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1 *Writing and teaching writing*

Aims: This chapter will explore some of the ways that writing is viewed and the implications this has for teaching. It outlines the kinds of knowledge and skills involved in writing and develops some general principles for L2 writing teaching through a critical analysis of the main classroom orientations.

As EFL/ESL writing teachers, our main activities involve conceptualizing, planning, and delivering courses. At first sight, this seems to be mainly an application of practical professional knowledge, gained through hands-on classroom experience. To some extent this is true of course, for like any craft, teaching improves with practice. But there is more to it than this. Experience can only be a part of the picture, as our classroom decisions are always informed by our theories and beliefs about what writing is and how people learn to write. Everything we do in the classroom, the methods and materials we adopt, the teaching styles we assume, the tasks we assign, are guided by both practical and theoretical knowledge, and our decisions can be more effective if that knowledge is explicit. A familiarity with what is known about writing, and about teaching writing, can therefore help us to reflect on our assumptions and enable us to approach current teaching methods with an informed and critical eye.

This chapter provides an overview of how different conceptions of writing and learning influence teaching practices in L2 classrooms. For clarity I will present these conceptions under different headings, but it would be wrong to understand them as core dichotomies. The approaches discussed represent available options which can be translated into classroom practices in many different ways and combinations. Together they offer a picture of current L2 writing instruction.

Reflection 1.1
Spend a few minutes to reflect on your own experiences as a writing teacher. (a) What are the most important things you want students to learn from your classes? (b) What kinds of activities do you use? (c) Do you think an understanding of different ideas about writing and teaching could help you to become a better teacher? (d) Why?

Guiding concepts in L2 writing teaching

A number of theories supporting teachers' efforts to understand L2 writing and learning have developed since EFL/ESL writing first emerged as a distinctive area of scholarship in the 1980s. In most cases each has been enthusiastically taken up, translated into appropriate methodologies, and put to work in classrooms. Yet each also has typically been seen as another piece in the jigsaw, an additional perspective to illuminate what learners need to learn and what teachers need to provide for effective writing instruction. So, while often treated as historically evolving movements (e.g., Raimes, 1991), it would be wrong to see each theory growing out of and replacing the last. They are more accurately seen as complementary and overlapping perspectives, representing potentially compatible means of understanding the complex reality of writing. It is helpful therefore to understand these theories as curriculum options, each organizing L2 writing teaching around a different focus:

- language structures
- text functions
- themes or topics
- creative expression
- composing processes
- content
- genre and contexts of writing

Few teachers adopt and strictly follow just one of these orientations in their classrooms. Instead, they tend to adopt an eclectic range of methods that represent several perspectives, accommodating their practices to the constraints of their teaching situations and their beliefs about how students learn to write. But although the "pure" application of a particular theory is quite rare, it is common for one to predominate in how teachers conceptualize their work and organize what they do in their classrooms (Cumming, 2003).

Teachers therefore tend to recognize and draw on a number of approaches but typically show a preference for one of them. So, even though they rarely constitute distinct classroom approaches, it is helpful to examine each conception separately to discover more clearly what each tells us about writing and how it can support our teaching.

Reflection 1.2
Which of the curriculum orientations previously listed are you most familiar with? Can you identify one that best fits your own experience of teaching or learning to write in a second language? Might some orientations be more appropriate for some teaching-learning situations than others?

Focus on language structures

One way to look at writing is to see it as marks on a page or a screen, a coherent arrangement of words, clauses, and sentences, structured according to a system of rules. Conceptualizing L2 writing in this way directs attention to writing as a product and encourages a focus on formal text units or grammatical features of texts. In this view, learning to write in a foreign or second language mainly involves linguistic knowledge and the vocabulary choices, syntactic patterns, and cohesive devices that comprise the essential building blocks of texts.

This orientation was born from the marriage of structural linguistics and the behaviorist learning theories of second language teaching that were dominant in the 1960s (Silva, 1990). Essentially, writing is seen as a product constructed from the writer's command of grammatical and lexical knowledge, and writing development is considered to be the result of imitating and manipulating models provided by the teacher. For many who adopt this view, writing is regarded as an extension of grammar – a means of reinforcing language patterns through habit formation and testing learners' ability to produce well-formed sentences. For others, writing is an intricate structure that can only be learned by developing the ability to manipulate lexis and grammar.

An emphasis on language structure as a basis for writing teaching is typically a four-stage process:

1. ***Familiarization***: Learners are taught certain grammar and vocabulary, usually through a text.

Table 1.1: *A substitution table*

There are The	Y	types kinds classes categories	of X	: A, B, and C. . These are A, B, and C. are A, B, and C.
X	Consists of Can be divided into classes	Y	categories classes kinds types	. These are A, B, and C. : A, B, and C.
A, B, and C are	kinds types categories	of X.		

Source: Hamp-Lyons and Heasley, 1987: 23

2. ***Controlled writing***: Learners manipulate fixed patterns, often from substitution tables.
3. ***Guided writing***: Learners imitate model texts.
4. ***Free writing***: Learners use the patterns they have developed to write an essay, letter, and so forth.

Texts are often regarded as a series of appropriate grammatical structures, and so instruction may employ "slot and filler" frameworks in which sentences with different meanings can be generated by varying the words in the slots. Writing is rigidly controlled through guided compositions where learners are given short texts and asked to fill in gaps, complete sentences, transform tenses or personal pronouns, and complete other exercises that focus students on achieving accuracy and avoiding errors. A common application of this is the substitution table (Table 1.1) which provides models for students and allows them to generate risk-free sentences.

The structural orientation thus emphasizes writing as combinations of lexical and syntactic forms and good writing as the demonstration of knowledge of these forms and of the rules used to create texts. Accuracy and clear exposition are considered the main criteria of good writing, while the actual communicative content, the *meaning*, is left to be dealt with later. Teaching writing predominantly involves developing learners' skills in producing fixed patterns, and responding to writing means identifying and correcting problems in the student's control of the language system. Many of these techniques are widely used today in writing classes at lower levels of language proficiency for building vocabulary, scaffolding writing development, and increasing the confidence of novice writers.

Reflection 1.3

Consider your own writing teaching practices or your experiences of writing as a student. Do they include elements of approaches that emphasize language structures? Can such approaches be effective in developing writing? In what situations might they be a useful response to student needs?

Although many L2 students learn to write in this way, a structural orientation can create serious problems. One drawback is that formal patterns are often presented as short fragments which tend to be based on the intuitions of materials writers rather than the analyses of real texts. This not only hinders students from developing their writing beyond a few sentences, but can also mislead or confuse them when they have to write in other situations. Nor is it easy to see how a focus restricted to grammar can lead to better writing. Research has tried to measure students' writing improvement through their increased use of formal features such as relative clauses or the "syntactic complexity" of their texts (e.g., Hunt, 1983). Syntactic complexity and grammatical accuracy, however, are not the only features of writing improvement and may not even be the best measures of good writing. Most teachers are familiar with students who can construct accurate sentences and yet are unable to produce appropriate written texts, while fewer errors in an essay may simply reveal a reluctance to take risks, rather than indicate progress.

