, 2001). Second, a syllabus serves as an operational framework and planning tool. It structures and sequences instructional aims, units, lessons, assignments, classroom procedures, and assessment procedures for both the instructor and the students (Graves, 2000; Nunan, 1991a, 2001). The checklist in Fig. 3.4, although not exhaustive, offers a framework for providing students with all the information they will need about course objectives and content, workload, participation requirements, policies, assignments, and performance expectations. Figure. 3.4 also serves as an advance organizer for the discussion in the sections that follow. A sample syllabus for a community college composition course appears in Appendix 3A to exemplify the principles and practices outlined in this chapter.

THE COURSE SCHEDULE: PRIORITIZING, SEQUENCING, AND PLANNING FOR WRITING

Laying out a sequence of reading materials, classroom activities, and assignments can be one of the most challenging tasks facing novice and even experienced classroom teachers. Before



1. Descriptive Information ☐ Course name, number, meeting time, and location ☐ Prerequisites and other requirements ☐ Instructor's name and contact information (office location, consultation hours, campus telephone number, and e-mail address) 2. Course goals and primary content ☐ Program-level and course goals ☐ Specific course goals, as well as general and specific course objectives ☐ Core course content, as well as aspects of literacy and composing processes to be presented, practiced, and assessed ☐ Dimensions of English rhetoric, textual analysis, grammar, and so forth, that will be directly addressed ☐ Description of what constitutes progress toward the achievement of course aims (see item (7)) ☐ Quantity and scope of reading material to be covered in class activities and writing assignments 3. Reading materials ☐ Bibliographic information for all required and optional text sources, as well as details about their availability ☐ List of reading assignments, their sequence, page ranges, and deadlines (if this information can be determined in advance) 4. Writing assignments ☐ Number and description of writing assignments, including information about genre, length, use of published sources, and so on ☐ Description of how many and which assignments will involve multidrafting, peer response, teacher feedback, and so forth ☐ Indication of how many and which assignments will involve timed (in-class) or online writing ☐ Policies governing late work, revised assignments, collaboration, plagiarism, and so on ☐ Presentation requirements, including preferred style sheet (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago, CBE), length criteria, text formatting, word-processing conventions, electronic file formatting, and so forth 5. Instructional processes and procedures ☐ Description of how class time will be allocated (e.g., balance of workshop activities, drafting, peer review sessions, class discussions, lecture, in-class writing, quizzes) ☐ Expectations concerning student preparedness and participation in discussions, group tasks, peer review sessions, contributions to electronic bulletin boards, and so on 6. Course requirements ☐ Summary of compulsory assignments and their deadlines ☐ Description of assessment criteria, including how student work will be evaluated ☐ Explanation of policies concerning attendance, participation, missed assignments, and so on 7. Assessment and grading procedures ☐ Explicit description of assessment criteria and how they will be applied to assignments ☐ Account of how final course grades are weighted (if applicable) and calculated ☐ Justification of assessment and marking procedures 8. Course schedule or timetable ☐ If practicable and appropriate, a session-by-session or week-by-week calendar of dates, themes, events, reading assignments, and deadlines (considerable flexibility often is required with course timetables to accommodate inevitable changes, delays, and negotiated syllabi)

FIG. 3.4. Syllabus checklist.

describing specific techniques for meeting these challenges, we offer some guiding principles to assist in laying groundwork for writing a syllabus and course outline. Figure 3.5 presents an overarching schema and set of suggested procedures for incorporating overlapping phases of a hypothetical composing sequence into a course outline (see chapter 1). We point out that the stages leading from prewriting through publishing are not mechanical, autonomous steps, but potentially overlapping and recursive

phases and subprocesses (Clark, 2003d). Hillocks (1995) persuasively argued that conventional approaches to implementing so-called “process” models of composition instruction should be viewed with extreme caution, as we suggested in our discussion of process and postprocess pedagogies in chapter 1. “While the general model of the composing process is useful,” wrote Hillocks (1995), “it cannot begin to account for variations in process that appear to be dependent on a variety of factors” (p. xix). Therefore, we wish to avoid trivializing the complexity of individual writers’ evolving composing processes. We thus present the model in Fig. 3.5 not as a linear, operational design, but as a general guideline for structuring and sequencing classroom tasks and multiple drafting to serve a broad range of instructional contexts and student writer populations.

To operationalize this iterative writing process schema, we must first and foremost establish student and program goals as our highest priority, organizing our material, instructional procedures, and tasks accordingly (Jensen, 2001; Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Omaggio Hadley, 2001). Second, it is crucial that we understand how our planning decisions (including materials selection, sequencing, balance of instructional activity types, assignment development, and so on) will help our students to meet course objectives (see chapter 4). If textbooks and assignments are prescribed by an academic department, program, institution, or educational agency, our syllabi still will not write themselves. Our teaching will be most effective when we can justify—to ourselves and to our students—our planning decisions with direct reference to course objectives (Cumming, 2003). Third, flexibility is essential: As Tarvers (1993) aptly emphasized, “a ruthless sense of realism must go into planning [a] course schedule” (p. 42), because no timeline can be etched in stone.

Whereas some teachers can efficiently follow and complete a detailed, preplanned course timetable, many find it difficult to adhere so closely to a course outline that lays out a day-by-day, 10- or 15-week plan. Under ideal conditions, teachers can work with students to negotiate a syllabus, involving learners in decision making about literacy development tasks, reading selections, the nature and number of assignments, multidrafting processes, revision requirements, assessment criteria, portfolio contents, and so forth (Bamberg, 2003; Glenn et al., 2003; Nunan, 1991b, 2001). Under such circumstances, a quarter- or semester-length timetable is perhaps unnecessary. On the other hand, successfully delivering a negotiated syllabus requires even more

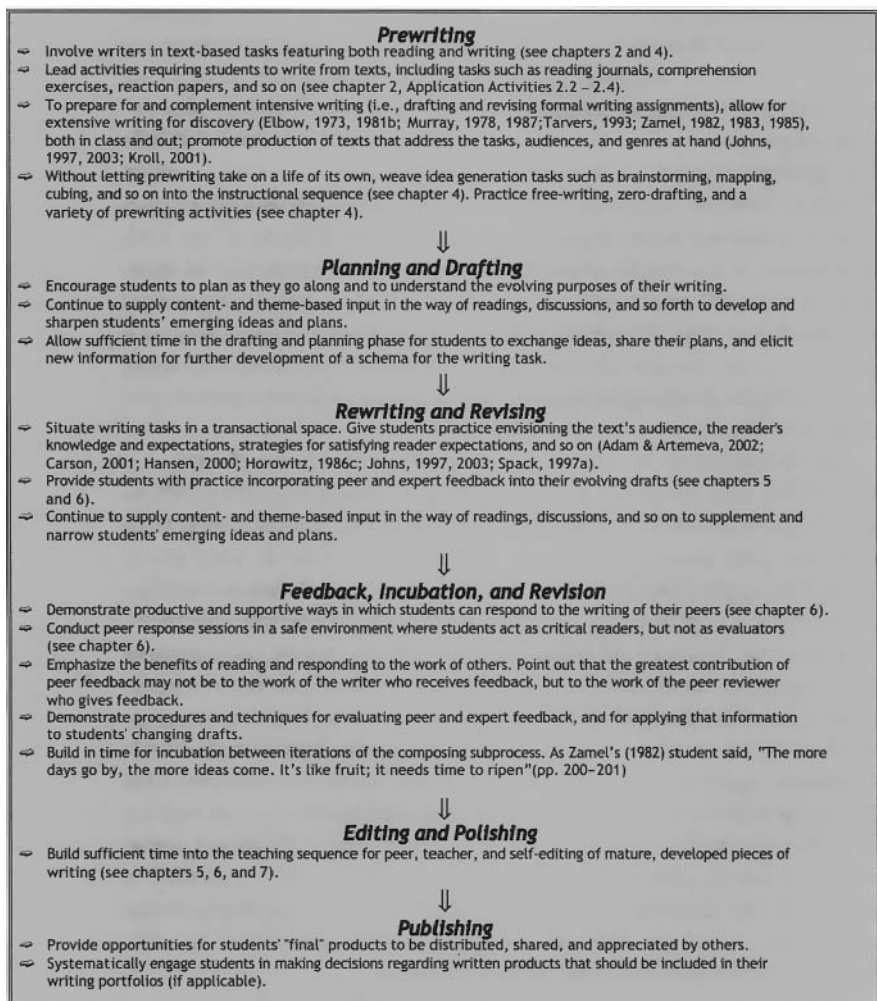


FIG. 3.5. Writing process schema for course planning.

scrupulous attention to curricular goals and course objectives because teachers must ensure that writers achieve the outcomes stated in the syllabus without the explicit structure of a detailed timetable (Jensen, 2001).

With these general planning precepts in mind, we can begin to lay out the work of a quarter or semester with the goals of our institutions and our students (as operationalized in our course

objectives) as clear, measurable targets. It is useful to start the process with an academic calendar or planner showing the exact number of class meetings and holidays to be included in the timetable. Cancellations because of personal and professional commitments should then be noted, and any required make-up meetings should be built into the schedule. Class days also should be reserved for timed writings, midterms, examinations, and the like to give a clear picture of exactly how many meetings can be planned for teaching, workshops, feedback sessions, and so on.

We further suggest designating one or two sessions per term as “free” or “flex” (flexible) sessions if the academic calendar permits. Flex sessions can provide highly valuable padding that allows the teacher to carry over units, tasks, and assignments without having to rework the entire course timetable when a class falls behind schedule, as many inevitably do. If the course proceeds as planned, flex sessions can then be used for extra writing time, teacher–student conferences, portfolio preparation, and even working ahead.

Next, it is a good idea to schedule due dates for graded writing assignments, particularly if these deadlines are prescribed by the program, department, or institution. We recommend working backward from final submission deadlines to include intermediate deadlines for drafts, peer feedback sessions, editing workshops, student–teacher conferences, and so forth. The sample syllabus and course outline in Appendix 3A illustrates one way in which this “backtracking” planning method can be used. We recommend allocating adequate time for multidraft assignments and revised papers, particularly near the beginning of a term, when writing assignments tend to take longer to work through. Extra class periods may be necessary early on to discuss preliminary drafts, demonstrate and practice peer response techniques, and revise assignments in class or in the computer lab.

You will likewise find it valuable to build into the course timetable sufficient time for you and your students to read assigned texts, practice prewriting and drafting techniques, and work through peer response tasks. The timetable should also allow sufficient time for you to annotate and evaluate your students’ work (see chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8). Allow as much time between sessions as practicable to make a multidraft approach worthwhile if multidrafting is a central feature of your course.

To maximize the multidrafting approach and provide sufficient incubation time between drafts, it can be useful to initiate a new writing assignment while the preceding one is still in progress. For example, it may be time efficient to collect a set of short papers for feedback or evaluation while students embark on an extended project or research assignment.

Once the core assignments are in place and the deadlines for preliminary work (readings, drafts, peer and teacher feedback, revision, and so on) are established, the course outline has at least a skeletal form that allows for the planning of discussions, lectures, student presentations, peer response workshops, online chats, quizzes, and other class activities. If reading figures prominently in the course objectives (as we strongly suggest it should), reading selections should be assigned with great care so that they correspond logically to the themes, genres, rhetorical patterns, and discursive forms to be featured in the syllabus, as well as the writing assignments and literacy tasks based on them (Johns, 1997; Kroll, 2001). Generally, reading selections in published anthologies and rhetorical readers (see chapter 4) are presented as units, linked topically, and connected to specific writing tasks (e.g., expository or argumentative essays).

Examples of themes included in recent ESL and NS composition textbooks include affirmative action, educational policy, environmental controversies, gender issues, globalization, human sexuality, immigration, language rights, multiculturalism, racism, and reproductive rights. Where such textbooks are not part of the curriculum, a thematic approach still may be used as the basis for syllabus design, with a thematic unit revolving around an identifiable topic or context (Snow, 1998, 2001; Snow & Brinton, 1997). As with writing assignments, reading assignments should be allotted generous time. Lengthy reading selections may need to be divided into smaller parts to enable students to complete them and to provide for effective treatment in class. Finally, lay your plan out so that you and the students can see the chronology of the entire term. Before finalizing the course schedule, check to see that adequate time has been allocated for especially labor-intensive literacy tasks such as extended reading selections, multi-draft writing assignments, and investigation projects. For multidraft assignments, track the sequence you have sketched out to ensure enough time for the necessary iterations of drafting, feedback, revision, and editing (Kroll, 2001).

LESSON PLANNING: PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

Identifying Lesson Objectives

In the same way that the instructional objectives specified in a syllabus identify what knowledge and skills students will acquire by the end of a course, effective lesson objectives describe the observable behaviors that students will demonstrate at the end of a class period or unit (Brown, 2001; Jensen, 2001; Nunan, 2001; Raimes, 1983). If instructional objectives are clearly specified in the syllabus, identifying lesson objectives should be an easy task when it comes to planning individual class periods. Lesson objectives should emanate directly from instructional objectives and at least indirectly from program or course goals. Consider, for example, this instructional objective for a low to low-intermediate, pre-academic ESL writing course from Fig. 3.3: "Compose descriptive, narrative, and expository paragraphs." A corresponding performative objective for a lesson derived from this course aim might read "Compose a 200- to 250-word paragraph describing each writer's dormitory room, apartment, or house." The anticipated outcome is described in terms of an observable, measurable student performance as well as a written product with which students can work and that can ultimately be published, shared, and evaluated. The objective statement also should be worded with action verbs such as "compose" and "describe" (in contrast to verbs such as "learn" or "understand," which are difficult to observe and appraise).

Although many experienced and skilled teachers plan and execute productive lessons without writing out their objectives in detail, effective teachers do have a clear purpose in mind when they select and organize classroom tasks. As Purgason (1991) pointed out, "each activity needs to have a reason. A teacher must think through why that activity is important to the students and what they will be able to do when they finish it" (p. 423). Consequently, it is advisable for both novice and experienced teachers to articulate lesson objectives routinely in their planning (Brown, 2001; Cruickshank, Bainer, & Metcalf, 1999; Graves, 2000; Ur, 1996). Explicit, measurable objectives help teachers to unify the components of their lessons:

In synthetic terms, lessons and units of work will consist, among other things, of sequences of tasks, and the coherence of such

lessons or units will depend on the extent to which the tasks have been integrated and sequenced in some principled way. (Nunan, 1989, p. 10)

Sequencing and Organizing a Lesson Plan

A lesson plan can take many forms, depending on the time constraints and personal style of the individual teacher. Regardless of how it appears, a lesson plan should provide the teacher with a "script" for presenting materials, interacting with students, and leading students through structured and unstructured activities. Much more than a mere step-by-step chronology of a classroom event, however, a lesson plan is a practical, tangible, and potentially dynamic tool for meeting student needs as operationalized in course objectives. It serves as a vital link between curricular goals and the learning we wish to bring about among our students. In this sense, the lesson is where the known (instructional objectives, texts, and so on) meets the unknown (the novice writers in our composition classes).

Hillocks (1995) noted that mapping out instruction is initially an exploratory endeavor: "At the beginning of a year or term, our students are likely to be new to us. We cannot begin planning, except with general outlines, until we know what students do as writers" (p. 132). Because we cannot possibly anticipate every aspect of what happens in our classrooms, we can think of lessons as opportunities for experimentation. Not all lessons or activities will succeed. We can be prepared for this outcome, however, by expecting the unexpected. We also can improve our teaching effectiveness by reflecting on what works well and what does not work so successfully with the students in our own classes (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001; Bailey & Nunan, 1996; Richards & Lockhart, 1994).

Hillocks (1995) offered sound planning advice in noting that "the thoughtful teacher, in searching for ways to help students learn more effectively, will plan real trials (what researchers call quasi-experiments), determine what effect they have, even as the trial goes forward, and consider new options as a result" (p. 125). Most teachers, even those seasoned and self-assured enough to conduct entire lessons with no written notes, are aware of the benefits of advance planning, which can lead to a willingness to depart from their plans when necessary (Bailey, 1996). A written lesson plan, whether a general list of activities or a meticulously detailed sequence of procedures, facilitates

processes such as postlesson evaluation, problem diagnosis, and skills enhancement.

The Mechanics of Lesson Planning

In purely mechanical terms, a lesson plan can be handwritten or word-processed on standard paper and formatted in any number of ways. Teachers working in highly “wired” environments can even prepare their class plans using interactive software such as Microsoft PowerPoint, enabling them to project outlines and materials onto a screen or an array of monitors. In contrast, a low-tech lesson plan can easily be printed out on notecards. In fact, for some teachers, it is enough to write out lesson notes before class as a way of putting the content and sequencing into their heads. In this way, they obviate the need for a written plan during the lesson.

Whatever form a lesson plan takes, it should be readable, convenient to refer to in class when needed, and usable as a future record of what took place. Instead of proposing a rigid or prescriptive model for planning ESL writing classes, we offer the following general outline and conceptual framework as options for individualizing daily lesson designs.⁵ The outline in Fig. 3.6 includes practical and procedural aspects of the planning process that many teachers consider essential in constructing a lesson. Appendix 3B contains an example of an authentic lesson plan that reflects these principles, procedures, and formatting options. Figure 3.6 focuses principally on logistical elements, whereas Fig. 3.7 focuses on pedagogical moves and instructional procedures.

Although most of the items in Fig. 3.6 are self-explanatory, a few are worth elaboration. In addition to reviewing the lesson’s objectives, making a note about the work that students did during the previous class and have done for homework can give us a realistic feeling for what kinds of reading, writing, discussion, and problem solving tasks students are ready for next. This review process is invaluable in managing time effectively. Preparing a list of equipment (e.g., overhead projector, transparencies, markers), materials, page numbers, and so on before class can avert the need to spend valuable class time getting organized. Having a prepared checklist of student work to return and collect can likewise save time, as can dispensing with announcements efficiently. Some teachers routinely write these on the board or an overhead transparency for students to read on their own. Others

Course and Lesson Objectives □ Summary of lesson objectives Work Previously Completed □ Account of reading, writing, discussion, and feedback completed in the previous class session Materials □ Textbook(s) □ Handouts, including worksheets, feedback guides, copies of student writing, and so forth □ Materials for student writing, including writing paper, blue books for in-class writing, printer paper for sessions conducted in computer labs, and so on □ AV materials (e.g., OHP transparencies, video player, laptop, computer projection unit, and so on) Class Management □ Assignments to be collected □ Assignments to be given and examined before the next class meeting □ Class business, announcements, reminders, and so on Lesson Sequence (Elements to consider in applying the steps listed in Figure 3.7) □ Time allocation for tasks and activities □ Variety of activity types (reading, drafting, discussion, collaborative tasks, lecture, and so forth) □ Transitions between lesson phases and integration of activities □ Coherence and activity flow □ Clear procedures for setting up collaborative tasks and other independent activity types Contingency Plans □ Ideas for alternative tasks or activities in case the lesson ends early or a lesson component has to be abandoned Reflection and Self-Evaluation (To be completed after the lesson) □ Observations to keep in mind before planning the next class □ Notations on successful tasks, procedures, and techniques □ Comments on tasks, procedures, and techniques to modify before repeating them

FIG. 3.6. Lesson plan outline/checklist.

prefer to make announcements at the end of class, when they will not have to be repeated for latecomers. On an increasing number of campuses, instructors can also post informational messages on electronic bulletin boards or conferences dedicated to courses.

The core lesson elements in Fig. 3.6 refer to techniques for successfully executing the steps outlined in Fig. 3.7. The first of these core elements is time management, perhaps the single most pervasive challenge for teachers in carrying out their lesson plans. For this reason, a useful practice is to anticipate the time that each activity in a lesson will require, adding several additional

<i>Lesson Phase</i>	<i>Teacher Actions</i>	<i>Student Actions</i>
1. Activation of prior learning	- Helps students recall what they have learned or practiced in previous lesson(s) - Asks students to demonstrate new knowledge and skills	- Report on prior learning - Demonstrate new knowledge and skills through practice
2. Preview/warm-up	- Previews new lesson, connecting new material to material just reviewed or practiced - Checks students' understanding of material and concepts at hand - Guides students in anticipating lesson content by capturing their interest and stimulating thought about the topic and task	- Respond to preview - Respond to teacher's prompts
3. Lesson core: Instruction, procedures, participation	- Presents lecture, writing task, or activity - Communicates lesson objectives to students - Models task or activity, guiding students to engage with new concepts and practice relevant skills - Asks students to complete the task or activity individually or in groups - Provides opportunities for students to practice using new knowledge and skills independently - Encourages student involvement, participation, and interaction - Checks students' understanding of material and concepts at hand	- Respond to teacher's presentation (e.g., by taking notes, asking questions, and so on) - Observe modeling, ask questions - Undertake the task or activity individually or in groups - Complete the task or activity independently - Elicit teacher's assistance to complete the task, as needed
4. Closure	- Prompts students to reflect on what they have learned and practiced - Links new learning to prior learning	- Discuss or describe what they have learned or practiced - Discuss relationship of new learning to prior learning
5. Follow-up and preparation for next lesson	- Presents additional tasks or activities to practice same concepts - Introduces or lays groundwork for future tasks and learning objectives	- Complete additional tasks or activities - Take note to prepare for further learning

FIG. 3.7. Conceptual framework for lesson sequencing.

minutes to that total. This strategy gives teachers a way of estimating what can reasonably be accomplished in a single class period. A general rule to follow is that open-ended activities such as unstructured discussions of texts, group activities, peer response workshops, and student conferences frequently take much longer than teachers predict, partly because of the numerous unexpected questions that can emerge and partly because managing such activities requires added time. The same can often be said of untested classroom tasks (see chapter 4).

Related to the issue of time management is the principle that lessons should involve some degree of variety in terms of task type and interactional styles (Graves, 2000; Jensen, 2001).

In an ESL composition course, it is entirely appropriate that a significant amount of class time be dedicated to the practice of writing, to the discussion of writing processes, and to effective text construction strategies. At the same time, teachers should recognize that allocating large chunks of time to writing in class can result in unproductive use of instructional resources (e.g., teacher expertise, class discussion, peer interaction). The classroom should serve not only as a workshop environment, as Kroll (2001) maintained, but also as a setting for meaningful, socioliterate activity.

Similarly, because many composition courses are not only writing courses but also reading courses (see chapter 2), it is reasonable to dedicate a substantial portion of class time to responding to, analyzing, discussing, and writing about the required texts and genres featured in the syllabus (Feez, 1998; Glenn et al., 2004; Johns, 1997, 2003; Kroll, 2001; Williams, 1996). Class meetings should likewise reflect a careful balance between teacher talk and student talk, with group work, class discussion, and lecture appropriately balanced (Bamberg, 2003). Classroom activities also should be linked explicitly to one another and to the instructional objectives so that students can see that lessons are internally coherent and connected to both institutional goals and their own literacy goals (Benesch, 1996). Of course, implementing transitions to link lesson components and establish coherence requires skill on the part of the teacher, but transitions are a crucial part of the teaching process. Making explicit links is easier when classroom tasks have a discernible purpose and are introduced with transparent, easy-to-understand directions and procedures (see chapter 4).

Whenever practicable, lesson plans should involve careful, systematic thought about how classroom activities will be set in motion by the teacher and students. It also is sometimes necessary to have a contingency plan ready in the event that you have extra time or must abandon something you had planned because of some unexpected circumstance (Bailey, 1996; Ur, 1996). This alternate task or activity does not necessarily require elaborate advance preparation. Indeed, an alternate task could involve something as simple as asking students to compose a journal entry on the day's topic of discussion, free-write on an aspect of a recent reading assignment, or begin the next reading selection or homework exercise. The point here is that, although these are straightforward solutions to the problem of underplanning, they

may not seem so straightforward when you reach the end of your lesson plan with 10 or 15 minutes to spare. When armed with a practical contingency plan, teachers can implement them rather seamlessly while engaging student writers in a valuable and productive literacy task that accomplishes much more than filling an unexpected time gap.

The postlesson reflection phase of instructional planning should not be seen as an addendum. On the contrary, we should view postinstructional evaluation as an integral part of meeting course objectives and of promoting our own professional development (Bailey et al., 2001). Teachers can take simple yet productive steps to evaluate a lesson plan at the end of a class session. For example, you can decide whether you would repeat the same procedures if you were to teach the lesson a second time or if you would make changes. "Ask yourself how well students responded to the activities you planned and try to diagnose the causes of problems you encountered" (Omaggio Hadley, 2001, p. 464). In addition to recording what worked and what did not work so well, you can note how long each activity took for future reference. Many teachers use their postlesson observations and assessments as starting points for planning the next class period. This cyclical practice provides the teacher and his or her students with a sense of continuity from one meeting to the next, facilitating the process of tracking progress through the syllabus.⁶

We now turn to the central pedagogical task of lesson planning: laying out the actual procedures involved in teaching a group of students in a meaningful literacy event such as writing and providing them with substantive writing practice in the course of a class period. The framework in Fig. 3.7 presents a general outline for a lesson sequence (i.e., that part of the class period focused not on logistics but on teaching, learning, interaction, and literate activity, including the production of written discourse).

After whatever preliminary business precedes the actual lesson (see Fig. 3.6 and the explanation that follows it), the sequence ideally begins with a procedure in which students are asked to recall what they have learned or practiced previously. This phase does not necessarily require an elaborate, comprehensive review. It may involve a 5-minute task in which students write a quick summary of the preceding day's discussion of a reading selection, compose a three-sentence reaction to the instructor's feedback on their last writing assignment, or complete a simple quiz on the text to be discussed in groups that day. These straightforward

techniques can and should reactivate students' knowledge and awareness to facilitate the introduction of new knowledge and to promote the practice of new skills.

The preview phase is sometimes indistinguishable from the activation phase, although the preview phase tends to direct students' attention to what lies ahead. Activities that might logically follow the summary task described earlier could include a read-aloud of students' summaries in small groups or a brief discussion of the next writing assignment's literacy goals. A follow-up to students' three-sentence responses to comments on their essays may serve as an introduction to strategies for incorporating teacher feedback into a revised writing assignment. A review of reading quiz solutions would be a good way to use that exercise productively to initiate a more detailed analysis of the text or texts under study. Depending on students' understanding of the material at hand, this portion of the lesson could last from 5 to 15 minutes before giving way to the lesson core, in which new material is introduced and new skills are practiced.

At this point, the teacher might briefly expose his or her objectives to the students before getting into the heart of the lesson. In the case of the discussion of summaries and subsequent read-aloud activity, the teacher might initiate students into a writing assignment draft focused on the text that sparked the original discussion. One option would entail brainstorming writing topics, whereas another would involve instructing students to begin writing based on a choice of focused prompts. To use students' three-sentence reactions to essay feedback and his or her subsequent introduction to incorporation strategies, the teacher might instruct the class to begin working on revised drafts. Meanwhile, the teacher could discuss revision plans with students in mini-conferences. After correction of the reading quiz and a discussion of the solutions, the teacher might scaffold a class or group activity in which students perform a detailed analysis of the text. In all of these hypothetical situations, students become actively involved in tasks that require them not only to recycle familiar knowledge, but also to practice new skills and acquire new knowledge.

Like the activation and preview segments, the closure phase may require very little time. Closure is nonetheless an important process leading naturally and logically to the follow-up. In each case, closure may involve prompting students to identify what they have practiced and why, and clarifying for them the purposes that their work will serve. For the students who began

composing initial assignment drafts in class, a natural extension of this task would involve completing the drafts and eliciting peer responses to them at the next class meeting. Students who were given instruction on incorporating feedback and who conferenced with the instructor may be asked to complete their revisions and reflect on the value of the feedback process. In the case of the students who practiced with text analysis, the teacher may assign a brief, structured written analysis for the next class (see Application Activity 2.5). Alternatively, the teacher might ask writers to apply the same analytic techniques to a different but related text in preparation for a class discussion. In all of these scenarios, the conclusion of each lesson requires the application of previously introduced skills and knowledge, and the laying of groundwork for future learning.

At this juncture, it is worth reiterating several related points made earlier in this chapter. The first is that, as with designing course syllabi, constructing lesson plans and putting them into action requires flexibility if the teacher is to achieve instructional aims, satisfy student needs, and avoid persistent frustration. The second point concerns the planning framework described in the preceding section and schematized in Figs. 3.6 and 3.7: The lesson design scheme we have sketched is intended to provide a general heuristic for developing lessons and making them successful. It should not be applied zealously or rigidly. Whereas we do hold that structure is necessary in planning and teaching writing courses, that structure should be adjusted to accommodate the wide-ranging needs of students and the unexpected events that are inevitable in any classroom. To paraphrase Hillocks' (1995) notion of lesson planning, the most effective teacher of writing is the one who designs lessons as "trials," expects lessons to produce unanticipated results, and applies those results in subsequent teaching. It is through this process that we discover "new options" (p. 125).

SUMMARY

Syllabus design and implementation constitute complex tasks for many composition teachers. To make these tasks more manageable, this chapter explores principles and procedures for constructing syllabi, course outlines, and lesson plans as a direct function of identifiable student and institutional needs. We

present the following summary statements as a synthesis of the principles we have covered:

- A clear understanding of learners' backgrounds, needs, expectations, styles, and strategies, as well as institutional requirements (as identified in systematic and ongoing needs analysis) is crucial to the formulation of achievable course goals and instructional objectives.
- The most effective syllabi, course outlines, and lesson plans are those that accommodate multiple, recursive writing processes by allowing adequate time for reading and exploring genres, composing and revising drafts, giving and using feedback, and exploring new content.
- Maintaining a clear sense of instructional objectives in constructing daily lesson plans enables the teacher to effect coherent instruction by connecting tasks within lessons and by linking each lesson to past and future lessons.
- Flexibility is essential in all aspects of instructional planning.

REFLECTION AND REVIEW

1. In what ways can student background variables (e.g., primary language or languages, nature and length of prior education, educational and career goals, immigration status, motivational profile) affect students' potential performance in ESL and non-ESL literacy courses? How can a systematic characterization of students' backgrounds inform writing instruction?
2. Describe the roles played by goals and objectives in the planning of syllabi, course outlines, and lesson plans. Identify the advantages of linking goals and objectives to course content and classroom tasks.
3. In what ways can a syllabus and course outline assist the teacher in planning literacy instruction and writing practice? How can these tools assist students in their literacy skill development?
4. What are the principal components of a writing lesson?

LECTURE 35

PLANNING A WRITING COURSE I

Topics	Lecture Name	Topics	Books	Pages
190	35.Planning a Writing Course I	Introduction Planning a Writing Course	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (Eds.). (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press.	pp. 316
191		Ascertaining Goals and Institutional Constraints	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (Eds.). (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press.	pp. 316-317

192		Deciding on Theoretical Principles	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (Eds.). (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press. pp. 317-318
193		Planning Content	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (Eds.). (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press. pp. 318-319
194		Weighting the Elements	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press. PP. 319-320
195		Drawing up a Syllabus	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press. pp. 320-321

196		Selecting Materials	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press. pp. 321-322
197		Preparing Activities and Roles	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press. pp. 322
198		Choosing Types and Methods of Feedback	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press. pp. 322-323

CHAPTER 29

Ten Steps in Planning a Writing Course and Training Teachers of Writing

Ann Raimes

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, I gave papers called “The Neurosis of Lesson Planning” and “Anguish as a Second Language” in which I explored the fact that both learning and teaching a language promote anxiety. There is even more anxiety when writing is involved, especially when many teachers themselves do not feel entirely comfortable with writing in English, even if it is their native language. Today, with a burgeoning of conflicting theories, planning a writing course is like walking a minefield. It involves so many choices about where to go next, what is the best step to take, and what is the best route to the goal. Taking a wrong step in this context might not be as dire as stepping on a mine, but it can undermine our confidence and detonate our students’ resistance. So I have come up with ten steps that I hope can lead us to safer ground both in planning writing courses and in helping teachers to plan writing courses.

STEP 1: ASCERTAINING GOALS AND INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

When I began writing this paper, I listed only “ascertaining goals.” Then, as I worked on the paper, I found myself discussing under every heading the constraints imposed upon teachers by their institutions or, further afield, by ministries of education, examining and accreditation agencies, funding sources, and the like. Such constraints include assigned curricula, approved textbooks, and designated proficiency examinations; they lead to questions such as these about goals: Do your students have to pass an exam that values writing to a formula and rewards above all accuracy of grammar, spelling, and punctuation? Do they even have to compose at all, or just write sentences, judge grammaticality, or pick from multiple-choice responses? Do you want your students to write to demonstrate mastery of form, or to experiment with language, record experiences and reactions, and generate and

communicate ideas? Or do you want simply to increase their confidence in themselves as writers? Answering questions like these is a necessary first step in designing a course. And different answers will lead in different directions.

