Current Issues in Academic Writing in English

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Agenda

Theoretical Approaches and Teaching 2nd language writing

2nd language writing: Influences and Challenges

An Overview of 2nd language writing approaches

Traditional L2 Rhetoric

Expressivism and Cognitivism

Socioliterate, collaborative, and critical literacy approaches

Conclusions

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Theory in Teaching L2 Writing

Teachers must consequently "consider a variety of approaches, their underlying assumptions, and the practices that each philosophy generates"
(Raimes, 1991, p. 412)

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Theory in Teaching L2 Writing

- L2 writing teacher practices are influenced by:
  - **personal beliefs** based on their own writing experiences
  - knowledge of **theory and teaching methods**
  - Practical constraints in their **teaching context** (class time, access to materials, curriculum, etc.)

- Knowledge of L2 writing approaches → informed L2 teaching

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Factors Influencing 2nd Language Writing

- L1 writing strategies transfer to L2 writing tasks
- L2 global proficiency and vocabulary development
- Affective and cognitive factors (motivation, executive planning, etc)
- L2 writers focus more on local writing issues like grammar, word choice, and mechanics
- No focus on global writing issues like audience, purpose, genre, coherence, and cohesion

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Challenges L2 Writers Face

- Lack of knowledge about appropriate content and word choices
- Misuse of linguistic structures and cohesion devices
- Lack of knowledge of cultural, disciplinary, and rhetorical practices
  - e.g. western practices for developing an argument, textual borrowing, and reader expectations

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Question:
What challenges do your 2nd language writers face?

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An Overview of Theoretical Approaches

Product – oriented approaches (before 1970s)

- Focus literary analysis and school-based rhetorical modes (expository, narrative, and argumentative writing)

Process – oriented approaches (1970s – 1980s)

- Focus on individual writing development and expressive writing (journals, personal essays)

Post – process approaches (after 1980s)

- Focus on writing as social process involving the writer, the reader, the text, and the context

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Product - Oriented: Traditional L2 Rhetoric

- Beliefs about teaching and learning writing
  - Analyzing literature and copying models improves writing skills
  - Writing is a tool for language learning and assessment
- Contributions
  - Prepares students for academic writing in the Humanities
- Critiques
  - No contribution to overall writing proficiency and fluency
  - No preparation for disciplinary and non-academic writing
  - No consideration of social and communicative practice of writing

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Traditional L2 Rhetoric Activities

- Introducing school-based rhetorical modes through models
- Teaching prescribed formulas for writing
- Writing 5 paragraph essays with introduction, body, and conclusion
- Combining sentence drills (Audiolingualism)
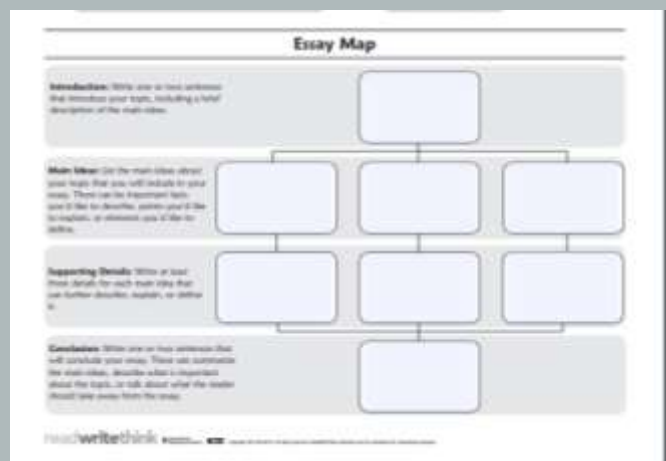
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Process-Oriented: Expressivism

- Beliefs about teaching and learning writing
  - Expressive writing improves critical thinking and writing skills
  - allows for self-discovery of one's writing identity (voice)
- Contributions
  - Freewriting improves global writing fluency and increases student motivation
- Critiques
  - No preparation for disciplinary and non-academic writing
  - Minimal focus on language for L2 writers
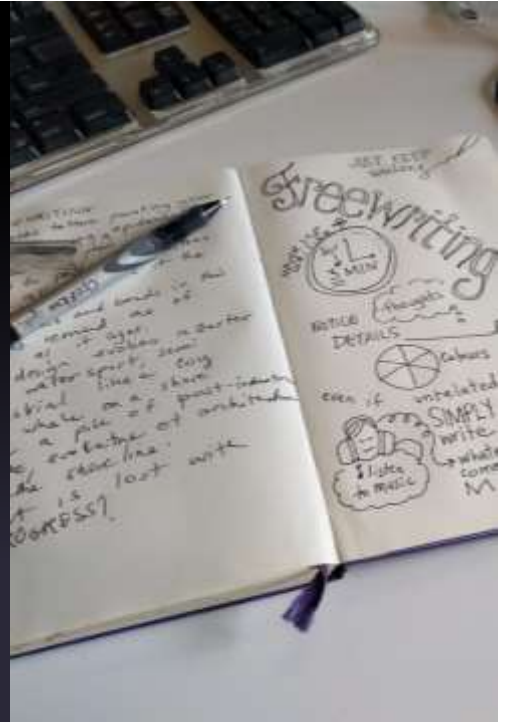 - Voice is a cultural construct; may not be useful for L2 writers

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Question:
How useful is a traditional 2nd language rhetoric approach for your classroom?