More seriously, the goal of writing instruction can never be just training in explicitness and accuracy because written texts are always a response to a particular communicative setting. No feature can be a universal marker of good writing because good writing is always contextually variable. Writers always draw on their knowledge of their readers and similar texts to decide both what to say and how to say it, aware that different forms express different relationships and meanings. Conversely, readers always draw on their linguistic and contextual assumptions to recover these meanings from texts, and this is confirmed in the large literature on knowledge-based inferencing in reading comprehension (e.g., Barnett, 1989).

For these reasons, few L2 writing teachers now see writing *only* as surface forms. But it is equally unhelpful to see language as irrelevant to learning to write. Control over surface features is crucial, and students need an understanding of how words, sentences, and larger discourse structures can shape and express the meanings they want to convey. Most teachers therefore include formal elements in their courses, but they also look beyond language

structures to ensure that students don't just know how to write grammatically correct texts, but also how to apply this knowledge for particular purposes and contexts.

Reflection 1.4
Can you imagine any circumstances when you might focus on language structures in a writing class? Are there ways you might be able to adapt this focus to help students express their meanings?

Focus on text functions

While L2 students obviously need an understanding of appropriate grammar and vocabulary when learning to write in English, writing is obviously not *only* these things. If language structures are to be part of a writing course, then we need principled reasons for choosing which patterns to teach and how they can be used effectively. An important principle here is to relate structures to meanings, making language *use* a criteria for teaching materials. This introduces the idea that particular language *forms* perform certain communicative *functions* and that students can be taught the functions most relevant to their needs. Functions are the *means* for achieving the *ends* (or purposes) of writing. This orientation is sometimes labeled "current-traditional rhetoric" or simply a "functional approach" and is influential where L2 students are being prepared for academic writing at college or university.

One aim of this focus is to help students develop effective paragraphs through the creation of topic sentences, supporting sentences, and transitions, and to develop different types of paragraphs. Students are guided to produce connected sentences according to prescribed formulas and tasks which tend to focus on form to positively reinforce model writing patterns. As with sentence-level activities, composing tasks often include so-called free writing methods, which largely involve learners reordering sentences in scrambled paragraphs, selecting appropriate sentences to complete gapped paragraphs and write paragraphs from provided information.

Clearly, this orientation is heavily influenced by the structural model described above, as paragraphs are seen almost as syntactic units like sentences, in which writers can fit particular functional units into given slots. From this it is a short step to apply the same principles to entire essays. Texts can then be seen as composed of structural entities such as

Unit 1	Structure and cohesion
Unit 2	Description: Process and procedure
Unit 3	Description: Physical
Unit 4	Narrative
Unit 5	Definitions
Unit 6	Exemplification
Unit 7	Classification
Unit 8	Comparison and contrast
Unit 9	Cause and effect
Unit 10	Generalization, qualification, and certainty
Unit 11	Interpretation of data
Unit 12	Discussion
Unit 13	Drawing conclusions
Unit 14	Reports: studies and research
Unit 15	Surveys and questionnaires

Source: Adapted from Jordan, 1990.

Figure 1.1: A contents page from a functionally oriented textbook.

Introduction-Body-Conclusion, and particular organizational patterns such as narration, description, and exposition are described and taught. Typically, courses are organized according to common functions of written English, such as the example from a popular academic writing textbook shown in Figure 1.1.

Each unit typically contains comprehension checks on a model text. These are followed by exercises that draw attention to the language used to express the target function and that develop students' abilities to use them in their writing. Such tasks include developing an outline into an essay, or imitating the patterns of a parallel text in their own essay. Again, these offer good scaffolding for writing by supporting L2 learners' development. An example is shown in Figure 1.2.

While meaning is involved in these tasks and instructional strategies, they are essentially concerned with disembodied patterns rather than writing activities that have any meaning or purpose for students. An exclusive focus on form or function means that writing is detached from the practical purposes and personal experiences of the writer. Methods such as guided compositions are based on the assumption that texts are objects that can be taught independently of particular contexts, writers, or readers, and that by following certain rules, writers can fully represent their intended meanings. Writing, however, is more than a matter of arranging elements in the best order, and writing instruction is more than assisting learners to remember and execute these patterns. An awareness of this has led teachers to make efforts to introduce the writer into their models of writing and writing teaching,

There are basically two main ways to organise a cause and effect essay: "block" organization and "chain" organization. In *block organization*, you first discuss all of the causes as a block (in one, two, three or more paragraphs, depending on the number of causes). Then you discuss all of the effects together as a block. In *chain organization*, you discuss a first cause and its effect, a second cause and its effect, a third cause and its effect. Usually, each new cause is the result of the preceding effect. Discussion of each new cause and its effect begins with a new paragraph. All the paragraphs are linked in a "chain."

BLOCK	CHAIN
Introduction	Introduction
First cause	First cause
Second cause	Effect
Transition paragraph	Second Cause
First effect	Effect
Second effect	Third Cause
Third effect	Effect
Conclusion	Conclusion

Source: Adapted from Oshima and Hogue, 1999: 130–1.

Figure 1.2: A paragraph organization description.

and it is to orientations that highlight writers to which we turn in the next section.

Reflection 1.5
What arguments would persuade you to adopt a Functional orientation to your teaching?

Focus on creative expression

The third teaching orientation takes the writer, rather than form, as the point of departure. Following L1 composition theorists such as Elbow (1998) and Murray (1985), many writing teachers from liberal arts backgrounds see their classroom goals as fostering L2 students' expressive abilities, encouraging them to find their own voices to produce writing that is fresh and spontaneous. These classrooms are organized around students' personal experiences and opinions, and writing is considered a creative act of self-discovery. This can help generate self-awareness of the writer's social position and literate possibilities (Friere, 1974) as well as facilitate "clear thinking, effective relating, and satisfying self-expression" (Moffett,

1982: 235). A writing teacher in Japan characterized his approach like this:

> I try to challenge the students to be creative in expressing themselves. Students learn to express their feelings and opinions so that others can understand what they think and like to do. I've heard that prospective employers sometimes ask students what they have learned at university, and that some students have showed them their poems. [quoted in Cumming, 2003]

Reflection 1.6
Can you recall an experience when you wrote a creative text, perhaps a poem or short story? Do you feel that this was helpful in developing your skills as a writer more generally? In what ways?