Students in a recent ESL class of mine wrote about the times when they wrote or spoke in English. They felt worried, embarrassed, hampered by barriers, restrictions, and fears. They felt their voice was monotonous: "I'm not the real me," said one. "I feel like I'm choking on a word that won't come out," said another. And one capped it all by saying, "Inside of me I feel stupid and dumb." This was owing mainly, it seems, not to the difficulty of writing itself but to the difficulty of doing it in a new language. When students wrote in their native language they felt, they said, "comfortable, free, self-assured, open, loud, and positive"; "I feel more like me"; "I can write with feelings and anger"; "Words just come out from my brain on paper." We can see that taking direction from these students and addressing comfort, confidence, and fluency as a goal would lead to a very different course from one that sees as its goal the production of an academic essay with an introduction, three points, and a conclusion, and effective use of transition words. And what if an imposed curriculum or textbook stresses only rhetorical form and grammatical accuracy? What is the teacher to do?

If institutional constraints limit our ability to pursue our goals and what we see as the students' goals, a few courses of action are open to us:

- We can work politically to change the constraints. We can join and form committees, we can make proposals, and we can run pilot projects. Pilot projects are a good way to test out alternate methods, since administrations do not view them as too threatening.
- We can make only a part of our course address the test or the assigned curriculum.
- We can avoid seeing ends as means. If a student has to learn how to write an essay in 30 minutes on a prescribed topic, that does not mean that the whole course should consist of 30-minute writing tasks. The ends dictate only the destination, not how we get there. We need to find ways to ensure that we vary our means of working toward the prescribed ends.

STEP 2: DECIDING ON THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES

Articles by Santos (1992), McKay (1993), Severino (1993), and Benesch (1993) have discussed the role of ideology in teaching writing. Terry Santos tells us that ESL composition "see[s] itself pragmatically" and so "avoid[s] ideology" (1992, p. 80). And some teachers insist that their teaching is not associated with ideology in any way. Those in my graduate course have said emphatically, "In my classroom I teach English and there's no ideology in that." But Sarah Benesch points out that "all forms of ESL instruction are ideological, whether or not educators are conscious of the political implications of their instructional choices" (1993, p. 705). She illustrates this with an analysis of English for academic purposes (EAP). She points out that in its attempts "to adapt students to the status quo" (p. 714) by presenting the demands of literacy as "positive artifacts of a normative academic culture" (p. 710), EAP turns toward "an accommodationist ideology" (p. 714), which prepares students to be assimilated into systems that instructors never question and that their students never examine critically. She claims, then, that all writing is ideological.

So teachers first need to confront their ideological position and recognize their perceptions of the relationship between the type of writing they teach and the roles they are preparing students for in academia and the wider world of work. The question of ideology

and who determines what is taught is a question of power and reflects local conditions. In the United States, teaching writing to immigrants and refugees raises issues of assimilation and accommodation which are obviously different from issues raised by teaching EFL writing in other parts of the world. Suresh Canagarajah discusses this in relation to Sri Lanka in a *TESOL Quarterly* article (1993). It is important for all of us to ask ourselves what English and what types of writing we teach, what content our students are exposed to, and what we expect our students to do with what they learn. What roles in society does our instruction prepare them for? How specific are the specific purposes of ESP (English for specific purposes), socioeconomically and politically?

Then, closely allied to ideology comes theory and our views of language, the nature of language learning, writing, and the nature of the learning of composition. Even if we never articulate our theories to ourselves, they become apparent to others in our syllabus and choice of materials and activities. Let's look at two examples of writing-class decisions: the use of text models and the choice of focus on content or form.

What are text models used for? Are they to be imitated or examined critically, analyzed, and compared? Fan Shen (1989) from the People's Republic of China has written about his experience learning English composition in the United States. He says that in Chinese, writers try to "reach a topic gradually and systematically." To him, the concept of a topic sentence stating the main idea of a paragraph right there up front is "symbolic of the values of a busy people in an industrialized society" (p. 462). As teachers, we have the choice of presenting a text structure as a given, as some kind of "standard," as a form to be learned and imitated, or going beyond that and exploring in our classes the notion that what writers do reflects an entire system of values and beliefs, with strong connections between the writing process and the beliefs of a culture. Sandra McKay claims that we need to examine the "social practices that surround academic discourse" (1993, p. 74), and we can do that by discussing openly in our classes the differences in approaches to writing and reading and critically examining the text forms that appear in our textbooks and curricular guides.

Another example of a writing-class decision that has clear links to theory is the choice of focus on content or form. A commitment to content, fluency, personal voice, and revising is often called *process writing*. But since all writing involves a process, whether teachers focus on it or not, I prefer to call this a *process approach to teaching writing* and to emphasize that when we pay attention to how a piece of writing is constructed, this is not necessarily at the expense of attention to the product. In addition, a process approach is not the same as an expressionist approach, focusing only on personal writing. A process approach to teaching writing can be used with personal and with academic content, with literature and with nonfiction. And in a process approach, of course the product and accuracy and grammar are important – they are just not the first and only thing that is important. A principled process approach always pays serious attention to the product – but at an appropriate stage in the process.

So what we decide to emphasize in the classroom is not just a practical matter of choosing an activity to fill the next day's lesson plan. Principled teaching will always reveal principled theoretical underpinnings. To detect these, I always ask the teachers in my teacher-training courses to ask themselves the following questions: Why am I doing this activity in my class? How does it fit into what I know about language and language learning? What will my students learn from it? What is it worth learning for?

STEP 3: PLANNING CONTENT

There's a healthy controversy about what the content of writing classes should be, and teachers use any or all of the following: personal experience, social issues, cultural issues, literature, or the content of other subject areas. There is no one right answer to the question

of content, but I will go so far as to say that there is one wrong answer. That wrong answer is that the content of a writing course takes a back seat to practice in prescribed models of paragraph or essay form; that is, that it does not matter what you write about as long as it conforms to an accepted rhetorical model. Why is that wrong? Because it misses the point about using writing as a unique tool for language learning. It returns to an early view of writing as one (and the least important) of the four language skills to be used to test that other skills have been mastered. It neglects the real value of writing: that it is a valuable tool for learning not only about subject matter, whatever the choice, but also about language. Writing is for discovery of learning, not just demonstration of learning. For writing, unlike speaking, provides us with a way not only to generate ideas before presenting them to an audience, but also to scrutinize the ideas and language we produce; this re-vision, this seeing again, lets us receive feedback from ourselves and others and, learning as we go, make changes and corrections. If we simply ask students to analyze, manipulate, and imitate given texts, we are not allowing them to grapple for that fit between content and form that all writers need to grapple with.

However, the question of content involves more than selecting content that is not based on rhetorical models of form. It involves also the question of what content will actively encourage students to use writing as a tool for learning and for communication and to become engaged enough with their writing to have an investment in examining it, improving it, and eventually revising it for readers. So when the pursuit of so-called objective academic content in a content-based approach leads to borrowing content from such areas as history and social sciences, this serves to shoulder out personal responses to the authentic academic issue of examining culture, identity, and language. Then a lot of the advantages of writing as a language learning tool bite the dust too. Although graduate courses might address specific genres as the focus of instruction, in large numbers of ESL and EFL writing courses, language learning rather than forms of written discourse is a major consideration. So students need topics that allow them to generate ideas, find the forms to fit the ideas, and invite risk taking.

STEP 4: WEIGHING THE ELEMENTS

Writing consists of many constituent parts and we need to consider which ones will be the most important for a course: content, organization, originality, style, fluency, accuracy, or using appropriate rhetorical forms of discourse. Obviously, unless a course lasts for years, we will not be able to do all these justice. So we have to form priorities and weight the elements according to students' needs and our own philosophy.

When I first began teaching ESL in the early 1960s, a writing course existed primarily as grammar practice. I would have students write dozens of sentences about John and Mary (and the tedious, boring lives they led) and eventually, with the advent of controlled and guided compositions, moved daringly into having them write paragraphs, but they were still working with content that was already provided for them on the page. Then came the idea that writing is generative of ideas, that it is a messy and chaotic process. Contrastive rhetoricians frequently graphically present a piece of writing in English as a straight line, but that is a depiction of the product, not the process. There are, unfortunately, no neat formulas for getting to an exquisite final product, one step at a time. Giving instruction in writing is not like giving instructions for assembling a toy or a mail-order computer. It is not simply a question of getting the right tools and following directions. If it were, more people would be good writers, and more teachers and textbook writers would be very rich. We must accept the chaotic and messy nature of writing—but teachers do not like chaos, so they have sought to impose order on it by focusing on grammar, rhetorical modes, and models of academic discourse, to provide themselves with neat systems to teach.

It is helpful to do a needs analysis on the first day, balancing institutional goals with what students say they need to learn and what they need to use writing for; then we can weight the elements so that the chaos of composing is somewhat reduced for the students, since they can focus on one or two things at a time. My ESL courses usually address a theme – culture and identity, or education, for example – and within that theme and within each task, students focus on critical reading, generating ideas and expressing them with clarity, organization, style, and accuracy. My students know that I see learning to write a lab report as a priority in a physics class, not in an ESL class.

STEP 5: DRAWING UP A SYLLABUS

The next question we ask after deciding on content and weighting the elements is how we will organize that content and the learning experiences in the classroom. In *The Language Teaching Matrix*, Richards (1990) lists the kinds of syllabi commonly found in speaking and listening courses in ESL. I will adapt his list to the types of syllabus organization for writing courses, from the traditional to the more current and innovative, with a lot of overlap:

1. *Structural*. Writing courses, particularly at beginning levels, can be organized around grammar and sentence patterns. A present tense paragraph one day, then a past tense paragraph, and so on. This was common in the 1960s, but is less so now. Structural courses nowadays are often organized by patterns of writing forms or genres: paragraphs with topic sentences, descriptions, analyses, and so on.
2. *Functional*. Writing courses can be organized around rhetorical activities: describing, telling a story, writing autobiography, comparing and contrasting, classifying, defining, explaining, arguing, persuading, or supporting a thesis with examples, illustrations, and other evidence.
3. *Topical*. A writing course can be organized around themes, such as housing, health, education, or abstractions such as *success* or *courage*. In the United States, ESL writing courses in college are often linked with a content course. At Hunter College in New York, students in an intermediate-level ESL course are also enrolled in “The Greek and Latin Roots of English” and many of the readings in that course are examined in more linguistic detail in the ESL course.
4. *Situational*. Writing courses can be organized around situational transactions, such as applying for a job, complaining to a landlord, writing letters to the newspaper, writing a business memo, or writing essays to pass a course.
5. *Skills and processes*. Writing courses can be organized around skills and processes such as generating ideas, organizing ideas, revising, writing fluently, writing effective beginnings and endings, and developing an argument to convince a reader.
6. *Tasks*. Writing courses can be organized around problem-solving activities, such as producing a class magazine of accounts of student trips; comparing the structure of texts written for different audiences and purposes; writing, editing, and producing a play; and examining the differences between ESL textbook situations and the expectations of the students’ culture.

Such a spread of choices is like going to a big food center. There is so much there that we do not know where to begin. I do not want to stick with Chinese noodles. I want satay and curry and those wonderful big prawns. With syllabus types, too, in practice, as Richards points out, a “combination of approaches is often used” (1990, pp. 9–10); what they are,

and in what proportion they are used, depends on our students, goals, theoretical principles, and institutional constraints. And we have to make a principled selection every time we plan a lesson or a course.

Learners do not have to be excluded from the process of syllabus design, though the traditional view, expressed by Reid (1993), is that a curriculum and syllabus “should be in place and ready to use before the ESL writing class meets for the first time” (p. 73). But if a needs assessment of the students who are actually in the classroom rather than a typical body of students is preferred, then syllabus planning can become more of a collaborative than a teacher-directed process.

The easy way out of syllabus design is, of course, to simply choose a book, and build a day-by-day syllabus around it. But then we give all our power of choice to a textbook writer who does not know our students. If the book we choose fits our theoretical philosophy, we will not feel too bound by the syllabus it imposes. If a book is assigned to a class, or a syllabus is prescribed, then we all learn to drop, add, cut, paste, and select. Creative adaptation and critical analysis become the order of the day. Canagarajah reports on textbooks assigned in Sri Lanka in which the situations “assume an urbanized, technological Western culture that is alien to the students” (1993, p. 609). But even with texts such as these, students do not have to just repeat and perform the assigned dialogues and exercises. The texts can also be used as material for critical analysis and comparison with local cultural and rhetorical norms.

STEP 6: SELECTING MATERIALS

Increasingly, teachers of writing are beginning to view the main texts of a writing class as what the students write and what the teachers write in response. Certainly, students and teachers generate a lot of words on the page for analysis, discussion, and revision. But to open up the classroom to shared experiences – to topics to stimulate writing – teachers turn to other materials, such as videos, software, and books. Then the materials have to fit as far as possible with the goals, principles, content, and weighting that we have already decided on. It just won’t work, for example, to decide that a process approach to writing will help our students with fluency and discovery of ideas and language, and then to use a book full of sentence-level grammar exercises with a few controlled compositions thrown in.

Before selecting a book, either as an individual or as a committee, it is advisable to take a section or a task or two and work through it to see what is asked for and what assumptions the author makes, because sometimes authors make claims on which they do not follow through. If you decide to use an ESL writing textbook and not books and articles written for authentic purposes, I would suggest looking for the following seven features:

1. *Topics.* Will they engage the students’ interests? What are they based on – experience, materials in the book such as readings and pictures, activities and inquiries beyond the classroom, or out-of-the-blue random topics? Are the topics culturally appropriate for your students? Is the content relevant and engaging?
2. *Types of writing.* Are the students writing essays, letters, or paragraphs? Is that what they need to be writing?
3. *Opportunities for and instruction in methods of generating ideas.* Which of the following are included: brainstorming, free writing, listing, mapping, outlining? Which are appropriate for your students?
4. *Instruction on principles of rhetorical organization.* What information is provided to help students organize various types of writing – letters, description, narration,

exposition, and argument, for example – and which types do your students need to practice?

5. *Opportunities for collaboration.* Is group work a part of the activities? If so, how are collaborative activities viewed in your culture?
6. *Opportunities for revision.* Are students encouraged and directed to write drafts? Does the book provide instruction on what to do at various stages? Does your curriculum allow for revision of essays?
7. *Instruction in editing and proofreading.* What can students learn from the book about how to edit their own work? What instruction is provided in finding and editing grammatical errors?

Once you have chosen a book, the task is not over. No time to relax. You still have to decide how to use it in the classroom.

STEP 7: PREPARING ACTIVITIES AND ROLES

In planning a lesson or a course, the tendency is for teachers to think about what they will be doing: presenting a lesson on paragraph organization, leading a class discussion on editing a student paper, and so on. One of my graduate students wrote in her journal: “I’m always scared that I’ll finish early and I won’t know what to do next.” What if we turn that around and ask what the students will be doing next? If we are presenting, the students are listening. If we have the right answers to the questions we ask, students become passive pawns in a guessing game.

There is a lot of theoretical talk about student-centered classrooms, and teachers can find out what that means when they analyze their own classes and their own experience as students. That is why it is important for teachers to be students, too – in their own classrooms, by writing reflective teaching journals, and, wherever possible, in another teacher’s classroom. When I took a course in elementary Japanese, the thing that frustrated me more than anything was the various systems for counting: different words for counting people, or cylindrical objects, or flat ones, or books, and so on. This was a result of the instructor’s adopting what Paulo Freire (1988) calls the “banking” concept of education: depositing knowledge in the learners’ heads. But this head was not ready for it, and in fact actively rejected it. I could not understand why I was not learning the one most useful system that would help me more than any other. Once resistance sets in, it is all over. We have to make sure that we do not try to bank too much in our students’ brains all at once. It helps if we think about what students will be doing and learning in the classroom rather than the comprehensiveness of the information we will be imparting.

STEP 8: CHOOSING TYPES AND METHODS OF FEEDBACK

Here each teacher has a lot of decisions to make: Will anyone respond, and if so, who? What will be the method and type of response – and what do I have time for? What is the purpose of my response?

First, in the case of large classes, not every piece of writing has to be corrected or even seen by the teacher. Students can do journal writing, response logs to reading, or free writing in which the aim is to generate ideas, and so increase fluency rather than accuracy. This writing can be for the student’s eyes only, or students can read each other’s work, with clear guidelines from the teacher about what to look for – not for accuracy, but for a response as a reader. If the teacher is to read the writing, the possible roles can be specified

LECTURE 36**PLANNING A WRITING COURSE II**

Topics	Lecture Name	Topics	Books	Pages
199	36.Planning a Writing Course II	Evaluating the Course	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press.	pp. 323-324
200		Reflecting the Teacher's Experience	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press.	p. 324
201		Planning	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press.	pp. 326

202		Drafting	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press. pp. 327
203		Responding and Revising	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press. pp. 327-328
204		Editing II	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press. pp. 328-329
205		Evaluating and Post Writing	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press. pp. 229-230

206		Implementing Process	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press. pp. 330-331
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and distinguished: general reader, helper, copy editor, or examiner. Then the teacher will not have to look for and comment on everything all at once, in one draft.

Second, whoever responds has a variety of physical methods of responding: a comment to or a conversation with the writer; an interlinear response with computer software, using such features as the “Comment” capability and redlining; an audiotaped response; or a written response. If you choose a written response, you can write a note to the student on a separate sheet of paper or on adhesive “Post-it notes”; you can write comments on the page; you can use an analytical checklist, or guidelines. But students have to understand what you are doing and why, and what you are *not* doing and why – and also what you will do on a later draft.

Third, you have to select the type of response you prefer to give, with time and class size being important factors in the decision. Some teachers do the following:

- They evaluate by giving a grade.
 - They locate, indicate the nature of, and/or correct the student’s errors.
 - They make suggestions for changes: “I think you need to rewrite the sentence about your boss so that we understand his point of view more clearly.”
 - They reflect – and subtly correct as they do so: “I’m not surprised that your grandmother felt upset.” (The student had actually written: “My grandmother *feeling* upset.”)
 - They rewrite passages: “I am easy to change a fuse.” → “Changing a fuse is easy.”
 - They comment on strategies: “It might be useful to define the term *success*.”
 - They ask questions: “Where was your grandmother born?”
 - They emote: “What a terrible experience!” “I feel this way, too.”
 - They criticize: “The conclusion is weak. It introduces new points.”
 - They describe: “You start out by mentioning four ways in which language learning is beneficial. Then you provide two specific examples.”
 - (less frequently) They praise: “The paragraph about your aunt’s language learning experience makes its point very strongly through the story you tell.”
- I used to type up student sentences with errors in them for the whole class to edit. Now, to emphasize the positive, I type up those that work well and we discuss these “winners.”

Fourth, you and your students need to agree on the purpose of the response. The key question here is: What are the students supposed to do next? Does the feedback help them do that? If we fail to make our expectations clear, we have only ourselves to blame if the students cast a mere cursory glance at all our hard work and file it in the circular file.

STEP 9: EVALUATING THE COURSE

Teachers use sentence tests and essay tests to evaluate students’ progress. They use the results of these tests in addition to questionnaires and their own reflective logs to evaluate their own success as teachers. One form of evaluation that is becoming increasingly popular in writing courses actually helps to combine student evaluation and course evaluation: the use of portfolios. All semester students work on multiple drafts of their writing, which are guided by their instructor but not graded. At the end, they select three or four specified types of writing to include in the portfolio, both in-class writing and revised work. They write a cover letter assessing their work and their progress and what they have learned in the course. The portfolio is then evaluated by another instructor in the program, who assigns a grade. So the original instructor is coach, not evaluator. These portfolios lead students to want to revise, to present their best work. They also provide a valuable ongoing

teacher-training tool, since teachers continually discuss appropriate assignments and the qualities of acceptable and good writing. They also see what colleagues assign and how they respond to student writing – a salutary lesson.

Probably, enough problematic considerations about planning a writing course have been presented to give you food for thought for a while. But let's round off our steps with one last, vital step.

STEP 10: REFLECTING THE TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE

Goals, theories, content, focus, syllabus, materials, activities, feedback, and course evaluation are substantive matters that we have to address whenever we design a writing course, but they pale into insignificance beside one thing: ourselves and our experience. In fact, we should begin – not end – with that. Teachers do not always consider themselves researchers. But any teacher who ponders why one class or activity works and another does not, any teacher who tests out a new approach and notes its effects, is a researcher, theorist, and practitioner – a busy person. We need to have confidence in what is called variously “the wisdom of practice” (Shulman, 1987, p. 11) or “a teacher's sense of plausibility about teaching” (Prabhu, 1990, p. 172). The best way for a teacher to record this sense of plausibility and analyze it is, of course, through writing. A key component of any teacher-training course should therefore be a massive amount of writing: reflective teaching logs, reports, essays, research papers, and responses to other teachers' and students' writing, with the hope that teachers in writing courses will then write along with their students and present their own writing for discussion. That way, we will keep in the forefront what we and our students learn and experience as we work together, and we will let that set the framework for the other nine steps in planning a writing course.

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CHAPTER 30

The Writing Process and Process Writing

Anthony Seow

INTRODUCTION

The writing process as a private activity may be broadly seen as comprising four main stages: planning, drafting, revising and editing. As depicted in Figure 1, the stages are neither sequential nor orderly. In fact, as research has suggested, ‘many good writers employ a recursive, non-linear approach – writing of a draft may be interrupted by more planning, and revision may lead to reformulation, with a great deal of recycling to earlier stages’ (Krashen, 1984, p. 17).

PROCESS WRITING

The term *process writing* has been bandied about for quite a while in ESL classrooms. It is no more than a *writing process approach* to teaching writing. The idea behind it is not really to dissociate writing entirely from the written product and to merely lead students

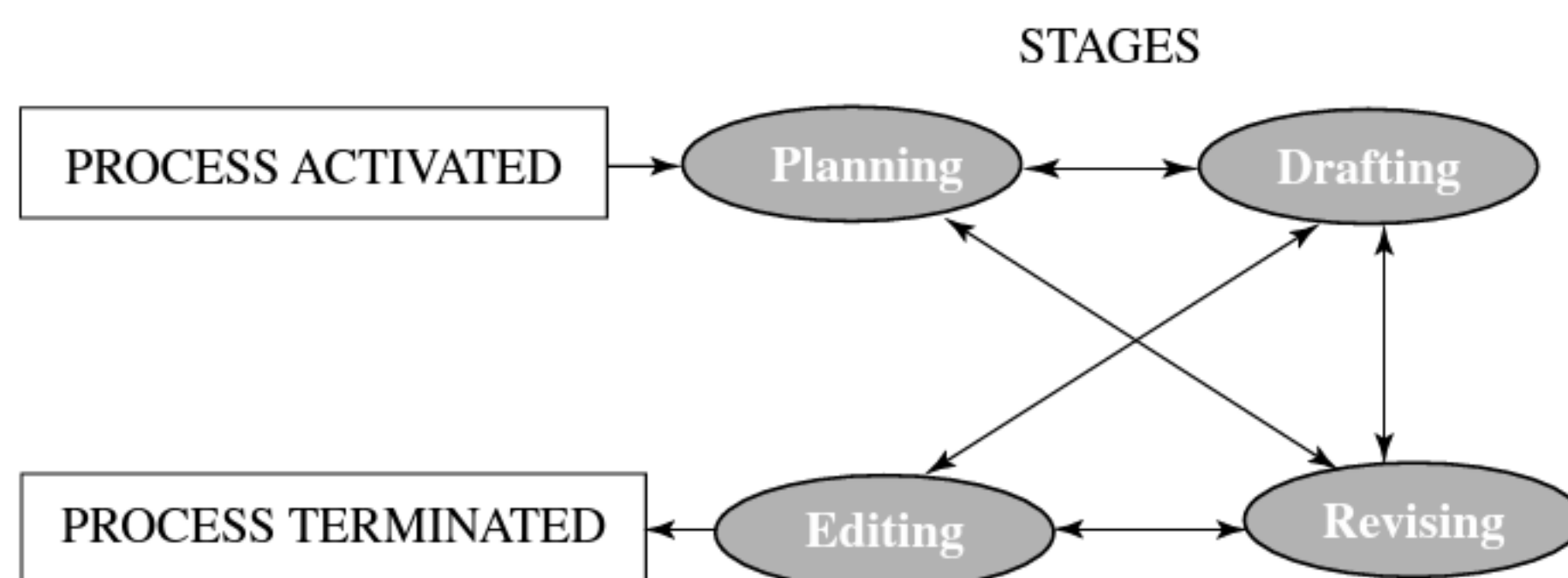


Figure 1 The Writing Process

through the various stages of the writing process but ‘to construct process-oriented writing instruction that will affect performance’ (Freedman, Dyson, Flower, & Chafe, 1987, p. 13). To have an effective performance-oriented teaching programme would mean that we need to systematically teach students problem-solving skills connected with the writing process that will enable them to realise specific goals at each stage of the composing process. Thus, process writing in the classroom may be construed as a programme of instruction which provides students with a series of planned learning experiences to help them understand the nature of writing at every point.

Process writing as a classroom activity incorporates the four basic writing stages – planning, drafting (writing), revising (redrafting) and editing – and three other stages externally imposed on students by the teacher, namely, responding (sharing), evaluating and post-writing. Process writing in the classroom is highly structured as it necessitates the *orderly* teaching of process skills, and thus it may not, at least initially, give way to a free variation of writing stages cited earlier. Teachers often plan appropriate classroom activities that support the learning of specific writing skills at every stage. The planned learning experiences for students may be described as follows.

PLANNING (PRE-WRITING)

Pre-writing is any activity in the classroom that encourages students to write. It stimulates thoughts for getting started. In fact, it moves students away from having to face a blank page toward generating tentative ideas and gathering information for writing. The following activities provide the learning experiences for students at this stage:

GROUP BRAINSTORMING

Group members spew out ideas about the topic. Spontaneity is important here. There are no right or wrong answers. Students may cover familiar ground first and then move off to more abstract or wild territories.

CLUSTERING

Students form words related to a stimulus supplied by the teacher. The words are circled and then linked by lines to show discernible clusters. Clustering is a simple yet powerful strategy: “Its visual character seems to stimulate the flow of association . . . and is particularly good for students who know what they want to say but just can’t say it” (Proett & Gill, 1986, p. 6).

RAPID FREE WRITING

Within a limited time of 1 or 2 minutes, individual students freely and quickly write down single words and phrases about a topic. The time limit keeps the writers’ minds ticking and thinking fast. Rapid free writing is done when group brainstorming is not possible or because the personal nature of a certain topic requires a different strategy.

WH-QUESTIONS

Students generate *who*, *why*, *what*, *where*, *when* and *how* questions about a topic. More such questions can be asked of answers to the first string of *wh*-questions, and so on. This can go on indefinitely.

In addition, ideas for writing can be elicited from multimedia sources (e.g., printed material, videos, films), as well as from direct interviews, talks, surveys, and questionnaires.

Students will be more motivated to write when given a variety of means for gathering information during pre-writing.

DRAFTING

Once sufficient ideas are gathered at the planning stage, the first attempt at writing – that is, drafting – may proceed quickly. At the drafting stage, the writers are focused on the fluency of writing and are not preoccupied with grammatical accuracy or the neatness of the draft. One dimension of good writing is the writer's ability to visualise an audience. Although writing in the classroom is almost always for the teacher, the students may also be encouraged to write for different audiences, among whom are peers, other classmates, pen-friends and family members. A conscious sense of audience can dictate a certain style to be used. Students should also have in mind a central idea that they want to communicate to the audience in order to give direction to their writing.

Depending on the genre of writing (narrative, expository or argumentative), an introduction to the subject of writing may be a *startling statement* to arrest the reader's attention, a *short summary* of the rest of the writing, an *apt quotation*, a *provocative question*, a *general statement*, an *analogy*, a *statement of purpose*, and so on. Such a strategy may provide the lead at the drafting stage. Once a start is made, the writing task is simplified 'as the writers let go and disappear into the act of writing' (D'Aoust, 1986, p. 7).

RESPONDING

Responding to student writing by the teacher (or by peers) has a central role to play in the successful implementation of process writing. Responding intervenes between drafting and revising. It is the teacher's *quick initial reaction* to students' drafts. Response can be oral or in writing, after the students have produced the first draft and just before they proceed to revise. The failure of many writing programmes in schools today may be ascribed to the fact that responding is done in the final stage when the teacher simultaneously *responds* and *evaluates*, and even *edits* students' finished texts, thus giving students the impression that nothing more needs to be done.

Text-specific responses in the form of helpful suggestions and questions rather than 'rubber-stamped' comments (such as 'organisation is OK', 'ideas are too vague' etc.) by the teacher will help students rediscover meanings and facilitate the revision of initial drafts. Such responses may be provided in the margin, between sentence lines or at the end of students' texts. Peer responding can be effectively carried out by having students respond to each other's texts in small groups or in pairs, with the aid of the checklist in Table 1 (adapted from Reinking & Hart, 1991).

REVISING

When students revise, they review their texts on the basis of the feedback given in the responding stage. They reexamine what was written to see how effectively they have communicated their meanings to the reader. Revising is not merely checking for language errors (i.e., editing). It is done to improve global content and the organisation of ideas so that the writer's intent is made clearer to the reader.

TABLE 1. PEER RESPONDING CHECKLIST

When responding to your peer's draft, ask yourself these questions:

- What is the greatest strength of this composition?
 - What is its greatest weakness?
 - What is the central idea of this composition?
 - Which are the ideas which need more elaboration?
 - Where should more details or examples be added? Why?
 - What are some of the questions that the writer has not answered?
 - At which point does this composition fail to hold the reader's interest? Why?
 - Where is the organisation confusing?
 - Where is the writing unclear or vague?
-

To ensure that rewriting does not mean recopying, Beck (1986, p. 149) suggests that the teacher collect and keep the students' drafts and ask them for rewrites. 'When the students are forced to act without their original drafts, they become more familiar with their purposes and their unique messages. . . . The writers move more ably within their topics, and their writing develops tones of confidence and authority'.

Another activity for revising may have the students working in pairs to read aloud each other's drafts before they revise. As students listen intently to their own writing, they are brought to a more conscious level of rethinking and reseeing what they have written. Meanings which are vague become more apparent when the writers actually hear their own texts read out to them. Revision often becomes more voluntary and motivating. An alternative to this would be to have individual students read their own texts into a tape recorder and take a dictation of their own writing later. Students can replay the tape as often as necessary and activate the pause button at points where they need to make productive revision of their texts.

EDITING

At this stage, students are engaged in tidying up their texts as they prepare the final draft for evaluation by the teacher. They edit their own or their peer's work for grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction, sentence structure and accuracy of supportive textual material such as quotations, examples and the like. Formal editing is deferred till this phase in order that its application not disrupt the free flow of ideas during the drafting and revising stages.

A simple checklist might be issued to students to alert them to some of the common surface errors found in students' writing. For instance:

- Have you used your verbs in the correct tense?
- Are the verb forms correct?
- Have you checked for subject–verb agreement?
- Have you used the correct prepositions?
- Have you left out the articles where they are required?
- Have you used all your pronouns correctly?

- Is your choice of adjectives and adverbs appropriate?
- Have you written in complete sentences?

The students are, however, not always expected to know where and how to correct every error, but editing to the best of their ability should be done as a matter of course, prior to submitting their work for evaluation each time. Editing within process writing is meaningful because students can see the connection between such an exercise and their own writing in that correction is not done for its own sake but as part of the process of making communication as clear and unambiguous as possible to an audience.

EVALUATING

Very often, teachers pleading lack of time have compressed responding, editing and evaluating all into one. This would, in effect, deprive students of that vital link between drafting and revision – that is, responding – which often makes a big difference to the kind of writing that will eventually be produced.

In evaluating student writing, the scoring may be analytical (i.e., based on specific aspects of writing ability) or holistic (i.e., based on a global interpretation of the effectiveness of that piece of writing). In order to be effective, the criteria for evaluation should be made known to students in advance. They should include overall interpretation of the task, sense of audience, relevance, development and organisation of ideas, format or layout, grammar and structure, spelling and punctuation, range and appropriateness of vocabulary, and clarity of communication. Depending on the purpose of evaluation, a numerical score or grade may be assigned.

