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**WRITING IS NOT SO TOUGH!**

LETRAS 27-28 (1993)



Within the last two decades or so, the teaching of writing has undergone a tremendous change. The traditional paradigm, which focuses on the end product of writing and which gives great importance to correctness, has been replaced by the new paradigm which focuses on writing as a process: a process of constructing meaning, a process of discovery, invention, and exploration of ideas. This shift from *product-centered* to *process-centered* writing has had many beneficial results on the teaching of writing, and of course, on the acquisition of writing skills as well. However, most of the research done on this area up until now has concentrated on English as a first language. A great deal remains to be done regarding the value of process-centered writing for English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It is my purpose here to show how useful the **writing as a process approach** can be in ESL/EFL writing, giving special attention to feedback, a key aspect in the writing process.<sup>1</sup> It is crucial to have a clear idea of the main assumptions of the writing-as-a-process paradigm, but not before mentioning some aspects about the present situation of the teaching of writing in Costa Rica. Then, each one of the steps in this process will be discussed, focusing particularly on the beneficial effects these can have on ESL/EFL writers. Finally, some recommendations on how to put this theory into practice will be offered.

## 1. ESL Writing in Costa Rica

The changes that the new paradigm has brought to the teaching of

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1. See *Annotated Bibliography on Writing as a Process*, at the end of this article.

writing around the world have also influenced many instructors and students in our country. A number of writing professors have been taking advantage of these innovative practices in the teaching of writing, especially at the university level. These educators have witnessed many beneficial results.

However, it is difficult to try to change the conceptions and teaching behavior of other educators in Costa Rica who are still oriented by the traditional paradigm, and to show how important each step in the writing process is. These teachers firmly believe that writing is the final product which ought to be perfect, with no mistakes of any kind. For this reason, they are sure that their responsibility as writing teachers consists of checking the student's final product, making students aware of their errors, and grading them. It is fundamental to realize that only by working through the writing process and following all of its steps will students improve the final product, learn, and probably enjoy their writing.

Some educators who give their students the opportunity to rewrite the papers focus only on the errors. These teachers show students their weaknesses. Those educators are not aware of the advantages of treating errors one at a time. Therefore, if they find one hundred kinds of mistakes, they feel that it is their responsibility to have students correct all of them at the same time. Many teachers never make comments on students content, not even when the ideas are beautifully communicated. Other teachers do not give students a chance to rewrite their papers. These are some of the reasons why many students hate their writing classes and never learn to write well.

It is pertinent to clarify that the writing-as-a-process approach does not neglect the importance of correctness in the final product. One cannot deny the negative effects of mechanical errors on a piece of writing. Students also ought to be very aware of this; and we know that students always want their errors to be treated. Most students are dissatisfied when they are not corrected on their surface level mistakes. Therefore, the teacher must make sure the students understand this new way of seeing writing with its assumptions. They are to understand that rather than neglecting correctness they are working on content first and then on form. According to Robb, Ross

and Shortreed «Krashen advocates delaying feedback on errors until the final stage of editing.»<sup>2</sup>

For a final piece of writing to be better in surface correctness and richer in ideas, and for these ideas to be smoothly communicated, students must get involved in a sequence of processes: collecting information (pre-writing), drafting, and revising. And they need the teachers' help and guidance.

We do not want to give students the wrong impression that learning to write is mastering techniques for structuring sentences, using correct punctuation and organizing ideas into predetermined structures. On the contrary, writing is a process of discovering and creating meaning. Writers give shape to the ideas as they write. They go back and forth, add, eliminate, and change ideas.

Obviously, in this process of creating meaning, student-writers make mistakes of which instructors must be tolerant. A piece of writing with fewer mechanical mistakes but a restricted elaboration of ideas is not necessarily better. The professor should share responsibilities in this process of production. His central concern is helping students go through the process successfully in order for them to produce good pieces of writing.

In addition, there are many professors who never allow students to work in the prewriting stage. They would never «waste time» allowing students to talk or to read in a writing class. Students know that the purpose of the composition class is to write, and that teachers expect them to remain silent. If a teacher knows about the steps of the writing process and refuses to follow them, at least he/she has the knowledge about this alternative for the teaching of writing.

## 2. Writing as a process

There are several important aspects to mention regarding the new

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2. Thomas Robb, S. Ross and I. Shortreed, «Salience of feedback on error and its effects on ESL writing quality,» *TESOL Quarterly*, XX, 1 (1986): 83.

paradigm of teaching writing. May Shih synthesizes these aspects very clearly when she affirms:

*«[...] process-centered approaches help student writers to understand their own composing processes and to build their repertoires of strategies of prewriting (gathering, exploring, and organizing raw material), drafting (structuring ideas into a piece of linear discourse), and rewriting (revising, editing, and proofreading).»<sup>3</sup>*

A brief reference to each one of these ideas will help us understand how important each one of these is, and how beneficial they can be if they are used with ESL learners.