From this perspective, writing is learned, not taught, so writing instruction is nondirective and personal. Writing is a way of sharing personal meanings and writing courses emphasize the power of the individual to construct his or her own views on a topic. Teachers see their role as simply to provide students with the space to make their own meanings within a positive and cooperative environment. Because writing is a developmental process, they try to avoid imposing their views, offering models, or suggesting responses to topics beforehand. Instead, they seek to stimulate the writer's ideas through pre-writing tasks, such as journal writing and parallel texts. Because writing is an act of discovering meaning, a willingness to engage with students' assertions is crucial, and response is a central means to initiate and guide ideas (e.g., Straub, 2000). This orientation further urges teachers to respond to the ideas that learners produce, rather than dwell on formal errors (Murray, 1985). Students have considerable opportunities for writing and exercises may attend to features such as style, wordiness, clichés, active versus passive voice, and so on. In contrast to the rigid practice of a more form-oriented approach, writers are urged to be creative and to take chances through free writing.

Figure 1.3 shows typical writing rubrics in this approach. Both rubrics ask students to read personal writing extracts, respond to them as readers, and then to use them as a stimulus to write about their own experiences.

Expressivism is an important approach as it encourages writers to explore their beliefs, engage with the ideas of others, and connect with readers. Yet it leans heavily on an asocial view of the writer, and its ideology of individualism may disadvantage second language students from cultures that place a different value on self-expression (see Chapter 2). In addition,

In his article, Green tells us that Bob Love was saved because "some kind and caring people" helped him to get speech therapy. Is there any example of "kind and caring people" you have witnessed in your life or in the lives of those around you? Tell who these people are and exactly what they did that showed their kindness.

Violet's aunt died for her country even though she never wore a uniform or fired a bullet. Write about what values or people you would sacrifice your life for if you were pushed to do so.

Figure 1.3: Essay topics from an expressivist textbook.

it is difficult to extract from the approach any clear principles from which to teach and evaluate "good writing." It simply assumes that all writers have a similar innate creative potential and can learn to express themselves through writing if their originality and spontaneity are allowed to flourish. Writing is seen as springing from self-discovery guided by writing on topics of potential interest to writers and, as a result, the approach is likely to be most successful in the hands of teachers who themselves write creatively. Murray's (1985) *A writer teaches writing*, for instance, provides a good account of expressivist methods, but also suggests the importance of the teacher's own personal insights in the process.

So despite its influence in L1 writing classrooms, expressivism has been treated cautiously in L2 contexts. Although many L2 students have learned successfully through this approach, others may experience difficulties, as it tends to neglect the cultural backgrounds of learners, the social consequences of writing, and the purposes of communication in the real world, where writing matters.

Focus on the writing process

Like the expressive orientation, the process approach to writing teaching emphasizes the writer as an independent producer of texts, but it goes further to address the issue of what teachers should do to help learners perform a writing task. The numerous incarnations of this perspective are consistent in recognizing basic cognitive processes as central to writing activity and in stressing the need to develop students' abilities to plan, define a rhetorical problem, and propose and evaluate solutions.

Reflection 1.7
What cognitive skills might be involved in the writing process? What methods may help students to develop their abilities to carry out a writing task?

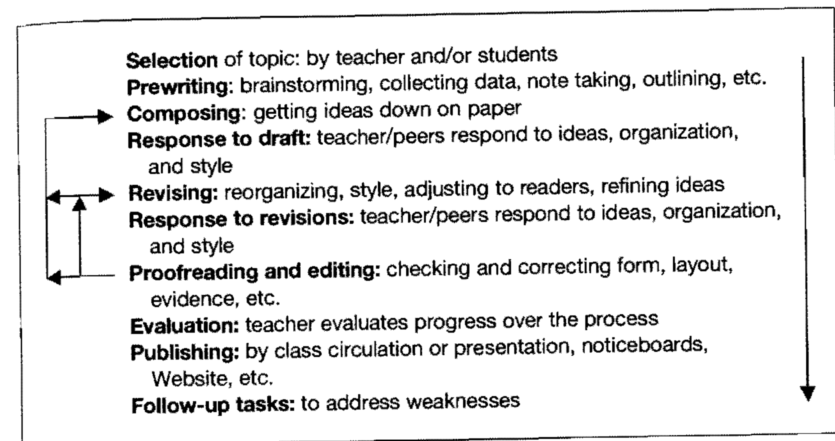


Figure 1.4: A process model of writing instruction.

Probably the model of writing processes most widely accepted by L2 writing teachers is the original planning-writing-reviewing framework established by Flower and Hayes (Flower, 1989; Flower and Hayes, 1981). This sees writing as a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (Zamel, 1983: 165). As Figure 1.4 shows, planning, drafting, revising, and editing do not occur in a neat linear sequence, but are recursive, interactive, and potentially simultaneous, and all work can be reviewed, evaluated, and revised, even before any text has been produced at all. At any point the writer can jump backward or forward to any of these activities: returning to the library for more data, revising the plan to accommodate new ideas, or rewriting for readability after peer feedback.

Reflection 1.8
Consider the last longish piece of writing that you did. It may have been an assignment for a course, a report, or a piece of personal writing. Can you identify the stages you went through to get the text to "publishable" or public standard? Was the process similar to that sketched in Figure 1.4?

This basic model of writing has been elaborated to further describe what goes on at each stage of the process and to integrate cognitive with social factors more centrally (Flower, 1994). Building on this work, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) have argued that we need at least two process models to account for the differences in processing complexity of skilled and novice

writers. They label these as knowledge-telling and knowledge-transforming models. The first addresses the fact that novice writers plan less than experts, revise less often and less extensively, have limited goals, and are mainly concerned with generating content. The latter shows how skilled writers use the writing task to analyze problems, reflect on the task, and set goals to actively rework thoughts to change both their text and ideas. For writing teachers the model helps explain the difficulties their L2 students sometimes experience because of task complexity and lack of topic knowledge. Its emphasis on reflective thought also stresses the need for students to participate in a variety of cognitively challenging writing tasks to develop their skills and the importance of feedback and revision in the process of transforming both content and expression.

A significant number of writing teachers adopt a process orientation as the main focus of their courses and the approach has had a major impact on writing research and teaching in North America. The teacher's role is to guide students through the writing process, avoiding an emphasis on form to help them develop strategies for generating, drafting, and refining ideas. This is achieved through setting pre-writing activities to generate ideas about content and structure, encouraging brainstorming and outlining, requiring multiple drafts, giving extensive feedback, seeking text level revisions, facilitating peer responses, and delaying surface corrections until the final editing (Raimes, 1992). The teaching strategies developed to facilitate process goals have extended to most teaching contexts and there are few who have not employed teacher-student conferences, problem-based assignments, journal writing, group discussions, or portfolio assessments in their classes.