Students may be encouraged to evaluate their own and each other's texts once they have been properly taught how to do it. In this way, they are made to be more responsible for their own writing.

POST-WRITING

Post-writing constitutes any classroom activity that the teacher and students can do with the completed pieces of writing. This includes publishing, sharing, reading aloud, transforming texts for stage performances, or merely displaying texts on notice-boards. The post-writing stage is a platform for recognising students' work as important and worthwhile. It may be used as a motivation for writing as well as to hedge against students finding excuses for not writing. Students must be made to feel that they are writing for a very real purpose.

IMPLEMENTING PROCESS WRITING

Here are some pointers which teachers may like to take note of when implementing process writing:

TEACHER MODELLING

Teachers should model the writing process at every stage and teach specific writing strategies to students through meaningful classroom activities.

RELATING PROCESS TO PRODUCT

A first draft looks quite unlike another draft that has gone through several revisions. It is vital that as students go through the various stages of writing, they understand what kind of product is expected at each stage. Thus students need to be guided to set and achieve specific writing goals at every stage.

WORKING WITHIN INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

It is possible to teach some process skills appropriate to a writing stage, be it planning, drafting, responding, revising or editing within a regular two-period composition lesson. The teaching of the same process skill could be repeated in subsequent composition lessons. Process skills can be systematically taught each time until the entire series of such skills is developed over a period of time.

CATERING TO DIVERSE STUDENT NEEDS

The teacher should implement a flexible programme to cater to different student needs. The teacher will need to know what the individual student knows and work from there. The teacher may also decide to have students enter into different writing groups as planners, drafters, responders, revisers or editors during a writing session. A student may be with the planners for one writing task, but move to be with the editors later for the same or another task, according to his or her need or developmental stage in writing.

EXPLOITING THE USE OF COMPUTERS IN PROCESS WRITING

Many word-processing programmes are user-friendly enough for students to handle. Their direct application to process writing, especially for the purposes of drafting, revising and editing, is rewarding for both the teacher and the students. The teacher can teach responding or editing skills via the computer hooked on to an overhead projector. The students can freely make any number of changes to their texts by deleting words or moving them around without having to retype large chunks of text all over again. Any work done can be saved on the computer for revision later.

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LECTURE 37

TEACHING STUDENTS TO SELF-EDIT

Topics	Lecture Name	Topics	Books	Pages
207	37.Teaching Students to Self-edit	Introduction Teaching Students to Self-edit	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press.	pp. 338
208		Focusing on Form	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press.	pp. 339
09		Recognizing Major Error Types	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press.	pp. 340-341

210		Self-Editing Practice	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press. pp. 342-343
211		Does This Editing Approach Work?	Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge university press. pp. 344

CHAPTER 32

Teaching Students to Self-Edit

Dana Ferris

INTRODUCTION

Over the past couple of decades, the process approach to teaching writing has greatly improved both L1 and L2 composition pedagogy. However, though students may be much better at invention, organization, and revision than they were before, too many written products are still riddled with grammatical and lexical inaccuracies. No matter how interesting or original a student's ideas are, an excess of sentence- and discourse-level errors may distract and frustrate instructors and other readers. Because this may lead to harsh evaluation of the student's overall writing abilities, ESL writing teachers, in addition to focusing on students' ideas, need to help students develop and improve their editing skills.

In the modern process approach composition classroom, editing refers to finding and correcting grammatical, lexical, and mechanical errors before submitting (or "publishing") a final written product. A number of studies claim that a lack of grammatical accuracy in ESL student writing may impede students' progress in the university at large (Janopolous, 1992; Santos, 1988; Vann, Lorenz, & Meyer, 1991; Vann, Meyer, & Lorenz, 1984). As a university-level ESL writing teacher, I know the high standard of accuracy in student writing that the academic discourse community demands. My students will not succeed outside of the sheltered world of the ESL class unless they can learn to reduce their errors. Because I will not always be there to help my students, it is important that they learn to edit their own work.

As shown by several ESL editing textbooks (Ascher, 1993; Fox, 1992; Lane & Lange, 1993; Raimes, 1992a) and a teacher's reference on responding to ESL writing (Bates, Lane, & Lange, 1993), researchers and teachers of ESL writing have become more aware of the need to help students self-edit their writing (Lane & Lange, 1993, p. xix). In response to this need, I have developed and used a semester-long editing process approach to help advanced ESL writing students become more self-sufficient as editors. The particulars of this approach follow.

PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

I based my editing process approach on the following principles:

- Students and teachers should focus on major patterns of error rather than attempt to correct every single error (Bates, Lane, & Lange, 1993).
- Because not all students will make the same errors, it is necessary and desirable to personalize editing instruction as much as possible.
- The errors to focus on should be those that are most frequent, global (interfere with the comprehensibility of the text), and stigmatizing (would cause a negative evaluation from native speakers) (Bates, Lane, & Lange, 1993; Hendrickson, 1980).

THE EDITING PROCESS

Bates, Lane, and Lange (1993) and Hendrickson (1980) advocate teaching students a discovery approach through which they will become independent self-editors. I teach my advanced ESL students through a three-stage discovery approach to become self-sufficient editors.

STAGE 1: FOCUSING ON FORM

Although some teachers assume that all ESL students are obsessively concerned with grammar to the detriment of developing and presenting their ideas, I have found that many students have little interest in and pay limited attention to editing their work. They find editing tedious or unimportant or they have become overly dependent on teachers or tutors to correct their work for them. A crucial step in teaching students to become good editors is to convince them of the necessity of doing so.

To raise awareness of the importance of editing, I use in-class activities in which the students look at sentences or short student essays that contain a variety of editing problems. Rather than simply finding and correcting errors, they discuss how these errors impede their understanding of the texts, as in the following three examples:

1. My *parent* always gave me a lot of love.
2. School is the place where I *learn* things such as reading and writing.
3. I like coffee; *on the other hand*, I also like tea.

The italicized portions of these three sentences contain common ESL writing errors: respectively, an omitted plural marker, a verb tense error, and a misused transitional phrase. However, none of the sentences immediately appears ungrammatical – *parent* can be singular; the two verbs in Example 2 are both in present tense and thus appear consistent; and *on the other hand* does signal a clause expressing a different viewpoint from the one preceding it. But once the students look closely at the texts, they can see that the use of *parent* is confusing and nonidiomatic (if you really had only one parent, you would identify him or her as your father or mother), that they learned to read and write a long time ago in school, and that liking coffee is not the opposite of liking tea, as implied by the use of *on the other hand*. Even fairly minor errors can lead to problems in text processing and comprehension.

Another strategy I use to convince the students of the necessity of developing editing skills is to give them a diagnostic essay assignment and then provide them with written feedback about their ideas, detailed information about their editing problems, and an indication of what grade they would receive if still writing at this level at the end of the semester. Giving students an immediate sense of what their final grade could be is motivating, but

does not seem to be intimidating if it is made clear that these initial grades are for the students' information only and will not be counted in their final course evaluation.

STAGE 2: RECOGNIZING MAJOR ERROR TYPES

Research indicates that focusing on patterns of error, rather than on individual errors, is most effective for both teachers and students, so at this stage I train students to recognize various types of errors. The categories may vary depending on the students' needs, but they should be selected from error types which are frequent, global, and stigmatizing. I sensitize students to these error patterns by going over the targeted categories, letting them practice identifying them in sample student essays, and then looking for these errors in peer-editing exercises (see Activities 1 and 2). It seems to be true that it is easier to find mistakes in others' work than in one's own. Exercises in recognizing error patterns of other writers' work help students become more aware of similar problems in their own writing. They also help lead students away from the frustrating and even counterproductive notion that they can or should attempt to correct every single error in a given essay draft.

During this stage of the editing process, I may also give brief, focused instruction on major patterns of error if there are particular errors to which most students are prone. For instance, students may be confused about when to use the simple past tense and when to use the present perfect. In-class instruction should deal directly with this difficulty, rather than attempting to give students a complete overview of the English verb tense system or even of the various uses of the present perfect. (See Activity 3, which provides an example of an overview of noun error problems: This activity takes 15–20 minutes.)

Activity 1

Editing: Major Error Categories

Type 1: Nouns

- *Noun endings*
I need to buy some *book*.
I gained a lot of *knowledges* in high school.
- *Articles*
I need to buy $\wedge$ *book*.
A good *jobs* is hard to find.

Type 2: Verbs

- *Subject-verb agreement*
The boys *was* hungry.
That TV show *come* on at 8:00.
Many students in the class *is* failing.
- *Verb tense*
Last year I *come* to Sac State.
I've never been to Disney World, but I *had been* to Disneyland before.
- *Verb form*
My car *was stole*.
My mother *is miss* her children.

Type 3: Punctuation and Sentence Structure

- *Sentence fragments*
Wrong: *After I got home*. I washed the dishes.
Right: After I got home, I washed the dishes.

- *Comma errors*

When I got home ^ I discovered my house was on fire.
 I studied hard for the test ^ but I still got a bad grade.
 I studied hard for the test, I still got a bad grade.

- *Run-on sentences*

I studied hard for the test I still got a bad grade.

- *Semicolon errors*

Although I studied hard for the test; I still got a bad grade.
 I studied hard for the test ^ I still got a bad grade.

Type 4: Word Form Errors

Examples:

My father is very *generosity*.

Intelligent is importance for academic success.

Type 5: Preposition Errors

Examples:

I do a lot of work *on* volunteer organizations.

For an American, I like baseball and hot dogs.

Editing Worksheet

Instructions: Read the sample essay. First, find all the nouns, and underline any noun errors. Then do the same with verbs, punctuation/sentence structure, word forms, and prepositions. Count the errors of each type and fill in the worksheet below. Turn in both your marked essay and this worksheet.

Type 1: Noun Errors

Total number of noun errors in essay: _____

Write one example from the essay. Underline the error.

Type 2: Verb Errors

Total number of verb errors in essay: _____

Write one example from the essay. Underline the error.

Type 3: Punctuation and Sentence Structure

Total number of punctuation errors in essay: _____

Write one example from the essay. Underline the error.

Type 4: Word Forms

Total number of word-form errors in essay: _____

Write one example from the essay. Underline the error.

Type 5: Prepositions

Total number of preposition errors in essay: _____

Write one example from the essay. Underline the error.

Note: The categories for this activity were taken from Fox, 1992.

An alternative to whole-class instruction is to individualize editing instruction with an editing handbook (e.g., Ascher, 1993; Fox, 1992; Lane & Lange, 1993; Raimes, 1992b). A handbook is distinct from an ESL text, which attempts to provide comprehensive coverage of grammatical concepts, as opposed to focusing on specific writing problems students may have. In addition, many ESL writing textbooks include an editing section (e.g., Raimes,

1992a; Spack, 1990). When using an editing handbook, I give students homework assignments that correspond to their particular area(s) of need as shown in their essay drafts.

Activity 2

Peer-/Self-Editing Workshop

Your Name: _____

Writer's Name: _____

Instructions: Read your partner's second essay, looking specifically for errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Mark the paper using the following symbols:

- If there is a spelling error, circle it.
- If there is a grammar error, underline the word or phrase that has the problem.
- If there is a missing word, put a ^ to show that something is missing.

After you have read and marked the essay, complete the worksheet below.

Error Types

Type 1 (Noun Errors)

Total number found in essay: _____

Example (from essay): _____

Type 2 (Verb Errors)

Total number found in essay: _____

Example (from essay): _____

Type 3 (Punctuation and Sentence Structure Errors)

Total number found in essay: _____

Example (from essay): _____

Type 4 (Word Form Errors)

Total number found in essay: _____

Example (from essay): _____

Type 5 (Preposition errors)

Total number found in essay: _____

Example (from essay): _____

STAGE 3: SELF-EDITING PRACTICE

In the final phase, I require students to find and correct errors in their own and other students' essay drafts (see Activity 2). Also, throughout the semester, students keep a log of their error frequencies in the different categories so they can observe their progress. As the semester progresses and the students get more and more editing practice, I gradually decrease the amount of editing feedback I provide and turn the editing task over first to peer editors and then to the writers themselves.

Activity 3**Grammar Focus: Nouns**

- I. Definitions: A noun is a word that names a person, place, object, idea, emotion, or quantity.
Nouns may be concret: physical, can be touched, seen, felt, etc. (book, table, gas).
Nouns may be abstract: nonphysical (friendship, sadness, hope).
Both concrete and abstract nouns can be classified into two types:
- count nouns: may be counted (apples, students, chairs)
 - noncount nouns: are not counted (money, coffee, happiness)
- II. Noun trouble spots for ESL writers
- A. Plural nouns must have plural markers:
1. English teachers are good spellers.
 2. One of the ways to improve your spelling is to study hard.
- B. Subject nouns must agree in number with their verbs.
1. *One* of the reasons I came here *is* to study English.
 2. *People* who emigrate to the United States *are* usually very happy.
 3. English *teachers are* good spellers.
- C. *Singular count nouns must* be preceded by a determiner (*a/an, the, some, my, this, that, one, etc.*).
1. I have *a friend*.
 2. My friend owns *a car*.
 3. *The car* is old.
 4. She bought *her car a long time ago*.
 5. *Some people* think she should get *a new car*.
 6. *These people* have more money than she does.

Exercises: Find and Correct the Noun Errors.

1. One of the way teacher helps her students is to talk to them outside of class.
2. Teacher in general are very hardworking.
3. This is the reason that many people don't want to become teacher.
4. Each of the students is important to a good teacher.
5. Student should come to class every day and always do homework.
6. Students should treat their teacher with respect at all time.
7. Student who come to United States have to learn English.
8. Students is very nervous.
9. A teacher who gives a lot of high grade is good teacher.
10. All of student should give presents to their teacher at the end of the semester.

DOES THIS EDITING APPROACH WORK?

I have developed the various components of this approach over several years. In order to assess its effectiveness, I undertook two small research projects (Ferris, 1994). The first showed that nearly all students analyzed (twenty-eight to thirty) made significant progress in reducing their percentages of errors in five error categories over the course of a semester.

However, their degree of improvement varied across error types, essay topics, and writing context (in or out of class). As a result, I modified my instructional approach to editing during the following semester to allow for a more individualized treatment of student editing problems. Specifically, I gave the students individual editing assignments from a text (Fox, 1992) when each essay draft was returned, rather than providing in-class grammar-focus presentations. Research on the effects of this change is ongoing, but preliminary results indicate that student improvement was even greater than with the prior approach.

Editing is an aspect of the writing process which has been somewhat neglected by ESL writing teachers and researchers. With the introduction of new techniques and tools (such as editing handbooks) to help students edit better (and research and teacher-training books to support these efforts), working on students' sentence-level needs is likely to become a more successful and satisfying enterprise than it has been. Although we should not return to the excesses of previous generations (attempting to mark and eradicate every single error student writers make), our goal should be to have our students become skillful independent editors who can function beyond the ESL writing class.

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LECTURE 38

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES IN ESL WRITING

Topics	Lecture Name	Topics	Books	Pages
212	38.Theoretical and Practical Issues in ESL Writing	The Value of Theoretical Knowledge	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 2-3
213		Theory and Research in ESL Composition	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 3-6
214		Issues and Methods in L2 Writing	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 9-10

215		Shifts in Pedagogical Focus	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 10-14
216		Prior Knowledge and Its Implications for the Teaching of L2 Writing	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 15-16
217		Contrastive Rhetoric and Its Implications for Teaching ESL Writing	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 17-20
218		The Uniqueness Of ESL Writers: Classroom Implications	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 21-24

Chapter 1

Theoretical and Practical Issues in ESL Writing

Questions for Reflection

- What do you remember about the primary language writing instruction you received during your primary, secondary, college, or even graduate education? What were the principal features of the method or methods used by your instructors?
- What aspects of that writing instruction contributed most (or least) to your expertise as a writer in your primary language? Why?
- In your experience as a writer, have you become aware of any explicit or implicit theories of writing that might have motivated the instruction you received? Were there any instances in your formal education in which writing teachers exposed their philosophy concerning the teaching of writing? If so, what were the stated principles and how did they influence your learning?
- If you have received formal instruction in a foreign or second language, were you provided training as a writer of that language? If so, compare that experience to your experience as an apprentice writer in your primary language. Describe specific similarities and differences.

THE VALUE OF THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE

Teacher preparation manuals conventionally begin with a theoretical background that explains and justifies the premises of the instructional approaches to be presented. This practice sometimes frustrates pre- and in-service teachers who may wish to forgo a careful study of abstract theories in favor of acquiring practical strategies for effective classroom teaching. This book aims to provide its readers with a principled set of instructional tools for teaching writing to secondary and postsecondary learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL).¹ To achieve this goal, we first lay a foundation of theoretical principles and historical precedents so that readers can make informed decisions about the pedagogical processes and procedures presented throughout the chapters of this book. By acquainting themselves with the historical and philosophical origins of the discipline of second language (L2) writing, readers can approach current instructional paradigms from a well-grounded, critical standpoint (Matsuda, 2003b; Polio, 2003).

We believe that the development of effective instructional skills for the L2 composition classroom relies partly on an explicit awareness of the fundamental precepts that guide prevailing beliefs and practices in the field (Hedgcock, 2002; Kroll, 2003b). Our current understanding of composing processes and methods for teaching them is evolving and disparate. Consequently, teachers must “consider a variety of approaches, their underlying assumptions, and the practices that each philosophy generates” (Raimes, 1991, p. 412). A knowledge of formally articulated paradigms, theories, models, and precepts enables teachers to discover and build on their own theories (Grabe & Kaplan, 1997; Johnson, 1996; Tsui, 1996; Yates & Muchisky, 2003). This knowledge also enables teachers to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of their own teaching, a dimension of teacher education that encourages teachers “to become critical and reflective practitioners, researchers of their own professional life, and agents of change” (van Lier, 1994, p. 7).

Formal theories, in tandem with the insights of empirical research, can and should play a vital role in our thinking about instructional planning, practice, and assessment (Sasaki, 2000). In a persuasive argument for the utility of theory in composition

teaching, Zebroski (1986) characterized the ways in which theory served his day-to-day teaching:

Theory has helped me to excavate and to uncover my own assumptions about writing. It has aided me in crafting a more coherent and unified course structure. It has encouraged me to try out some new methods of teaching writing. It has helped me to relinquish control and to emphasize classroom community. (p. 58)

Instead of viewing theory as abstract and distant from the challenges we face as novice and expert teachers, we should recognize its enormous practical utility: Without the knowledge provided by theoretical principles, we lose sight of a crucial tool for responsible instructional planning and classroom decision making. As Lewin (1951), a pioneer in social psychology, wrote, "There is nothing so practical as good theory" (p. 7).

THEORY AND RESEARCH IN ESL COMPOSITION INSTRUCTION

Despite its brief history as a discipline, L2 writing lacks a tidy corpus of conclusive theory and research on which to base a straightforward introduction to processes of learning and teaching. The field can boast an impressive body of research, yet a single, comprehensive theory of L2 writing is perhaps a long way off—if, in fact, a singular theory is even a suitable aim. Indeed, Cumming and Riazi (2000) cautiously observed that the field currently lacks a coherent understanding of "how people actually learn to write in a second language" and of how teaching contributes to this learning (p. 57).

Nonetheless, L2 writing instruction as a discipline is far from atheoretical. Substantive L2 composition research did not appear until the 1980s, but its current theoretical frameworks can be traced to advances in first language (L1) rhetoric and composition research, applied linguistics, and TESOL (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, 1997; Hedgcock, in press; Leki, 2000; Matsuda, 1998, 1999, 2003a, 2003b; Raimes, 1991, 1998). The following sections examine major approaches to L1 rhetoric and composition, focusing on those paradigms and approaches that have played influential roles in shaping theory development and praxis in L2 writing. Throughout this survey, it should be remembered that no

singular theory or paradigm is necessarily autonomous or self-contained. In fact, we should expect to find a number of common features and overlapping points of view, even among so-called “competing theories” (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1984).

Product-Oriented Instructional Traditions in L1 Rhetoric and Composition

From the early 20th century into the 1960s, the principles governing composition instruction in U.S. schools, colleges, and universities were rooted largely in an educational philosophy that featured the reading and analysis of literature. In this tradition, native speakers (NSs) of English were required to read novels, short stories, plays, essays, and poetry. They then analyzed these works in written compositions or “themes.” Pedagogical practice emphasized the understanding and interpretation of canonical literary texts. Consequently, little, if any, instructional time was devoted to planning, drafting, sharing, or revising written products (Babin & Harrison, 1999; Berlin, 1984, 1987; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Graves, 1999; Kroll, 2001; Matsuda, 2003b). Paradoxically, however, students were expected to master a range of school-based written genres (e.g., narration, exposition, argumentation) that embedded functions such as description, illustration, process analysis, and comparison and contrast.

To enable students to achieve this mastery, many 20th century textbooks followed what was then a conventional model of instruction. Initially, the teacher introduced and defined a rhetorical form, pattern, or “mode” (e.g., comparison) in terms of rigidly established rules or formulas. Students then read a work of literature, which they discussed and analyzed in class. Next, the teacher assigned a composing task based on the literary text, referring back to the rhetorical description introduced earlier. This sequence often was accompanied by a linear outline or template for students to follow in constructing their essays or themes. In the final phase of the instructional sequence, the teacher evaluated the students’ assignments before initiating a similar cycle based on a new literary text.

This model of composition instruction, known by some as the “traditional paradigm” in U.S. English language education (Berlin, 1987; Bloom, Daiker, & White, 1997; Clark, 2003b, 2003c, 2003d) and by others as the “product approach” (Kroll, 2001), was not grounded in a fully articulated theory of education or cognitive development. Indeed, the traditional paradigm

reflected a perspective in which school-based essays and themes were viewed as static representations of students' learning and content knowledge. Therefore, in product-oriented writing classrooms, little if any effort was dedicated to the strategies and other cognitive operations involved in putting pen to paper (or fingers to the keyboard) and drafting a coherent, meaningful piece of connected discourse.

The Process Movement and Allied Pedagogies in L1 and L2 Composition

The 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s witnessed a highly influential trend in L1 composition pedagogy and research. "Process approaches," as they now are broadly labeled, emphasized the individual writer as a creator of original ideas. It was believed that written discourse encoded these ideas, serving as a vehicle for exploring oneself, conveying one's thoughts, and claiming one's individual voice, or authorial persona, as a writer. Process-oriented writing pedagogies focused particular attention on procedures for solving problems, discovering ideas, expressing them in writing, and revising emergent texts—typically, in isolation from any cultural, educational, or sociopolitical contexts in which writing might take place (Canagarajah, 2002; Casanave, 2003; Hyland, 2003).

Faigley (1986) divided process writing proponents into two distinct categories: expressivists and cognitivists. Expressivists (Elbow, 1973, 1981a, 1981b; Macrorie, 1984; Murray, 1985; Zamel, 1982, 1983) viewed composing as "a creative act in which the process—the discovery of the true self—is as important as the product" (Berlin, 1988, p. 484). Based on the belief that writing instruction should be nondirective and personalized, expressionism writing instruction involved tasks designed to promote self-discovery, the emergence of personal voice, and empowerment of the individual's inner writer. Elbow (1981b), for example, enthusiastically advocated journal writing and personal essays as tasks in which students could "write freely and uncritically" to "get down as many words as possible" (p. 7). Expressivism therefore explicitly valued fluency and voice (Elbow, 1981b, 1999) as the chief tools for achieving writing proficiency (Hillocks, 1995; Hirvela & Belcher, 2001; Ivanic, 1998; Sharples, 1999; Soven, 1999; Zamel, 1976, 1982, 1983).

Cognitivism, sometimes described as a "writing as problem solving" approach, has affected theory construction in L2 writing pedagogy in even more marked ways. At the same time, some

cognitivist approaches share with expressivism an explicit appreciation of novice writers' composing processes as recursive, personal, and "inner directed" (Bizzell, 1992). Cognitivists placed considerably greater value than did expressivists on high-order thinking and problem-solving operations. These operations included planning, defining rhetorical problems, positioning problems in a larger context, elaborating definitions, proposing solutions, and generating grounded conclusions (Emig, 1983; Flower, 1985, 1989; Hayes & Flower, 1983).

Hallmarks of cognitivist approaches to teaching L1 and L2 writing as a process include invention and prewriting tasks, drafting of multiple versions of writing assignments, abundant text-level revision, collaborative writing, feedback sessions, and the postponement of editing until the final stages of the composing cycle (Atkinson, 2003b; Clark, 2003b; Murray, 1992; see chapters 3, 4, and 5). Cognitivist rhetoricians and L2 writing practitioners thus focused principally on developing writers' intramental processes, particularly cognitive and metacognitive strategies for creating, revising, and correcting their texts independently (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Berlin, 1988; de Larios, Murphy, & Marín, 2002; Flower, 1989; Ransdell & Barbier, 2002a, 2002b). From a cognitivist, process-based perspective, writing is "essentially learnt, not taught, and the teacher's role is to be nondirective and facilitating, assisting writers to express their own meanings through an encouraging and cooperative environment with minimal interference" (Hyland, 2003, p. 18).

L1 and L2 Writing in the Post-Process Era

Although the literature of the past several decades strongly implies that the process movement entails a singular, homogeneous method of instruction, it is no exaggeration to suggest that the number of "process approaches" might equal the number of classroom writing teachers. That is, practitioners interpret and adapt aspects of process models, hybridizing principles and practices in ways that suit their beliefs, teaching styles, classroom contexts, and students (Blanton, Kroll, Cumming, & Erickson, 2002). Nonetheless, most implementations of process-based pedagogies share a number of fundamental, recursive practices such as prewriting, peer and teacher feedback, and revision (Cumming, 2003). As teaching practice and beliefs about process have evolved away from the process movement's expressivist and cognitivist core, L1 rhetoricians (Clark, 2003b; Glenn, Goldthwaite,

& Connors, 2003; Gottschalk & Hjortshoj, 2004; Kent, 1999; Tobin, 1994; Trimbur, 1994) and L2 writing specialists (Atkinson, 2003a, 2003b) have tried to characterize what they term the "post-process" era. Post-process scholarship aims, among other things, to expose the shortcomings of current process-oriented conceptualizations, "highlight the rich-multifocal nature of the field," and "go beyond now-traditional views of L2 writing research and teaching" (Atkinson, 2003b, p. 12).

Like many popular and influential educational trends, process-oriented approaches (expressivist and cognitivist alike) have been challenged on ideological, social, cultural, ethical, theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical grounds. Atkinson (2003b), for example, observed that process paradigms represent text construction as a solitary, asocial, and decontextualized activity. Because process models assume that written production emanates from within the individual, they tend to "disempower teachers and cast them in the role of well-meaning bystanders" (Hyland, 2003, p. 19). In addition to minimizing teacher authority in composition instruction (Bizzell, 1992; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993), the inductive, discovery-based nature of process-oriented practice typically avoids prerevealing learning aims (Feez, 2002; Hasan, 1996).

With their strong emphasis on idea generation, self-discovery, and problem solving, process pedagogies also tend to imply that "'product' is not important" (Delpit, 1988, p. 287). Conveying such a message can be particularly damaging to minority and non-native-speaker (NNS) writers who have not been socialized into adopting, let alone embracing, the nondirective, discovery-based precepts and practices of process writing. In fact, many process approaches "draw heavily on inaccessible cultural knowledge" (Hyland, 2003, p. 21), which well-intentioned teachers may falsely assume all students have available to them. Indeed, prototypical components of process-based instruction (e.g., personal writing, multiple drafting, extensive revision, minimal form-focused feedback) can be mystifying to NNS writers, particularly those in EFL and multilingual contexts in which prevailing educational traditions do not support such practices (Holliday, 1994).

Along similar lines, just as the promotion of voice in L1 composition pedagogy has come into question (Bowden, 1999, 2003), L2 experts have challenged the appropriateness of this abstract metaphor in ESL and EFL writing instruction (Atkinson, 2000; Belcher & Hirvela, 2001b; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999b;

Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996a). Development of one's voice is undeniably a vital component of writing proficiency. Stapleton (2003), for example, acknowledged that voice "should be brought into the mainstream of L2 writing pedagogy either via consciousness raising or through the specific teaching of certain features" (p. 187). However, he offered a strong caution regarding voicist pedagogies, warning that overplaying the voice metaphor "sends the message to teachers that voice is critically important, and this message, if passed down to students, may result in learners who are more concerned with identity than ideas" (p. 187).

Some of the groundwork for constructing a post-process framework was laid by cognitivists who recognized that writing, as a form of literacy, is an inherently social, transactional process that involves mediation between the writer and his or her audience (Bazerman, 1988; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Flower, 1994; Gee, 1996, 1998). As a transactional activity, writing represents a process that must be undertaken with the reader's background knowledge, needs, interests, and ideologies in mind. By understanding their readers and by anticipating reader expectations, writers shape their texts so that they meet these expectations effectively (Hinds, 1987; K. Hyland, 2000, 2003; Johns, 1997, 2003). According to this social constructionist view, the audience or target discourse community largely determines knowledge, language, and the nature of both spoken and written discourse (Bruffee, 1986; Coe, 1987; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Prior, 2001).

A discourse community comprises a minimum number of expert members and frequently a larger number of apprentice members who operate on the basis of implicit and explicit public goals (Swales, 1990, 1998). It is informative to examine discourse communities because their members develop and use speech and writing systems that often are specific to a particular community's needs, goals, and ideologies (Gee, 1999). Within these systems, we often find participatory mechanisms used by community members to transmit information and feedback (e.g., meetings, print publications, and electronic messages) as well as text types and genres that promote collective goals (e.g., letters, newspapers, books, and journal articles) with particular formal (rhetorical, grammatical, lexical) features (Freedman & Medway, 1994a, 1994c; Johns, 1995a, 2002b, 2003).

The access of novice writers to academic discourse communities depends fundamentally on the mastery of certain communication skills. These skills might include the writing of expository

or persuasive essays for college composition courses (Bizzell, 1992), the preparation of empirical research reports for the physical sciences (Bazerman, 1985, 1988, 1998; Myers, 1990), or the composition of documents in the workplace (Bhatia, 1993, 1999). Given these institutional, educational, and social demands, composition instruction must provide novice writers with opportunities for practicing and appropriating the content knowledge, language, and rhetorical expertise represented in the academy and in the specific disciplines that students wish to join (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; K. Hyland, 2000; Johns, 1997; Reid, 1989; Spack, 1988). These multiple communicative functions and transactions coincide with a broad conceptualization of contemporary rhetoric, that Williams (1996) defined as "the conscious control of language to bring about an intended effect in an audience" (p. 27).

Pedagogical models have been proposed to assist writers in gaining control over language and written genres, and in becoming apprenticed to the discourse communities associated with these genres (Bishop & Ostrom, 1997; Briggs & Bauman, 1992). Because L2 writing pedagogy has in many respects paralleled L1 composition in terms of theory and practice (Leki, 1991b, 1992; Matsuda, 1999, 2003b; Raimes, 1998), the next section explores ideological, theoretical, and methodological developments as they pertain specifically to the teaching of composition in ESL and EFL classrooms.

The Emergence of a Discipline: Issues and Methods in L2 Writing

Based on presumed and observed similarities between L1 and L2 composing processes, ESL writing instruction in the early 1980s largely replicated L1 classroom practice (Leki, 1992; Matsuda, 2003b). Not only did research in L1 composition and rhetoric provide sound theoretical underpinnings for L2 composing pedagogy, emergent L2 writing research also began to show that ESL writers already proficient in writing in their primary languages tended to display strategies and skills parallel to those displayed by native English-speaking writers. For instance, Cumming (1989) and Zamel (1976, 1982, 1983) demonstrated that ESL writers with well-developed L1 writing abilities tended to transfer L1 skills and strategies to their L2 composing processes. The ESL students in these investigations displayed skills that included planning, grappling successfully with specific writing tasks, organizing their ideas, and revising their texts to reflect

their intentions as writers. Cumming (1989) also reported that the ability of his intermediate- and advanced-level writers to practice these strategies as they composed in English was an independent function of their measured ESL proficiency. This study and others like it led some L2 writing researchers and practitioners to conclude that ESL students' needs are essentially comparable with those of basic L1 writers in terms of composing processes and their instructional needs.