## 2.1 Prewriting

The first important step in the writing process is prewriting. The main purpose of having a prewriting stage is to give students the opportunity and the time they need to generate, explore, and organize ideas, and then to share those ideas with their classmates, professor, or any other person in order for them to construct meaning. In an ESL/EFL situation, this step is not just important but absolutely necessary. It is obvious that many ESL/EFL students have the limitation of the language itself. They have a great deal of trouble trying to communicate in the second language, especially in written form, because not only are they worried about how to communicate their ideas, but they also need to be cautious about surface mistakes. Due to the fact that the latter are often more important for them, they concentrate on form rather than meaning. For instance, many students tend to go back and look for mistakes while they are writing; consequently, they sometimes forget the ideas they had in mind, or it becomes more difficult for them to express these ideas.

In addition, EFL/ESL writers over-use dictionaries. They get so worried about spelling the words correctly that they constantly interrupt their

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3. May Shih, «Content-based approaches to teaching academic writing,» *TESOL Quarterly*, XX, 4 (1986): 623.

writing to look the words up in the dictionary. Prewriting helps them concentrate on meaning and generate ideas because they do not need to worry about form. One of the main reasons for this difficulty is the fact that many students think in their native language and then try to translate into English. Of course, much of the meaning is lost in this translation process, which is not an easy task even for professional translators. The prewriting stage helps students overcome all these limitations and think in English.

Several activities have been proposed for this prewriting stage by different researchers such as Zemelman and Daniels, Meyher et al., Britton, and others.<sup>4</sup> Activities such as free writing, talking, reading, interviews, clustering, journals, brainstorming, and many others have been suggested. Some of these activities are very useful for ESL students to improve their writing ability. In addition, they are beneficial in developing other language skills. For instance, by talking or brainstorming, students generate many of new ideas to be used and developed in their writing at the same time that they improve their speaking and listening comprehension skills. If the students are to read in the prewriting stage, not only do they acquire knowledge in the language, spelling, grammar, etc., but also in other areas of content, not to mention the improvement in reading comprehension itself.

Having such a variety of activities to choose from, the teachers might consider giving the students the opportunity to select the activities which they like better, feel more comfortable with, and enjoy more than the others. In other words, students should be allowed, as often as possible, to choose those prewriting activities they like the most.

## 2.2 Drafting

Once the students finish their prewriting stage and feel more knowledgeable about a topic, they are prepared to start with their first draft. Students need to know that this is just the first attempt to construct meaning

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4. S. Zemelman and H. Daniels, *A Community of Writers* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 1988); J. Meyher, N. Lester, G. Pradl, *Learning to write: Writing to learn* (Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1983); J. Britton, *The development of writing abilities* (London: Macmillan, 1975).

on paper, that this draft can be changed and that it does not matter if it has mistakes. It is important to remember that, as Britton points out, «writing is rarely a matter of putting spoken words into written words.»<sup>5</sup> It is really important for ESL students to be allowed to work on the improvement of the papers. These students improve, and feel more confident as well. If students are allowed to work through a paper, they can first worry about conveying meaning, knowing that they will have time to concentrate on mechanical mistakes later.

It is not surprising to notice that researchers in ESL such as Urzua,<sup>6</sup> Shih, and others, have found that drafting helps students improve their writing considerably. Not only do they write better, but they also improve their fluency. Unfortunately, even though many teachers allow students to work in this drafting stage, the type of feedback they give in these drafts shows that their main concern is still surface level errors rather than content. This is the weakest point in teacher's reactions to students' papers. As a result, a demotivating attitude has grown among student writers.

### 2.3 *Feedback and revising*

Research in ESL writing shows that teachers respond most frequently to surface errors. For example, Applebee (1981) «found that 80% of the foreign language teachers rank mechanical errors as the most important criterion for responding to student writing.»<sup>7</sup> In addition, Zamel reports that teachers evaluate students writing with a similar criterion. She found that language teachers focused primarily on «problems of mechanics, usage, and style.»<sup>8</sup> She also notices that ESL teachers:

*«[...] misread students texts, are inconsistent in their reactions, make*

5. Britton, p. 19.

6. C. Urzua, «'You stopped too soon': Second language children composing and revising.» *TESOL Quarterly*, XXI, 2 (1987): 279-297.

7. Cited in Thomas Robb, S. Ross and I. Shortreed. «Salience of feedback on error and its effects on ESL writing quality.» *TESOL Quarterly*, XX, 1 (1986): 83.

8. Vivian Zamel, «Responding to student writing.» *TESOL Quarterly*, XIX, 1 (1985): 84.



*arbitrary corrections, write contradictory comments, provide vague prescriptions, impose abstract rules and standards, respond to texts as fixed and final products, and rarely make content specific comments or offer specific strategies for revising the text.»<sup>9</sup>*

Similarly, Santos (1988), in a study conducted to see the reactions of 178 professors to nonnative speaking students writing,<sup>10</sup> found that teachers give special attention to the language mistakes rather than the content.

The following example illustrates the fact that ESL/EFL professors pay more attention to surface mistakes than content in the revision process. These paragraphs are taken from a composition written by Pablo, a ESL student in The American Language Institute at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. His native language is Spanish.

### *The immigrants in America*

*The majority of US citizens are descendants of settlers who came from many places around the world to establish themselves in this new land. The first immigrants came from England, Holland, and Germany. Later, they came from Italy, Poland, Scandinavia, Turkey, China, etc. Currently, many people have immigrated from Latin America for political, economical, and social reasons.*

*The first immigrants were trying to escape from poverty and oppression in their countries. They wanted to establish their own farms and have their own property, not dictated for anyone. In America, they found great economic opportunities, religion liberty, and political freedom. For these reasons they were motivated to build a new civilization in the new world.*

*America was the land of opportunity, the land of liberty. Immigrants had many serious problems adjusting to their new word. They didn't have enough money and most of them didn't speak English.*

9. Zamel, p. 86.

10. Terry Santos, «Professor's reactions to the academic writing of nonnative-speaking students,» *TESOL Quarterly*. XXII, 1 (1988): 69-87.