A priority of teachers in this orientation therefore is to develop their students' metacognitive awareness of their processes, that is, their ability to reflect on the strategies they use to write. In addition to composing and revising strategies, such an orientation places great emphasis on responses to writing. A response is potentially one of the most influential texts in a process writing class, and the point at which the teacher's intervention is most obvious and perhaps most crucial. Not only does this individual attention play an important part in motivating learners, it is also the point at which overt correction and explicit language teaching are most likely to occur. Response is crucial in assisting learners to move through the stages of the writing process and various means of providing feedback are used, including teacher-student conferences, peer response, audiotaped feedback, and reformulation (see Chapter 7). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of error correction and grammar teaching in assisting learners to improve their writing remains controversial in this model (Ferris, 1997; Truscott, 1996).

Reflection 1.9

How might you persuade a process adherent of the potential advantages of providing students with grammatical and text information about the texts they are asked to write? Are you persuaded by these reasons? At what stages and in what ways might grammar best be introduced?

Despite considerable research into writing processes, however, we still do not have a comprehensive idea of how learners go about a writing task or how they learn to write. It is clear that cognition is a central element of the process, and researchers are now more aware of the complexity of planning and editing activities, the influence of task, and the value of examining what writers actually do when they write. But although these understandings can contribute to the ways we teach, process models are hampered by small-scale, often contradictory studies and the difficulties of getting inside writers' heads to report unconscious processing. They are currently unable to tell us why writers make certain choices or how they actually make the cognitive transition to a *knowledge-transforming* model, nor do they spell out what occurs in the intervening stages or whether the process is the same for all learners. While Berieter and Scardalamaia's idea of multiple processing models opens the door to a clearer understanding of the writing process, no complete model exists yet that allows us to predict the relative difficulty for students of particular writing tasks or topics or their likely progress given certain kinds of instruction (Grabbe, 2003).

It also remains unclear whether an exclusive emphasis on psychological factors in writing will provide the whole picture, either theoretically or pedagogically. Forces outside the individual that help guide the writer to define problems, frame solutions, and shape the text also need to be considered (Bizzell, 1992; Faigley, 1986). As I argued at the beginning of this chapter, each orientation illuminates just one aspect of writing; the process of writing is a rich amalgam of elements of which cognition is only one. Process approaches overemphasize "the cognitive relationship between the writer and the writer's internal world" (Swales, 1990: 220) and as a result they fail to offer any clear perspective on the social nature of writing or on the role of language and text structure in effective written communication. Encouraging students to make their own meanings and find their own text forms does not provide them with clear guidelines on how to construct the different kinds of texts they have to write.

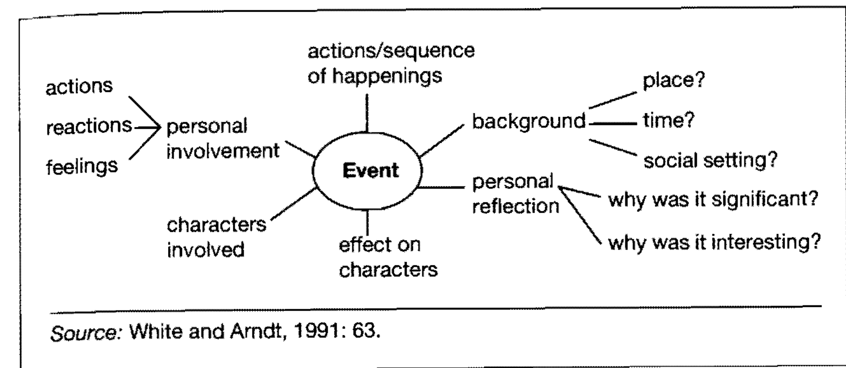
I have devoted a great deal of attention to process teaching methods and the theories that underpin them as these represent the dominant approach in L2 writing teaching today. Once again, however, it is necessary to look beyond a single approach. Process theories alone cannot help us to confidently advise students on their writing, and this is perhaps one reason why there is little evidence to show that process methods alone lead to significantly better writing. Quite simply, equipping novice writers with the strategies of good writers does not necessarily lead to improvement (Polio, 2001). Students not only need help in learning how to write, but also in understanding how texts are shaped by topic, audience, purpose, and cultural norms (Hyland, 2002).

Reflection 1.10
How do you think the "social factors" that influence writing might be incorporated into a process orientation? Think of a writing task that might achieve this.

Focus on content

A fifth way of conceptualizing EFL/ESL writing teaching is in reference to substantive content: what students are required to write *about*. Typically this involves a set of themes or topics of interest that establish a coherence and purpose for the course or that set out the sequence of key areas of subject matter that students will address (see Mohan, 1986). Students will have some personal knowledge of these themes and will be able to write meaningfully about them. This is a popular organizing principle for L2 writing courses and textbooks for students of all ages and abilities, and many teachers base their courses on topics students select themselves. In most cases such courses rarely focus exclusively on content and, in fact, represent interesting ways teachers can integrate and combine different conceptualizations of writing.

Reflection 1.11
Think of a set of topics or themes that might provide the basis of a writing course for a group of L2 students you are familiar with. What writing tasks and research issues do these topics suggest? What functions might students find useful to complete these writing activities?



Source: White and Arndt, 1991: 63.

Figure 1.5: A spidergram for brainstorming a writing task.

Themes and topics frequently form the basis of process courses, where writing activities are often organized around social issues such as pollution, relationships, stress, juvenile crime, smoking, and so on. L2 students may be disadvantaged in such classrooms as they do not typically have a strong familiarity with either the topics or the types of texts they have to write. But these integrated writing activities may be useful to new migrants or students in academic preparation programs and can be important in encouraging learners to think about issues in new ways. Teachers may need to help learners acquire the appropriate cognitive *schema* (pl. *schemata*) or knowledge of topics and vocabulary they will need to create an effective text. Schema development exercises usually include reading for ideas in parallel texts, reacting to photographs, and various brainstorming tasks to generate ideas for writing and organizing texts. Figure 1.5 shows a spidergram or mind map used to stimulate ideas for an account of a personal experience. This kind of activity is useful for building a list of issues, and also for identifying relationships between them and prioritizing what it will be important to write about.

Clearly content-oriented courses can be tailored to students at different proficiency levels by varying the amount of information provided. At lower levels, much of the content can be supplied to reduce students' difficulties in generating and organizing material, while at more advanced levels students are often required to collaborate in collecting and sharing information as a basis for composing. Students may be asked to conduct research of some kind, either in the library, on the Internet, or through the use of interviews and questionnaires, so teachers may find themselves providing assistance with data collection techniques. Group work is frequently a key element of these classes and cooperation among students in

generating ideas, collecting information, focusing priorities, and structuring the way they will organize their texts provides practical purposes for genuine communication.