Nonnative linguistic proficiency does not seem to prevent ESL writers from becoming effective writers of English, yet many such learners require assistance in developing written fluency and practice with a range of composing strategies and written genres. Some experts (Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Zamel, 1983) have argued that the primary needs of ESL writers consist of extensive and directed practice with global writing functions, as opposed to more extensive language instruction. Research involving ESL writers who are inexperienced writers in their L1s tends to suggest that, like their NS peers, NNSs may lack a sense of direction as they undertake composing tasks, may experience difficulty categorizing and sequencing information according to reader expectations, and may often get stalled at intermediate steps in their composing and revision processes (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Boshier, 1998; Cumming, 1989; Raimes, 1985). Consequently, less experienced L1 and L2 writers may focus prematurely—and with less than satisfactory results—on microlevel features such as grammatical, lexical, and mechanical accuracy, as opposed to discourse-level concerns such as audience, purpose, rhetorical structure, coherence, cohesion, and clarity (Cumming, 1989; Jones, 1985; New, 1999). Given that novice L1 and L2 writers appear to share such characteristics, many models of L2 composing pedagogy, particularly, those that emphasize process writing and multidrafting, assume that L2 writers benefit from the same instructional techniques as those used in L1 composition settings (Krapels, 1990; Leki, 1991b, 1992). Several recent studies (Lally, 2000a, 2000b; Ma & Wen, 1999; Olsen, 1999; Thorson, 2000) have nonetheless suggested that L2 writers may require targeted instruction aimed at the development of specific linguistic skills, rhetorical expertise, and composing strategies.

Shifts in Pedagogical Focus

Approaches to L2 composition reflect parallel (although by no means simultaneous) developments in L1 composition and

rhetoric. Historical accounts of ESL writing theory and practice (Cumming, 2001; Hedgcock, in press; Leki, 2000; Matsuda, 2003a, 2003b; Raimes, 1998) provide meaningful insights into how ESL writing theory and practice have evolved and how the field has achieved status as a discipline in its own right. For the sake of expediency, we summarize major trends in ESL writing according to the following foci, which we link to relevant approaches, schools of thought, and ideologies.

Focus on Discursive Form, Traditional Form, and "Current-Traditional Rhetoric," 1966–. Raimes (1991) and Matsuda (2003b) traced formally oriented L2 writing approaches to the audiolingual tradition in second language teaching (Fries, 1945), in which writing served essentially to reinforce oral patterns of the language being learned and to test learners' accurate application of grammatical rules (Rivers, 1968).

Early L2 composition pedagogy emphasized the production of well-formed sentences. A writing task that typifies this paradigm is the controlled composition, a narrowly focused paragraph- or essay-length assignment designed principally to give students practice with specific syntactic patterns (e.g., the past simple and past progressive in narration) as well as lexical forms (Kroll, 2001; Matsuda, 1999; Silva, 1990).

In an extension of this model, known as "current-traditional rhetoric" (Berlin & Inkster, 1980; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Silva, 1990), students also were instructed to generate connected discourse by combining and arranging sentences into paragraphs based on prescribed formulas. Representative composing tasks involved the imitation of specific rhetorical patterns (e.g., exposition, exemplification, comparison, classification, argumentation, and so forth) based on authentic samples and sometimes student-generated models (Barnett, 2002).

Focus on the Writer: Expressionism and Cognitivism, 1976–. Congruent with process approaches to L1 composition (described earlier), a focus on the writer in L2 composition has drawn researchers' and teachers' attention to what writers "actually do as they write" (Raimes, 1991, p. 409). Researchers in this paradigm therefore attempted to characterize the heuristics, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive processes used by writers as they plan, draft, read, revise, and edit their texts (Cumming, 2001; Manchón, 2001; Ransdell & Barbier, 2002b). Classroom procedures associated with this writer-based orientation include

practice with invention strategies (see chapter 4), creation and sharing of multiple drafts, peer collaboration, abundant revision, and implementation of editing strategies. Syllabi reflecting this approach may likewise allow writers to select their own topics and take more time to complete writing tasks than would be possible with a formally oriented approach.

Focus on Disciplinary Content and Discursive Practices, 1986–. Reservations concerning writer-centered instructional designs have been expressed by researchers and practitioners who argue that the “almost total obsession” (Horowitz, 1986c, p. 788) with how writers construct personal meaning overlooks the need of many NS and NNS writers to compose texts for academic or professional readers with particular expertise (Coe, 1987; Horowitz, 1986a; Hyland, 2000, 2003; Johns, 1997, 2003). In response to this perceived need, experts have proposed shifting the methodological emphasis in the direction of the knowledge and written genres characteristic of ESL students’ specific areas of study and academic disciplines.

Instead of replacing writing processes with the pedagogical material characteristic of traditional English courses (i.e., language, literature, and culture), proponents of content- and genre-based instruction assert that ESL writing courses should feature the specific subject matter that ESL students must master in their major and required courses (Crandall & Kaufman, 2001; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Flowerdew, 2002; Johns & Price-Machado, 2001; Jordan, 1997; Kasper, 2000; Pally, 2000; Paltridge, 2002; Reppen, 1994/1995; Snow, 2001; Snow & Brinton, 1988, 1997). In this model, students in adjunct, multiskill, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses are given assistance with “the language of the thinking processes and the structure or shape of content” (Mohan, 1986, p. 18). This focus on content does not preclude the use of writer-driven, process-oriented principles and procedures such as prewriting, revision, collaboration, and peer review (Guleff, 2002; Horowitz, 1986b; Johns, 2003). The fundamental emphasis “is on the instructor’s determination of what academic content is most appropriate to build whole courses or modules of reading and writing tasks around that content” (Raimes, 1991, p. 411).

Focus on Readers and Discursive Communities: Social Constructionism, 1986–. Overlapping considerably with content-based models, reader- and discourse-based

frameworks for ESL writing instruction have emerged partly in opposition to the prescriptions of writer-centered approaches, described by Horowitz (1986a) as a form of "humanistic therapy" (p. 789). Reader- and discourse-oriented composition pedagogy is founded instead on the social constructionist premise that NS and NNS writers need to be apprenticed into one or more academic discourse communities, and that writing instruction consequently should prepare students to anticipate, satisfy, and even challenge the demands of academic readers (i.e., their instructors and other authorities) as they generate their written products (Flower, 1979; Flower, Long, & Higgins, 2000; Hinds, 1987; Hyland, 2002; Johns, 1990; Pennycook, 2001).

Clearly, socioliterate approaches (Johns, 1997) are highly compatible with content-based approaches, ideologically and methodologically. Interestingly, some have interpreted the implementation of socioliterate pedagogies as entailing a return to a directive, prescriptive stance with respect to materials selection and classroom pedagogy (Benesch, 2001; Freedman & Medway, 1994b). To operationalize a reader-centered pedagogy emphasizing discipline-specific rhetorical forms, teachers need to collect texts and assignments from the relevant disciplines, analyze their purposes, assess audience expectations, and acquaint learners with their findings. According to this view, writing instruction most appropriately centers on identifying, practicing, and reproducing the implicit and explicit features of written texts aimed at particular audiences.

Focus on Sociopolitical Issues and Critical Pedagogy, 1990–. With a number of scholars appealing to "Freirean notions of liberatory literacy practices" (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, p. 32), the educational, ethical, and political dimensions of L2 writing instruction, including genre-oriented and socioliterate models, have come under careful scrutiny in recent years (Freire, 1970, 1985, 1994; Freire & Macedo, 1987). Zamel (1993), for instance, argued that academic literacy instruction should enable writers to comprehend, analyze, and negotiate the demands of academic disciplines.

Belcher and Braine (1995) pointed out that the teaching of academic literacy should no longer be understood as "neutral, value-free, and nonexclusionary" (p. xiii). Consequently, ESL/EFL writing specialists have begun to address issues of critical pedagogy, including critical needs analysis (Benesch, 1996), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), critical writing

about academic genres (Benesch, 2001; Hyland, 2002), the complexity of text appropriation and plagiarism (Bloch, 2001; Hyland, 2000; Pecorari, 2001; Pennycook, 1996), race and class issues (Canagarajah, 2002; Vandrick, 1995), gender equality and inequality (Belcher, 1997; Kirsch & Ritchie, 1995; Vandrick, 1994), and identity (Ivanic, 1998; Norton, 1997).

A major thread in applications of critical pedagogy to literacy instruction stems from the charge that social constructionist approaches have tended to overlook “sociopolitical issues affecting life in and outside of academic settings” (Benesch, 2001, p. xv). Whereas EAP and socioliterate approaches embrace the precept that writing and the teaching of writing always have social purposes, critical pedagogy challenges assumptions that those purposes are necessarily value free or beneficial to novice writers.

These ideological, theoretical, and methodological orientations do not reflect discrete historical periods, epistemological models, or ideological orientations. In other words, whereas each focus represents a distinct instructional purpose and area of core interest, we can see considerable chronological, conceptual, and practical overlap among them. The conflicts and compatibilities that exist among these orientations can certainly cause confusion among ESL writing teachers in search of answers to pedagogical questions.

Nonetheless, with the maturation of L2 writing as a discipline and profession, progress has been made, and it is increasingly possible to navigate a sometimes bewildering landscape of theories and practices (Kroll, 2003b). To make sense of a challenging and perplexing situation, Silva (1990) first proposed that L2 writing be approached systematically as “purposeful and contextualized communicative interaction, which involves both the construction and transmission of knowledge” (p. 18). Working within this framework, we then can consider the following components of composing processes as we assess research and theory, and in doing so, make sound decisions about our own teaching practices:

- *The ESL writer.* The writer as a person (i.e., his or her personal knowledge, attitudes, learning styles, cultural orientation, orientations, evolving identity, language proficiency, and motivational profile, in addition to his or her composing strategies) (see chapter 3).
- *The NS reader as the ESL writer’s primary audience.* The L1 reader’s needs and expectations as a respondent

and as a potential evaluator of the ESL student's written products (see chapters 5, 6, and 7).

- *The writer's texts.* The writer's products as represented by their purposes, formal characteristics, and signifying constituent elements: genre, rhetorical form, discursive mode, coherence, cohesion, syntactic properties, lexical patterns, mechanical features, print-code properties, and so on (see chapters 2 through 7).
- *The contexts for writing.* Cultural, political, social, economic, situational, and physical dimensions of the writer's texts (see this chapter and chapter 6).
- *The interaction of all these components in authentic educational and disciplinary settings.*

Sources: Polio, 2003; Raimes, 1991; Silva, 1990.

We can begin to formulate our own operational theories of how ESL writers learn to write, and how we can shape our instruction to meet their needs effectively, by adopting a critical view of L2 composing theory and research. In addition, it is important for us to appreciate how this work has been informed by developments in L1 composition, rhetoric, and their allied fields. An operational understanding of theoretical and pedagogical paradigms can sensitize us to our students' strengths and weaknesses. It also can equip us to implement a balanced, informed, and effective pedagogy that takes into account the multiple dimensions of L2 writers' developing skills in composing.

Prior Knowledge and Its Implications for the Teaching of L2 Writing

A primary feature distinguishing NNS from NS writers lies in the prior experience they bring to the composition classroom. Differences in background knowledge and strategic proficiency manifest themselves in a variety of ways: in NNS students' responses to texts and topics, in their reactions to the activities of ESL writing classrooms, and in their familiarity with the rhetorical patterns of academic and professional discourse communities (Fig. 1.1).

This prior knowledge about texts, their purposes, their genre categories, and their formal properties are part of a learner's schema. A schema refers to an "organized chunk of knowledge or experience, often accompanied by feelings" (Weaver, 1994, p. 18). In psycholinguistic and cognitive approaches to L1 and L2

Knowledge brought to the writing class - about reading and writing topics - about written texts - about rhetorical patterns of academic writing in English - about the expectations of English-speaking academic readers Reactions to the writing class - about the role of personal expression in English writing - about writing from sources and using the work of others - about peer response and teacher-student conferences - about teachers' response techniques - about revision procedures

FIG. 1.1. Cultural and rhetorical differences between L1 and L2 writers.

reading, schema has been discussed in terms of both content and formal knowledge about texts (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Carrell, 1983a, 1983b; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Chen & Graves, 1995; Grabe & Stoller, 2002b), particularly the facilitative effects of adequate schemata—and, conversely, the debilitating impact of the absence of sufficient schematic knowledge—among L2 readers and writers.

The notion of schema as it relates to formal instruction rests on several precepts: that literacy events involve an interaction between readers and texts (Rumelhart & McClelland, 1982), that readers' responses to and comprehension of a text vary according to individuals' schemata and other circumstances at the time of the interaction (Weaver, 1994), and that schemata include not only the content of a text, but also its organization (Carrell, 1987). For example, imagine that you are reading a recipe in a magazine, newspaper, or web page. What would you expect the content and the organization of that text to comprise? You probably would anticipate finding a list of necessary ingredients and then a sequential list of steps to follow in order to prepare the dish. A recipe that deviates from this expected structure might frustrate or confuse you. These expectations constitute your formal and content schemata. Of course, if you have never cooked a meal or baked a cake, your schemata related to recipes will be quite different from those of a skilled cook. Moreover, your experience with reading that text will vary depending on the circumstances: Are you merely glancing at the recipe to consider it for a future meal? Are you in the kitchen at this moment preparing dinner? The specific situation naturally will affect the level of concentration and attention to detail that you bring to the reading task.

The findings of L1 and L2 literacy research have generally demonstrated that "when content and form are familiar, reading

and writing are relatively easy. But when one or the other (or both) are unfamiliar, efficiency, effectiveness, and success are problematic" (Reid, 1993a, p. 63). A major implication of schema theory is that teachers should take systematic steps to ensure that students find the texts and topics of a course accessible—cognitively, culturally, and educationally (Ediger, 2001; Moran, 2001). These goals can be achieved by selecting reading materials and writing tasks that allow learners to capitalize on their prior experience. Teachers can likewise devise in-class activities that develop and expand students' schemata. Specific suggestions for schema activation and development are presented in chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Contrastive Rhetoric and Its Implications for Teaching ESL Writing

As we have suggested, an important way that the schemata of L2 students differ from those of L1 writers involves their expectations about the structural properties and rhetorical functions of texts. The study of contrastive rhetoric (CR) aims to characterize these divergent expectations and their effects on L2 literacy development, including L2 writing skills. Connor (1996) wrote that "contrastive rhetoric maintains that language and writing are cultural phenomena. As a result, each language has rhetorical conventions unique to it. Furthermore, the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the first language interfere with writing in the second language" (p. 5).

The Genesis of Contrastive Rhetoric. Kaplan's (1966) pioneering article is frequently considered to be a landmark work in the study of CR. At the time that Kaplan's article appeared, contrastive analysis (CA) and its application to foreign- and second-language instruction were very much in vogue. With the CA approach, linguists and materials developers compared the grammatical structures and phonological features of learners' L1s with those of the L2 they were trying to acquire. It was believed that CA could identify specific areas of difficulty (e.g., in syntax and speech production), and that direct instruction focusing on major contrastive features could facilitate and accelerate the language learning process (Gass & Selinker, 2001; Mitchell & Myles, 1998).

Against the backdrop of CA, Kaplan (1966) suggested that L2 students' L1s also exhibited contrasting rhetorical and logical

patterns. His study featured a formal analysis of more than 600 texts written by NNS writers representing a range of primary languages. On the basis of his rhetorical analysis, Kaplan proposed the following generalizations: Arabic-speaking writers make extensive use of coordination (considered excessive by English-speaking readers), speakers of "Oriental" languages tend to circle around a topic instead of approaching it head-on, and speakers of French and Spanish tend to digress and introduce extraneous material more than NNS writers of English do.

The Impact of CR in ESL Writing Instruction. Kaplan's ground-breaking article ignited considerable interest in CR, which has since generated an impressive body of empirical research. In characterizing the impact of Kaplan's work, Hinkel (2002) noted that CR research

pursues the goal of descriptive accuracy that originates in pedagogical necessity. He specified that L2 students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities are expected to produce academic texts that are congruent with Anglo-American rhetorical paradigms. However, these students bring to the larger academic arena the fundamental discourse paradigms that reflect their L1 conventions of writing, and need to be taught the textual constructs accepted in writing in English. (p. 6)

With its focus on the written products of expert and novice writers (as compared with the writers themselves), CR has led to spirited discussions concerning the possible influences of L2 writers' primary languages, their knowledge of L1-specific rhetorical patterns, and their educational experiences on the construction of their written products. Although hardly uncontroversial, CR has contributed much to our understanding of rhetorical patterns in written text across a range of genres by accounting for the frequency of selected rhetorical features in written discourse, the conventions associated with particular written genres, and the patterns of text construction across numerous languages (Bräuer, 2000; Connor, 2003).

In the years after the publication of Kaplan's (1966) research, ESL and composition professionals interpreted his findings as suggesting a number of instructional implications. For instance, many teachers felt that the CR hypothesis pointed to the need among L2 writers for explicit instruction and modeling in the rhetorical patterns of English (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999; Kirkpatrick, 1997). Not unexpectedly, this view dovetailed nicely

with current-traditional approaches to writing instruction that prevailed in the 1960s and 1970s, and into the 1980s.

Nonetheless, as the CR hypothesis underwent increasing scrutiny, a number of reservations surfaced concerning its validity and empirical premises (Panetta, 2001). Kaplan's (1966) early work was criticized for the alleged imprecision of his analytic categories (e.g., his classification of all Asian writers in his sample under the broad category, of "Oriental") (Zhang, 1997). Critics have likewise asserted that Kaplan's early framework was overly simple, given his attempt to reconstruct L1 rhetorical patterns from compositions written in students' L2s (Holyoak & Piper, 1997). In addition, detractors have argued that CR models were deterministic, leading to rigid, ethnocentric views of English rhetorical patterns and potentially damaging stereotypes of ESL writers (Kachru, 1995; Kubota, 1997, 1999; Leki, 1997; Scollon, 1997; Wu & Rubin, 2000; Zamel, 1997).

Nevertheless, CR-based studies have produced useful evidence of differing rhetorical patterns across diverse languages, indicating measurable effects of L1-specific discursive and sentence-level patterns on the texts of ESL writers (Connor 1996, 2003; Connor & Kaplan, 1987; Kaplan, 1987, 1988; Leki, 1991b, 1992; Purves, 1988; Reid, 1993a). Hinds' (1983a, 1983b, 1987) investigations of Japanese and English argumentation styles provide a clear and persuasive example. In his studies, Hinds discovered that English-speaking readers expected writers to make clear, unambiguous statements of their points of view, usually near the beginning of a persuasive text. In contrast, he reported that Japanese-speaking writers elected to obscure their own opinions in their presentation of the various sides of an issue, taking a position only at the end of the text, if at all. Having probed his writers' and readers' perceptions of persuasive writing, he discovered that Japanese readers found the linear, deductive argumentation style associated with English-language texts to be dull, pointless, and self-involved. At the same time, English-speaking readers perceived Japanese argumentative patterns to be circuitous, abstract, and occasionally evasive.

The strong predictive claims made by early CR researchers no longer characterize this important line of empirical study in L2 writing (Connor, 2003; Hinkel, 2002; Kaplan, 2001), yet even the most conservative scholars acknowledge the descriptive value of careful CR research. According to state-of-the-art CR research, we cannot assume that all writers from a given linguistic or cultural background will experience the same difficulties in a given L2.

However, the knowledge that logical patterns of organization in written language differ cross-culturally and cross-linguistically can help both teachers and students understand issues and challenges involved in composing in an L2 (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999; Kirkpatrick, 1997). Leki (1991a) and Reid (1993a) suggested several ways in which an understanding of CR findings can inform L2 writing instruction. These suggestions are summarized in Fig. 1.2.

We believe that L2 writing teachers must be aware of the rhetorical knowledge that their novice writers bring to the composition course. This rhetorical knowledge may include formal and content schemata as well as implicit and explicit knowledge about text structure, genres, and their purposes. It is essential to recognize, however, that L2 writers' L1s, cultures, and prior educational experience do not predetermine their difficulties or abilities in mastering the genres and text structures that typify English-language writing (Atkinson, 1999). The backgrounds and knowledge bases of L2 writers' differ not only from those of NS writers of English, but also from those of other L2 writers. In other words, each L2 writer should be viewed in individual terms, not as a prototype representing a set of collective norms or stereotypes (Scollon, 1997). Individual differences across novice

Implications

1. Familiarity with CR findings can assist teachers in understanding some of the culturally and educationally based influences on rhetorical patterns in L2 students' written production.
2. An understanding of CR research can help teachers avoid stereotypes, leading them to view L2 writers as individuals who may or may not incorporate L1-based rhetorical patterns into their L2 writing.
3. Insights from CR may help L2 writers appreciate and understand L1-based cultural and educational factors that underlie their L2 written production.
4. CR findings can show students that their L2 writing development may be affected by cultural patterns and rhetorical practices rather than individual inadequacies (adapted from Leki, 1991b).

Applications

1. Teachers can collect literacy assignments across the curriculum to "become more informed about appropriate . . . academic discourse patterns" in the L2.
2. Teachers can analyze diverse assignments "to inform their . . . writing students about discourse differences and audience expectations."
3. Teachers then can plan activities and lessons around this information "to provide practice with the imposition of appropriate patterns upon experience and to offer opportunities for practice and experience with the new schema" (adapted from Reid, 1993b, p. 63; cf. Kirkpatrick, 1997).

FIG. 1.2. Implications and applications of contrastive rhetoric.

L2 writers affect their abilities to comprehend, analyze, and respond to the texts they read, to function effectively in the L2 literacy classroom, and to construct original texts that fulfill the expectations of target language readers. Consequently, ESL writing teachers must consider the implications of schematic and rhetorical differences in the readings they select, the tasks they assign, the modes of instruction they deploy, the assessment instruments they use, and the feedback they offer their student writers.

THE UNIQUENESS OF ESL WRITERS: CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS

The preceding discussion addressed aspects of L2 composing theory, research, and pedagogy that drew on parallels with L1 composition and rhetoric. It also dealt with ideological assumptions, empirical discoveries, and instructional approaches that make implicit and explicit distinctions between L1 and L2 composing processes and strategies, particularly with respect to CR research. Silva (1993) observed that “L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically, and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing” (p. 696). It is, therefore, crucial for L2 writing teachers—as well as L1 composition instructors whose mainstream classes include L2 writers—to understand fundamental characteristics that distinguish L2 writers, and to appreciate the diversity of learners whom they may encounter in their composition courses. This variety of backgrounds, goals, and expectations on the part of novice ESL writers accentuates the complexity of an already challenging educational endeavor.

We embrace the precept that “there is no such thing as a generalized ESL student” (Raimes, 1991, p. 420). If ESL writers (or any other type of writer, for that matter) constituted a homogeneous group, our task as composition professionals might simply entail making decisions about the optimal instructional approach or approaches to adopt, on the basis of current expert knowledge (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). In fact, however, ESL instructors in many educational settings are keenly aware of the challenges posed by student populations that are heterogeneous in terms of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural background, not to mention language proficiency, literacy, educational attainment, and cognitive development (Cumming, 2001; Leki, 2000; Raimes, 1998; Spack, 1997b). Also of concern to classroom teachers are learners’

attitudes toward learning, formal instruction, and the target subject matter, as well as students' motivation to acquire linguistic, cognitive, and academic skills. Other factors known to influence learning include age, academic goals, aptitude, anxiety, cognitive strategy use, language awareness, and social distance.

We mention these variables here to acknowledge the enormously complex challenges facing classroom teachers of ESL writers. At the same time, we suggest general directions for identifying, categorizing, and working with these multiple variables in planning and delivering instruction. The individual differences (ID) research in second language acquisition has shed considerable light on the multiple learner-specific, linguistic, and environmental factors bearing on L2 learners' success, or failure, in their efforts to acquire L2 knowledge and skills. In general, ID research has focused on how ID variables influence learner development, proficiency, and achievement, as measured in quantifiable performances (Ellis, 1994; Gass & Selinker, 2001; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Mitchell & Myles, 1998; Skehan, 1989, 1991, 1998; Williams & Burden, 1997).

Notwithstanding a few notable exceptions (Lally, 2000b; Reid, 1995b), the L2 composition literature seldom draws upon this research, yet it is worthy of our attention because it offers a systematic framework for identifying roughly hewn, but easily identifiable, ID factors known to influence language proficiency, academic performance, and student predispositions toward writing processes and tasks. Of particular relevance to ESL composition are dimensions of learners' knowledge and prior training that have shaped their current linguistic capabilities, L1 and L2 literacy skills, metacognitive strategy repertoires, and language awareness. Figure 1.3 summarizes a few of the major features that may set ESL writers apart from NS writers.

As the previous sections on schema theory and CR observed in some detail, a chief characteristic distinguishing ESL writers from their NS peers is that ESL students come to the classroom with the ability to speak, and often write, one or more languages other than English. This multilingual, multicultural, and, in many cases, multiliterate, knowledge gives ESL students a unique status as learners that entails a set of linguistic, metalinguistic, cognitive, and metacognitive skills. This skill set may be very different from the skill sets of monolingual, NSs of English (Brisk & Harrington, 2000; Carrell & Monroe, 1995; Harklau, Losey, & Siegel, 1999). Based on the findings of CR research and genre analysis, we have suggested that this rich knowledge can both facilitate and impede progress in the development of L2 writing proficiency.

	<i>NS Writers . . .</i>	<i>ESL Writers . . .</i>
<i>Knowledge of language and writing systems</i>	• begin with "intact" knowledge of spoken and written English • are principally acquiring English composing skills • are familiar with the Roman alphabet and English orthographic conventions • produce sentence-level errors that are not influenced by knowledge of another language • are not influenced by rhetorical knowledge emanating from another language, writing system, or rhetorical tradition, although they may be unfamiliar with formal rhetorical conventions (i.e., organizational sequences, coherence and cohesion markers, and so forth).	• begin with an intact L1 and a developing knowledge of spoken and written English as a second language • are simultaneously acquiring language and composing skills • may or may not be familiar with the Roman alphabet and thus still may be acquiring English graphemic and orthographic conventions • may produce sentence-level errors influenced by their primary language(s) • may have L1-related rhetorical knowledge (i.e., organizational sequences, coherence and cohesion markers, and so forth) that could facilitate or possibly inhibit the learning of English rhetorical conventions.
<i>Schematic and rhetorical knowledge</i>	• have topical and schematic knowledge specific to English-speaking discourse communities, cultures, and educational systems • have access to (and perhaps some knowledge of) English-speaking readers' expectations • by virtue of educational experience in an English-speaking discourse community, have exposure to (and experience with) rhetorical conventions of school-based writing in English.	• may not have the same topical or schematic knowledge as NS writers because of educational experience (e.g., in an L1 discourse community) • may be unfamiliar with the expectations of English-speaking readers • may have little or no experience with rhetorical conventions of writing in English-speaking discourse communities; may have been trained in rhetorical conventions of a L1 educational tradition, which may contrast with those observed in English-speaking discourse communities.
<i>Responses to composition instruction</i>	• may have experience with personal writing and the development of individual voice • may have experience with peer response (and may expect it) • may have experience using published sources, paraphrasing, quoting, and so on • may have received instruction in how to avoid plagiarism • may have extensive experience with teachers' response and feedback styles (e.g., marginal notes, questioning, indirectness, and so forth) • may expect to revise assignments significantly.	• may have some experience with personal writing and expressing voice, or none at all (especially in school contexts) • may have little or no experience with peer response • may have little or no experience using published sources, paraphrasing, or quoting • may have undergone little or no instruction in how to avoid plagiarism • may have little or no experience with teachers' interactive response and feedback styles (e.g., marginal notes, questioning, indirectness, and so forth); may expect little or no feedback for revision • may not expect to revise assignments significantly (if at all).

FIG. 1.3. Overview of differences between novice NS and ESL writers.

SUMMARY

The individual cognitive, linguistic, ethnic, and socioeconomic background factors highlighted in the previous section (by no means an exhaustive survey) underscore the priority of taking into account students' unique personal and educational profiles, as well as the characteristics of particular educational institutions. Clearly, individual differences and institutional factors can have direct and rather specific implications for classroom practice in ESL and EFL environments. Despite the apparent parallels between the composing processes of L1 and L2 writers highlighted in the first part of this chapter, ESL writers represent a unique learner population (Silva, 1993, 1997). Therefore, the development of a sound approach to the teaching of ESL composition necessitates an appreciation of these unique features, as well as strategies for accommodating them. To synthesize this chapter's chief content, we present the following summary statements as a foundation for considering the topic-specific material outlined in the succeeding chapters:

- By virtue of their emergent L2 proficiency and literacy skills, ESL writers should not be expected to perform like their NS peers on writing tasks and tests designed for NS writers. We reject a deficit view of L2 writers, yet composition instructors should understand why ESL writers' texts can vary, qualitatively and quantitatively, from comparable NS writers' texts in terms of linguistic form, rhetorical structure, and even content.
- In their development of L2 literacy skills, ESL writers have needs specific to their status as NNS students. That is, in light of their implicit and explicit linguistic knowledge, prior educational experience, L1 and L2 literacy skills, cognitive development, and metacognitive skill and strategy use, ESL writers have unique instructional needs that may not be fully or effectively addressed in NS-oriented or mainstream composition courses.
- These particular needs can be accurately identified and appropriately accommodated by composition teachers equipped with theoretical and practical knowledge of L2 writing processes, as well as an awareness of the unique linguistic and cultural expertise of L2 writers.
- Apprentice ESL writers may require "more of everything" in terms of reading skill development, idea

LECTURE 39

RESPONDING TO WRITTEN WORK I

Topics	Lecture Name	Topics	Books	Pages
219	39.Responding to Written Work I	Introduction Responding to Written Work	Nation, I. S. (2008). Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. Routledge	pp. 137
220		Assessment and Motivation	Nation, I. S. (2008). Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. Routledge	pp. 137-138
221		Improving the Quality Of Writing	Nation, I. S. (2008). Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. Routledge	pp. 138-139
222		Written and Oral Feedback to the Class	Nation, I. S. (2008). Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. Routledge	pp. 139-140
223		Individual Feedback	Nation, I. S. (2008). Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. Routledge	pp. 140-141
224		Conferencing on a Portfolio	Nation, I. S. (2008). Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. Routledge	pp. 142
225		Marking Grammatical Errors	Nation, I. S. (2008). Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. Routledge	pp. 142-143
226		Peer Evaluation	Nation, I. S. (2008). Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. Routledge	pp. 143-144

CHAPTER 10

Responding to Written Work

The assessment of learners' written work can have a range of goals. These goals can be classified under various headings. First, as we have seen in Chapter 8 on the writing process, assessment can focus on the product or the piece of writing itself, or on the process of writing. Second, assessment can differ in its purposes. It can aim at making a summative judgement on the learners' writing for the purpose of awarding a grade, or passing or failing. It can aim at a formative shaping of the learners' progress in writing by diagnosing problems, by providing encouragement to keep writing and to write more, and by providing constructive feedback on the content and form of the writing. Table 10.1 lists one range of options.

Motivating

Positive feedback on the content of learners' writing can do a lot to increase the amount of writing that learners do and to improve their attitude to writing. This feedback includes comments like the following.

"The part about the fire was really interesting. Can you tell me more about that?"

"You wrote that the end of the movie surprised you. What were you expecting?"

Written feedback like this tells the writer that their work is being read, is understood, and interests the reader. Especially with younger learners, it is important not to discourage writing by always giving feedback that points

Table 10.1 Goals, Purpose and Means of Writing Assessment

Goals	Purpose	Means
Motivating	Increase amount of writing Develop a love of writing	Positive feedback on the content Publication of the writing
Improving the quality of writing	Improve the written product Improve control of the writing process	Peer feedback Conferencing Marking of errors Analytic assessment Use of checklists Self-assessment
Diagnosing problems	Finding poorly controlled parts of the writing process	Analysis of the product Observation of the process
Measuring proficiency	Award a grade	Holistic assessment Analytic assessment Assessment of a portfolio

out the errors in the writing. There should be a place in a writing course for feedback on errors but this kind of feedback needs to be very carefully balanced against the positive encouragement to write more, and these two kinds of feedback need to be separated.

Another form of positive feedback is publication. This can take many forms. Reading written work aloud to others is a form of publication. Having your work circulated or posted on the wall of the classroom is another, and having it appear in a printed collection is yet another.