The whole composition, which is actually well organized and without serious mechanical mistakes, was graded C by the professor because she thought: «It could have been more vivid,» and «You should try to be more careful, you made too many mistakes.» The surface-level mistakes did not interfere with the transmission of meaning at all; the composition was easy to understand. However, the professor was upset with the student's mistakes.

The student had the opportunity to rewrite the paper. However, he affirms that he was so discouraged that «I changed the whole thing.» In addition, Pablo says that he was never able to understand what the teacher meant by «it could have been more vivid.»

Obviously, errors should be treated, but they should be treated one at a time, as many researchers such as Zemelman and Daniels, Meyher et al. suggest. Furthermore, the teacher should always make students feel that there is at least something worthwhile in their writing. If I were to help Pablo improve his paper, I would probably have a talk with him. First, I would help him extend his ideas if he wants to. And when he has successfully communicated his ideas, I would help him work on mechanical mistakes, one at a time. Spelling seems to be the most persistent error Pablo has; therefore, I would work with this first. Then, he can check the other minimal mistakes he has by himself. But most importantly, I would let him know that his composition is very interesting.

The main problem of some ESL/EFL students, whose instructors pay too much attention to surface-level features, is the fact that content is constantly put in second place. It appears that some teachers tend to forget that language is a means of transmitting meaning. Thus, meaning should be the main aspect considered in writing as well as speaking. This implies that ESL students have to be encouraged to develop, organize, generate, and express their ideas in the first place, and then, start worrying about surface-level mistakes such as spelling, word choice, grammar structures, and so forth. As Santos asserts «NNS [non-native speaking] students need to improve their skills in areas that most directly affect content, such as organizing, developing, and supporting their ideas and arguments.»<sup>11</sup> In a study in ESL carried out by Urzua, whose primary goal for students was to

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11. Santos, p. 85.

concentrate on meaning, results showed that students developed their writing «as a result of their growing sense of divergent audience and a conscious awareness of the means by which they could manipulate language as they develop their own voice.»<sup>12</sup> The fact that these students were advised to pay attention to meaning rather than form, helped them develop their writing, and become more fluent. Focusing on content rather than form does not deny the importance of mechanical errors, but these can be analyzed and improved after the writer has been able to organize his ideas coherently. Having mentioned the importance of feedback in the writing process, it is now pertinent to consider some possible methods for providing feedback.

### 3. Methods for Providing Feedback

#### 3.1 Conferences

There are several ways in which feedback can be provided, not necessarily only by the teachers. Researchers (Zemelman and Daniels; Meyher et al.; Urzua; Harris; Shih; Zamel) agree that conferences are valuable because they give teachers the opportunity to provide feedback in such a way that students clearly understand the teacher's comments and ask for clarifications if they do not understand. EFL/ESL students, for example, for whom it is sometimes very difficult to express their ideas and to understand written comments, have the opportunity to raise questions, to make themselves understood. In other words, conferences are two-way communication in which both students and teacher can actively negotiate meaning.

The fact that the feedback is given directly makes students feel that the teacher is really interested in helping them, and that he or she is curious about their ideas. Harris mentions that conferences give teachers the opportunity to «respond as an audience or reader, to identify problems the writer may be having, and to teach the writer strategies for moving through the writing process successfully.»<sup>13</sup> The teacher then helps students move into the

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12. Urzua, p. 283.

13. M. Harris, *Teaching one-to-one: The writing conference* (Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1986), p. 6.

process of constructing meaning by talking to them, asking for clarifications, specifications, opinions, etc. In addition, Harris affirms «conference comments are clearer than those on written paper.»<sup>14</sup> Conferences also give the teacher the opportunity to treat individual problems. For instance, if a student has a grammar problem that the rest of the class does not have, a conference provides a good opportunity to treat this problem without bothering the rest of the students. Besides, Harris also mentions that there are cultural differences which interfere with the students' performance. If most of the students in an ESL class belong to different cultures, they will probably have different kinds of culturally related problems. Thus, conferences are a good resource to work on these problems without involving, and possibly confusing, the rest of the class. Important advice is given by Meyher et al. (1983). They mention that teachers have to keep in mind that in conferences «students need to build confidence in us [teachers], to hear positive and supportive remarks.»<sup>15</sup>

### 3.2 *Group Work*

Another efficient way of providing feedback is found in group work. Working in response groups, students have the opportunity to share the role of audience with the teacher. In addition, response groups offer students the chance to work together, helping each other in the writing process, giving suggestions for improvement, developing ideas, sharing experiences, and so forth. Furthermore, this is a good activity for them to improve their language skills such as listening and speaking. Urzua, in a study conducted with ESL children, found significant improvement in the writing process of those who were allowed to work in peer response sessions. She affirms that «the importance of having a reader as well as a responder, was evident in the children's products, as well as in the group process itself.»<sup>16</sup>

### 3.3 *Pair Work*

Working in pairs can be effective in EFL/ESL because by giving

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14. Harris, p. 19.