A content orientation can also form the basis of courses that focus more on language structures and functions. Such courses help students to generate, develop, and organize their ideas on a given topic in ways similar to those discussed above for courses with process leanings. Students are then typically presented with language structures and vocabulary items directly relevant to the topic, which they then practice through a series of exercises. There may follow an introduction and explanation of the rhetorical patterns, which may be useful to students as a framework for expressing their ideas, developing learners' awareness of functions such as explanation and cause and effect described earlier. The two tasks shown in Figure 1.6 illustrate the different kinds of approaches to texts in the process and structural orientations to L2 writing instruction.

It should be clear that content-oriented methods tend to rely heavily on reading and exploit the close relationship between writing and reading in

Preparing to read and write.
Personalizing the topic.
According to this text, young adults have to face many difficult questions. Which of these questions, taken from the text, have you ever seriously asked yourself? Put a check (√) in front of those that apply.

_____1. Should I get married?
_____2. Should I live with someone?
_____3. Should I get a job?
_____4. To what sort of career should I devote my life?
_____5. Do I need more education?
_____6. Where should I go to get more education?
_____7. Should I have children?
_____8. When should I have children?

Source: Seal, 1997: 70.

1. What is the topic of the first sentence?
   How many parts does it have?
   Are these parts the same or different in terms of their level of generality?
2. What is the topic of Sentence 2?
   Is it more general or more specific than Sentence 1?
3. What is the topic of Sentence 5?
   How does this sentence relate to Sentence 1?

Source: Blass and Pike-Baky, 1985: 121.

Figure 1.6: Exercises exploiting a reading text in topic-oriented process and structural materials.

L2 literacy development. Content-oriented courses aim to give students the skills and confidence to read texts efficiently as a basis for producing their own texts, but this relationship is not restricted to content alone. Reading provides input for both content and the appropriate means of its expression – a positive link that reflects the wider role of reading in developing composing skills.

Reflection 1.12
How might reading contribute to the development of L2 writing skills in the classroom setting? List some of the advantages that might accrue to readers.

Research suggests that second language writing skills cannot be acquired successfully by practice in writing alone but also need to be supported with extensive reading (Krashen, 1993). Whether assigned or voluntary, reading has been shown to be a positive influence on composing skills at various stages of proficiency. This is because both processes involve the individual in constructing meaning though the application of complex cognitive and linguistic abilities that draw on problem-solving skills and the activation of existing knowledge of both structure and content (Carson and Leki, 1993; Grabe, 2001). Reading may yield for students new knowledge within a subject area, but more importantly it provides them with the rhetorical and structural knowledge they need to develop, modify, and activate schemata which are invaluable when writing. In other words, extensive reading can furnish a great deal of tacit knowledge of conventional features of written texts, including, grammar, vocabulary, organizational patterns, interactional devices, and so on. Therefore, what students read – particularly the relevance of the specific genres to which they are exposed – are important elements.

This last point draws attention to the fact that literacy acquisition rarely occurs in a vacuum. Writing instruction typically is geared toward some end as students will employ their writing skills for various academic or professional purposes. In fact, although the different types of courses discussed above all draw on content to some extent, "content-based" has come to mean an approach that focuses on the requirements of particular subject areas. In other words, such courses focus on the language, composing skills and specific text conventions associated with a particular domain and its "content" or subject matter. In this way writing instruction seeks to be motivating by focusing on contexts and content relevant and significant to learners.

Such courses may place considerable emphasis on preparing students to engage effectively in their target academic or professional communities, and most involve collaboration with students and/or subject teachers to draw on their specialist knowledge. In some cases this collaboration may entail the writing teacher loaning his or her expertise to a subject department to advise staff or instruct students in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) classes (Bazerman and Russell, 1994). In L2 contexts, collaboration more frequently involves a contribution by the subject specialists to the writing class, either through team teaching or advice on content (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998). Perhaps most often there is a reciprocity between the two specialists in "linked courses" where a specialist writing course is integrated with the activities of a specialist content course by jointly planning tasks and coordinating instruction (Benesch, 2001). Once again, however, although content provides one orientation of the course, teachers typically draw on structural, functional, or process methods in its delivery, and frequently draw on a genre focus to highlighting the rhetorical structure of written texts.

Focus on genre

Teachers who take a genre orientation to writing instruction look beyond subject content, composing processes and textual forms to see writing as attempts to communicate with readers. They are concerned with teaching learners how to use language patterns to accomplish coherent, purposeful prose. The central belief here is that we don't just *write*, we write *something* to achieve some *purpose*: it is a way of getting something done. To get things done, to tell a story, request an overdraft, craft a love letter, describe a technical process and so on, we follow certain social conventions for organizing messages because we want our readers to recognize our purpose. These abstract, socially recognized ways of using language for particular purposes are called *genres*.

In the classroom, genre teachers focus on texts, but this is not the narrow focus of a disembodied grammar. Instead, linguistic patterns are seen as pointing to contexts beyond the page, implying a range of social constraints and choices that operate on writers in a particular context. The writer is seen as having certain goals and intentions, certain relationships to his or her readers, and certain information to convey, and the forms of a text are resources used to accomplish these. In sum, the importance of a genre orientation is that it incorporates discourse and contextual aspects of language use that may be neglected when attending to structures, functions, or processes alone. This means that it can not only address the needs of ESL writers to

compose texts for particular readers, but it can also draw the teacher into considering how texts actually work as communication.

Reflection 1.13

Look at this list of genres, partly taken from Cook (1989: 95). Can you see any similarities and differences between them? Try to group them into categories in different ways, for example, spoken versus written, similar purposes, type of audience, main grammar patterns, key vocabulary, formality, and so on. You will find that genres often have things in common but are distinct in various ways.

sales letter	joke	anecdote	label	poem	memo
inventory	advertisement	report	note	chat	seminar
essay	manifesto	toast	argument	song	novel
notice	biography	sermon	consultation	jingle	article
warrant	ticket	lecture	manual	will	conversation
menu	prescription	telegram	editorial	sign	film review

Classroom perspectives on genre largely draw on the theory of systemic functional linguistics originally developed by Michael Halliday (e.g., Halliday, 1994; Halliday and Hasan, 1989). This theory addresses the relationship between language and its social functions and sets out to show how language is a system from which users make choices to express meanings. Halliday argues that we have developed very specific ways of using language to accomplish our goals, which means that texts are related to social contexts and to other texts. Broadly, when a set of texts share the same purpose, they will often share the same structure, and thus they belong to the same genre. So genres are resources for getting things done, and we all have a repertoire of appropriate responses we can call on for recurring situations, from shopping lists to job applications.

