

- Hoey M 1983 *On the Surface of Discourse*. Allen and Unwin, London
- Hunt K W 1970 Syntactic maturity in school children and adults. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 35(1): 1-67
- Kinneavy J L 1971 *A Theory of Discourse*. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ
- Loban W D 1963 *The Language of Elementary School Children*. NCTE Research Report no. 1. National Council of Teachers of English, Champaign, IL
- Loban W D 1976 *Language Development: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve*. NCTE Research Report no. 18. National Council of Teachers of English, Champaign, IL
- Martin J R 1985 *Factual Writing: Exploring and Challenging Social Reality*. Deakin University Press, Geelong, Victoria
- Moffett J 1968 *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA
- Swales J 1986 A Genre-based Approach to Language Across the Curriculum. In: Tickoo M (ed.) *Language Across the Curriculum*. SEAMEO Regional English Language Center, Singapore
- Wilkinson A, Barnsley G, Hanna P, Swan M 1980 *Assessing Language Development*. Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Winter E O 1977 A Clause-Relational Approach to English Texts: A study of some predictive lexical items in written discourse. *Instructional Science* 6(1): 1-92

## Writing Instruction

S. W. Freedman

Since the 1970s ideas about teaching writing have undergone a revolution in the English-speaking world, with the emphasis shifting from what writers write to how they write, from their products to their processes. Under the older 'product' focus, teachers normally concentrated their energies on writing comments on students' finished pieces, with the expectation that students would improve their writing by reading those comments. With a 'process' focus, teachers are expected to understand how writers think and then use that knowledge to lead writers through an elaborate and recursive process that involves thinking through ideas, putting words on paper, revising, and solving any problems that arise along the way. Rather than focusing attention on the final version, teachers with a process orientation provide ongoing assistance. The assumption is that the teacher's help will allow students to write better pieces than they could if they wrote alone and that as time goes on students will come to need less help on writing tasks of comparable difficulty.

### 1. Some Problems with a Process Approach

In spite of the widespread emphasis on process approaches, they are being interpreted in widely varying ways in the schools. First of all, the meaning of teaching writing as a process has not always been interpreted as the recursive, problem-solving process that researchers defined. Instead, many have seen the process as a set of fixed and rigid steps and stages, for example, 'Monday we brainstorm; Tuesday we write; and Wednesday we revise.'

The second problem with process approaches involves the perspective itself. Teachers need to attend

to more than students' cognitive processes; they need to focus attention on products, and help students with the mechanics of spelling, punctuation, and written syntax. They also must understand the social networks that best support students' learning, especially the peer networks. Finally, they must create classrooms that are flexible enough to allow students a variety of developmental paths.

Process and product are best viewed as dialectic, with process conceptualized to include both social and cognitive processes.

### 2. Classroom Organization—Communities of Writers

Classrooms organized to meet the varying social and cognitive needs of different students as they compose are not traditional classrooms dominated by teacher-talk; rather they are places where students, through their talk and actions, reveal their needs to their teachers and their peers. A workshop approach, with much attention to encouraging student talk and building trust and community, allows teachers to organize the ongoing and flexible help writers need. In workshop classrooms, many different activities can occur at the same time, with much collaborative activity among students and between the teacher and students. In what Dyson (1989: 272) calls a 'literary collective,' 'peer talk interwoven with the children's activity may invest writing with powerful meanings, as written messages begin to figure into children's reactions to and relationships with each other.'

### 3. Multiple Literacies, Purposes, and Audiences

Literacy is a plural concept. People write for many purposes (to think through a difficult concept, to

remember a grocery list, to display knowledge, to apply for a job, to entertain others) and for many audiences (teachers, employers, the self, the general public, specialist groups). It takes different skills to write for different purposes and audiences: the good story writer may not be competent at completing a job application.

Most school writing is for a limited purpose and audience: to display knowledge for the teacher who plays the role of examiner. Although this is an important audience and purpose (especially in the school context), if schools are to create a highly literate citizenry, students need experience with a wider repertoire of literacies. Such exposure demands expanded literacy opportunities in school. Students, then, need to write for many purposes and audiences that stretch beyond the classroom. For example, where writing is well taught, students enter writing contests, create booklets for students who are new to their school, share their experiences with students from another community or country, write letters to the editor of a local newspaper, and so on.

#### 4. Connecting Writing Instruction with the Language Processes of Reading, Talking, and Listening

Writing is part of a web of language processes. As students develop expertise in one process, they draw on their competencies in others. For writing, students may need to talk out their ideas before writing them down or to talk about difficult concepts they have tried to express. They may also rely on their ideas of how written language differs from oral language, ideas that come not only from their past experiences with talk and writing but also from their experience with reading and with listening to text read aloud. To capitalize on students' broader language knowledge, teachers can purposefully integrate writing with other language activities.

#### 5. Writing To Learn

When students are asked to write in history, science, or mathematics classes, they often write only for a test or to re-present material they have already been taught. However, writing can also be used in the subject disciplines to help students explore ideas and think deeply about what they are learning. Such writing can help students integrate new ideas with what they already know and make the new ideas their own. Writing to learn can range from informal learning logs or exploratory pieces to formal essays.

#### 6. Computers and Word Processing

Computers offer writers exciting new tools that can support their composing and that are beginning to redefine what composing is. Word-processing programs make revising and creating text easier. With the advent of hypermedia computer programs, it is possible to integrate print, drawing, and sound and to create compositions of a type unknown before. Undoubtedly, as computers become increasingly accessible, they will shape not only instruction in writing but the nature of writing itself.

*See also:* Writing in School.

#### Bibliography

- Cochran-Smith M 1991 Word processing and writing in elementary classrooms: A critical review of related literature. *Review of Educational Research* 61(1): 107-55
- Delpit L 1995 *Other Peoples' Children*. New Press, New York
- Dyson A H 1989 *Multiple Worlds of Child Writers*. Teachers College Press, New York
- Dyson A H 1993 *Social Worlds of Children Learning to Write in an Urban Primary School*. Teachers College Press, New York
- Freedman S W 1994 *Exchanging Writing, Exchanging Cultures*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA
- Sperling M, Freedman S W in press Teaching Writing In: Richardson (ed.) *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, 4th edn. Sponsored by the American Educational Research Association