15. Meyher, p. 138.

16. Urzua, p. 283.

feedback and trying to help each other, students improve their writing and learn about themselves. In other words, if they have the opportunity to see their writing in the writing of others, not only will students try to avoid those problems they were told about, but they will also avoid the problems they detected in their peers' papers.

### 3.4 *Teacher's Comments*

Nevertheless, some instructors have been neglecting revision. Their comments at the end of the essays advise to students as to how to improve in their following assignment. The student, however, is often quite lost when reading the teacher's comments because, as Harris asserts, they are «too abbreviated in nature, too general, and possibly not focused enough in the areas where learners want feedback». Similarly, Zamel asserts that «the teacher's marks and comments usually take the form of abstract and vague prescriptions and directives that the students find difficult to interpret.»<sup>17</sup> Most of the time, the students do not understand these comments and by the time they write another essay, they have forgotten the comments the teachers had made. It seems that some instructors do not understand the purpose of this revision step.

Obviously, we cannot teach students to write by looking only at what they have written. We must also understand how that product came into being and why it assumed the form it did. Without clear detection of the symptoms, no effective treatments can be conducted (Harris, 1986; Sommers, 1986). In addition, if the process of writing is a process of discovery and invention in which people make meaning while they write, then it is evident that revision is a fundamental part of this process. What students need is not comments on their finished product, but rather help in revising the essays, in other words, the opportunity to improve their writing. Moreover, this view also implies that teachers should be more tolerant of errors. And that they should always make students feel that their compositions have at least something worthwhile, no matter how many errors they have.

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17. Zamel, p. 79.

It is necessary for ESL teachers to realize that errors are almost impossible to avoid in the process of learning to write. Furthermore, they have to remember the fact that errors are thought to be necessary in second-language learning; in fact they are developmental. As Hull (1985) affirms «errors in second language learning are viewed as a necessary and healthy outcome of language experimentation, rather than merely the absence of correctness.»<sup>18</sup> This idea has important implications for the teaching of writing, specially for those educators for whom the product-centered approach still prevails.

#### 4. Implications

The recommendations given here can help change some views about the teaching of writing. First, it is necessary to educate educators. In other words, many instructors need to be informed about the existence of a new way of approaching the teaching of writing and its implications to ESL/EFL. There are several means that can be used for this purpose some of which are publication of articles, giving lectures in the National Workshops for the Teachers of English, practical research, among others. Second, it is also important to let students know about the process-centered approach to try to change their negative attitude toward writing into a positive one. If they have found writing difficult, they must understand that the writing steps make it much easier. If they have thought that it is boring and individualistic, they can realize it is no longer. If they have believed that the teacher's main concern is mechanical mistakes, now they can see that teachers are more interested in helping them communicate their ideas and improve through the writing process.

In fact, the shift that the teaching of writing has experienced from product-centered to process-centered, has had many positive effects on the teaching of writing, as well as in the learning of writing. In ESL situations, the application of this theory has had very positive effects on the students

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18. G. Hull, «Research on error and correction,» in B. M. McCulland and T. R. Donovan, eds., *Perspectives on research and scholarship in composition* (New York: Modern Language Association, 1985), p. 172.

(see Shih), as well on teachers who have adopted a more flexible position, and therefore, they are now more tolerant of errors.

Even those educators who oppose this new approach to the teaching of writing cannot avoid going through these processes. Consciously or unconsciously, all writers are involved in the processes of prewriting, writing, and revising. It never stops. No matter how knowledgeable and skillful a writer (professor, student, professional writers) might be, s/he cannot avoid such processes when writing, because—as mentioned before—«writing is not a matter of putting spoken words into paper,» but constructing meaning through writing.

This process-centered paradigm is not well known to some professionals for different reasons. Therefore, they are not aware that writing is a process through which meaning is created, a process that has three main stages: prewriting, writing, and rewriting, offering students the opportunity to improve their «final products» and learn in an enjoyable way. This new paradigm is mainly concerned with what students have to offer rather than what the teacher thinks they should.

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## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON THE WRITING-AS-A-PROCESS APPROACH

The works compiled in the present annotated bibliography represent only a segment of the broad variety of current trends in writing-as-a-process. They are confined to the idea that writing instruction has to emphasize content rather than form. To facilitate the best selection of the works included and to ease the comprehension for the reader, the compiler has classified articles in four different categories. Namely: **I. Methods of Writing as a Process**, **II. Writing Strategies**, **III. Feedback**, and **IV. Revision**.

This work is the result of consultation of books, journals and abstracting sources —*Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*, *Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE)*, *Language Teaching (LT)*, *Language and Linguistics Behavioral Abstracts (LLBA)*, and *Applied Linguistics Abstracts (ALA)*. The works cited cover articles and books published between 1985 and 1989.

In cases where the compiler either created or modified existing abstracts, the initials of the abstractor have been appended; where an author's original abstract has been used, either in its original form or with minor modifications, the letters (OR) for «Original» have been appended to the abstract in question.

### I. Methods of Teaching Writing as a Process

Allwright, R. et al. «Investigating reformulation as a practical strategy for the teaching of academic writing.» *Applied Linguistics*, 9, 3 (1988): 236-56.