Most simply, Martin (1992) defines genre as a goal-oriented, staged social process. Genres are social processes because members of a culture interact to achieve them; they are goal-oriented because they have evolved to achieve things; and staged because meanings are made in steps and it usually takes writers more than one step to reach their goals. By setting out the stages, or moves, of valued genres, teachers can provide students with an explicit grammar of linguistic choices, both within and beyond the sentence, to produce texts that seem well-formed and appropriate to readers. All texts

Table 1.2: *Some Factual genres*

Genre	Purpose
• *recount*	to reconstruct past experiences by retelling events in original sequence
• *procedure*	to show how processes or events are accomplished – how something is done
• *description*	to give an account of imagined or factual events and phenomena
• *report*	to present factual information about a class of things, usually by classifying them and then describing their characteristics
• *explanation*	to give reasons for a state of affairs or a judgment

Source: Butt et al., 2000; Martin, 1989.

Stage	An Exposition Example	Stage	A Recount Example
Thesis	A good teacher needs to be understanding to all children.	Orientation	On Tuesday we went on a harbor cruise.
Argument	He or she must be fair and reasonable. The teacher must work at a sensible pace. The teacher also needs to speak with a clear voice so the children can Understand.	Events in Chronological Order	We went underneath the harbor bridge and then we went past some submarines. When we got to Clifton Gardens we had a picnic After we had finished we played on the climbings. Then Mr. Robinson came over and said Mr. Moses was giving out frozen oranges. Then after we finished that we went home.
Conclusion	That's what I think a good teacher should be like.	Personal Comment (optional)	It was a nice day out.

Source: Board of Studies, 1998b: 287.

Figure 1.7: Some factual genres.

can therefore be described in terms of both form and function, that is, how their elements are organized for making meanings and the purposes this serves. Some core "factual genres" are listed in Table 1.2.

Writing instruction begins with the purposes for communicating, then moves to the stages of a text which can express these purposes. Teachers can help students to distinguish between different genres and to write them more effectively by a careful study of their structures. Figure 1.7 shows how even primary school children can distinguish texts by their structure.

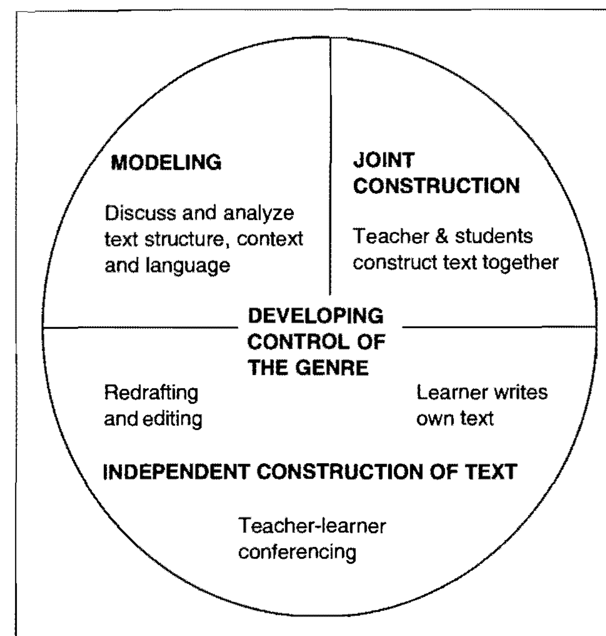


Figure 1.8: The teaching learning cycle.

In the writing classroom, teachers following a genre orientation draw on the work of the Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1978) and its interpretation by Bruner (1986). This stresses the view that learning occurs best when learners engage in tasks that are within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the area between what they can do independently and what they can do with assistance. Learning evolves from verbal interaction and task negotiation with a more knowledgeable person, and the teacher has a central role in "scaffolding" this development.

The method used to achieve this is a process of contextualizing-modeling-negotiating-constructing, which is usually presented as a cycle (Figure 1.8). At the beginning of this learning cycle direct instruction is crucial, as the learner gradually assimilates the task demands and procedures for constructing the genre effectively. The teacher here adopts a highly interventionist role, ensuring that students are able to understand and reproduce the typical rhetorical patterns they need to express their meanings. At later stages learners require more autonomy. Importantly, writing is the outcome of activity, rather than an activity itself. The classroom is characterized by talk, by many kinds of writing, and by the development of a linguistic *metalanguage* by which students can describe and control the structure and grammatical

features of the texts they write. Grammar is important, but presented as a way of giving learners the language they need to construct central genres and to reflect on how language is used to accomplish this.

Genre pedagogy is underpinned by the belief that learning should be based on explicit awareness of language, rather than through experiment and exploration, so teachers provide students with opportunities to develop their writing through analyzing "expert" texts. Genres are both what students actively do with language and how they come to understand the ways it works; however, this "reproductive" element has been criticized as running the risk of a static, decontextualized pedagogy. This is, of course, a danger of all pedagogies, but untrained or unimaginative teachers may fail to acknowledge variation and choice in writing and so neglect the important step of contextualizing the language so that genre models are presented as rigid templates and forms represented as linguistic abstractions. When this happens, the explicit teaching of genres can impose restrictive formulae which can shackle creativity to prescribed structures (Sawyer and Watson, 1987). Students might then regard genres as sets of rules, a "how-to-do" list, or what Freadman (1994: 46) calls "a recipe theory of genre."

There is therefore a tension between expression and repression in genre teaching that is not fully resolved. It is clear, however, that learners must know how to employ conventional patterns and the circumstances where they can change them as much as they need ways of drafting and editing their work. For teachers it is important to foster creativity while acknowledging the ways language is conventionally used to express meaning.

Toward a synthesis: Process, purpose, and context

The different perspectives outlined above provide teachers with curriculum options, or complementary alternatives for designing courses that have implications for teaching and learning. These orientations are summarized in Table 1.3.

Reflection 1.14

Collect some L2 writing textbooks or in-house materials. Do they follow one of these orientations or do they combine several? Does one predominate in the overall approach or in individual tasks? Which approach currently has the most impact in your country or institution?