Some learners are embarrassed by praise, especially in the presence of peers. One way of dealing with this is to praise the piece of work not the person. That is, rather than say “You did a good job with the introduction”, some learners may find it more acceptable to hear “The introduction was very clear and well organised”.

The motivation to write is most helped by learners doing a lot of successful writing. **Speed writing** involves the learners writing for a set time each day and keeping a graph of the number of words written within that fixed time. Special praise is given to those who increase the amount they write within that time.

Improving the Quality of Writing

In Chapter 8 we have looked at ways of providing feedback on the various parts of the writing process. The techniques used to provide feedback to learners on their writing can differ over a range of factors. Table 10.2 lists the possibilities.

Table 10.2 Factors Involved in Giving Feedback**Source of feedback**

Teacher

Peers

Self

Mode of feedback

Spoken

Written

Both

Size of audience

Whole class

Small group

Individual

Focus of the feedback

Product—several aspects or narrow focus

Process—several aspects or narrow focus

Form of the feedback

Comments

Scale

Checklist

Amount of writing

Single piece of writing

A portfolio of writing

1. *Source of feedback.* The feedback can come from the teacher, from peers, and from the learners themselves in self-assessment. The use of peer feedback can reduce the teacher's load but is also very valuable in helping writers develop a sense of audience. The use of self-assessment encourages metacognitive awareness of the writing process and the qualities of good writing.
2. *Mode of feedback.* Feedback can be written or spoken or a combination of these. Spoken feedback allows a dialogue to exist between the writer and the source of feedback. It may also be more effective in getting the writer's attention than written feedback. Written feedback provides a lasting record which can be used to measure progress and to act as a reminder.
3. *Size of the audience.* A teacher can give feedback to the whole class, to small groups or to individuals. Where there are common problems in the class, feedback to the whole class can save a lot of time. Working at the individual level, as in conferencing, can provide an opportunity to explore issues as well as give feedback.
4. *Focus of the feedback.* Feedback can focus on aspects of the written product as, for example, when marking scales are used. It can also

focus on the parts of the writing process. The focus can also cover a range of aspects or parts of the process, or it can be narrowed down to focus on only one or two. Having a narrow focus can make peer evaluation more effective.

5. *Form of the feedback.* Feedback can be guided by the use of checklists or scales. Feedback can be uncontrolled when spoken or written comments are given on the strengths and weaknesses of the piece of writing without the systematic coverage of a scale. Upshur and Turner (1995) describe a way of making scales which can be used for marking large quantities of tests with reasonable reliability and validity.
6. *Amount of the writing looked at.* Feedback can be given on parts of a piece of writing, for example, when someone sits next to the writer and reads what they have just written after every two or three sentences are written. Feedback can be given on the whole of a piece of writing, or on a portfolio of writing. The advantages of seeing a portfolio are that a range of genres can be looked at, the learner's progress over time can be seen and commented on, and the assessment is likely to be more reliable and valid because of the numerous points of assessment.

Let us now look at some techniques for providing feedback that draw on the factors we have just considered. The various combinations of these factors provide a very large number of feedback possibilities. We will look at a few that together cover most of the factors.

Written Feedback to the Class

Where learners in the class have common weaknesses and strengths in their writing, an efficient way of giving feedback is to prepare a written report that is handed out to the class. This report can detail what the best pieces of writing were like, what the common errors and weaknesses were, and what to do about them. The teacher may also make individual written comments on each piece of writing but these need not be so extensive if they are accompanied by a class handout.

This sheet also provides a useful record that can be looked at again by the teacher for later pieces of writing or for other years to see if the strengths and weaknesses are the same or have changed.

If a grade is given to the pieces of writing, the handout sheet can also explain the range of grades and the criteria for each step in the grading scale.

Oral Feedback to the Whole Class

A very effective way to give feedback on writing is to get the permission of two or three learners to put their pieces of writing on an overhead

projector transparency and then go through them orally with the whole class. In effect, the learners are watching the teacher mark a piece of work and this can help the learners see what the teacher is looking for and what the teacher values in a piece of writing. The teacher can also ask the learners to comment and can interact with them on points in the piece of writing. This obviously has to be done tactfully and with praise for the writing playing a large part in the commentary. The name of the writer could be kept confidential, but this is unlikely to be successful in a small class where learners know each other reasonably well.

It is worth remembering that when the good points and bad points are mentioned, it is better to end with the good points so that the writer is left with a positive feeling about the piece of writing. If learners know that everyone has a chance of having their writing discussed in this way, they may be less likely to use it as a way of making fun of others.

Individual Feedback Using a Scale

One way of speeding up marking and making sure a balanced range of aspects of writing are dealt with is to mark each learner's work using a scale. Each part of the scale can be accompanied by a brief comment explaining why that point on the scale was chosen. Here is an example of a scale.

Aspects of writing	Comments
Richness of vocabulary 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5	
Mechanics (spelling, punctuation) 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5	
Grammatical accuracy and complexity 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5	
Organisation and coherence 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5	
Content 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5	

The use of a standard feedback tool like a scale gives learners feedback on each of the important aspects of their writing, allows them to see improvement or lack of it for each aspect, and makes them aware of the

range of aspects that need to be considered while writing and when reflecting on it. It can be a useful preparation for self-assessment.

Conferencing on a Portfolio

Conferencing involves a one-to-one meeting between the teacher and the learner to talk about the learner's writing. A portfolio is a collection of several pieces of the learner's writing, some of which may have already been marked and commented on. The major strength of conferencing is that the learner can provide an explanation of what was involved in the pieces of writing, and can seek clarification from the teacher about the teacher's evaluation of them.

Good conferencing is interactive. It should conclude with clear proposals for future improvement of the writing. Learners can prepare for conferencing either by preparing some questions to ask, or by having a sheet provided by the teacher that gives the learner some questions to consider. These questions can focus on what the teacher expects in the writing.

Conferencing on a portfolio allows the opportunity to look at weaknesses and strengths which appear in several pieces of writing and thus deserve comment. It also allows the opportunity to see improvement across several pieces of writing. This improvement can be in the quantity written, the quality of the writing, and quality and range of the content. Conferencing is also used at different stages of a piece of writing so that the learner is helped to improve a particular piece of writing. Conferencing takes a lot of time but its focused one-to-one interaction brings many benefits.

Marking Grammatical Errors

Some pieces of writing can be marked for grammatical accuracy, appropriate use of vocabulary, and spelling. This feedback can have the goal of helping learners develop knowledge and strategies for self-correction. Learners at intermediate and advanced levels appreciate such feedback and ask for it, particularly when they have to write reports, memos, and assignments that others will read.

The most effective way of giving this kind of feedback is to have a set of signals that indicate where the error occurs and what kind of error it is. The learners then have to correct their own errors after they have been marked and show their corrections to the teacher. They do not rewrite the piece of writing but make the corrections on the marked piece of writing. This makes the teacher's checking much easier. See Chapter 8 for such a scheme.

If the number of errors per 100 words is calculated and put on a graph,

learners can see their improvement on this aspect of writing. When the errors per 100 words is high, around ten or more errors per 100 words, it is easy to make very quick improvement in grammatical accuracy. This is because many of the errors will involve items like subject-verb agreement, article usage, and verb group construction, which are rule-based. Learning the rules and how to check their application brings quick improvement. When learners are making about three errors per 100 words, improvement is very slow because most of the errors are word-based, involving collocation, appropriacy, and grammatical patterns that apply to certain words.

Such feedback is a useful part of a well-balanced writing course, but it must not be the only kind of feedback. Too much of this detailed, negative feedback can discourage learners from writing and from taking risks when writing.

Peer Evaluation with a Focus

Peer evaluation involves learners receiving feedback on their writing from each other. It can be done in pairs or in a small group. Each learner brings the draft of a piece of writing, the others read it, and then give helpful comments. In order to make commenting easier, the learners can be told to focus on one or two aspects of the piece of writing, such as organisation, the quality of the argument, or formal aspects such as the use of headings or references. Usually the learners will make oral comments, but written feedback is also possible.

The main advantages of peer evaluation is that learners get feedback from others besides the teacher. It can help them develop a more balanced model of the reader, who they can then think of when they write. Peer feedback also allows those giving feedback to learn from seeing others' pieces of writing and hearing what others say about them. In the academic world, peer review is an important part of the publication process. It has the two goals of obtaining an adequate product as well as providing training for future writing.

A major problem with peer evaluation is that learners may not value the comments of their peers and see them as being far inferior to the teacher's comments (Zhang, 1995). There are several ways of dealing with this. First, peer evaluation can be a step before teacher evaluation. If learners see that peer evaluation can result in an eventual better evaluation by the teacher, peer evaluation will be valued. Second, the quality of peer evaluation can be raised by providing training in evaluation (Min, 2005 and 2006) and by providing written guidelines to use during the evaluation. These written guidelines can be questions to ask or a checklist. Min's (2006) study shows that training learners in doing peer review results in many more comments being incorporated into the revision, peer comments

LECTURE 40**RESPONDING TO WRITTEN WORK II**

Topics	Lecture Name	Topics	Books	Pages
227	40.Responding to Written Work II	Self-Evaluation with a Checklist and Reformulation	Nation, I. S. (2008). Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. Routledge	pp. p.144
228		Electronic Feedback	Nation, I. S. (2008). Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. Routledge	pp. 144-145
229		Measuring Proficiency in Writing	Nation, I. S. (2008). Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. Routledge	pp. 146-147
230		Effects of Teacher Commentary	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 187-188
231		Student Views on Teacher Feedback	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 188-189

232		Principles for Providing Written Feedback (I)	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge. pp. 190-191
233		Principles For Providing Written Feedback (II)	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge. pp. 191-192
234		Guidelines for Written Teacher Feedback	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge. pp. 193-194

becoming by far the greatest source of revisions, and in better revisions. The training Min used lasted a total of five hours and involved in-class modelling and one-on-one conferencing outside class. It should be possible to develop a more efficient training system. The benefits make it clearly worth doing.

Self-evaluation with a Checklist

Part of the writing process is checking over what has been written to make improvements. In formal writing, such as the writing of assignments for academic study, this checking can be helped if there is a checklist of things to consider. Here is a possible checklist.

- ☐ Is your main argument clearly stated?
- ☐ Is it presented very early in the writing?
- ☐ Are the supports for this argument clearly signalled?
- ☐ Are there enough sub-headings?
- ☐ If you look only at the sub-headings, do they cover the main ideas in the assignment?
- ☐ Have you checked carefully for spelling and grammar errors?
- ☐ Are all the references in your text also in the list of references?
- ☐ Are your references complete and do they follow a consistent format?
- ☐ Have you kept within the word limits of the assignment?

A step towards self-assessment is pair checking, where learners work in pairs to check each other's assignment together. That is, both learners read the same assignment together.

Reformulation

Reformulation involves a native speaker rewriting a learner's piece of writing so that the learner can then compare their first attempt with the reformulation. This is a very time-consuming process which places a heavy burden on the native speaker. However, those who support this procedure speak very highly of it.

Electronic Feedback

If texts are submitted in electronic form, it is possible to provide feedback using the range of word-processing functions. Here we will look at some of those available in the word-processing program, Microsoft Word, but other programs have similar features.

- *Track changes:* by turning on the Track changes function in the Tools menu, any changes the teacher makes to the text are clearly indicated

for the learner to see. Additions are highlighted, and deletions are indicated. The learner can decide to accept or reject these changes and continue to improve the text.

- *Comment*: by turning on the Comment function in the Insert menu, the teacher can add helpful suggestions for improving the text or can praise parts of the text.
- *Font colour*: by selecting part of the text, and changing the font colour (go to the Format menu, choose Font, and click the desired colour), the teacher can mark parts of the text that need careful checking or rewriting. Different colours can be used to mark different problems.
- *Hyperlink*: if the learner has a problem with using a particular word, the teacher can make a small concordance (a list of sentences all containing the problem word) using Tom Cobb's website (www.lex tutor.ca) or using a downloadable concordancer and link this short concordance using the hyperlink function in the insert menu. Here is an example of a concordance for *explain*.

1. . . . te smoke screen . . . I have nothing to [[explain]].”<quote/
><p/> <p__>As for debates, Clin . . .
2. . . . the famous and the powerful squirm and [[explain]], charge
and countercharge.<p/> <p__>L . . .
3. . . . re he will call a Press conference to [[explain]] his sorry side of
this financial mess.< . . .
4. . . . eting. Failure to attend the meeting or [[explain]] inability to
attend, the letters said, . . .
5. . . . ited States, State Department officials [[explain]], now is
mainly interested in setting u . . .
6. . . . inted with this sport I should perhaps [[explain]] that divi-
dend stripping is essentially . . .
7. . . . resentative of Syria called upon her to [[explain]] that his
brother would meet her at the . . .
8. . . . a garrulous American egghead tried to [[explain]] the differ-
ence between the Senate and t . . .
9. . . . Department officials were inclined to [[explain]] the April
sales decline as a reaction f . . .
10. . . . recorder (the “black box”), which could [[explain]] why two
engines fell from the plane a . . .
11. . . . to give a performance himself. This may [[explain]] why
sometimes his films let personalit . . .
12. . . . term's law clerks in their search to [[explain]] why Justices
Anthony Kennedy, David Sou . . .

By looking at several relevant examples, the learner can work out how to correct the error they made when using this word in their writing. All of these types of feedback require the learners to send their writing as a computer file to the teacher, and the teacher responding to it on the computer (see Gaskell and Cobb, 2004 for further description of these activities).

Balancing the Feedback in a Course

A teacher of writing needs to look at the range of feedback options and work out a suitable balance for a particular learner or a course. Balancing the feedback involves:

- Considering the teacher's workload. Having some peer assessment and self-assessment can reduce this.
- Considering how the learners can develop their own self-assessment skills. Having the teacher model assessment, watching peers do it, and practising it with the help of checklists can support this.
- Working out the knowledge learners need to improve their writing. Getting feedback on the writing process, developing grammatical knowledge, and gaining awareness of writing conventions can help this.

Measuring Proficiency in Writing

A good writing test should satisfy the demands of reliability, validity and practicality. One requirement for reliability is that the test should contain a good number of points of assessment. For writing, this means that any assessment based on one piece of writing is not likely to be reliable. Where the assessment is very important, Elley suggests the 2×3 rule. That is, learners should be assessed on two pieces of writing which are independently graded by three markers, or on three pieces of writing assessed by two markers. If this is not practical, then there should be at least two pieces of writing, with a second marker where the main marker has doubts.

Analytic marking has also been used as a way of increasing the points of assessment. Analytic marking involves having a marking scheme that awards marks for things like richness and appropriateness of vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, organisation, and overall communicative effectiveness. For each of these categories, marks from 0 to 5 can be awarded. The marks for all the categories can be added up to get a final grade. This contrasts with holistic marking where the marker reads the piece of writing and awards an overall grade for it. In analytic marking each point on each of the categories is arguably a point of assessment. The debate regarding holistic and analytic marking continues. What is

clear from the debate is that assessing learners' writing on just one piece of writing is likely to be neither reliable nor valid.

A valid assessment of writing skill needs to consider the range of purposes for which learners write and the degrees of preparation they bring to writing. Some researchers are not happy with seeing a learner's writing skill summed up in one grade. They argue that it is much more informative and helpful to provide a richer description which provides information about the various aspects of the writing process, indicating both strengths and weaknesses.

Practicality is a major issue with the assessment of writing and has encouraged interest in peer feedback and self-assessment. Certainly, for non-native teachers of English, assessing writing can be a major challenge, usually requiring very high levels of language proficiency on the part of the marker. Marking is also very time-consuming, particularly if feedback to the learner on the piece of writing is required. This has encouraged the use of feedback sheets which provide categories for comments.

justify a grade, perhaps including some general suggestions for the student writer to consider "next time." Recent L1 and L2 research, focused on process-oriented models of instruction, have yielded far more encouraging and informative results. As teachers have adopted a multiple-draft response-and-revision approach to composition instruction, they have begun to intervene at earlier stages of the process (e.g., as students generate preliminary drafts), and to provide commentary on a broader range of issues.

Whereas it is fairly straightforward to observe that teachers should and do provide feedback at various stages of the writing process (not just at the end) and about a range of issues (not just grammar), how such commentary is constructed poses a question of greater complexity and practical interest to most teachers. Text-analytic descriptions of teacher commentary, whether written or oral, have been rare in the literature, no doubt, because such investigations are labor-intensive. Nonetheless, several recent studies have provided a promising start to this research base, yielding valuable and replicable analytic models (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris 1997, 2001a; Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997; Hyland & Hyland, 2002; Straub & Lunsford, 1995).

Effects of Teacher Commentary

Quantitative descriptions of teacher commentary are interesting and illustrative, yet perhaps the most pressing question for writing instructors is whether the feedback over which they labor so diligently actually helps their students' writing development. Studies that explicitly link teacher commentary to student revision have been scarce, indeed, and longitudinal research on student improvement as a result of teacher feedback has been virtually nonexistent. Part of the problem, perhaps, is that it can be difficult to trace the effects of specific teacher comments on revision, to measure "improvement," and to isolate the effects of teacher feedback from other aspects of the writing instruction, including composing practice, reading, and so on, that likely also affect literacy development.

That said, the few studies conducted along these lines have yielded results that are helpful in assessing the effectiveness of teacher commentary and certainly in identifying areas for future empirical investigations. One important and clear finding is that L2 student writers are very likely to incorporate teacher commentary into their subsequent revisions. For instance, Ferris (1997)

found that 76% of a teacher's suggestions were observably incorporated into students' next-draft revisions. Such findings should be simultaneously heartening and sobering. On the one hand, it certainly is encouraging to find that the commentary on which we work so hard is taken seriously by our student writers. On the other, it is daunting to realize that, because our students likely will not ignore our comments, the burden is on us to make sure that our feedback is helpful, or at least does no harm!

Thus, assuming that students do indeed pay attention to teacher commentary and try to use it in revision, the next question is whether such teacher-influenced revisions actually are beneficial to the quality of student texts and to the students' development as writers over time. Again, evidence on this point is scarce, but in the few attempts to trace the influence of teacher commentary on student writing, it appears that whereas most changes made by students in response to teacher feedback have a positive impact on their revised texts, at least some teacher comments lead students to make changes that actually weaken their papers (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1997, 2001; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Hyland & Hyland, 2002; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997).

Student Views on Teacher Feedback

Studies on the nature of teacher feedback and its effects on student writers have been rare. Nonetheless, a more substantial body of work in both L1 and L2 composition examines student reactions to teacher response (Arndt, 1993; Brice, 1995; Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Enginarlar, 1993; Ferris, 1995b; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Saito, 1994; Straub, 1997; see also Ferris, 2003b, chapter 5, for a review). Findings across these studies are surprisingly consistent and include the following insights:

1. Students greatly appreciate and value teacher feedback, considering teacher commentary extremely important and helpful to their writing development.
2. Students see value in teacher feedback on a variety of issues, not just language errors.³
3. Students are frustrated by teacher feedback when it is illegible, cryptic (e.g., consisting of symbols, circles, single-word questions, comments), or confusing

(e.g., consisting of questions that are unclear, suggestions that are difficult to incorporate into emergent drafts).

4. Students value a mix of encouragement and constructive criticism and are generally not offended or hurt by thoughtful suggestions for improvement.

Research on Teacher Commentary: Summary and Critique

Whereas research on teacher feedback still is in its preliminary stages (although certainly more evolved than when the first edition of this text was published!), we can offer the following suggestions based on the existing research findings:

- Feedback is most effective when provided at intermediate stages of the writing process.⁴
- Teachers should provide feedback on a range of writing issues (i.e., not just “language” or not just “ideas”).
- Teachers should pay attention to the formal characteristics of their feedback (scope, pragmatic form, and so on) so that students can understand it and use it effectively.

Finally, we should add that contextual issues also need to be considered in evaluating the effectiveness of various feedback types (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1981; Leki, 1990a; Reid, 1994). These issues include individual differences and predispositions (educational, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds; L2 writing proficiency levels; motivation for writing; see chapters 1 and 3); types of writing being considered (e.g., genres and text types, journal entries, speed-writes); and classroom context (class size, teacher–student rapport, instructional style); and other types of feedback provided (peer response, self-evaluation, and so forth). In other words, we cannot simply look at teachers’ written comments or transcripts of their oral feedback as well as students’ revisions and conclude that we know everything we need to know about a particular teacher, student, or class.

PRINCIPLES FOR PROVIDING WRITTEN FEEDBACK

Considering our own experiences with the feedback we have received on our own writing as well as feedback we have offered as teachers, together with what the literature suggests about teacher commentary in L2 writing, we present the following guiding principles (summarized in Fig. 5.1 and discussed briefly here) for approaching the delicate and arduous process of constructing written feedback for L2 student writers:

- 1. *The teacher is not the only respondent.* Depending on their ability and experience with writing, students also can benefit greatly from peer response and guided self-evaluation. Chapter 6 focuses extensively on peer response, touching briefly on self-evaluation. Many students will benefit further from working individually with private tutors in a campus writing center, or interacting with peers or experts in an online context (see chapter 9).
- 2. *Written commentary is not the only option.* For some writing issues and for some individual writers' temperaments and learning styles, in-person writing conferences may be a superior option to written commentary. We provide

Guiding Principles of Written Teacher Commentary	
1.	The teacher is not the only respondent.
2.	Written commentary is not the only option.
3.	Teachers do not need to respond to every single problem on every single student draft.
4.	Feedback should focus on the issues presented by an individual student and his or her paper, not on rigid prescriptions.
5.	Teachers should take care to avoid "appropriating," or taking over, a student's text. Final decisions about content or revisions should be left in the control of the writer.
6.	Teachers should provide both encouragement and constructive criticism through their feedback.
7.	Teachers should treat their students as individuals and consider their written feedback as part of an ongoing conversation between themselves and each student.

FIG. 5.1. Guiding principles.

guidelines for effective teacher–student conferences later in this chapter. Some teachers also use alternative delivery modes such as audiotaped feedback and commentary sent to students electronically.

3. *Teachers need not respond to every single problem on every single student draft.* Many instructors prefer to focus primarily or even exclusively on the development of student ideas in early drafts, saving language or editing issues for the penultimate draft. In any case, experienced teachers prioritize issues on individual student papers and selectively respond to the most important issues. Attempting to address all student problems on every paper can exhaust teachers and overwhelm students with commentary that, in some cases, may exceed the amount of text they themselves produced!
4. *Feedback should focus on the issues presented by an individual student and his or her paper, not on rigid prescriptions.* Many instructors have been taught that they should never mark errors on early drafts or address content issues on final drafts. However, if a student's initial version is solid in terms of idea development and organization yet replete with frequent and serious grammatical errors, it could be counterproductive to ignore these problems and struggle to find something "content-related" to say. Conversely, if a penultimate or final draft shows inadequate development or ineffective organization, it would not serve the student's needs simply to mark grammatical errors and ignore the major rhetorical issues.
5. *Teachers should take care to avoid "appropriating," or taking over, a student's text. Final decisions about content or revisions should be left in the control of the writer.* A great deal has been written about teacher "appropriation" of student writing, a serious concern. As Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) argued, if a student feels that his or her text belongs to the teacher rather than to him or herself, the student may lose the motivation to write and revise. Students may resent overly controlling teacher responses. With L2 writers, however, the more serious risk is that they will make every attempt to please the teacher. However, if the teacher has misunderstood the student's purposes, or if the student has misunderstood the teacher's chief message, the writer's rigor in trying to give the teacher exactly what he or she asked for may well lead to

an inferior revised product. All that said, in efforts to avoid such appropriative behavior (e.g., through questioning, indirectness, hedging) teachers also may fail to communicate suggestions and advice that student writers truly need.

6. *Teachers should provide both encouragement and constructive criticism through their feedback.* Most students recognize that teacher feedback is intended to help them and will not feel offended if we provide suggestions for improvement. However, it is human nature to desire and appreciate positive responses as well to the work we have done. Some teachers, reticent to discourage or offend students, may lavish praise through their written commentary while making few revision suggestions. Other teachers may be so dismayed at the problems they see that they jump right into extensive critiques without ever stopping to consider what the student writer might have done well. An important part of our job as L2 writing instructors is to build students' motivation, especially their confidence in expressing their ideas in English. Although it is not strictly necessary to strive for a 50/50 distribution of praise and criticism, teachers should recognize that both types of feedback are needed for the overall development of the writer and discipline themselves to provide written feedback at both ends of the spectrum on a regular basis.
7. *Teachers should treat their students as individuals, considering their written feedback as part of an ongoing conversation between themselves and each student writer.* Some authors urge teachers to provide "personalized" feedback, by writing summary endnotes like a letter, addressing the student by name and signing their own. Whereas providing personalized feedback is a good goal—and one that we strive toward—treating students as individuals additionally means following their development from draft to draft and assignment to assignment, pointing out persistent areas of weakness and encouraging them for the progress we observe. To accomplish all this, we will need to become acquainted with our students in class, during conferences, and through their writing (whether graded or not). We also must collect and read ongoing writing assignments (not just individual drafts) to trace and comment on student progress (or lack thereof, in some cases!).

GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN TEACHER COMMENTARY

With some guiding principles in mind, we can turn to practical suggestions for constructing responses that are helpful, clear, personalized, and appropriately encouraging. This discussion is divided into three general “stages”: approach (knowing what to look for and prioritization), response (providing the commentary itself), and follow-up (helping students maximize feedback and holding them accountable for considering it) (Fig. 5.2).

Approach

Preservice and novice teachers in our courses often articulate their greatest fear and struggle in responding to student papers as “Knowing where to start.” Teachers may find themselves at one of two extremes: not knowing what to look for or how to analyze student work critically on the one hand, or being so overwhelmed

<i>Suggestions for Teacher Commentary</i>	
1.	Clarify your own principles and strategies for responding and share them with students.
2.	Read through the entire paper before making any comments.
3.	Use a scoring rubric, checklist, specific writing assignments, and prior in-class instruction to identify possible feedback points.
4.	Select two to four high-priority feedback points for that particular student and writing task.
5.	Compose a summary endnote that highlights both strengths and weaknesses of the paper.
6.	Add marginal commentary that further illustrates the specific points raised in the endnote.
7.	Check your comments to make certain that they are clear and effective; avoid jargon and questions.
8.	Give students opportunities in class to pose questions about your feedback.
9.	Ask students to write a cover memo that they submit with revisions, explaining how they have considered and addressed comments they received, or why they chose not to address them.

FIG. 5.2. Suggestions for teacher commentary.

with the amount and severity of students' writing problems that they are paralyzed with indecision about where to begin.

Instructors who are not sure what to look for can use institutional grading criteria to identify possible areas of weakness or student need (see chapter 8). A rubric or checklist that outlines the qualities of passing or excellent papers for that specific context can help us to articulate questions that we might ask ourselves as we read student papers. For example, one checklist includes the following point: "Opposing viewpoints have been considered and responded to clearly and effectively" (Ferris, 2003b, p. 135). Thus, a question that the teacher might consider while reading could be "Is this a one-sided argument, or have possible counterarguments been anticipated and addressed in the paper?"

A second lens through which teachers can look at student writing is the assignment or task type as well as the task's genre category (see chapters 4 and 8). For example, a prototypical freshman composition assignment requires writers to describe a personal experience and analyze its significance in their lives (Spack, 1990/1996). This assignment raises two possible heuristic questions that teachers could ask as they review student papers: (a) Has the experience or event been described clearly and effectively with adequate but not extraneous detail? and (b) Has the writer analyzed the importance of the experience and how it has shaped his or her life?

A third way in which teachers can approach written commentary is to consider specific issues that have been covered in the syllabus and to look carefully at student papers to see the extent to which they have grasped and applied those concepts to their writing. Class time may have been spent on writing effective introductory sections and using systematic connectors (transitional expressions, repetition, synonyms, pronouns, and so on) to achieve better textual cohesion and coherence. Instruction may have focused on using summary, paraphrase, and quotation to incorporate ideas from another author into one's text, shifting verb tense and aspect accurately in telling personal narratives, and so forth. Under such conditions, the teacher may wish to comment on those specific issues to remind the students of what they have studied and practiced in class.

Once an instructor has examined a writing sample and identified strengths, weaknesses, and "feedback points," he or she then needs to consider how to prioritize these features and select which ones to address in written commentary. As suggested by principle 3 earlier, it can be counterproductive for the teacher

to comment on every possible problem that he or she sees. Although prioritization decisions are highly variable and by definition subjective, in selecting feedback points to address, teachers should take into consideration: the point in the term and what has been covered in class; where students are in the drafting and composing cycle (first draft, penultimate draft); the needs of individual student writers including issues that have been covered in prior feedback cycles, persistent problems, and encouraging signs of progress; and the teacher's own judgments concerning the relative urgency of the possible feedback points in a particular paper, which again can and should vary from student to student. Considering all of these concerns, we have found that two to four major feedback points usually is about optimal.

The final point about an instructor's "approach" to writing comments on student papers is that he or she should have a philosophy or theory of commentary, such as the "guiding principles" discussed in chapter 1, and a strategy for commentary, whether it be using a checklist, writing a letter, highlighting language errors, or a combination of these options. The teacher should strive to be consistent in adhering to his or her own philosophy and strategy. We also would recommend explaining our own approach to students: Doing so forces teachers to articulate their approaches and attempts to follow them!

Response

Having selected feedback points for response, the instructor next has specific practical choices to make in providing commentary.

The Mechanics of Feedback. As teachers have become more conscious of developing effective response procedures, a variety of techniques have been proposed for providing feedback to students. These techniques include audiotaped oral feedback (in contrast to written comments on papers), comments inserted into students' word-processing files, and comments sent via e-mail.

Clearly, all of these techniques have their advantages. In the case of audiotaped commentary, students are provided with listening comprehension practice. In addition, student writers who are more comfortable processing information via auditory modes may find such feedback more helpful than written commentary (Reid, 1993b). However, some students may find oral responses frustrating and confusing because of weak aural skills or a more

visually oriented learning style. Teacher feedback provided via computer, whether via floppy disk or e-mail attachment, has the same visual advantages as handwritten commentary, with the added benefit that the teacher's handwriting will not interfere with students' mental processing of the written message (Ferris, 1995b). Further, feedback provided on the computer can encourage students to become comfortable with technology that can help them improve their writing (see chapter 9).

Although all these alternative response techniques have their appeal, convenience and the availability of technology may be the deciding issues for many classroom teachers. Some teachers find it easier to take a stack of papers with them wherever they go, working on them as they have time. Because of the time and space limitations associated with audiotape and computerized formats, many teachers may find these options to be practical for only a small proportion of their students' assignments. Teachers' decisions about whether to use these tools likely will rest on student preferences and learning styles (i.e., for oral vs. written feedback) and on teachers' preferences and needs.

The Tools of Handwritten Feedback. For the aforementioned reasons, a majority of teacher response is likely to be of the pen-and-paper variety. Even with this more traditional mode of response, teachers have several choices to make: Will they use pen or pencil—and what color pen? Will they use a separate response sheet or write directly on the student's paper? Will they use some sort of rubric, coding sheet, or checklist for responses, or will they provide only verbal comments? Again, research findings do not point to an advantage of a single method over another. Some practitioners insist that using a red pen seems punitive and can inhibit students or make them anxious. Others argue that the tone and substance of the response (and the relationship between teacher and student) is far more significant than the color of ink used (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994).

Regarding response sheets, rubrics, and checklists, it can be argued that such forms provide teachers and students with a consistent framework and terminology for providing and processing feedback. However, it also can be argued that response checklists can limit and inhibit teachers from providing personalized responses appropriate to the student and the assignment given. In Ferris et al. (1997), when a teacher switched from writing endnotes directly on the student paper to using a response form, she produced significantly fewer (and shorter) comments

(although not necessarily less effective ones). Perhaps more important, if students do not understand the checklist or rubric, the forms can actually be distracting and counterproductive.

Beyond the mechanics of feedback, a number of other practical questions should be considered.

Preliminary Drafts or Final Drafts? Most scholars agree that teacher feedback is most effective and most likely to be used when it is provided on preliminary drafts that will be revised subsequently (Ferris, 1995b; Krashen, 1984; Zamel, 1985). However, does this precept mean that feedback on a final draft is wasted energy? Perhaps not, but the process probably could be handled differently. Whereas feedback on earlier drafts is formative, helping students to see where their developing text can be improved, final-draft feedback tends to be evaluative and summative, informing students about what they did well, explaining the basis for a grade or a score (if one is given), and perhaps offering general suggestions for consideration in subsequent assignments (e.g., "Great job adding more support for your arguments in your body paragraphs! The conclusion is still underdeveloped, and you need to stay aware of the errors you make in article usage. Let's see if we can work on those things on the next paper").