Studies the use of reformulation as a strategy for the teaching of writing and then explores the use of reformulation for such purposes. The strategy generates a rich data base of writing samples which permit the pursuit of a great deal of precise research. (IJ/LT)

Diaz, D. M. «The adult ESL writer: the process and the context.» Paper presented at the 76th Annual Meeting of the *National Council of Teachers of English*. San Antonio, Texas, November 1986.

Investigates the use of process writing techniques with English as a second language (ESL) writers to establish a context where the strategies and methodologies that have been generated by the last 15 years of research on the composing process of native speakers could be used with ESL writers. Findings indicated that not only are process strategies and techniques strongly indicated and recommended for ESL students, but also when used in secure, student-centered contexts, the benefits to these students can go far beyond their development as writers. (IJ/ERIC)

Dole, R. On teaching the neglected fourth skill. *Bulletin de L'ACLA/Bulletin of the CAAL*, 11, 1 (1989): 49-35.

Presents the results of an experiment involving 50 ESL students. The experimental goals were to make students feel as anxious as possible when writing in English, to have them write as much as possible, to make them concentrate on accuracy and fluency. Results show the varying effects of the factors in the students' progress in ESL composition. (IJ/LLBA)

Hedge, T. *Writing*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

This book presents a range of writing tasks within a framework of the current thinking on the process of writing. It discusses the components of writing ability which skilled writers demonstrate, and how classroom activities can help learners to develop these skills. (IJ/LT)

Hudelson, S. «Writing in a second language.» *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 9 (1988): 210-222.

Traditional views of writing instruction focus on writing as a product, whereas more recent models focus on the process of writing. The application of the process-oriented model in the second language classroom is discussed in relation to recent research. Among the areas of concentration of current research are writing processes, the second language classroom instruction, and second language writing. (IJ/LT)

Hudelson, S. «Children's writing in ESL.» *ERIC Digest*. Washington, D.C., 1988.

Research has found that the process of writing is similar for both first and second language learners. Teachers need to provide opportunities during class for ESL children to use writing to carry out tasks that are meaningful to them, e.g., keeping a diary or journal. Assessment should be based on daily classroom activities and may include keeping writing folders with all of each student's work. (IJ/ERIC)

Janopoulos, M. «Reader Comprehension and holistic assessment of second language writing proficiency.» *Written Communication*, 6, 2 (1989): 218-37.

Holistic reading is widely used to assess the proficiency of non-native speaking writers. However, ESL professionals have questioned how native speaking raters will comprehend NNS texts. Results show that readers of the better written text recalled better. (IJ/LLBA)

Katz, P. «The life experience approach with L2 learners: The case against correction.» *Australian Journal of Reading*, 9, 3 (1986): 180-85.

Suggests that noncorrective approach in a life experience program has significant merits in ESL language reading and writing programs. This informal method not only speeds up the reading process but also helps in building students confidence. (IJ/LLBA)

Kelly, P. «How Do ESL Writers Compose?» *Australian of Applied Linguistics*, 2 (1986): 94-119.

Reported is an experiment in which adult nonnative speakers, all professionals taking an English for specific purposes (ESP) course were required to «think aloud» as they engaged in an expository writing task. Tapes of the Students' speech were analyzed to reveal duration, frequency, and position of various types of writing behavior. Focus was on accretion of data about subprocesses of writing such as planning revising, commenting, etc. (IJ/ALA)

Liebman, J. «Contrastive rhetoric; students as ethnographers.» *Journal of Basic Writing*, 7, 2 (1988): 6-27.

Discusses the application of contrastive rhetoric to the teaching of writing in both ESL and NES students. The organization of the papers did not reveal any cultural differences between the students, but differences were found in the students' approaches to the material. (IJ/LLBA)

Littlejohn, A., Hicks, D. «Task-centered activities.» *Lancaster Practical Papers in English Language Education*, 7 (1987): 69-91.

Proposes that language tasks should provide the opportunities for communication, be motivating and absorbing, and exploit the learner's prior experience. Frequently writing materials involve students in activities which are designed to develop grammatical control. What we need are genuine writing activities which students find interesting and motivating. (IJ/LT)

Meloni, C., ed. «WATESOL working papers.» *WATESOL*, 2 (Fall-Winter, 1985).

A collection of working papers on English as a second language (ESL) instruction. This includes several articles based on the techniques and approaches for the teaching

of composition to ESL students and of the writing of formal research papers. (IJ/ERIC)

Nelson, M. «Teaching 'writing' to ESL students: a process-based approach.» In *WATESOL Working Papers*, 2 (1985).

A college-level composition course in English as a second language uses a «freewriting» technique and de-emphasizes rules and structure to emphasize writing strategies. The course is divided into three major segments: drafting, revising, and fine-tuning. (IJ/ERIC)

Peyton, J. K. and others. «Beyond writing assignments: the influence of communicative context on ESL students' writing.» Paper presented at the 22nd Annual Meeting of the *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages*, Chicago, IL. March 1988.

Compares the quantity and maturity of writing in three assigned tasks and unassigned entries in dialogue journals. The assigned tasks varied in topic control, audience, and purpose. Findings suggest that ESL students may explore and demonstrate a more complete range of their writing abilities in unassigned writing about personally chosen topics than in assigned writing about teacher-selected topics. (IJ/ERIC)

Piper, A. «Writing instruction and the development of ESL writing skills: is there a relationship?» *System*, 17, 2 (1989): 211-22.