Table 1.3: *Summary of the principal orientations to L2 writing teaching*

Orientation	Emphasis	Goals	Main pedagogic techniques
Structure	Language form	• Grammatical accuracy • Vocabulary building • L2 proficiency	Controlled composition, gap-fill, substitution, error avoidance, indirect assessment, practice of rhetorical patterns
Function	Language use	Paragraph and text organization patterns	Free writing, reordering, gap-fill, imitation of parallel texts, writing from tables and graphs
Expressivist	Writer	• Individual creativity • Self-discovery	Reading, pre-writing, journal writing, multiple drafting, and peer critiques
Process	Writer	Control of technique	Brain-storming, planning, multiple drafting, peer collaboration, delayed editing, portfolio assessment
Content	Subject matter	Writing through relevant content and reading	Extensive and intensive reading, group research projects, process or structure emphasis
Genre	Text and context	Control of rhetorical structure of specific text-types	Modeling-negotiation-construction cycle • Rhetorical consciousness-raising

I have stressed that L2 writing classrooms are typically a mixture of more than one approach and that teachers frequently combine these orientations in imaginative and effective ways. Most commonly, however, these favor either a process or genre orientation and we should not gloss over the protracted – and often bitterly argued – debate on these two positions. This debate boils down to the relative merits of predominantly text-focused pedagogies, which emphasize the social nature of writing, and more writer-centered process methods, which stress its more cognitive aspects. By laying out the main attributes of these two orientations side-by-side, however, it can be seen how the strengths of one might complement the weaknesses of the other (Table 1.4).

Although this stark opposition of the two orientations oversimplifies far more complex classroom situations, it also helps to show how one might complement the other. The conflict between process and product can only be damaging to classroom practice, and the two are more usefully seen as supplementing and rounding each other out. Writing is a sociocognitive activity which involves skills in planning and drafting as well as knowledge of language, contexts, and audiences. An effective methodology for L2 writing teaching should therefore incorporate and extend the insights of the main orientations in the following ways:

- Broaden formal and functional orientations to include the social purposes behind forms

Table 1.4: *A comparison of genre and process orientations*

Attribute	Process	Genre
Main Idea	Writing is a thinking process Concerned with the act of writing	Writing is a social activity Concerned with the final product
Teaching Focus	Emphasis on creative writer How to produce and link ideas	Emphasis on reader expectations and product How to express social purposes effectively
Advantages	Makes processes of writing transparent Provides basis for teaching	Makes textual conventions transparent Contextualizes writing for audience and purpose
Disadvantages	Assumes L1 and L2 writing similar Overlooks L2 language difficulties Insufficient attention to product Assumes all writing uses same processes	Requires rhetorical understanding of texts Can result in prescriptive teaching of texts Can lead to overattention to written products Undervalue skills needed to produce texts

- Locate the process concepts of strategy, schema, and metacognition in social contexts
- Respect students' needs for relevant content through stimulating readings and source materials
- Support genre pedagogies with strategies for planning, drafting, and revising texts
- Situate writing in a conception of audience and link it to broader social structures

In practice this means a synthesis to ensure that learners have an adequate understanding of the *processes* of text creation; the *purposes* of writing and how to express these in effective ways through formal and rhetorical text choices; and the *contexts* within which texts are composed and read and which give them meaning. While I have discussed processes and purposes already, it is worth considering context in a little more detail as it is central to understanding and teaching writing.

The notion of context echoes the belief in genre that writing does not take place outside particular communities and that the genres we teach should be seen as responses to the purposes of those communities, whether professional, academic, or social (Bruffee, 1986). Skilled writers are able to create successful texts by accurately predicting readers' background knowledge and anticipating what they are likely to expect from a particular piece of writing. In our own domains – our homes, workplaces, or classrooms – we are comfortable with the genres we write because we are familiar with them and have a good idea how to create texts that will connect with our readers. We are able to draw on a shared community schema to structure our writing so that our audience can process it easily. But this knowledge of readers and their needs may be lacking when we try to communicate in an unfamiliar situation, such as a new profession, a new discipline, or a foreign language.

Reflection 1.15

We all belong to several "communities" or groups that share certain communicative purposes and common genres. Note one community to which you belong and list the genres that it uses. Why are these genres important to this community?

Teachers in process classrooms, as mentioned earlier, try to bridge this gap between writer and reader by using pre-writing tasks that develop an understanding of vocabulary and topics. But schema knowledge is far richer than this and includes considerable knowledge of contexts, interpersonal relations, the roles of readers and writers, and how all these influence texts. We don't only know what to write about and how to express ourselves, but what to include and leave out, how formal or informal we can be, and when it is appropriate to use the genre at all. Schemata, in other words, are culturally sensitive; they reflect the ways that members of different communities think. This means teachers should help learners develop these sociocultural schemata by extending their knowledge of form, process, and content to the discourse communities within which they serve particular purposes.

The notion of *discourse community* is not entirely precise and tends to mean different things to different theorists. However, it tries to capture the idea of like-mindedness among writers and readers, sometimes called *membership*, which is essential for understanding the specialist background knowledge we use to encode and decode texts appropriately (e.g., Swales, 1990). It is a powerful concept in joining writers, texts, and readers together and suggests that an understanding of target communities is useful to those wishing to become members, including L2 learners. By understanding these communities and their writing, students are better able to "interpret, produce and critique the texts they have to write" (Johns, 1997: 19).

Reflection 1.16

We have all had experiences where our attempts to communicate with someone from another discourse community has failed, perhaps when discussing music with your child's piano teacher, your frozen computer with a technician, or a vague interest of some kind with an enthusiast. Think of a recent occasion when you have had an experience like this. What happened and why did misunderstanding arise? Compare it with an experience where communication was effortless. What was different about the two situations?

The notion of context also incorporates ideas from New Literacy Studies that writing (and reading) only make sense within wider social and cultural practices (e.g., Barton and Hamilton, 1998). Context is more than the interactions of particular writers and readers, it refers to how institutions, societies, and cultures themselves influence writing. Such an extended notion of context has four main implications:

1. It recognizes that different communities use different genres, conventions, and even varieties of English, and that not all writing has the same standards of acceptability.
2. It takes account of the way English is used as an international language between nonnative speakers, and, in many countries, as an intranational language with local norms and models.
3. It highlights the fact that because socially powerful institutions, such as education and the professions, support certain genres and conventions, these become dominant and possess greater prestige.
4. It helps learners to guard against devaluing their own writing and to see so-called superior forms of writing simply as other practices that are open, like others, to scrutiny and challenge.

A synthesis of different writing orientations therefore means taking the best of existing approaches and using them to more fully understand writing and learning to write. It suggests that, in the classroom, teachers should focus on increasing students' experiences of texts and reader expectations, as well as providing them with an understanding of writing processes, language forms, and genres. Finally, it means that we need to be sensitive to the practices and perceptions of writing that students bring to the classroom, and build on these so that they come to see writing as relative to particular groups and contexts. In this way students can understand the discourses they have to write, while not devaluing those of their own cultures and communities.