In one study that asked students about the degree to which they read and paid attention to teacher comments on first drafts versus final drafts, the students clearly indicated that they valued feedback at both stages of the process (Ferris, 1995b). Finally, with many instructors using a portfolio approach to assess student writing (see chapter 8), even "final draft feedback" may not truly be final if the student chooses to revise that paper further. Therefore, it can be worth the instructor's effort to let the writer know where the paper stands and what still could be done to improve its quality.

Endnotes or marginal comments? Arguments can be made on both sides of this issue. Endnotes enable the teacher to summarize his or her reactions to the entire paper. Also, because endnotes are not subject to the space limitations of marginal notes, they can be longer, clearer, less cryptic, and easier to read. Marginal comments, on the other hand, offer immediacy in that they are clearly keyed by proximity to specific ideas in the text. Moreover, marginal notes communicate to the writer the sense of an involved, interested reader engaged in a dialogue with the creator of the text.

LECTURE 41

RESPONDING TO WRITTEN WORK III

Topics	Lecture Name	Topics	Books	Pages
235	41.Responding to Written Work III	Feedback on Preliminary Drafts and Final Drafts	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 197
236		Praise and Criticism	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 198-199
237		Feedback on Content or Form	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 199-200
238		Follow up	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 200-201

239		Teacher-Student Writing Conferences	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp.203
240		Implementing Writing Conferences: Issues and Options	Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2013). Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice. Routledge.	pp. 205

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We have found that the ideal solution is a combination of both marginal and endnotes. We recommend that instructors, after reading through a student text carefully and selecting feedback points as described earlier, next construct a summary endnote, perhaps in the form of a personal letter to the student (Fig. 5.3). Teachers then can go back through the text making marginal comments that highlight or illustrate the points raised in the endnote, offering praise and other “interested reader” comments. However, if time is short, we recommend privileging the summary endnote over the marginal comments, simply because it provides a comprehensive overview of the paper that tends to be clearer and easier to read.

Praise or Criticism? As noted previously, solid arguments can be posited for incorporating both comments of encouragement and suggestions or constructive criticism into our written commentary. Many teachers like to use the “sandwich” approach to writing endnotes: beginning and ending the note

Julia,

You did a nice job with this essay. I liked your examples about listening to music and observing nature. You did a great job of discussing Sartre's essay, too.

A couple of suggestions for your next draft:

- 1. The paragraph about “sightseeing” is shorter than the other body paragraphs. You might try developing it more fully by including summary and quotation from Sartre's essay that might support or frame your personal experience.*
- 2. The paragraph about “College” needs to be more closely connected with the rest of the essay, maybe by specifically mentioning Sartre's essay, and how Yezierska's experience shows “The Rewards of Living a Solitary Life.”*
- 3. There are a lot of language errors, too. I've highlighted them for you. Be sure to edit carefully!*

Good work! I'll look forward to seeing your next draft!

Best wishes,

Dr. Ferris

FIG. 5.3. Sample summary endnote (letter) to student.

with encouraging remarks (the “bread”) and making the two to four feedback points or suggestions in the middle (the “filling”). Figure. 5.3 illustrates this style of commentary. Most instructors also like to write positive comments in the margins of student texts to communicate that they are interested, engaged readers.

Questions or Statements? The literature reflects some debate about the formal characteristics of teacher commentary and even about whether such considerations are important (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999). Following strongly worded cautions in the L1 response literature about the danger of appropriating student texts through overly directive teacher commentary (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982; Sommers, 1982; Sperling & Freedman, 1987), both L1 and L2 composition professionals have, since the 1980s, been explicitly trained to use questions rather than imperatives or statements in responding to student writers, both to encourage students to think more clearly and critically about their ideas (or, as Sommers [1982] put it, “forcing students back into the chaos” [p. 154]) and to communicate through the form of their comments that authority and ownership of the paper still belong to the student writer.

For some ESL writers, particularly those educated in their home countries, teacher questions can cause both pragmatic and cultural confusion. Whereas NS writers can easily recognize an indirect comment such as “Can you give an example here?” as a politely phrased teacher request rather than a “real” question (akin to “Can you shut the door?”), students less experienced with English pragmatic phenomena or North American teachers’ desire to assume a nonappropriative stance may either misinterpret the question as a real yes/no question (possibly answering “no”!) or wonder if the teacher’s wishy-washiness is a sign of incompetence or insecurity. The writer may consequently ignore feedback from a teacher for whom they have lost respect. This unfortunate outcome could, in turn, lead to frustration when the teacher receives a revised assignment in which it appears that the student completely ignored a clear, reasonable suggestion.

We are not suggesting by this discussion that instructors should abandon questioning as a commenting strategy. On the contrary, we use questions consistently in feedback on our own students’ writing. However, we believe that writing teachers should perhaps reexamine their questioning techniques. First, they should not assume that questions are the only or always the best approach for all types of feedback. When writing comments

in the form of questions, teachers might ask themselves three questions: (a) If the student answers this question, will it really improve the effectiveness of the paper? (b) Will the student be able to understand this question's intent and form? (c) On a rhetorical level, will the student know how to incorporate the answer to this question into his or her evolving draft? One practical approach to this final issue is to pair questions with statements explicitly suggesting revision, but perhaps hedging the suggestion ("Maybe you could. . .").

Content or Form? Another area of disagreement in the literature concerns whether L2 writing teachers should avoid mixing commentary on students' ideas and content with feedback on their errors or the linguistic form of their texts. As we have already discussed, it is neither necessary nor desirable for a teacher to respond to every problem on every draft of a student essay. Chapter 7 discusses in detail how teachers might approach the challenging task of error correction and how they might effectively combine feedback on form with explicit grammar instruction and strategy training to build independent self-editing skills.

Although the chapter division in this volume explicitly separates the issues of responding to student content and responding to lexical and syntactic problems (as does most research), it is important to note that the oft-cited dichotomy between content and form is largely artificial. For instance, consistent errors in verb tense and aspect inflection (form) can cause confusion for the reader about the time frame or immediacy of the action (content). Inaccurate lexical choices (form) can cause major problems in the overall comprehensibility of a text, causing the reader to be unsure of what the writer intended to express (content). Nonetheless, because teachers' strategies for detecting and marking lexical and syntactic errors tend to be different from their strategies for responding to content issues, the techniques that can be used warrant a separate discussion.

It is also important to acknowledge that in the available L2 research to date, no empirical evidence suggests that L2 writers will ignore teacher feedback on content if errors are also addressed in the same draft of an assignment, or that they cannot simultaneously make successful revisions in both content and formal accuracy. On the contrary, we can cite evidence that student writers who received feedback on both content and form improved in both areas during revision (Ashwell, 2000; Fathman & Whalley,

1990; Ferris, 1997). In any case, the principle of personalized or individualized feedback (Fig. 5.1, principle 7) should guide teachers here: Teachers should give each student what he or she most needs on a particular assignment at a specific point in time, rather than follow prescriptions such as “Never mix feedback on content with feedback on form.”

Follow-Up

An aspect of the response cycle that teachers may neglect to incorporate is follow-up. That is, we should ensure that students understand the feedback we have given them, helping students with revision strategies after receiving feedback and holding students accountable through the writing process and marking scheme. These strategies and tools should explicitly guide students in reading and understanding the feedback they have been given (see chapter 6 for further discussion of techniques for holding students accountable for peer response). Regrettably, teachers often simply return marked papers to students at the end of class or via e-mail, saying “The next draft is due 1 week from today.” This lack of attention to follow-up is unfortunate because it fails to recognize that students may not understand the comments we have made despite our best attempts to be clear, that students may not know how to revise skillfully even if they understand our feedback, and that students may not be highly motivated to exert themselves during revision, preferring instead to make minor microlevel changes that can be done at the computer in a matter of minutes.

The first step in ensuring that students understand our written feedback is, of course, to do a careful job of constructing it. If we are so hasty, careless, or exhausted that students cannot understand what we are trying to tell them, we might as well not bother responding at all. It should be obvious that feedback that is incomprehensible to students cannot help them. Nonetheless, even when we are careful and systematic, all human communication can and does misfire at times, particularly when participants in the exchange include novice writers composing in their second language. We should also make the humbling observation that writing teachers, no matter how experienced, can misunderstand their students’ intentions and purposes. Consequently, they may write comments that are off the point, inaccurate, or unhelpful. With these inevitable communication pitfalls in mind, we should allow students time in class to read over our feedback and to

ask questions about it immediately, or we should ask them to write a one- to two-paragraph response to our feedback articulating what they think the main points of our feedback might be.

Students should also receive explicit classroom instruction on revision strategies, both in general and specifically on how to take suggestions from an expert or peer reader and to use them to make effective changes in their evolving texts. At the same time, writers should be assured that they are the authors of their work, and that the final decisions about revisions should remain in their hands. In other words, they should be given explicit permission to disregard suggestions that they find unhelpful or with which they disagree.

We recommend several ways to hold students accountable for taking feedback seriously. One method requires that students include with revisions a cover memo explaining how they have or have not incorporated their teacher's suggestions and why. Another requires students to turn in folders or miniportfolios of ongoing writing projects so that teachers can compare earlier drafts with later drafts (and be reminded of their own previous suggestions). Teachers can choose to make comments about the quality and effort demonstrated in student revisions or actually make such good-faith effort part of the course grading scheme.

Written Commentary: Summary

Research on written teacher commentary has helped us identify issues to consider and possible strategies for providing feedback that is transparent, helpful, encouraging, and constructive. To summarize, insights from research and practice include the following:

- Teachers should identify and articulate—to themselves and to their students—their purposes for and philosophies (or theories) of response to student writing.
- Teachers can use different sources of information (course grading rubric, assignment specifications, prior classroom instruction, individual student needs) to examine student writing and then select and prioritize feedback points about which to write comments.

- The ideal approach to commentary involves a thoughtful mix of a summary endnote and marginal comments. However, if teachers have time for only one mode of response, they should opt for endnotes.
- Feedback should optimally include a fair balance of praise and constructive criticism.
- Especially for L2 writers, teachers should consider the formal characteristics of their comments (questions, jargon, and so forth) to ensure that their comments are clear and comprehensible.
- Teachers may wish to prioritize comments about content over feedback concerning language errors on different drafts of student papers, or they may choose to provide a combination of both feedback types on all drafts.
- Teachers should also be intentional in making sure that students understand their feedback and that they use it effectively in revision and future writing tasks.

TEACHER-STUDENT WRITING CONFERENCES

Another important means of giving feedback and instruction to writing students is through one-to-one writing conferences. Over the past several decades, the writing conference has achieved widespread popularity as a teaching tool for several reasons. One concerns the perception that writing conferences save teachers time and energy that would otherwise be spent marking student papers. Another is the immediacy and potential for interaction and negotiation that the conferencing event offers, allowing for on-the-spot clarification of difficult issues (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999) and helping teachers to avoid appropriating student texts (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982; Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1985). Finally, with the consideration given in recent years to students' learning styles (Reid, 1995b; see chapter 1), it is argued that writing conferences offer a more effective means for communicating with students who are auditory rather than visual learners. Some writing instructors feel so strongly about the value of writing conferences that they have suggested doing away with all other forms of in-class instruction to make time for them (Carnicelli, 1980; Garrison, 1974).

Research on Teacher–Student Writing Conferences: Empirical Trends

A number of researchers have described various aspects of conferencing, including attitudes toward and advantages of teacher–student writing conferences, the discourse of writing conferences, the outcomes and effects of the conferences, and the differing roles and behaviors of teachers and students during conferences. Early researchers (Arndt, 1993; Carnicelli, 1980; Sokmen, 1988; Zamel, 1985) examined students' or teachers' attitudes toward conferencing, concluding with strong endorsements of writing conferences as pedagogical tools because students can ask for on-the-spot clarification, and because "dynamic interchange and negotiation" can take place (Zamel, 1985, p. 97). Arndt (1993) also found that students wanted both written comments and conferences, whereas their teachers preferred conferences.

Conferencing Techniques: Suggestions and Criticisms

Early process-oriented concerns, particularly the desire to avoid appropriating students' texts or dictating the terms of the revisions, led to specific suggestions and guidelines for conducting teacher–student writing conferences. For instance, Murray (1985) encouraged teachers to allow students to take the lead in conferences by eliciting student writers' responses to their own writing before offering any feedback or evaluation, a procedure characterized by Newkirk (1995) as indirect. Similarly, Harris (1986) presented a list of nondirective strategies to guide teachers in their one-to-one interactions with students.

However, some composition theorists have expressed concern that in empowering students to retain ownership of their writing, we force them into roles for which they are not prepared and with which they are not comfortable (Arndt, 1993; Bartholomae & Petrosky, 1986; Delpit, 1988; Newkirk, 1995; Silva, 1997). In ESL writing research, scholars have argued that nondirective approaches to teaching and responding to student writing leave L2 writers ill-prepared to deal with the demands for either linguistic accuracy or the literate and critical skills expected by subject matter faculty in the disciplines (Eskey, 1983; Ferris, 1995b, 1997; Horowitz, 1986c; Johns, 1995a).

Most previous research on response to ESL student writing has examined teachers' written feedback, but it is safe to assume that some students may have problems adequately comprehending oral feedback, even though the conference format allows them increased opportunities to request clarification. Goldstein and Conrad (1990) pointed out that "ESL students bring with them diverse cultures and languages that potentially affect how students conference [and] how their teachers respond to them" (p. 459). For instance, some students may have strong inhibitions against questioning or challenging a teacher in any situation, especially a one-to-one conference. Meanwhile, others may feel that teachers' comments or corrections are to be incorporated verbatim into their texts because of instructors' presumed superior knowledge and authority. Arndt (1993), who compared teachers' and English as a foreign language (EFL) students' reactions to written commentary and conferences, noted that the potential for miscommunication existed in both modes, and that not all students were naturals at "the art of conferencing" (p. 100).

Implementing Writing Conferences: Issues and Options

If a teacher wishes to incorporate writing conferences into a composition or literacy course, several practical issues are worth considering. The first is whether to provide feedback to all students in this manner. Some students would no doubt enjoy the opportunity to discuss their writing in person with their teacher, both to get individual attention and to clear up any problems. Meanwhile, others might prefer written feedback because they find one-to-one discussions with their instructor intimidating, because they prefer seeing feedback in writing, or because they might forget what they have discussed with the teacher during the conference.

Several options are available for addressing these challenges. A teacher can ask students at the beginning of the term whether they prefer written or oral feedback or some combination of both (e.g., in a needs assessment; see chapter 3). For students who are unsure, the teacher can provide written feedback on one assignment and oral feedback on the next. For students who feel nervous about conference dynamics, ideas to relieve their anxieties include conferencing with pairs of students (also adding a peer feedback dynamic to the mix) and allowing students to audiotape or take notes during the conference.

Logistics: When, Where, and How Often?

Along with the question of whom to involve in conferences, a teacher must decide when, where, and how often to hold such conferences. Options range from holding conferences every week or at every class session (the “Garrison Method,” in which students write during class and come up to the teacher’s desk for a conference whenever they feel the need) to holding them at regular intervals (e.g., seeing each student during office hours on a 3- to 4-week rotation) to requiring students to come in at least once during class sessions for a conference to making conferences completely optional and holding them only at the student’s request.

Decisions about frequency and time frames depend on logistical constraints such as scheduling and office space. If a teacher has an office and holds regular office hours, scheduled office time can be the best way to hold conferences. Some instructors occasionally cancel classes to hold conferences with hard-to-schedule students. However, many part-time ESL literacy instructors have neither an office nor office hours. If teachers in this situation wish to hold one-to-one conferences, they most likely have to do so during class time, a situation that requires careful planning because the other students need to be productively engaged while the teacher holds individual discussions. Alternatively, as discussed in chapter 9, the computer writing lab can be an ideal setting for one-to-one teacher–student interaction because students work at individual terminals, and the teacher can move around the room to hold brief conferences as the need arises and inclination leads.

What Topics Should Conferences Cover?

Once the teacher has overcome the logistical obstacles, it is important to prepare and plan for conferences. What to discuss during conferences will vary according to the context of the conference. For instance, if the conference is student-initiated, the student may well have a particular question to discuss or problem to resolve. If the teacher has scheduled a conference, the options for topics to discuss range from a holistic reaction to the student’s latest draft to a specific discussion of a particular writing problem or a teaching point covered in class. If the teacher has an opportunity to prepare ahead of time for a conference, he or she might

make notes on particular issues that have arisen during class or that he or she has noted in previous papers. Alternatively, if discussing a particular assignment, the teacher may want to read through the text and make a few notes or check marks in the margins as reminders of items to discuss.

How Should Conference Dynamics Be Shaped?

Another pedagogical issue concerns the dynamics of teacher-student writing conferences, specifically, the relative proportion of talk by teacher and student as well as instructor directiveness (or lack thereof). Studies focusing on this issue have suggested that teacher-student conferences are most successful (with "success" not always operationally defined) when the writer makes a significant contribution to the conference, meaning that he or she participates fully in the discussion instead of sitting passively as the teacher dispenses criticism and advice. Moreover, researchers have suggested that when teachers avoid being overly directive in the conference setting, students can participate more fully, negotiate meaning more effectively, and ultimately produce texts that result from their own thought processes (presumably influenced by the teacher's input) rather than from verbatim reflections of the teacher's oral feedback. Specific ways to encourage students to participate and avoid being overly directive include asking questions (e.g., "What do you think about this paper?" and "Can you explain in another way what you were trying to say here?"), actively eliciting student participation ("Do you have any questions or issues to bring up?"), and allowing occasional silences so the student can formulate and articulate his or her thoughts.

SUMMARY

In L1 and L2 studies of teachers' feedback on student writing, a range of theoretical and practical questions have been examined:

- At what point or points in the writing process should a teacher intervene (if at all)?
- What are the differences between appropriation and intervention in responding to student writing?

LECTURE 42

TEACHING ACADEMIC L2 WRITING I

Topics	Lecture Name	Topics	Books	Pages
241	42.Teaching Academic L2 Writing I	Academic L2 writing Overview	Hinkel, E. (2003). Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar. Routledge.	pp. 30
242		Writing Requirements in the University	Hinkel, E. (2003). Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar. Routledge.	pp. 31
243		Characteristics of Academic Writing	Hinkel, E. (2003). Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar. Routledge.	pp. 31-32

244		Academic Writing Tasks and Assignments	Hinkel, E. (2003). Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar. Routledge. pp. 32-33
245		Teaching Academic Text Features	Hinkel, E. (2003). Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar. Routledge. pp. 36
246		Explicit Instruction in L2 Academic Writing	Hinkel, E. (2003). Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar. Routledge. pp. 37-38
247		Types of Writing Tasks	Hinkel, E. (2003). Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar. Routledge. pp. 39-40

Student Writing Tasks and Written Academic Genres

OVERVIEW

- Writing requirements in the university
 - Most important characteristics of academic writing
 - Most common written academic assignments and tasks
 - Essential features of academic text and importance of teaching them
 - Research findings on explicit instruction in L2 academic text
 - Types of writing tasks in commonly required academic courses
-

Although ESL instruction to non-native speakers (NNSs) takes place in various domains of language skills, such as reading, speaking, listening, and pronunciation, L2 learners who undertake to become proficient L2 writers are usually academically bound. In light of the fact that most students who prepare to enter degree programs dedicate vast amounts of time and resources to learn to produce written academic discourse and text, the teaching of English to academically bound NNS students must include an academic writing component. Although it is a verifiable and established fact that NNS students need to develop academic writing skills, ESL teachers in EAP, intensive, and college-level writing programs do not always have a clear picture of the types of writing and written discourse expected of students once they achieve their short-term goals of entering degree programs. In particular, students rarely need to be proficient narrators of personal experiences and good writers of personal stories. In fact what they need is to become relatively good at displaying academic knowledge within the formats expected in academic discourse and text. More important, NNS students' academic survival often depends on their ability to construct written prose of at least passable quality in the context of academic discourse expectations. This chapter presents an overview of

those written discourse genres and formats common in the academy in English-speaking environments.

WRITING REQUIREMENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY

Undergraduate students in U.S. colleges and universities are required to take general education courses in such disciplines as the sciences, history, philosophy, psychology, and sociology prior to their studies in their chosen majors. One implication of this structure in U.S. college education is that the greatest demand on students' language skills occurs during the first 2 years of their academic careers, when they are expected to read large amounts of diverse types academic text, write many short and long assignments, and take numerous tests and exams.

In the academy in English-speaking countries, the purpose of written assignments and of examinations and testing is to require students to display their knowledge and familiarity with the course material. Examinations vary in types and formats, ranging from multiple-choice tests to lengthy term papers, including essay tests and short essay-like responses. Outside multiple-choice tests, a great deal of writing is expected in most undergraduate courses, and it is not unusual for students to have to produce up to a dozen written assignments per term (Horowitz, 1986a). Even some multiple-choice tests—such as the TOEFL, ACT, or SAT—incorporate an essay component designed to measure test takers' writing proficiencies.

It is important to note that practically all writing assignments necessitate more than one writing task, such as exposition in the introduction, followed by cause/effect or comparison/contrast rhetorical structures, and possibly back to exposition in the conclusion. For instance, most types of writing assignments can include summaries of published works or syntheses of multiple sources of information or data. In this case, the writing tasks would include synthesis (or analysis) of information, paraphrasing, and restatement skills.

Beginning in the early 1980s, several studies undertook to investigate the types of writing assignments and tasks required of undergraduate and graduate students in academic mainstream courses in various disciplines, such as the natural sciences (e.g., biology, chemistry, and physics), engineering, business, and the humanities including English.

MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OF ACADEMIC WRITING

A survey of 155 undergraduate and 215 graduate faculty in 21 U.S. universities specifically identified the essential NNS students' L2 writing skills in courses that ranged from history, psychology, business, chemistry, and engineering (Rosenfeld, Leung, & Oltman, 2001). The responses of undergraduate faculty (Table 2.1) clearly indicate that organizing writing to convey

TABLE 2.1
Undergraduate Faculty Assessments of Some Writing Tasks

Task Statement	Mean Importance Rating
Organize writing to convey major and supporting ideas.	4.19
Use relevant reasons and examples to support a position.	4.09
Demonstrate a command of standard written English, including grammar, phrasing, effective sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation.	3.70
Demonstrate facility with a range of vocabulary appropriate to the topic.	3.62
Show awareness of audience needs and write to a particular audience or reader.	3.33

Note. Mean Importance Rating on a scale of 0 to 5.

major and supporting ideas and using relevant examples to support them occupy top priority in the quality of academic discourse¹ (ranks 4.19–4.09, respectively, out of 5).

In addition, demonstrating command of standard written English, “including grammar, phrasing, effective sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation,” is another high-priority requirement (rank 3.70), as well as demonstrating “facility with a range of vocabulary appropriate for the topic” (rank 3.62). On the other hand, showing awareness of audience needs and writing to a particular audience/reader was not found to be as important (rank 3.33). In addition to the faculty, undergraduate students ranked written discourse organization skills at 4.18; grammar, phrasing, and sentence structure at 4.15; and appropriate vocabulary at 3.69.

¹The teaching of academic discourse organization is crucially important in L2 writing instruction, and a large number of textbooks are available that focus on discourse. It would be no exaggeration to say that the teaching of L2 academic writing focuses predominantly on the features of discourse organization. However, markedly few course books on L2 writing for either students or teacher training address the importance of text features in L2 instruction. As mentioned earlier, however organized the information flow can be in student writing, it may be impossible to understand without an essential clarity and accuracy of text.

Graduate faculty (Table 2.2) identified largely similar priorities in student writing with regard to the importance of information/discourse organization and examples (ranks 4.46 and 4.34, respectively), grammar, phrasing, and sentence structure (rank 4.06), and appropriate vocabulary (3.74).

On the other hand, graduate students ranked discourse organization and exemplification at 4.32 and 3.96, respectively; grammar, phrasing, and sentence structure at 3.83; and vocabulary 3.56 (i.e., below the importance rankings assigned by graduate faculty in practically all categories).

In a separate subset of survey items, both undergraduate and graduate faculty also specified the specific writing skills that in their experiences determined the success of NNS students in their courses. For undergraduate faculty, the top three L2 writing skills included (in declining order of importance):

- discourse and information organization (2.40 out of 3)
- standard written English (i.e., grammar, phrasing, and sentence structure; 2.35)
- vocabulary (2.26).

Among graduate faculty, the top three skills essential for success in academic courses consisted of:

- information/discourse organization (2.49 out of 3)

TABLE 2.2
Graduate Faculty Assessments of Some Writing Tasks

Task Statement	Mean Importance Rating
Organize writing to convey major and supporting ideas.	4.46
Use relevant reasons and examples to support a position.	4.34
Demonstrate a command of standard written English, including grammar, phrasing, effective sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation.	4.06
Demonstrate facility with a range of vocabulary appropriate to the topic.	3.74
Show awareness of audience needs and write to a particular audience or reader.	3.62

Note. Mean Importance Rating on a scale of 0 to 5.

- command of standard written English (2.37)
- using background knowledge, reference materials, and other resources to analyze and refine arguments (2.35).

The employment of appropriate vocabulary received a ranking of 2.27.

The Rosenfeld, Leung, and Oltman (2001) study demonstrated unambiguously that L2 grammar and vocabulary skills play a crucial role in student academic success (and obviously survival).

MOST COMMON STUDENT WRITTEN ACADEMIC ASSIGNMENTS AND TASKS

The most comprehensive study of academic writing tasks was carried out by the Educational Testing Service (Hale et al., 1996), which surveyed eight large comprehensive universities in the United States. The information discussed in this investigation is summarized next.

Major Writing Assignments

Major academic essays typically have a specified length of 5 to 10 or more than 10 pages. These papers predominantly take the forms of out-of-class assignments and are required far more frequently in humanities courses such as psychology, economics, history, and English than in the sciences, engineering, or computer science. Most of these projects also necessitate library research and syntheses of literature and relevant information from a variety of sources. According to the Hale et al. (1996) findings, undergraduate courses in the sciences and engineering rarely expect students to write papers as long as 5 to 10 pages, and most of these types of essays are expected in English department courses.

Medium-Length Essays and Short Written Tasks

Medium-length essays between 1 and 5 pages are required as in-class and out-of-class assignments in practically all disciplines, with the exceptions of undergraduate courses in physics, mathematics, and engineering. In social science and humanities studies, they are expected in a majority of undergraduate courses. Similarly, short written assignments of about 0.5 to 1.5 pages represent course components in approximately half of all undergraduate courses, including physics, math, and engineering, and 94% of English courses (Hale et al., 1996). These essays are assigned both in and out of class in undergraduate and graduate studies alike. Among these assignments, library research reports, laboratory or experiment reports with or without interpretation, and book reviews represent the most common types of writing.

Short writing tasks (also called *expanded answers*) found in many written in-class and out-of-class exams, laboratory reports, case studies, annotations of literature, and computer program documentation assignments constitute the most common type of writing across all disciplines and courses. Furthermore, short writing assignments are significantly more common in undergraduate than graduate courses and in in-class than out-of-class assignments.

English Composition Writing Tasks

English composition instruction often provides the model for teaching writing in EAPs. According to the Hale et al. (1996) study, short writing tasks are far less common in English than in social or natural sciences (29% of all in-class assignments vs. 53% and 79%, respectively). On the other hand, out-of-class essays are required in 94% of all English courses, for example, compared with 53% in social and 47% in natural sciences. Among the assignment types, summaries and unstructured writing genre defined as free writing, journal entries, or notes, all which consist of writing down one's thoughts and experiences, are found almost exclusively in English courses, as well as twice as many assigned library research papers as in other disciplines. Major papers of 5 to 10 pages in length are assigned in 41% of English courses and only rarely in social science courses. Similarly, 1- to 5-page essays are required in 82% of English courses versus 39% of those in social sciences and 21% in physical/natural sciences.

FEATURES OF ACADEMIC GENRE AND TEXT

Research into various types of discourse and text (Biber, 1988; Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999; Swales, 1990a) showed explicitly and clearly that academic discourse and text are constructed differently than other types of text, such as fiction, news reportage, or personal correspondence. In fact, Swales (1990a) identified what he called "the academic discourse community" (p. 5), which prescribes somewhat rigid forms of discourse construction and organization combined with similarly inflexible expectations of vocabulary and grammar uses. Biber et al. (1999) examined a large corpus of specific microfeatures of texts in diverse spoken and written genres, and their findings are described in a 1,200-page volume. Their analysis includes the cross-genre uses of nouns, determiners, pronouns, verb tenses, and semantic classes of verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and clauses. Textual uses of practically all features indicate that written academic text is markedly distinct from many other types of texts, such as personal narrative, conversation, and even academic lectures.

Other corpus studies investigated frequencies of use of various lexical and syntactic features employed in academic and other types of text to eluci-

date the differences between the academic and other types of written genres. For example, these examinations focus on various hedges, modal verbs, epistemic adjectives, adverbs, and nouns (Collins, 1991; Hoyer, 1997; Hyland, 1998), as well as classes of collocations, idioms, synonyms, adverb clauses, and text-referential cohesion (Partington, 1996). These studies expanded the current knowledge base regarding specific structures and lexical features of written academic text, as well as other common features of text such as noun and prepositional phrases, stock phrases, and collocations (Kennedy, 1991; Kjellmer, 1991; Renouf & Sinclair, 1991).

For instance, analyses of large corpora have led to the development of pattern grammar to identify combinations of words that occur relatively frequently in academic texts and that may be dependent on a particular word choice to convey clear and definable meaning (Hunston & Francis, 2000). Because of great strides made in corpus analyses in the past few decades, today much more is known about frequent patterns of verb, noun, and adjective uses and variations in their meanings, as well as the syntactic and lexical contexts in which particular lexical and syntactic features occur.

Although findings of text and corpus analyses of the written academic genre may not be directly applicable to classroom instruction and studies of student texts, they provide insight into discourse and text conventions of published academic and other types of texts. Furthermore, they often help explain how written academic prose is constructed and, by implication, can inform writing instruction and pedagogy. An additional benefit of corpus studies is that they shed light on how enormously complex and frequently lexicalized the uses of language and text in the academic genre actually are.

TEACHING ACADEMIC TEXT FEATURES

Several researchers have identified English composition essays and the pedagogical essays (Johns, 1997) ubiquitous in English for Academic Purposes (EAPs) programs to be dramatically different from those students are required to write in the disciplines. Among other researchers, Horowitz (1986a) identified some of the writing tasks in undergraduate humanities courses. According to his findings, these included:

- summary/reaction to a journal article or reading
- annotated bibliography in such disciplines as biology, lab, and experiment reports
- connections between theory and data
- synthesis of multiple literature sources
- various research projects

Horowitz further noted that these assignments do not include invention and personal discovery and “the academic writer’s task is not to create per-

sonal meaning but to find, organize, and present data according to fairly explicit instructions" (p. 452). According to the author, sentence-level grammar, use of discourse markers, and clarity of academic text remain "vital" (p. 454) in the teaching of academically bound NNS students.

In the 1980s, several studies endeavored to learn about the reactions of faculty to particular features of NNS students' text (Johns, 1981; Ostler, 1980; Santos, 1988; Vann, Lorenz, & Meyer, 1991; Vann, Meyer, & Lorenz, 1984). Most professors in the disciplines are not well versed in the complexities of ESL instruction or L2 learning and acquisition. Nonetheless, their perceptions of text quality are important because they are the ones who grade students' assignments. According to the results of these studies, the employment of syntactic, lexical, and discourse features of text and errors in the uses of these features have an influential effect on the perceived quality of students' text. Although sentence- and phrase-level errors are often seen in relative rather than absolute terms, the problems in students' uses of verb tenses, word order, subordinate clauses, passive voice, and impersonal constructions have been found to obscure the text's meaning. In the view of faculty in various disciplines, such as physical and natural sciences, humanities, business, and the arts, accuracy in the uses of these and other syntactic and lexical features is very important and, in most cases, syntactic and lexical errors result in lower assignment grades.