Views writing instruction as the techniques and approaches used by the teacher, as well as the learner's whole experience in the writing classroom. Drawing on research on writing in both first and second languages, an analysis focuses on the different aspects of writing instruction. (OR)

Ragan, P. «Applying functional grammar to teaching the writing of ESL.» *Word*, 40, 1-2 (1989): 117-124.

A classroom methodology employs a Hallidayan systemic linguistic perspective to teach writing ESL more effectively to tertiary-level, nonnative speakers of English. It is concluded that ESL students can more profitably analyze text that they have produced during task oriented conceptualized language related activities and this classroom interaction is facilitated by a systemic perspective. (IJ/LLBA)

Raimes, A. «Teaching writing: What we know and what we do.» Paper presented at the 20th Annual Meeting of the *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Anaheim, CA. March 1986.

A review of 10 recent ESL writing textbooks reveals no real change in approach to teaching writing. Rather, there is a continued traditional emphasis on prescribed form,

enhanced by a few prewriting strategies and group activities intended to focus on process. This survey makes clear that current theory about writing instruction has not been fully transferred to practice. (IJ/ERIC)

Richards, R. T. «Thesis/dissertation writing for EFL students: an ESP course design.» *English for Specific Purposes*, 7, 3 (1988): 171-180.

Describes an intensive English for Specific Purposes (ESP) thesis-writing course. The course focuses on total discourse learning needs and uses an interactive model of needs analysis to target the learning needs of students. (OR)

Richmond, K. «Prose models and the ESL writing lesson.» Paper presented at the 16th annual meeting of the California association of teachers of English to speakers of other languages. San Diego, CA. In *CATESOL (California Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) Occasional Papers*, 11 (1985): 31-40.

The use of prose models in the English as a second language writing class has been criticized for promoting product-based rather than process-based learning. However, the process-centered approach has a number of drawbacks, and prose models can solve some of these inherent problems. Properly designed models can be an essential part of a writing class if their purpose is to show how writers with limited English proficiency can solve a communication problem in an acceptable, idiomatic, and concise way. (IJ/ERIC)

Russo, G. «Writing: an interactive experience» in Rivers, W. *Interactive Language Teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Argues that writing is an interactive activity in which students are involved with one another, with instructors, and other members of the community. Describes four types of writing: Class, group, individual, and community writing which students can use to express themselves. (IJ)

Schafer, John S. «Linguistic Descriptions of Speaking and Writing and Their Impact on Composition Pedagogy.» *Journal of Advanced Composition*, 4 (1983): 85-106.

Surveys the effect of linguists' contrasting speaking and writing to investigate the difficulties of teaching writing and analyzes their influence on the teaching of writing. It is concluded that helping students imitate speech in their writing is a proper goal for advanced composition classes. (IJ/ALA)

Schlumberger, A., Mangelsdorf, K. «Reading the Context.» Paper presented at the 23rd Annual Meeting of the *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages*. San Antonio, TX. March 1989.

Investigated whether exposure to contrastive rhetoric would deepen international students' awareness of first and second language conventions characterizing their own and other students' writing. It was concluded that awareness of context, enhanced by knowledge of linguistic and rhetorical forms, is a valid objective in ESL writing instruction. (IJ/ERIC)

Spack, R. «Initiating ESL students into the academic discourse community: How far should we go?» *TESOL Quarterly*, 22, 1 (1988): 29-51.

An attempt to define the nature of academic writing tasks which led to the development of different approaches to the teaching of writing. Argues that the teaching of writing in the disciplines should be left to the teachers of those disciplines, and that second language teachers should focus on general principles of inquiry and rhetoric with emphasis on writing from sources. (IJ/LLBA)

Spack, R. «Literature, reading, writing, and ESL: bridging the gaps.» *TESOL Quarterly*, 19, 4 (1985): 703-725.

Presents a brief overview of the history of the emergence of composition courses in English-speaking universities and examines research on the activities of reading, composing, and responding to literature. Describes a literature and composition course in English as a second language which focuses on the interrelationship between reading and writing. (OR)

Staton, J., ed. et al. *Dialogue*, III, 1-4 (1985-1986).

These four issues of a bulletin on the use of dialogue journals in foreign language teaching include articles for reading, writing as a process, writing methodology, and writing instruction activities. Recent publications and notes from the field are also included. (IJ/ERIC)

Tung, J. «Representation of Syntactic Parallelism,» *Ying Yu Yen Chiu Chi K'an/Studies in English Literature and Linguistics*, 13 (1987): 145-153.

A pedagogically based system for representing syntactic parallelism is outlined. Exercises using this representation are useful in developing a sense of syntactic relations which is useful particularly for students learning to write in English as a second or foreign language. (IJ/ERIC)

Zamel, V. «Writing the Process of Discovering Meaning» in Long, M., J. Richards. *Methodology in TESOL*. New York: Newbury House Publishers, 1987.

States that writing is a process through which meaning is created, and suggests composition instruction that recognizes the importance of generating, formulating,

and refining one's ideas. It implies that revision should become the main component of instruction, that teachers should intervene throughout the process, and that students should learn to view the writing as someone else's reading. (IJ)

## II. Writing Strategies

Burger, S. «Content based ESL in a sheltered psychology course: input, output and outcomes.» *TESL Canada Journal*, 6, 2 (1989): 45-59.