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Expressivist Activities

- Free writing on topics of interest to the student
- Guiding students through individual and group writing conferences
- Assigning freewriting, journaling, personal essays

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Process-Oriented: Cognitivism

- Beliefs about teaching and learning writing
    - Writing skills are learned by engaging in the process of writing
    - Writing helps students with critical thinking and problem-solving
- Contributions
    - Teaching composing processes improves student use of successful writing strategies
- Critiques
    - No focus on academic and non-academic genres and reader expectations
    - Minimal focus on language for 2nd language writers

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The Writing Process

PREWRITING
begin with a thought web or word list and brainstorm ideas; decide on a purpose, audience, format and tone

WRITING
write out the details with concern for the ideas; you will make improvements later

REVISE
revise your first draft with a partner, paying attention to vocabulary, content and organization. The details that you need to change, move, add or remove

REWRITE
rewrite your draft, including the changes identified in the revision stage

PROOFREAD
proofread your second draft, correct conventions, spelling, grammar, punctuation and mechanical errors

PUBLISH
share/publish the completed story

You can go back and forth from step to step as your writing requires

Process-Oriented Activities

• Focus on the stages of the writing process (Flower and Hayes, 1980)

• Guiding students through pre-writing, planning, drafting, pausing, reading, revising, editing, publishing stages

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Question:
How useful are expressivist or cognitivist approaches for your classroom?

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Socioliterate Approaches

- Beliefs about teaching and learning writing
  - Literacies are multiple and writing practices are unique to discourse communities
- Three main approaches:
  - Genre studies
  - Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)
  - Writing across the curriculum (WAC)
- Critiques
  - Return to formulaic models for writing
  - No critical analysis of power and inequality in academic communities
  - Minimal focus on language for 2nd language writers

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Genre Studies

- Common in English for academic/specific purposes (EAP/ESP), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS)
- Beliefs about teaching and learning writing
  - Instruction should focus on genres 2nd language writers need in their academic disciplines
- Contributions
  - Building genre knowledge has been shown to improve disciplinary writing skills

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Genre - based Activities

- Raising awareness of the communicative purposes, reader expectations, moves and linguistic features of a disciplinary genre
- Using models to write their own samples of the genre

Rhetorical Issues: Ethos, Pathos and Logos:

- How does each genre help to establish the information's credibility? Is it effective?
- How does each genre help to evoke an emotional response from the audience? Which emotions? Why?
- What types of evidence are used to support the claims of the information in the genres? Is it appropriate? Why or why not?

Structure:

- How is the information shaped by the genre (s)? (Consider the limitations/freedoms of space, time, layout, audience, and so on.)
- How are the genres organized to convey its message?
- How does the structure facilitate the purpose of the information in the genre(s)?

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Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)

- Common in in K-12 and in disciplinary courses at universities
- Beliefs about teaching and learning writing
  - Writing instruction should be learned in discipline-specific courses and content areas
- Contributions
  - Teaching writing within the content area increases student motivation and genre knowledge.

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CLIL and WAC Activities

Purdue OWL

General Writing ▸

Research and Citation ▸

Teacher and Tutor Resources ▸

Subject-Specific Writing ▾

　Professional, Technical Writing ▸

　Writing in Literature ▸

　Writing in the Social Sciences ▸

　Writing in Engineering ▾

　　Engineering Project Documentation ▸

Writing Engineering Reports

This PowerPoint slide presentation covers major aspects of writing reports in Engineering. Click on the link above in the Media box to download the slides.

The presentation includes information about:

- Report purpose and planning
- Report format and organization
- Headings and language
- Visual design
- Source documentation
- Finishing touches

- Analyzing discipline-specific writing conventions of genres while learning content
- Assigning writing that integrates content learning and disciplinary writing practices

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Question:
How useful is a socioliterate approach for your classroom?

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Post – Process: Collaborative Pedagogies

- Beliefs about teaching and learning writing
  - Collaborative learning, social mediation and scaffolding (sociocultural theory, Vygotsky, 1986) improves writing skills
  - Writing is communication with readers and text ('intertextuality')
- Contributions
  - Scaffolding and collaborative activities have been shown to encourage interlanguage development in 2nd language writing
  - Can be used with other writing approaches
- Critiques
  - Preparing 2nd language writers to work together can be challenging
  - students may be at different levels or contribute differently

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Collaborative Writing Activities

- Small group discussions of models and writing conventions
- Collaborative writing tasks and peer feedback
- Workshops and student-teacher writing conferences

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Post – Process: Critical Literacy

- Beliefs about teaching and learning writing
    - Writing in discourse communities enacts social, political and cultural power structures.
    - 2nd language writers should analyze sociohistorical context of writing and challenge educational practices.
- Contributions
    - Critical literacy practices may be empowering for 2nd language writers and may improve their advocacy skills.
- Critiques
    - Impractical for novice members in a discourse community
    - Minimal focus on language skills for 2nd language writers

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Media Consumers and Creators, What Are Your Rights and Responsibilities?

Critical Literacy Activities

- Critical needs analysis and rights analysis (Benesch, 2001)
- Critical analysis of texts and critical writing about academic genres
- Exploring issues of race, class, gender and sexuality in discourse communities
- Exploring textual borrowing practices as a cultural construct

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Question:
How useful are collaborative and critical approaches for your classroom?

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Teacher Resources

- <u>Writing Skills</u> (American English, US Department of State)
  - A good general source for teaching ESL writing
- <u>Read – Write – Think</u> (International Literacy Association)
  - A good source for traditional rhetoric and collaborative writing resources
- <u>Second Language Writing Listserv</u> (Conference on College Composition and Communication)
  - A good source for process orientations to teaching writing
- <u>Teaching Resources</u> (Writing Across the Curriculum)
  - A good source for Writing across the curriculum teaching resources
- <u>Online Writing Lab</u> (Purdue University)
  - A good source for WAC, genre studies and socioliterate approaches
- <u>Classroom Resources</u> (Teaching Tolerance)
  - A good source for critical literacy resources

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