When thinking about the importance of accuracy in the academic writing of NNS students, many ESL and EAP teachers believe that syntactic and lexical errors in L2 texts are not particularly damaging because NS writers also make numerous mistakes in their texts. However, several studies have found that faculty in the disciplines have a far more critical view of ESL errors than those of NSs (Santos, 1988; Vann et al., 1984, 1991). Although the indications of error gravity vary across disciplines and even vary according to the age of faculty, the conclusions in all investigations largely remain similar: ESL errors in students' texts are costly in terms of grades and overall evaluations of work quality.

To determine whether the needs of academically bound NNS learners were adequately addressed in EAP writing instruction, Leki and Carson (1997) interviewed a large group of students who began their ESL training and then continued their studies in various disciplines, such as engineering, biology, business, communications, and social work. The students reported great differences between the demands of writing in EAP classes and those in the disciplines. Among other important considerations, many students identified shortfalls in their vocabulary repertoire and a lack of familiarity with the *dry* academic textual style. Most important, the students spoke about the fact that EAP writing instruction represents what Leki and Carson called "non-text-responsible writing" (p. 63), whereas in the disciplines students are held accountable for the context of the text they read and the content and accuracy of the text they produce. The authors concluded that what

is valued in writing classes that emphasize personal growth and experience is distinct from that necessary in academic writing in the disciplines. They further stated that EAP writing instruction has the responsibility for preparing students for “real” academic courses because without adequate exposure to the demands of academic writing students are essentially left to their own devices once their EAP training is completed.

Johns (1997) explained that the narrow focus of writing instruction in EAPs and its focus on experiential essays is often based on the principle that, “if you can write [or read] an essay, you can write [or read] anything” (p. 122). She pointed out that in mainstream courses the expectations and grading of writing are different from those of ESL/EAP faculty. In fact she commented that when NNS students are exposed to largely one type of writing task, they come to believe that “this is the only way to write.” Such limited experience with writing actually does students a disservice and causes problems in their academic and professional careers.

Like Horowitz, Johns emphasized the importance of text in students’ academic writing. She emphasized that faculty often complain that students do not use vocabulary and data with care. However, in her view, because personal essays are highly valued in ESL and EAP writing instruction and because many instructional readings are in story form and/or simplified specifically for NNS readers, students are not exposed to the precision often expected in much of the academic prose. Furthermore, considerations of academic objectivity often conveyed by lexical and syntactic means, such as uses of personal pronouns and passive voice, are in conflict with those features of text encouraged in personal essays. Johns emphasized that formal academic register requires writers to be guarded and personally and emotionally removed from the text. She underscored that the hedged and depersonalized register of academic text is rarely addressed in ESL/EAP writing instruction, but should be if students are to attain the proficiency necessary for their success in mainstream academic courses.

In other studies, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) also stated that “the process approach [to teaching L2 writing], although extremely valuable in helping students organize and plan their writing has failed to tackle the actual texts that students have to produce as part of their academic or professional work” (p. 117). They also noted that in the United States, most of those who advocate a process approach see the teaching of generalized strategies of planning, writing, and revising as sufficient and believe that a detailed analysis of academic texts lies beyond the job of the writing teacher (Raimes, 1993; Zamel, 1983). However, according to Dudley-Evans and St. John, the considerations of end-product quality in L2 writing is important in academic and professional writing, and combining the strengths of both the product- and process-oriented approaches to the teaching of writing can lead to overall improvements in L2 writing instruction.

THE NEED FOR EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION IN L2 ACADEMIC TEXT

In an important study that surveyed 77 published research reports on the effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction, Norris and Ortega (2000) normed the results of investigations in an attempt to achieve consistency across various investigative and analytical methodologies. Their meta-analysis shows that in grammar learning focused instruction of any sort is far more effective than any type of teaching methodology based on focused exposure to L2 without explicit teaching. They further found that focused L2 instruction resulted in large language gains over the course of the instructional term and that the effects of the instruction seem to be durable over time. Furthermore, Norris and Ortega explained that explicit instruction based on inductive or deductive approaches leads to greater L2 gains than implicit instruction of any sort. Thus, given that academically bound L2 learners need to make substantial L2 gains to begin their studies, it seems clear that L2 grammar and vocabulary should be taught thoroughly and intensively.

When students matriculate from ESL/EAP programs, the quality of their writing and text is evaluated by non-ESL specialists who are faculty in the disciplines. Furthermore, when students' academic studies are completed, the accuracy of their text production is continually appraised by subsequent non-specialists in on-the-job writing whenever college-educated NNSs write e-mail, notes, reports, and old-fashioned memos. Considerate, understanding, and compassionate ESL teachers who seek to benefit their students have to teach the skills and language features that students must have to achieve their desired professional and career goals. In fact, this is what ESL teachers are hired to do. If instruction in the essential language skills is not provided, students are largely left to their own devices when attempting to attain L2 proficiency needed for their academic and professional endeavors.

Much recent research has shown that exposure to daily and classroom interactions, as well as fluency-oriented instruction, does not represent an effective pedagogical approach to developing syntactic and lexical accuracy (Chang & Swales, 1999; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Ellis, 2001; Jordan, 1997; Richards, 2002). Although teachers in academic preparatory and writing programs often believe that they set out to develop learners' academic reading and writing proficiencies, in actuality few are closely familiar with the types of writing assignments and tasks that NNS students need to perform once they complete their language training. For example, a list in chapter 5 includes the most frequently encountered nouns in course materials across all disciplines in college-level general education courses and contains such words as *ambiguity*, *anomaly*, *apparatus*, *appeal*, and *aristocrat*. In all likelihood, few practicing ESL teachers in EAP programs have undertaken to teach the meanings of these words unless they are fortuitously used in student reading texts. Fluency development activities in writing that re-

quire students to keep personal journals or carry out journal-centered correspondence with the teacher are not designed to increase learners' academic vocabulary or grammar repertoire, with its almost requisite uses of passive voice, impersonal construction, and complex hedging. In fact such fluency-based activities encourage the use of immediately accessible lexicon and grammar structures without a means of language gains and perpetuate learners' misunderstanding and confusion with regard to the high degree of accuracy expected in formal academic prose.

A teacher of writing would do a disservice to academically bound NNS students by not preparing them for academic writing assignments, particularly those in the more common forms the students are certain to encounter later in their studies. Within these academic assignments and tasks, students must produce text that is academically sophisticated enough to demonstrate their understanding of and familiarity with the course material. Yet few ESL/EAP programs undertake to at least expose their students to various types of academic assignments and require production of written academic (rather than personal) prose (Chang & Swales, 1999; Johns, 1997; Leki & Carson, 1997).

TYPES OF WRITING TASKS

The discussion of writing tasks in this section relies on the findings of Hale et al. (1996) to survey the writing requirements in eight comprehensive U.S. universities. Overall the types of writing expected of undergraduate and graduate students do not seem to vary greatly with regard to the rhetorical and discourse patterns they elicit. Most assignments combine several rhetorical tasks (e.g., exposition and analysis in business case studies or history essays).

The most common types of rhetorical formats found in in-class and out-of-class assignments represent (in declining order of frequency):

- **Exposition** (short tasks required largely in introductions and explanations of material or content to follow, and thus it is a component of all assignment types)
- **Cause-effect interpretation** (by far the most prevalent writing task, found in over half of all writing assignments)
- **Classification** of events, facts, and developments according to a generalized theoretical or factual scheme
- **Comparison/contrast** of entities, theories, methods, analyses, and approaches (in short assignments)
- **Analysis** of information/facts (in medium-length assignments)
- **Argumentation** based on facts/research/published literature (in medium-length assignments)

LECTURE 43

TEACHING ACADEMIC L2 WRITING II

Topics	Lecture Name	Topics	Books	Pages
248	43.Teaching Academic L2 Writing II	Teaching Cause and Effect	Hinkel, E. (2003). Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar. Routledge.	pp. 41
249		Teaching Classification	Hinkel, E. (2003). Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar. Routledge.	pp. 42
250		Teaching Comparison and Contrast	Hinkel, E. (2003). Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar. Routledge.	pp. 43

251		Teaching Analysis	Hinkel, E. (2003). Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar. Routledge. pp. 44
252		Teaching Argumentation	Hinkel, E. (2003). Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar. Routledge. pp. 45
253		Teaching Exemplification	Hinkel, E. (2003). Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar. Routledge. pp. 172-173

Less common writing tasks include:

- **Expanded definition** (least common in medium-length and out-of-class assignments)
- **Process analysis** in such disciplines as political science, economics, sociology, psychology, accounting, marketing, and management (hardly ever found in out-of-class assignments)
- **Fact-based exemplification** of concepts and theoretical premises and constructs (overall least common in both in-class and out-of-class assignments)
- *Not found in any assignments*—**narration/description** in the disciplines or English courses

In general, the frequency of rhetorical patterns does not seem to differ greatly among the writing tasks in undergraduate and graduate courses. Specifically, cause–effect essays can be found in over half of all written tasks in in- and out-of-class assignments, with exemplification, process analysis, and definition being comparatively least common.

Exposition rhetorical tasks require writers to explain or clarify the topic/subject. In general terms, exposition is entailed in expressing ideas, opinions, or explanation pertaining to a particular piece of knowledge or fact. For example,

1. *What nonverbal cues communicated the most conflict in the newlywed study?* (Psychology) (Epstein, 1999, p. 291)
2. *Discuss the various types of accounting information most companies routinely use.* (Business) (Zikmund, Middelmist, & Middelmist, 1995, p. 447)
3. *Which forms of government predominated among the Italian city-states? In the end, which was the most successful? Why?* (History) (Perry et al., 2000, p. 322)

Cause–effect interpretation tasks deal with establishing causal relationships and are based on causal reasoning. Most assignments of this type include a discussion or an explanation of a cause–effect relationship among events or problems, identification of causes or effects, and a presentation of problem solutions in the case of problem–solution tasks.

Examples of cause–effect interpretation assignments can be:

1. *Pabst Blue Ribbon was a major beer company when I was in college. However, recently it has lost market share, and now you hardly even hear about it. What happened at Pabst and why?* (Business) (Adapted from Bean, 1996)
2. *Why does culture arise in the first place? Why is culture a necessary part of all organized life?* (Sociology) (Charon, 1999, p. 105)

3. *Why is the Renaissance considered a departure from the Middle Ages and the beginning of modernity?* (History) (Perry et al., 2000, p. 322)

Classification of events, facts, and developments assignments involve cognitive tasks in which writers are expected to determine what types of group members share particular features or characteristics. Therefore, students are required to classify clusters or groups of objects, events, or situations according to their common attributes, create a system to classify objects or events, and list them based on this classification. For example,

1. *In what ways can a company maintain good relations with its union employees without being unfair to its nonunion employees?* (Business) (Zikmund, Middlemist, & Middlemist, 1995, p. 421)
2. *What do Elaine Walster and Ellen Berscheid say are the ingredients for love?* (Psychology) (Epstein, 1999, p. 326)
3. *What was the traditional relationship between the people and their rulers during the Middle Ages? How and why did this relationship begin to change in the sixteenth century and with what results?* (History) (Perry et al., 2000, p. 376)

Comparison/contrast tasks expect writers to discuss or examine objects or domains of knowledge by identifying their characteristics/properties that make them similar or different. In general, the purpose of such assignments is to identify the specific points that make objects, events, or situations similar and/or different as well as explain one in terms of the other.

Examples of these assignments can be:

1. *Compare and contrast medieval universities with universities today* (History) (Perry et al., 2000, p. 278)
2. *What distinguishes the philosophy of religion from theology?* (Philosophy) (Schoedinger, 2000, p. 225)
3. *Compare the reaction of Olaudah Equino on first encountering Europeans with that of the Spaniards encountering Aztecs.* (History) (Perry, Peden, & Von Laue, 1999, p. 351)

Analysis of information or facts (in medium-length assignments) requires writers to separate a whole into elements or component parts and identify relationships among these parts. Other types of analysis assignments include applying theories or interpretive methods to the object of analysis or a particular school of thought, distinguishing facts from theories, evaluating the validity of stated or unstated assumptions and/or various types of relationships among events, identifying logical fallacies in arguments, or specifying the author's purpose, bias, or point of view. For example:

1. *How does the bourgeoisie gradually undermine its own existence according to Marx?* (Philosophy) (Schoedinger, 2000, p. 215)
2. *How do the elasticities of supply and demand affect the deadweight loss of a tax? Why do they have this effect?* (Economics) (Mankiw, 2001, p. 176)
3. *If class, race, and gender are positions within social structures, we should be able to describe them in terms of power, prestige, privileges, role, identity, and perspective. Can you do this?* (Sociology) (Charon, 1999, p. 86)

Argumentation assignments largely represent a form of exposition that includes an element of persuasion. Therefore, the rhetorical purpose of these writing tasks extends beyond the presentation, explanation, or discussion to convince the reader of a particular point of view. In argumentation tasks, the writers are required to recognize that issues have at least two sides and present the facts or information to develop a reasoned and logical conclusion based on the presented evidence. In practically all assignments, presentations of unsupported assertions are not considered to be argumentation (Hale et al., 1996).

1. *Human beings are social to their very core. How does the material covered in Chapter xxx/this term so far support this proposition? What do you think of this argument?* (Sociology) (Adapted from Charon, 1999)
2. *What is freedom? What is individuality? To what extent do you think human beings are free or individuals? What do you think is the origin of freedom and individuality?* (Sociology) (Charon, 1999, p. 148)
3. *Why would removing trade restrictions, such as a tariff, lead to more rapid economic growth?* (Economics) (Mankiw, 2001, p. 262)

Less Common Rhetorical and Writing Tasks

Three types of writing tasks appear markedly less common than those discussed earlier: definition, process description, and exemplification.

Expanded definition assignments consist of explanations of exact meanings or significance of a phrase or term. Usually these assignments consist of defining the term, listing the concept to which the term belongs, and specifying the attributes that distinguish it from others in its class. For example:

1. *What is social order?* (Sociology) (Charon, 1999, p. 147)
2. *Explain the meaning of nominal interest rate and real interest rate. How are they related?* (Economics) (Mankiw, 2001, p. 237)

Process analysis involves directions on how someone should do something or how something should be done, including chronological details in a series of steps/operations/ actions necessary to achieve a particular result or happening. In most cases, a discussion of reasons for the steps and negative directions are needed. For example,

1. *Suppose that you were to set up an organization—for example, a club, a church, a school, or a small community. What would you do to try to ensure that social order would successfully be established?* (Sociology) (Charon, 1999, p. 147)
2. *What is the business value chain? Use frozen pizza sold in supermarkets to explain your answer.* (Business) (Zikmund, Middlemist, & Middlemist, 1995, p. 17)

Exemplification and illustration largely deals with expanding on theories/concepts/ ideas and providing reasonable amounts of detail to explain a type, class, or group of objects or events by presenting examples. These assignments largely rely on general-to-specific discourse organization flow. For example,

1. *Give at least two examples of what children can learn from playing peek-a-boo.* (Psychology) (Epstein, 1999, p. 258)
2. *What is a simple idea, according to Locke? Give examples.* (Philosophy) (Adapted from Schoedinger, 2000, p. 351)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the key writing tasks with which NNS writers need to be competent based on research and interviews with undergraduate and graduate faculty? What kinds of instruction can help NNS writers improve these skills?
2. What are the most common forms of academic writing assignments? How can a teacher in an ESL or EAP writing course help students prepare for these kinds of assignments?
3. What can be possible reasons that the common types of essays/writing tasks required of students in ESL/EAP writing courses are distinct from those in courses in the disciplines? If you were in charge of the curriculum in preparatory ESL writing courses, would you change the types of writing tasks required of students? If yes, in what way? If no, why not?

FURTHER READINGS ABOUT WRITING TASKS AND WRITTEN ACADEMIC GENRES

Writing Tasks

- Johnson, D. (1989a). Enriching task contexts for second language writing: Power through interpersonal roles. In D. Johnson & D. Roen (Eds.), *Richness in writing* (pp. 39–54). New York: Longman.
- Leki, I., & Carson, J. (1997). “Completely Different Worlds”: EAP and the writing experiences of ESL students in university courses. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31(1), 39–70.

LECTURE 44

TEACHING READING AND WRITING IN THE PAKISTANI ELT CONTEXT

Topics	Lecture Name	Topics	Books
254	44.Teaching Reading and Writing in the Pakistani ELT Context	Introduction to Teaching reading and writing in the Pakistani ELT context	Aftab, A. (2012). English language textbooks evaluation in Pakistan (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).
255		Teaching Reading Skills in the Pakistani Context	Aftab, A. (2012). English language textbooks evaluation in Pakistan (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).
256		Integration of Reading Skills in the Pakistani National Curriculum	Aftab, A. (2012). English language textbooks evaluation in Pakistan (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).

257		Teaching Writing Skills in the Pakistani Context	Aftab, A. (2012). English language textbooks evaluation in Pakistan (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).
258		Integration of Writing Skills in the Pakistani National Curriculum	Aftab, A. (2012). English language textbooks evaluation in Pakistan (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).

The provincial population figures detailed above have helped in deciding the sampling criteria for the schools selected for the present research [see section 6.7.3 below].

2.3 Role of English in Pakistan

Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and helps in uniting the general public linguistically in a country whose people speak different regional languages; in fact it functions as a kind of local Lingua Franca in Pakistan (Shamim, 2011). English is recognized as the second language. However, it is spoken by a very small percentage of the population in Pakistan as shown in Table: 1.2 in which English does not even figure among the major languages to be given a separate reference and is instead included in the ‘others’ category:

Table: 2.2

Language	Percentage of Speakers	Number of Speakers
Punjabi	44.15	66,225,000
Pashto	15.42	23,130,000
Sindhi	14.10	21,150,000
Siraiki	10.53	15,795,000
Urdu	7.57	11,355,000
Balochi	3.57	5,355,000
Others	4.66	6,990,000

(1998 census cited in Rahman, 2004.: 2)

Major Languages spoken in Pakistan

Yet English is one of the main languages which are being utilized in the major spheres of power, like bureaucracy, judiciary, commerce, education, research and so on. There is some confusion regarding the official language even in the official circles; some refer to Urdu as the official language, while others assign English to this position:

English was supposed to continue as the official language of Pakistan till such time that the national language (s) replaced it. However, this date came and went by as many other dates before it and English is as firmly entrenched in the domains of power in Pakistan as it was in 1947.

(Rahman, 2004: 5)

Rahman (2004) is of the view that the elite classes of Pakistan have been responsible for maintaining (if not strengthening) the privileged position of English in the country for their

vested interests, namely that of reinforcing their own superior status. Whatever the reason for being assigned so much prominence, English has come to be accepted in the country especially by the younger generation:

In recent years with more young people from the affluent classes appearing in the British O' and A' level examinations; with the world-wide coverage of the BBC and the CNN; with globalization and the talk about English being a world language; with stories of young people emigrating all over the world armed with English---with all these things English is a commodity in more demand than ever before.
(Rahman, 2004.: 5)

In the coming years the influence of English will continue to spread; “globalization will increase the power of English because it will open up more jobs for those who know it” (2004:7). Notwithstanding Rahman’s misgivings about English as the language of the powerful elite, other Pakistani linguists affirm that the language is playing a significant role in the country – as a Lingua Franca and a “necessity” (Warsi, 2004; Akram and Mahmood, 2007: 6 respectively). Moreover, even the general populace believes that knowing English is “an asset”. In fact, the growth of English medium schools even in remote areas highlights the great “demand” of the language among Pakistanis. (Ashraf, 2006: 112)

Furthermore, after years of debate as to which language (Urdu/English) should be used as the medium of instruction there has been official recognition of the importance of English as a language in Pakistan. This change in government attitude is reflected in the following assertions made by Aly (2007) while reviewing the national educational policy during the stint of the previous government (2002 – 2007):

Historically, proficiency in English language has been the privilege of the elite and those who have been kept outside the facility of this language were at a disadvantage. Everyone now needs to learn English... To ensure that our education system provides for imparting instruction of English language to all people across the entire breadth of the country, it is important to comprehend the usefulness of the facility of the functional language and all the public schools should provide instruction of English language of uniform standard.
(2007: 54)

The new government which took office in 2008 has continued to recognize the importance of English and the draft of the new education policy (2008) supports this view:

Pakistan's policy is... based on the perception of increased importance of English language. It has been felt that the education sector, with the exception of a few elite schools, fails to produce the requisite proficiency. This has led to social exclusion of those who cannot afford to access these schools. There is also an opinion that the deficiency has impacted Pakistan's potential to attract investment and benefit optimally from globalization. In Pakistan the best jobs, whether in the public or the private sector, are beyond the reach of those who lack proficiency in the English language.
(2008: 30)

Thus according to the latest education policy, English will be taught from Grade I onwards as a compulsory subject and there will be a gradual shift towards English medium all over the country (at present many public schools are using Urdu as a medium of instruction).

Masood (2006) goes on to commend this policy since “higher education, research and access to better-paying jobs need a degree of proficiency in English that pupils from Urdu-language schools tend not to have” and asserts that teaching English from the commencement of formal schooling “will undoubtedly make a difference to the lives of many” (2006: webpage). This once again highlights that English is generally believed to play a vital role in Pakistani society even though a very small percentage of the population use the language in their daily discourse [see above].

Here it is important to emphasize that various linguists [named above] have just mentioned the different roles of English in general terms and no one has really tried to probe into the actual situation and illustrate the specifics. For instance, Masood (2006) and the Educational Policy (2008) refer to the value of knowing English in the job market in vague terms like having access to “better-paying jobs” and “best jobs”, while no attempt is made to elaborate upon or elucidate which particular job sectors and levels require English. However, Hasan

(2009) has presented a relatively comprehensive list of areas where English is used in

Pakistan:

All government documents, military communications, street signs, many shop signs, business contracts and other activities are done in English. The language of the courts is also English. English is taught to all school level Pakistani students, and in many cases the medium of instruction is also in English. At College and University level all instruction is in English. Pakistan boasts a large English language press and media.

(Hasan, 2009: webpage)

[Also see section 3.2 below]

2.4 Educational System of Pakistan

The education system of any country is complex and multifaceted and so here it is neither possible nor relevant to provide a comprehensive survey of the whole system. Instead, the following discussion focuses on some aspects of the Pakistani educational system which are pertinent to the research in question. Without understanding the jurisdiction, structure and the simultaneous working of parallel systems of education in Pakistan, it will not be possible to comprehend the textbook situation. The school categorization and the comparison of the private and public educational sectors have provided the rationale behind the selection of schools for the present study. Finally, since teachers are the bridge between coursebooks and the students, it is essential to briefly examine the teacher training structure.

2.4.1 Official Jurisdiction

In Pakistan, education had been under both the central control (that is the federal government) and the provincial governments. Saeed (2007) elaborates that at the centre the Ministry of Education, based in the federal capital (Islamabad), is in charge of preparing the national educational policies. Then each province formulates its own strategies but within the framework proposed by the federal government. According to the Federal Education Ministry

Presentation (2008), the Curriculum Wing is responsible for the overall preparation and approval of the scheme of studies, curricula and textbooks of the different subjects. Thus as affirmed by Saeed:

... uniform curriculum of each subject is followed all over the country; although textbooks in different subjects may vary across the provincial text book boards (PTB).
(2007: 47)

However, recently under the eighteenth amendment to the constitution (which has been passed by the parliament in 2010) the formulation of the educational policies (including curriculum development) is being handed over to the provincial governments.

2.4.2 Educational Structure

The educational levels are classified into elementary (grades 1-8, ages about 5 to 13), secondary (grades 9-12, ages about 14 to 18), and tertiary or higher education after 12 years' schooling. The elementary grades are further divided into primary (grades 1-5) and middle (grades 6-8).

2.4.3 Categories of Schools

The following up-dated classification of schools in Pakistan based on the categories listed by Pakistani researchers like Aly (2007) is deemed relevant for the present study [see section 6.7.3 below]:

Table: 2.3

School Type	Management	Examination	Clientele
Public Sector			
Government I	Provincial Education Department	Local Matriculation Examination	Rural & urban poor
Government II	Local Bodies (like union councils)	Local Matriculation Examination	Urban poor and lower middle class
Government	Autonomous under	Local Matriculation	Urban lower middle

Model	commissioners	Examination	& middle classes
Cadet	Cantonment boards	Local Matriculation Examination	Urban middle class
Public Elite	Autonomous under the governor	O' Level & Local Matriculation Examination	Rural & urban upper middle & upper classes
Private Sector			
Madrassas	Religious bodies	Religious boards recognized by the government	Rural and urban poor
Private I	Private owners	Local Matriculation Examination	Rural & urban poor & lower middle class
Private II	Charity/Philanthropists	Local Matriculation Examination	Urban poor & lower middle class
Private III	Private owners	O' Level/Local Matriculation Examination	Urban middle & upper classes
Private School Chains	Private owners	O' Level/Local Matriculation Examination	Urban middle & upper classes
Private Elite Institutions	Private owners – foreign management	O' Levels & American school diploma	Urban upper class

Categories of Schools in Pakistan

2.4.4 Parallel Systems of Education

There are parallel systems of education in Pakistan – both differing in terms of objectives. The first system prepares the students for the local board examinations referred to as matriculation examination. Both the public and many private sector schools have adopted this system. There has been general confusion about the medium of instruction, with successive governments opting for Urdu or English (in rural Sindh the regional language Sindhi is widely used as the medium of instruction) at whim. The recent governments are promoting English as the medium of instruction [see section 2.2. above]. Irrespective of the approved medium, English is a compulsory subject from middle school upwards. The public sector schools prescribe the provincial textbook board approved textbooks, while for the private sector the school administration selects textbooks from those available locally.

The second system follows the British educational scheme leading to the O' level examination. The medium of instruction is English and generally imported textbooks are prescribed. Some private sector schools especially those in the affluent urban areas and the public elite institutions have adopted this system. However, most of the older established private institutions (that is, founded before 1979) and some relatively newly established schools offer both the local and the British system.

2.4.5 The Public and Private Divide

First of all, it is important to clearly identify what constitutes public sector and private sector in the context of Pakistan. Aly (2007), while discussing the Pakistani educational scenario in policy papers (compiled to debate issues related to the education policy of Pakistan) clarifies these terms as follows:

The public sector can be taken to include all government and State controlled organizations/institutions, while the private sector will be defined as "all organizations/ institutions not governed or controlled by the State". This definition equally encompasses institutions that are for profit or not for profit, religious/missionary and located/controlled from within Pakistan or internationally controlled.
(2007: 30 – 31)

Private sector has continued to play an important role in education since Pakistan was founded in 1947. The only exception was the 1970s when nationalization policy affected the educational institutions.

Generally it is held that the children belonging to the upper strata of society attend the private schools, while the public schools cater to the students belonging to the lower social classes. In other words, it is believed that the public schools reach out to the greater sections of the society.

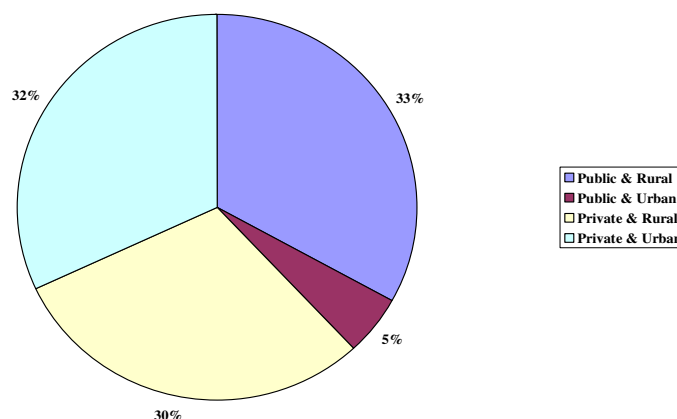
However, the detailed survey of the situation highlights the other side of the picture. Recently with the setting up of low cost private schools (even in rural areas) children of low income families have a choice of opting for private institutions. In addition, the numbers of private school students has risen in recent years, and this number is expected to rise further:

...a growing number of students now attend private schools, giving rise to an industry that has become one of the country's most profitable. According to former finance minister, Shahid Javed Burki, as many as 30 percent of Pakistani students now attend private schools. These range from one-room schoolhouses in villages that charge less than \$1 per student to international schools that cost the same as elite private schools abroad.

(Qureshi, 2008: webpage)

Furthermore, the examination of the educational level wise figures issued by the National Educational Census (2005) has belied claims that Pakistani educational scenario is dominated by public sector institutions at all levels. Thus a comparison of the number of middle schools belonging to public and private sectors classified separately into rural and urban types shows up interesting results (see Figure: 2.1 below):

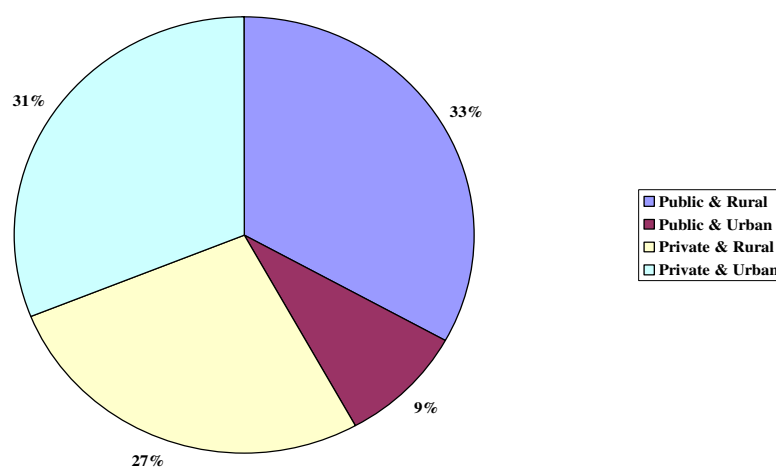
Figure: 2.1



Sector Wise Distribution of Middle Schools

As observed from Figure: 2.1, the number of private middle schools in rural areas (30%) is almost at par with the public sector middle institutions (33%) in the same locale. On the other hand, while private sector schools are flourishing in the urban regions (32%), the number of public schools is comparatively very insignificant (only 5 %). The enrolment situation is similar to that of the number of institutions, as supported by the following graph:

Figure: 2.2



Sector Wise Enrolment in Middle Schools

In rural localities, the difference between the number of students attending public sector middle schools (33%) and those attending private sector (27%) is not very substantial, while in the urban areas the difference in enrolment in the two types of schools (9% and 31 %) is very significant. In other words, private middle schools appear to be popular in both urban and rural areas, whereas public middle schools seem to be in demand only in the rural areas. Thus 58% (31 + 27) of the middle level student population attends private middle schools in the country.

The above mentioned figures support the fact that private sector institutions are gaining popularity among the population across the board in Pakistan. This phenomenon by default throws light on the dismal state of affairs in the public sector education, as also asserted by Dubin and Olshtain (1986) while discussing general language curriculum development:

An indication that language programmes are failing to meet learners' objectives is often signaled by the existence of flourishing schools and courses outside the official educational system.
(1986: 11)

The above assumptions are supported by Aly (2007) in the context of Pakistan since he explicitly blames the poor quality education being imparted by the public institutions for the sharp increase in private educational institutions. Similarly, Masood (2006) has indicated that the dismal standard of education in the public schools is responsible for the preference of the private sector education among the lower classes in Pakistan:

Worldwide, privately-funded schools tend to offer a significantly better quality of education compared to state-funded ones. In Pakistan, however, the difference between the two amounts to a chasm. Pakistan's state schools are notoriously bad.
(2006: webpage)

Thus the private sector schools provide a good return for money because they provide better quality education at reasonable rates. However, a different perspective is provided by some rural educators (interviewed during the course of this research) who assert that private schooling has become a status symbol with parents who can afford it opting for these institutions, while in actual fact the quality of education is comparatively worse.

2.4.6 Teachers Training

In Pakistan training is a pre-requisite for public sector teachers. This training is classified into 'pre-service training' provided by the Government Colleges of Elementary Training and the 'in-service' training which is structured differently in the four provinces. Mainly the

Provincial Institutes of Teacher Education are responsible for in-service training. In Punjab the Department for Staff Development is responsible for the training. In addition, B Ed degrees are awarded by Allama Iqbal Open University through distance learning projects and some private sector institutions.

The private sector schools do not adhere to the requirements specified for the public sector with regard to hiring of teachers. Instead, each school administration decides its own criteria for teacher selection. Generally training is stressed only in the more affluent institutions. A few well reputable school systems like the City School System have developed their own training services where teachers belonging to different branches from all over the country are trained. (Adapted from National Education Policy Review Team, 2006: 52 – 53; and, Aly, 2007: 23 – papers prepared for revision of the National Educational Policy.)