Compared the writing skills of psychology students enrolled in a sheltered content area English as a Second Language (ESL) writing course with those of ESL psychology students enrolled in a course with more traditional instruction. Both groups gained in language proficiency; however, the findings suggest that focussed reading rather than actual writing may have accounted for gains in writing skills. (OR)

Chenoweth, N. «The need to teach rewriting.» *English Language Teaching Journal*, 1 (1987): 25-29.

Recent research shows that there is a difference in how unskilled and skilled writers write, and in how they rewrite. Better writers have strategies for correcting local problems such as word choice, grammar, and punctuation, and also deal with the overall content and meaning of their writing by adding, deleting, or reorganizing large chunks of discourse. (IJ/ALA)

Cumming, A. «Intentional learning as a principle for ESL writing instruction: a case study.» *TESL Canada Journal*, special issue 1 (1986): 69-83.

Data collected from young adult English as a second language students' (N+20) reports, think-aloud protocols, and analyses of achievement in composition writing indicated that most learners were able to use these learning strategies to make discernible achievements in their writing proficiency. (OR)

Edwards, B. H. «The broad nature of intermediate EFL writing: difficulties and challenges for the EFL instructor.» Paper presented at the 8th Annual University of Southern Florida Linguistics Club Conference on Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Teaching. Tampa, FL. 1988.

A pilot study concerning the range of writing skills of intermediate students of English as a second language (ESL) is reported. The study identified the clause structures and relative low-order linguistic skills in the writing samples of 25 college students in this group. The method of evaluation of writing samples was a model of conformity to correct prose, focusing on three error types: word form, word order, and word choice. (IJ/ERIC)



Elliott, M. «Nasr's development as a writer in his second language: the first six months.» *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, 2 (1986): 120-153.

Discussed are observations of the development of writing skills in English as a second language (ESL) in an adolescent native speaker of Arabic. These observations took place over a six-month period. The most significant change observed was acquisition of an appreciation of the way in which English as a written lang differs from the spoken lang. Changes were manifested not only in the S's texts, but in the processes by which they were produced. Intermediate forms in the writing development process are labeled «intertext.» The acquisition of various discourse cohesion devices is traced. (IJ/ALA)

Florez, V., Hadaway, N. L. «Relationship of oral language proficiency and writing behaviors of secondary second language learners.» Paper presented at the 15th Southwest Regional Conference of the International Reading Association. Phoenix, AZ. January 1987.

Examines the impact of oral language competence on the writing behavior of secondary students of English as a second language (ESL). It was found that the greatest overall difficulty with the ESL writing was lack of vocabulary. Oral language development could have an effect on writing behavior, but oral language proficiency scores may not indicate what to expect of the students' composing behavior. (IJ/ERIC)

Liebman-Kleine, J. «Teaching and researching invention: using ethnography in ESL writing classes.» *ELT-Journal*, 41, 2 (1987): 104-11.

A small ethnographic study determining the writing strategy preferences of advanced English as a second language students (N=48) found that students' most common preferences were hierarchical treeing or planning. Open-ended exploratory techniques were also popular. The least common preference was for systematic heuristics. (OR)

Lucas, T. «Beyond Language 'and' Culture: Individual Variation in Students' Engagement with a Written Genre.» Paper presented at the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. Chicago, IL. March 1988.

A study examined the role of individual differences in the journal writing of adult students of English as a second language (ESL). Findings indicated that individual differences such as past writing experience and personality had a greater influence than cultural background on students' approaches to the journal writing task. (IJ/ERIC)

Mohan, B. A., Au Yeung Lo, W. «Academic writing and Chinese students: transfer and developmental factors.» *TESOL Quarterly*, 19, 3 (1985): 515-34.

Discusses academic writing as it is learned by Chinese students of English as a second language (ESL), and critiques Kaplan's claim that ESL students writing expository prose in English will show organizational patterns different from those of native speakers. Developmental factors in second language learners' writing are discussed. (OR)

Raimes, A. «Language Proficiency, Writing Ability, and Composing Strategies: A Study of ESL College Student Writers.» *Language Learning*, 3 (1987): 439-468.

English as a second language (ESL) student writers are examined at different levels of instruction. The ESL students (N=18) were given two writing tasks for think-aloud composing; the resulting protocols were coded and analyzed. Results showed that native-speaker (L1) basic writers and second-lang (L2) writers had many strategies in common, the main difference being that the L2 writers did not appear to be inhibited by attempts to correct their work. (IJ/ALA)

Skibniredki, L. «The writing processes of advanced foreign language learners in their native and foreign languages: Evidence from thinking aloud and behavior protocols.» *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, 21 (1988): 177-186.

A study conducted to identify the nature of writing processes in skilled, unskilled and average student writers expository prose in their native and foreign language. Attention focuses on potential differences in the writing processes of skilled and unskilled writers in both languages. (IJ/LLBA)

Yau, M.S.S., Belanger, J. «Syntactic development in the writing of EFL students.» *English-Quarterly*, 18, 2 (1985): 107-118.