Summary and conclusion

While every act of writing is in a sense both personal and individual, it is also interactional and social, expressing a culturally recognized purpose, reflecting a particular kind of relationship, and acknowledging an engagement in a given community. This means that writing cannot be distilled down to a set of cognitive or technical abilities or a system of rules, and that learning to write in a second language is not simply a matter of opportunities to compose and revise. This chapter has looked at the main orientations to teaching writing to L2 students and has argued that teachers should draw on the best of what these theories offer. It has stressed that L2 writers bring five kinds of knowledge to create effective texts and these should be acknowledged in teaching:

- Content knowledge – of the ideas and concepts in the topic area the text will address
- System knowledge – of the syntax, lexis, and appropriate formal conventions needed
- Process knowledge – of how to prepare and carry out a writing task
- Genre knowledge – of communicative purposes of the genre and its value in particular contexts
- Context knowledge – of readers' expectations, cultural preferences, and related texts

A number of conclusions for teaching can be drawn from the perspectives presented in this chapter:

- Composing is nonlinear and goal-driven. Therefore, students may benefit from having a range of planning, writing, and revising strategies to draw on.
- Writing seeks to achieve purposes through socially recognized ways of using language called genres. Therefore, teachers should provide learners with a metalanguage for identifying genres and their structures, through analysis of authentic texts and modeling genre stages.
- Writing is a purposeful and communicative activity that responds to other people and other texts. Therefore, writing tasks should not simply emphasize formal accuracy and discrete aspects of language, but be situated in meaningful contexts with authentic purposes.
- Writing is often structured according to the demands and expectations of target discourse communities. Therefore, teachers need to provide tasks that encourage students to consider the reader's perspective by incorporating a range of real and simulated audience sources.

- Writing is differently endowed with authority and prestige, which sustain inequalities. Therefore, instruction should build on students' own language abilities, backgrounds, and expectations of writing to help them see prestigious discourses simply as other ways of making meanings.

Discussion questions and activities

1 One definition of writing is "the process whereby a person selects, develops, arranges, and expresses ideas in units of discourse." Do you agree with this definition? Does it imply a particular orientation to teaching L2 writing? How would you define writing?

2 Look again at the sections on the Process and Genre approaches. How do you think each might answer these fundamental questions about teaching writing?
- What is involved in the process of becoming a writer?
- What are our criteria for good writing and how do we communicate these to learners?
- How should teachers intervene in students' writing?

3 The process and genre approaches are often presented as polar extremes. Can you think of ways that they might be seen as complementary rather than as incompatible?

4 How important is the choice of textbook in influencing the orientation to teaching writing you might adopt in your classroom? Select a textbook and determine which orientation it favors. Could you successfully incorporate this textbook into a course guided by another orientation? Could you use it to support and supplement an orientation that you favor more?

5 Imagine you are designing a new writing course for Upper Intermediate level ESL students preparing for academic study in an English-speaking context. Would you choose one approach to guide your course or select elements from more than one? Which ones would you choose and why?

6 Look again at Reflection 1.13. Select one written genre from the list and find an authentic example of it to analyze. What are it's purposes, audience, formality, main vocabulary items, and grammar patterns? How far does your analysis match the intuitive comparisons that you made earlier? Which features are most useful for identifying the text as an example of the genre you chose? Which features would you choose to emphasize if you were teaching this genre?

7 Consider the following writing exercises. (a) Which orientation is foregrounded in each? (b) Are there elements of other orientations? (c) What is the primary teaching objective of each one? (d) Could you adapt any of these exercises to suit a class of your own? How?

(i) In this exercise, you will read five topic sentences. For each of these, predict what you expect to read in the paragraph. Make notes about your predictions and then compare your notes with a partner's.

1 Some very funny things happened to me during my first few days in the United States, but the most comical was our night in a Boston restaurant.

2 I am the product of two cultures, and I have adopted the desirable aspects of each culture without feeling guilt or conflict.

3 Moving to another culture is often a difficult step because you usually do not have family and friends around for emotional support.

4 Although American informality is well known, many people interpret it as a lack of respect.

5 One benefit of foreign travel is the realization that you have a great deal in common with people of other cultures.

(Blass and Pike-Baky, 1985: 20–1)

(ii) With a partner, look again at the text you wrote on the desirable and undesirable effects of scientific developments. Discuss how your text can be improved by using suitable grammar techniques and logical connectors to make the information clearer. Then rewrite your text individually.

(Hamp-Lyons and Heasley, 1987: 52)

(iii) Write a paragraph about your mother.

Before Writing

1. Divide the subject (your mother) into 4–6 "pieces" and list those topics.
2. Choose two of those topics and write a list of three even more specific topics.
3. Exchange your "even more specific topics" with your partner.
4. Read your partner's topics and choose two that you find most interesting.
5. Write two or three questions about each of those topics.

Writing

6. Choose one of the topics for which your partner has written questions.
7. Write the paragraph, answering the questions (and any others that you can ask) with examples and specific details about your mother.
8. Reread your paragraph, making any changes that will improve the paragraph.
9. Rewrite the paragraph with the changes you made.

After Writing

10. Read three of your classmates' paragraphs about their mothers. Take notes.
11. Choose the paragraph you liked best and be prepared to say why: "I like X's paragraph because . . ."

(Reid, 2000: 13)

(iv) Explanation
The writer of a promotional letter can use the Move ESTABLISHING CREDENTIALS not only by (1) referring to the needs of the business world in general or the needs of a customer in particular as in Mr. Huff's letter (not shown here) but by (2) referring to his own company's achievements/speciality as well. In the following example

C & E Hollidays, the name is synonymous with the very best in travel trade with 20 years of professional expertise, will present you with a variety of programs.

the writer ESTABLISHES CREDENTIALS by stating his company's past experiences and field of specialization. Either of these two strategies, or both, may realize this Move.

Instructions

Label the following text to indicate how many different strategies the author uses in ESTABLISHING CREDENTIALS of his company.

The next 12 months are going to be difficult ones for Singapore industries as a whole. We, at Marco Polo, are fully aware of the current market situation and are continuously upgrading our facilities and amenities to meet new competition.

(Bhatia, 1997: 143)

2 Second language writers

Aims: This chapter focuses on the key issues that distinguish second and first language writers and writing, highlighting the questions this distinction raises for ESL writing teachers.

The overview of writing instruction in the last chapter drew on theories principally developed from first language research. However, although there are important similarities between L1 and L2 writing, both teachers' intuitions and empirical studies suggest that there are also significant differences that teachers need to address to ensure their classroom expectations, teaching practices, and assessment procedures are fair and effective.

In a review of seventy-two studies comparing research into first and second language writing, Silva (1993: 669) noted that "L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing." Such differences may include the following writing and learning issues:

- Different linguistic proficiencies and intuitions about language
- Different learning experiences and classroom expectations
- Different sense of audience and writer
- Different preferences for ways of organizing texts
- Different writing processes
- Different understandings of text uses and the social value of different text types

Because an understanding of these various cognitive, social, cultural, and linguistic factors can help us to become better teachers, the following sections will explore their sources, nature, and effects and draw some implications for the L2 writing instruction.