2.4.7 The Standard of English Language Education in Pakistan

It is perceived that the standard of teaching English in Pakistan is not up to the mark, especially as far as it implies facilitating students to use the language in real life. Thus linguists assert that Pakistani student lacks the ability to communicate effectively, fluently and accurately in the language even after studying English for at least 6 years (Warsi, 2004; Ashraf, 2006). Moreover, some studies which have been conducted by linguists exploring the ongoing English language courses and English proficiency of Pakistani students have revealed significant data. One such research highlighted the following weaknesses in the public tertiary level English programmes:

The assessment practices in all cases focus on assessing content knowledge such as... ‘characteristics of a good paragraph’ instead of language skills. Students are given few opportunities to develop academic literacy since teaching and learning focuses mainly on getting good grades in the content-based examination. Additionally, there are few expectations that learners will use English in the classroom.
(Shamim, 2011: 8)

Yet a survey of the relevant students and teachers (which was part of the same study)

illustrated a high degree of satisfaction with the examined courses:

Surprisingly, we found that the majority of learners rated their current English language courses highly in terms of meeting their future needs. Similarly, more than 50 per cent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the current English language courses would help students in meeting future needs. This apparently optimistic picture could be the result of two things: a) teachers' and learners' limited experience of alternative pedagogies and assessment practices and b) a focus on gaining high grades in English as short-term goals for success in their respective educational programmes.

(2011: 8)

An earlier research project explicitly revealed that “most of the students do not know the basic structure of the English sentences. They find great difficulty in change of voice and translation.” (Ghani, Mahmood, and Akram 2008: 8) However, it is important to point out that the utilized proficiency test in this project was solely based on the grammatical and writing skill content of the local secondary level textbooks; the researchers made no attempt to devise an independent ‘basic’ English assessment tool. This observation highlights that at times even in research English language testing is primarily based on the prescribed coursebooks.

Importantly, as borne out by innumerable advertisements promoting English courses outside the normal educational system [see Appendix 1 below for examples of these advertisements taken from newspapers] many private sector informal educational establishments have cropped up in Pakistan over the years. Most of these institutions either prepare Pakistanis for foreign English language proficiency examinations like IELTS or TOEFL (a requirement for higher education in native English speaking countries and emigration to Australia) or claim to improve spoken or professional English. As such these programmes highlight that even after spending significant period studying English the Pakistani learners are deficient in language skills necessary for their future life. This in turn throws light on the deficiencies in the formal

educational system which necessitates the conduction of these adult second language programmes (Dubin and Olshtain, 1986; Javed, 2008, cited in Hasan, 2009).

Finally, the actual samples of English language [provided in Appendix I below] produced by college level Pakistani students illustrate English language deficiencies. Sample A consists of extracts from the dissertations of students who have completed Masters in ‘English Language Teaching’ in a private university. Sample B contains extracts from English literature examination answers written by students of a government affiliated B Ed institution. Sample C comprises extracts from essays written by first year students of one of the top ranked Pakistani private university. These extracts exemplify that the students have not acquired effective skills for using English; in fact, some samples do not make any sense.

2.4.8 Preliminary Survey of Textbooks in Pakistan

2.4.8.1 General Textbook Scenario

The textbook situation in Pakistan has been dismal and marred by inefficiency and inadequacy as even recognized by the research conducted by the Federal Ministry of Education itself:

In Pakistan the education publishing sector as a whole and the role textbooks and learning materials can play in the development of education are largely underdeveloped. The learning environment of government as well as many private schools is passive.

(National Education Policy Review Team, 2006: 53)

The textbooks prescribed for the public sector overburden the students with innumerable facts most of which are not clearly explained. Moreover, there is no emphasis on application of knowledge and this encourages rote learning.

This recognition of weaknesses in the system has led to the revising of the National Textbook Policy. Previously by and large the provincial governments' publishing houses (Provincial Textbook Boards) provided the textbooks to the public schools. In 2001 the then Federal government decided to deregulate the publishing of textbooks. The objective of this 'deregulation policy' is to promote the private sector to get involved in the development of school books. The rationale behind this change of policy was the perception that since the provincial Textbook Boards are the sole supplier of textbooks for public schools there is no choice for the user and no competition for the provider:

Choice on the part of the buyer promotes knowledge, empowerment and participation. Competition on the part of the seller forces the acquisition of the best available know-how for product development and leads to a wider variety of products, improved quality and better prices.

(National Education Policy Review Team, 2006: 53)

As a result of the implementation of this policy, even public schools would have been able to choose from a wide range of better quality text-books. However, the process was stalled by misgivings and reservations and by the time the previous government (in 2008) was voted out this deregulation textbook policy had still not been instigated. Nevertheless, the present government (2008 –) has managed to resolve the main issues and consequently, coursebooks are being sanctioned for public schools under the new policy.

2.4.8.2 The State of English Language Textbooks

The discipline of English language materials development is not being assigned any significance in Pakistan and few educationists and applied linguists have ventured into this area. Consequently, there is hardly any illuminating literature on the English Language textbook situation in the country. A few of the comments that touch on this subject are discussed below.

Warsi (2004), while analyzing the prevailing educational environment in Pakistan with reference to teaching English as a second language, contends that the coursebooks are being prescribed without taking into account the linguistic or developmental level of the learners:

...textbooks in Pakistan are not geared towards honing on the linguistic needs of the learner, taking into account whether or not the learner is at the appropriate developmental stage to acquire the target language structures.
(2004: webpage)

He goes on to assert that providing appropriate English language textbooks to students would help in improving the standard of English:

The Department of Education can play an instrumental role in publishing textbooks that are written in accordance with generative grammar and the structural method containing appropriate pictures and graded exercises. Fortunately, there is a plethora of English as a Second Language textbooks, making it relatively easier for educators and policy makers in Pakistan to adopt appropriate textbooks taking into consideration the learner's level of proficiency and specific curricular objectives for the level being taught.
(2004: webpage)

A Pakistani research report *The Subtle Subversion* has examined the weaknesses inherent in the curriculum of Pakistan. The report looks at the content of the coursebooks, and not at the activities, texts or language used in these books. However, a few shortcomings of the English teaching materials pertinent to the proposed study are illustrated. For instance, it is asserted that the English language textbooks produced in Pakistan fail to interest students or develop their intellectual curiosity. In addition, it is maintained that the coursebooks are poorly written as far as the language and design is concerned. Finally, it is highlighted that the local textbooks use an outdated methodology and their focus is limited to fulfilling the examination requirements:

...there are numerous pedagogical problems in school textbooks, the consequences of which on students are enormous. In many books, the main concepts are unclear, arguments lack logic, explanations are lacking, and the emphasis is on rote learning and blind deference to the authority of the teacher and the textbook and the demands of examinations. These are all strong disincentives to curious and questioning minds who seek understanding and truth through objective facts, logical arguments, and debate.
(Nayyar and Salim ed., 2007: 6)

In conclusion, most of the above mentioned assertions show that there is a considerable awareness about the weaknesses prevalent in the local coursebooks. Nevertheless, no one is willing to delve deep into this issue. For example, Warsi (2004) merely mentions a few basic shortcomings of textbooks, and recommends that officials and educators should select appropriate textbooks from amongst the many books flooding the market, making the students' linguistic level and the syllabus aims the basis for selection. However, the coursebook selection procedure is a complex process involving numerous factors, and so does not warrant such simplistic solutions. [See sections 4.5, 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 below]

2.5 Conclusion

The previous discussion has highlighted the importance of English in Pakistan, the existing shortcomings in the education sector, and the prevalent weaknesses in the standard of English textbooks. However, it is essential to examine and verify the validity of most of these assertions. Moreover, the recent revisions in the curriculum and education policies, call for an appraisal of the situation.

Having established the local background behind textbook preparation and selection, the next chapter will examine the general issues indirectly related to materials development, like the overall role of English language in the world, the developments in teaching methodology and the different principles of curriculum preparation and 'needs analysis'.

LECTURE 45

INTEGRATING RECEPTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE SKILLS

Topics	Lecture Name	Topics	Books	Pages
259	45.Integrating Receptive and Productive Skills	Introduction to Integrating Receptive and Productive Skills	Miguel Angel, (2000). An approach to the integration of skills in teaching English, Language and literature journal	pp. 21
260		Why Should We Integrate Skills	Miguel Angel, (2000). An approach to the integration of skills in teaching English, Language and literature journal	pp. 22
261		Order Of L2 Acquisition	Miguel Angel, (2000). An approach to the integration of skills in teaching English, Language and literature journal	pp. 23-24
262		Writing and Other Skills	Miguel Angel, (2000). An approach to the integration of skills in teaching English, Language and literature journal	pp. 29-30

263		Reading and Other Skills	Miguel Angel, (2000). An approach to the integration of skills in teaching English, Language and literature journal pp. 32-33
264		Transition between Skills	Miguel Angel, (2000). An approach to the integration of skills in teaching English, Language and literature journal pp. 37-38
265		Conclusion (I)	Nation, I. S. (2008). Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. Routledge pp. 149
266		Conclusion (II)	Nation, I. S. (2008). Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. Routledge pp. 150

An Approach to the Integration of Skills in English Teaching

Miguel Ángel ALMARZA SÁNCHEZ
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Resumen

Con frecuencia, las destrezas de comprensión y expresión en la clase de lengua extranjera se han venido practicando como compartimentos estanco. Estos enfoques han producido una separación entre la realidad del aula y la que nos encontramos en la vida real, produciendo una artificialidad nada propia de la práctica comunicativa. Este artículo pretende hacer hincapié en las prácticas integradas de las cuatro destrezas, para convertir las clases en un escenario más auténtico desde el punto de vista de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje, y más significativo y motivador para profesores y alumnos. Se trata de ofrecer una base para la práctica contextualizada de los contenidos lingüísticos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Integración, destrezas, comprensión, producción.

Abstract

Receptive and productive skills have frequently been practised in isolation within teaching syllabuses. Such approaches have in many ways made an artificial distinction between in-classroom and out-of-classroom realities, which is not inherent to communicative practice. This article will focus on how the integration of all four skills can contribute towards a more real-life environment for both teachers and learners, as well as more meaningful and motivating. The basic idea is to offer a common ground for linguistic content to be fully contextualised.

KEY WORDS: Integration, skills, receptive, productive.

Résumé

Fréquemment les habiletés de compréhension et expression ont été considérées dans la classe de langue étrangère comme des compartiments étanches. Ces pratiques de classe ont produit une séparation entre la réalité de la classe et celle que nous trouvons dans la vie réelle, produisant, dans le premier cas, une séparation artificielle inexistante dans la communication authentique. Le propos de cet article est d'insister sur l'intégration des quatre compétences pour faire de la classe de langue un endroit plus authentique du point de vue de l'enseignement / apprentissage et plus significatif et motivant pour professeurs et élèves et de présenter une démarche pour la pratique contextualisée des éléments du système de la langue.

MOTS CLÉS: Intégration, compétences, compréhension, production.

1. Introduction

When we are teaching a second language we are trying to develop in the learner not just *grammatical competence* in the Chomskyan sense, but *communicative competence*. The learner must, it is true, develop the ability to produce and understand grammatical utterances, he must be able to distinguish grammatical from ungrammatical sequences, but he must also know when to select the one which is appropriate to the context, both linguistic and situational. Therefore, the language data to which the learner is exposed should be presented «in context».

If ELT does not only involve the teaching of the English sound system, grammatical structures or vocabulary, but the practice of the contexts in which they occur —that is, understanding and producing language—, teachers will have a fundamental task in providing the students with texts, oral passages and situations for the students to communicate both in the written and the spoken form. These are the so-called **four skills** of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

The work presented here intends to show an integrative approach to the teaching and practice of the language skills, bearing in mind that the language class will become more purposeful and meaningful for the learner at all levels if we do so. The methodological principles behind this approach are equally applicable to general English, English for specific purposes, or the Primary English classroom.

Ewen Arnold (1993) points out that many tasks in task-based courses are purposeless because nothing is done with the students' output and it does not lead anywhere. The idea is to make the classroom contexts and situations come closer

to the real-life ones, no matter how artificial or simulated we may think that the teaching and learning environment is. It is a matter of linking tasks; by way of example, when we deal with an answerphone message (listening), we often have to use this information in the spoken or written form (by calling someone back or writing a note).

Our primary concern as teachers is to activate strategies for learning in the students, as well as providing student-centred materials which focus on the process of communication. Let us see in which way the integration of skills contribute to the task of facilitating second language learning.

2. Why should we integrate skills?

If we ask, «What is the ultimate aim of language teaching?» most teachers would probably agree that one answer is that students should be able to understand and produce the language that they need—in other words, we want them to develop their autonomy in language use, that is, a kind of freedom in their choice of language and manner. By integrating skills we are providing a certain input that becomes a basis for further output, which in turn will be new input, and so on. In this way the students' contributions turn out to be part of the process in which language is generated.

Rather than focusing on ways of controlling the language and ideas that students produce, we should always be looking for ways to *free things up*. Similarly, we should move the students from the role as *consumers* in the classroom towards the role as *producers*. By doing this, we are also likely to move away from «language specific» work and instead involve the students in broader educational processes. Some teachers will actually say that they are only responsible for teaching the language, and not for the general educational development of the students. However, as noted by Andrew Littlejohn (1998: 10):

Whether we are aware of it or not, students will always learn more in their language classes than just language. They will also learn their role in the classroom and (to a greater or lesser extent) pick up values and attitudes from the texts they use. They will also learn a lot about themselves as learners, and about what language learning involves.

In my view, when we integrate skills we are thinking beyond language alone and reflect on how our teaching does, or does not, enrich the lives of the students; and, most importantly, we are using the target language and culture to do so.

Littlewood also mentions a number of principles that I find useful as a starting point to plan a series of lessons or coursebook units if we are to analyse the teaching of skills from a holistic point of view:

- **Making teaching coherent** means to ensure that tasks link together around a common topic which lasts a whole lesson or extends over a series of lessons. In this way the content will stay with the learner longer —and with it, the language. Otherwise, a random choice of topic to exemplify a language form makes it more difficult to learn the language, as there is nothing coherent to make it memorable.

- Another way to enrich our teaching of skills and make language learning more effective is to **use content worth learning about**. We should expose the students to bits of language (through *Reading* or *Listening*) that are significant for the students to produce their own language (in *Writing* or *Speaking*)

- **Using the students' intelligence:** If we want to make language learning more challenging and motivating, we should use what Chih-Hua Kuo (1993) calls *process-oriented materials*. The type of activities involved in the use of these materials are unpredictable in nature and the learner must interpret and make inferences and decisions, since they are cognitively demanding. They facilitate interaction and the development of both linguistic knowledge and communication skills. The integration of skills comes more naturally if we accept that the students' planning, reviewing and evaluating of their work is more motivating than a mere pattern practice, matching or repetition.

- **Fostering autonomy:** Only when the students are able to understand or express the language that they need or want, can we think that there is a sense of achievement, which is essential in the learning process.

A group of EOI teachers in Barcelona have recently published some work (1998) on the analysis and exploitation of authentic audiovisual materials. Their conclusions point to the necessity to make the students aware that if there is a task to carry out, their outcome should be relevant for them to apply in other in-classroom situations, as well as outside the classroom.

Obviously the objective for English language learners must be better communication; better communication with their peers, with sources of information and other learning resources, such as literature, songs or Internet materials. It is here, in a dynamic learning environment where the integration of skills, either within a lesson or within a block of lessons, makes it easier for the

Nevertheless, many experienced teachers have objected that some students feel very insecure when they are forced to depend on the ear alone. It may be thought that it is better for the students to see the correct, accepted version of the written language at an earlier stage and learn to use it as a help and support for learning and practice. In my view, though, it seems a reasonable approach to present all new material first in oral form, especially in the elementary sections of the course; to give the students practice in working with this material orally until they can handle it; then to train them with the script. After the students have received some help from the printed version, they should be given opportunities to practise the material orally until they can demonstrate that they have learnt it thoroughly and are able to apply it to their own situations.

The matter of encoding and decoding messages through the use of the skills in a second language is connected with certain verbal abilities acquired in the mother tongue; however, the instruction in a second language will need to *re-teach*, to some extent, what was learnt in one's own language. In Pit Corder's words (1973: 116):

(...) learning to read and write presupposes (at least, in all normal people) the ability to speak and hear; in other words, it requires the possession of some verbal behaviour. Thus, the language teacher is concerned not with teaching speaking and hearing, etc, but *speaking in French, or reading German or hearing Italian*. The teacher does not teach language skills from scratch but rather modifies or extends these skills in some perhaps relatively superficial fashion.

We can now take an overview at some of the different possibilities and connections for an effective teaching of the skills to take place in our classroom situations.

6. Writing and other skills

Writing is not a skill which can be learned in isolation. In the apprentice stage of writing, what the student must learn, apart from the peculiar difficulties of spelling or script, is a counterpart of what has to be learnt for the mastery of listening comprehension, speaking and reading —a nucleus of linguistic knowledge. The activity of writing helps to consolidate the knowledge for use in other areas, since it gives the student practice in manipulating structures and selecting and combining lexical elements.

Written questions based on a reading passage encourage the student to read the text more attentively and discover areas which were misinterpreted on the first reading. Only by hearing and reading a great deal of the language as it is spoken and written by native speakers can language learners acquire that feeling

for the appropriate use of language forms and combinations, which is basic to expressive writing.

The most effective writing practice will have a close connection with what is being practised in relation to other skills. We should be aware, though, that not everybody will reach a high standard in composition. Interference of the first language explains the unacceptable forms that many produce in the written form, the construction of hybrid phrases without realising that these are incomprehensible in the context of the new language.

Attempts should be made to encourage the learners to use structures and expressions they have already learned in oral practice and in reading, creating interesting and amusing pieces of expressive writing. By doing so, they will be using much language material which otherwise would escape from their active memory.

More effective results will be achieved in writing exercises if there is a continual integration of practice in all the skills. When the students have read, heard and said to themselves or others what they are expected to write, they are more likely to write it correctly.

When dictation procedures are employed for reproduction, two skills are being exercised at once: listening and writing. The dictation practice will then be reinforcing practice in listening comprehension, as well as providing practice in accurate writing. As students advance in language learning, phrases dictated will gradually be lengthened, until students are eventually able to retain complete sentences in their immediate memory and write them down correctly.

Notetaking and the writing of reports can be further developments from exercises in listening comprehension. Anything available in the recorded form or lectures themselves can be the basis for written composition. Similarly, wide reading and practice in putting some of the material read into an uncomplicated written form will consolidate the students' familiarity with many language items and make these more available for selection in oral expression. By integrating skills we are also giving the learners more opportunities to understand and broaden cultural concepts, since these *happen* through a wide variety of channels, both written and oral —apart from a wide range of visual ones

In order to ensure the potential contribution of other skill areas, the teacher should promote active class discussion of what has been heard or read and encourage the presentation of short oral reports. This will follow the communicative principle of **task-dependency**, which is essential to make the lessons meaningful from the students' point of view.

A story may be rewritten in dialogue form, or a dialogue rewritten as a narrative. We should, however, remember that not all students have a ready flow of ideas when asked to write, even in their native language. Therefore, composition

exercises should not be designed so that they become tests of originality and invention (although imaginative students should not be discouraged to go beyond what is required). The writing of an original dialogue, using the vocabulary area of some recent writing, keeps the student practising in the style of spoken language.

Composition exercises may profitably be linked with assignments for extensive reading. This composition may consist of a summary of the contents with a personal commentary or the narration of some aspect of the story assigned previously by the teacher. The students will then be encouraged to select their own approach and demonstrate the level of expression of which they are capable.

7. Listening and other skills

Integrating the listening into a longer sequence of work demonstrates to the students that the effort they have put into understanding is not wasted. For a number of reasons, the skill of listening could be regarded as the most difficult to develop, whether we look at it from a cognitive perspective or due to the added difficulties that derive from the acoustics. Helping students to improve their listening to spoken English is a vital part of the teacher's job. The better students understand what they hear, the better they will take part in spoken interactions.

Listening comprehension activities should spring naturally from, or provide material for, oral practice or reading; they can also provide a stimulus for writing activities. This idea is also expressed by Rivers (1981: 167):

When various skills are integrated into free-flowing activities, in which one provides material for the other, students learn to operate confidently within the language, easily transferring knowledge acquired in one area for active use in another. It is most important that the teacher not compartmentalize the learning (...)

Integration of the various aspects of language use requires careful preparation on the part of the teacher, so that opportunities for natural movement from one language modality to another evolve continually during each lesson. Task-based activities, such as labelling, form-filling, completing a grid, etc. reflect much more closely the type of response that might be given to a listening experience in real-life. They demand individual responses. Filling in forms, labelling diagrams or making choices obliges every learner to try to make something meaningful of what they are hearing. This is especially effective if the class is asked to work in pairs, since fostering cooperative learning should be one of our primary objectives when we design the teaching syllabus.

Quite a few are inclined to think that there can be no better teacher than a native speaker who never uses the students' mother tongue in the classroom —regardless of his / her teaching background. However, studies on contrastive analysis have focused on the importance for the foreign language learner of being aware of the similarities and differences between both languages. This has clear implications for the teaching and practice of listening skills.

If we want our students to get away from literal translations and mother tongue interference, an idea to help them understand difficult patterns of discourse follows: we can dictate them a sentence in L1 which is a non-literal version of what they are going to listen to in the target language. We then ask them to locate (as they listen) and transcribe the exact words used to phrase this idea in L2. Alternatively, we may have asked them before listening to give their own version as they imagine this would be said in the oral form, and later compare their own version to the real one. By doing so, we would be giving them reasons for listening and, at the same time, they would be focusing on specific language patterns that might otherwise remain unattended or offer difficulties for understanding. Whatever we do, our true aim should not be simply to provide practice but to produce better and more confident listeners.

8. Reading and other skills

Reading at advanced levels may be included as a reference tool, to provide material for more informed discussion of aspects of the target culture, but it should not be to the detriment of the time devoted to oral communication. It is preferable to use for this purpose articles from magazines and newspapers where reading is individual preparatory work, done out of the classroom.

It is useful in teaching reading to make a distinction between recognition and production grammar. The syntactic details the reader needs in order to extract the important elements of the message are fewer and may be different from those which are important when producing one's own messages in speech or writing. Rivers (1981: 267) makes a clear distinction between processes in speech production and speech perception:

Perception of spoken or written messages is primarily dependent on apprehension of semantic meaning, moving from what one perceives in the sound sequence or in the written script to the idea, with recourse to knowledge of syntax only when the meaning is not clear or an ambiguity or misdirected interpretation is detected (...) In production the speaker or writer expresses the intention or idea through the operation of the syntactic system.

Students should not be expected or encouraged to stop whenever they meet a new or rather unfamiliar word to insert a native-language gloss between the lines. This habit must be discouraged if they are to learn to think in a second language. They could increase their vocabulary by keeping individual notebooks in which they copy words they wish to remember. These words should be copied down in complete phrases or sentences, so that the students are reminded of the context in which they would be appropriately used, thus providing written practice from reading input.

Extensive reading fosters vocabulary growth and the acquisition of syntax in context. By reading, one may develop personal intuitions about what good writing looks like; practising and applying those intuitions in writing is probably the best way for a student to become a good writer in a second language. In fact, there are courses, programs and teaching practices whose rationale is based on the assumption that there is a strong relationship between reading and writing.

One of the fundamental principles in second language acquisition is the claim that people acquire a second language only if they obtain comprehensible input which they allow «in». The input hypothesis may also apply to the acquisition of writing competence, as Krashen and Terrell (1983) point out when they highlight the fact that reading can serve as an important source of comprehensible input and may make a significant contribution to the development of overall proficiency.

The assumption underlying is that writing competence is acquired subconsciously, without readers being aware that they have acquired it, while they are reading. We could even go further to illustrate the connections between reading and writing. Foong (1988), points to the fact that studies have been conducted which find that those who get pleasure from reading at all ages, especially at high school, are better writers, while none of the poor writers seem to report «a lot» of pleasure reading at high school. He concludes that persons with good writing ability do more reading than persons with poor writing ability.

When it comes to discussing comprehension processes through receptive skills, the terms «**bottom-up**» and «**top-down**» play a fundamental role; they describe two different paths to comprehension. They are metaphors which presuppose that we view comprehension in terms of hierarchy, with lower or higher levels of processing. Lower levels relate to the sound or print stimulus and are concerned with recognising and decoding it; higher levels are involved with comprehending and constructing the meaning of what is being heard or read.

Bottom-up processing suggests that linguistic information is received and processed beginning with the smallest unit and ending with larger units of meaning. Meaning, at any level, is accessed only once processing at previous levels has been completed. Top-down theories, in contrast, put forward a non-linear view of the

process. Comprehension begins with the reader's or listener's own contribution, making hypothesis about what is coming next and confirming predictions. In listening, the quantity of incoming information makes it impossible for the human auditory system to process all of it. Amos Paran (1997) mentions that the processing of information when listening must be regulated by higher level cognitive processes. Incoming information is sampled and sampling is done on the basis of the listener's expectations, previous knowledge, and what has already been processed.

Such a statement seems to suggest that when reading, however, the actor of the process has more control over the pace and can therefore vary the speed and the focus of the activity, going back to previous units of meaning to facilitate comprehension or to reinforce ideas. This may explain the big difference in the construction of meaning between the skills of reading and listening. The different nature of the processes would also account for the various degrees of linguistic challenge and would prove that listening may be more demanding than reading. Nevertheless, it would be true to say that the level of difficulty is also dependent on such factors as subject matter, register, complexity of meaning relations or lexical items, context and so forth.

9. Speaking and its implications

Rather than mechanical drills and repetitions, the purpose of this section is to focus on those situations where students use as much language as they can and where getting the message across is just as important as grammatical accuracy. If no English course is complete without writing or grammar, speaking is another essential strand of the language. Oral speech is the students' output, which can be based on previous written or oral input, or it can also lead to further activities in which the students continue to be involved. In both cases we would be approaching the classroom reality in a realistic and motivating way by integrating the language skills.

Speaking activities give learners a chance for rehearsal — practising the real skill of speaking as a preparation for using it outside the classroom. It also provides valuable feedback about their language knowledge, for both themselves and their teachers. Moreover, speaking activities also provoke **genuine student engagement** where they really get involved with the process of language learning in class.

Activities that work well tend to include a task with a clear, achievable **end product**. If they are personalised and relevant to the students' lives, they will see the link between what they are doing and life around them, which makes the whole process more meaningful. The tasks should have a purpose which is not purely

linguistic —such as solving a problem or reaching a decision and should maximise the range of language they will have to use. Questionnaires, surveys and other information-gap activities are popular, generate genuine discourse practices and lend themselves to an integration of the skills and task dependency. They can help teachers to overcome what Vaughan and Spencer (1997) call TAB in teenage students (Task Avoidance Behaviour). We should engage the students by making them want to take part in a tangible task with a clear purpose.

Discussions provide ideal opportunities for speaking. Some of the most enjoyable classes are ones where unplanned discussions suddenly arise on issues that matter to the students. As the students' level progresses, we can gradually make tasks more demanding by requiring a higher level of performance both in terms of accuracy and fluency, as well as the vocabulary range used in class.

Speaking activities can be used at any stage, not just at the end of a teaching sequence. Sometimes it is the students' performance that helps the teacher to decide what to teach next. It is also good to explain the objectives of the activities so that the students have visible, quantifiable progress; besides, feedback should be given after the task has been completed. Monitoring during the activity is the best way to identify problem areas.

Pair and group work is vital to increase the student talking time and create a motivating collaborative atmosphere. As lessons become more interactive between teacher and student and between students themselves, they can see the **real purpose of communication** in the written and spoken modes. Nowadays, fewer teachers are reluctant to admit that communication is the primary purpose of *General English* language instruction.

One of the tasks that may provide more genuine communication and practice in all the skills, especially at intermediate levels and above is the use of students' mini-lectures (5-10 minutes). It trains speaking and listening skills and helps them gain more flexibility in English using indirect input. Monika Gedicke (1997) describes ways of involving the whole class in student lectures. She decided to ask some students to give short talks on books they had read or on various topics they would need as background information for further work. The students have the chance to experience peer-learning and also learn to speak freely in front of a group.

Things to avoid when conducting this type of task are the students' reading out a text they have previously written, or going through the texts learnt by heart at home. What could also happen is that the listeners switch off or get bored when the activity is only good for the lecturer at the expense of valuable classroom time for the rest of the students in the room.

To sustain the listeners' interest and provoke active involvement the lecture cannot be a one-way communication. The listeners must ask questions, either as a

group or as individuals, determine what they want to find out about the subject matter, restate lecture content and offer comments. They must also answer questions asked by the lecturer who, beforehand, has prepared a handout with the main arguments, explained essential vocabulary and outlined the structure of his or her lecture.

As a first step to this classroom activity, teachers may model first, trying out their own lectures so that the students can get used to their new role as active listeners and speakers. The listeners may do some background reading from coursebook texts and also take notes, this allowing to incorporate written English to the whole process. Language problems that arise can be dealt with in later error correction, unless they stand in the way of communication.

We can always improve language tasks if we increase the demand for student-generated ideas and language. In the design of a task we have to look at two elements: *what*, that is, the content or topic and *how* (e.g. information-gap in pairs, brainstorming with the whole class, etc.). For each activity type we can see how much «freedom» or «control» there is for the student and pay attention to the procedure. We need to, progressively, increase the amount of time we devote to «free» activities.

The teacher's selection of activities can only be determined by our understanding of the ultimate goal and our judgement of where the learners stand in relation to it. Littlewood (1981: 15) makes this distinction according to the stage of the course in which we find ourselves:

In the early stages of a course we may expose learners to the same basic linguistic material so that they can move gradually towards the ability to participate in meaningful interaction. Later, learners will have achieved greater independence in their learning and use of language. They will therefore be able to move more swiftly from the initial learning of new language to the point where they have integrated it into their repertoire and can use it in more independent forms of interaction.

10. Transitions between skills

Reading and understanding a piece of text is an activity which the reader is able to perform because he or she can follow relationships of thought, understand cohesive functions, infer the meaning of unknown words, and so on. The distinction between receptive and productive performance comes from the fact that the participant has to be able to understand more alternative possibilities than they have to produce.

There is a general belief amongst teachers that the *recognition* of an item is easier than its *retrieval* in production. Corder (1973: 262) blames on the difficulty

of devising means of studying receptive errors, which has prevented us from confirming these general impressions or from establishing the qualitative or quantitative relations between them:

It could well be that we overestimate the pupil's receptive abilities simply because we cannot so readily detect failures in comprehension. In any act of comprehension there is a major component supplied by the situation and the hearer.

The designing of syllabuses involves many different considerations, linguistic, pedagogic, sociolinguistic, psychological. The number of variables are too numerous. Since we teach groups and not individuals there must be a compromise to integrate a parallel set of syllabuses: syntactic, phonological, cultural and functional, and, within each of these, a parallel set of learning tasks.

The psycholinguistic processes which go on when we perform receptively and expressively in the linguistic activities do not occur in isolation but in some sort of sequence of coordination. The efficient learning of reading may also involve writing or speaking. However, we must not fall into a confusion of ends and means. If the end is the ability to speak, this does not rule out receptive activity or exercise as a means to that end. Some exposure to language is necessary in order to discover its rules, and consequently some learning of receptive skills must logically precede productive activity. We must learn something of reading before we learn to write, something of comprehension before we learn to speak.

What we aim for is a balanced method in which practice and development of a skill leads naturally to another one through useful and authentic contexts, both for understanding and producing language. Language input should therefore be used as a springboard for students' output. The final product should be seen as a consolidation of all that the students have learnt by working their way through a unit and not just as an extra activity.

One of the principles in which the transition between the skills is contained is that of providing pre, while and post activities in order to help students to make sense of the texts and oral passages, deal with difficult language or unknown vocabulary and develop their own strategies. Besides, they are more likely to see the point in what they are doing when activities are linked together as part of a larger task. Writing at elementary levels should be guided, as they cannot be expected to write something they have not already seen in a reading text.

One of the best ways in which smooth transitions between skills can be made is by approaching teaching and learning beyond the sole linguistic purpose. We should go beyond the artificial contents and modes of information delivery so common to language classes, and use the students' interests to engage them in a personalisation