Examines the syntactic complexity and grammatical transformations used by students of English as a foreign language. Suggests that they use and expand syntactic structures in a manner similar to native speakers. (OR)

### III. Feedback

Cohen, A. «Viewing feedback on compositions from the teacher's and student's perspective.» *The Specialist* (1987): 13-29.

Examines the relationship between the teacher's feedback on compositions in ESL and students' appreciation/utilization of this feedback. A questionnaire is administered to ESL and 3 students. A good correlation was found between what the teacher reported and her actual feedback and students' preferences. (IG)

Graham, J. G. «Helping the ESOL writer: constructive feedback.» Paper presented at the 77th

Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English. Los Angeles, CA. November 1987.

The English teacher encountering a student of English as a second language (ESL) with significant writing problems must find an appropriate way of responding, finding a balance between being overly sympathetic and being overly concerned with correctness. ESL students are learning English from many sources, not just the teacher, and the teacher's job is less to teach English than to coach students as they modify their own idiosyncratic versions of the language to approach the standard form. (IJ/ERIC)

Hvitfeldt, C. «Guided peer critique in ESL writing at the college level.» Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Japan Association of Language Teachers International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning. Seirei Gakuen, Hamamatsu, Japan. November 1986.

One teacher's experience with peer critique in a college-level composition course in English as a second language (ESL) suggests that it can be an effective classroom technique. Early experiences in using peer critique revealed that while ESL students are not the best judges of grammaticality, word choice, and mechanics, they can develop critical abilities concerning the content and organization of an essay, and the use of peer critique is now limited to those areas. (IJ/ERIC)

Jacobs, G. «Miscorrection in peer feedback in writing class.» *RELC Journal: A Journal of language Teaching and Research in Southeast Asia*, 20, 1 (1989).

- Reports on a study investigating miscorrection in group writing activities. The subjects were eighteen third-year English majors in Chiang Mai, Thailand. They were enrolled in a course devoted seventy per cent to writing and thirty per cent to reading. The findings of the study, in which learners gave feedback to their peers' writing, are consistent with studies of miscorrection in spoken activities. (IJ/ERIC)

Robb, T. et al. «Salience of feedback on error and its effect on EFL writing quality.» *TESOL-Quarterly*, 20, 1 (1986): 83-95.

Investigated the relative merits of indirect and direct feedback on errors in the written work of English as a second language writers by comparing four types of error treatment, each of which provided the writers with progressively less salient information for making revisions in their compositions. (OR)

#### **IV. Revision**

Cronnell, B. «Language influences in the English writing of third-and-six grade Mexican American students.» *Journal of Educational Research*, 8, 3 (1985): 168-173.

Analysis of errors found in a set of writing samples produced by Mexican American children attending a city school. The analysis focuses on errors that may be influenced by language usage from Spanish. (IJ/LT)

Cumming, A. «Responding to the writing of ESL students.» *Highway-One*, 8, 1-2 (1985): 58-78.

Examines the responses of 10 veteran teachers to an essay written by an ESL student and concludes that most teachers continue to mark only surface errors, even in ESL essays. (OR)

Cumming, A. «Writing expertise and second language proficiency.» *Language Learning*, 39, 1 (1989): 81-141.

The second language writing performance of adults on composition tasks was assessed in relation to the writing expertise and L2 proficiency. Both factors accounted for large proportions of variance in the qualities of written texts and problem solving behavior in SL. (IJ/LT)

Devenney, R. «How ESL teachers and peers evaluate and respond to student writing.» *RELC Journal: A Journal of language and research in Southeast Asia*, 20, 1 (1989).

Presents an explanatory study conducted to see if Newkirk's findings regarding L1 instructor and peer evaluation differences would hold true for L2 teachers and learners. The subjects were thirty-nine fully matriculated ESL, university students and thirteen experienced ESL teachers at the University of Hawaii. The findings indicate that the role and function of the teacher evaluator differs from that of peer evaluation. (IJ/ALA)

Fitzgerald, J. «Research on revision in writing.» *Review of Educational Research*, 57, 4 (1987): 481-506.

Revisions used to be thought of as written alterations to a completed piece of writing. Recent definitions have considered that the revision can happen at any time in the 'composition process', can involve major changes in style and content, and require a mental process. (IJ/LT)

Lesikin, J. «The Social Consequences of Evaluating ESL Writing.» Paper presented at the 23rd Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. San Antonio, TX. March 1989.

The social implications of evaluating the writing of English as a Second Language (ESL) students are discussed in the context of the Hegemony Theory, a radical critical view of schooling, which identifies schools as an agency of socialization. ESL

writing teachers must sensitize themselves to these social implications by looking into three areas: (1) who establishes the evaluation criteria, (2) what the evaluation criteria are, and (3) how the evaluation criteria are used, including when evaluation is carried out and by whom. (IJ/ERIC)

Urzua, C. «'You stopped too soon': Second language children composing and revising.» *TESOL Quarterly*, XXI, 2 (1987): 279-304.

A six-month study observed four Southeast Asian children as they wrote and revised various pieces in English, their second language. Transcripts of peer response sessions, weekly compositions, and twice-weekly dialogue journals show a surprising amount of cognitive, social, and linguistic skills. Through the process of writing and revising with trusted peers, the children appear to have developed three areas of writing skills: (1) a sense of audience, (2) a sense of voice, and (3) a sense of power in language. (IJ/ALA)