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Second Language Writing Instruction
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Writing is one of the most important skills that second language students need to develop, and the ability to teach it is central to the expertise of a good language teacher. Writing in English has established itself as a key metric in the life chances of millions of people: a measure of educational success, academic competence, professional advancement and institutional recognition. As a result, research on the topic has grown massively, extending beyond conventional academic, school and workplace texts into the features of new electronic genres such as blogs, webpages and wikis. But Second language writing is not just finished texts and research also explores how writers create texts, how these processes and texts are different from those in a first language, and what texts and writing mean to writers, all this as well as seeking to gain greater understanding of writing is taught, analyzed and learnt.

One important variable of the teaching context is whether students are learning to express themselves in writing (learning-to-write) or to develop some area other than writing itself (writing-to-learn). Most research in L2 writing refers to *Learning-to-Write* contexts, how we can understand and teach writing as an additional language. In contrast, *Writing -to-Learn Language* refers to writing as a tool for language acquisition and *Writing-to-Learn Content* aims at enhancing student learning about content subjects, prompting learning and critical thinking.

Various theories supporting teachers' efforts to understand L2 writing and learning have developed since the subject emerged as a distinctive area of scholarship in the 1970s. Structural, functional, content, expressive, process and genre views can be seen as complementary and overlapping perspectives, representing potentially compatible means of understanding the complex reality of writing and how it might best be taught. But these theories are not open curriculum options as instruction is often constrained by local teaching contexts and always informed by teachers own views of what writing is and how it should be taught.

So, although the "pure" application of a particular theory may be quite rare, it is usual for one to predominate. Most common are varieties of process models, which privilege the writer as an independent producer of texts and recognize that writing depends on basic cognitive processes. Teachers are encouraged to develop these by helping students to plan a text, define a rhetorical problem, propose solutions and evaluate outcomes through a process of brainstorming, redrafting and responding to feedback. The second main approach looks beyond composing processes to see writing as attempts to communicate with readers. Genre is an approach concerned with helping learners create coherent, purposeful texts that will be seen as effective by readers, following certain rhetorical conventions for organizing messages to help readers to recognize a social purpose, such as telling a story, crafting a business email, describing a technical process or

whatever. In general, the value of scaffolding students writing development through an explicit awareness of language, a knowledge of target texts, and opportunities to redraft and receive feedback, are now key tenets of much writing instruction. Teachers have also embraced new practices to teach writing, turning to electronic, online and social media resources, being more sensitive to students' writing goals and target contexts, as well as making greater use of corpora, automated feedback and what the web has to offer. *Language* teachers are quickly becoming *writing* teachers.

The Research Questions

1. How do students best learn to write?
2. How should teachers intervene in students' writing and at what stage?
3. What are the main similarities and differences between writing in an L1 and an L2?
4. What information about the students and the context is most useful to have in preparing a writing course for L2 students?
5. To what extent does culture or first language influence writing in a second language?
6. What are the main features of key instructional and target genres and how can teachers best make these salient to learners?
7. What factors influence plagiarism/textual borrowing and how should this be treated by teachers?
8. What kinds of feedback (teacher, peer, automated, oral) are most effective in encouraging student engagement and promoting writing improvement?
9. What affordances and drawbacks do the internet and social media present for L2 writing instruction?
10. How are different kinds of writing most fairly and effectively assessed?

Suggested Resources

Casanave, C. (2017). *Controversies in second language writing 2ⁿᵈ ed*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Christine Pearson Casanave's book is an excellent resource for teachers, scholars, and administrators who find themselves grappling with various key concerns in the field. She focuses on five broad issues: contrastive rhetoric, "paths to improvement" (fluency and accuracy, process and product, and error correction), assessment, "interaction" (issues related to audience and plagiarism), and politics and ideology. Rather than simply relate the various views available on these topics, however, she encourages readers to think about their own assumptions and teaching contexts. In other words, she prompts teachers to become self-reflective by examining their own writing experiences, their preferred teaching and learning styles, and the pedagogical theories that have influenced them. She advises teachers to develop a "coherent and internally consistent belief system" for teaching writing that will evolve throughout their teaching careers.

Crusan, D. (2010). *Assessment in the second language writing classroom.* **Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.**

This book is strongly recommended for teachers looking for an intelligent, informative and authoritative book on L2 writing assessment uncomplicated by statistics. The book is for teachers working in a range of different contexts including mixed population classes. There are a number of learned books which cover the theoretical aspects of writing assessment, but none focus as heavily on practical classroom aspects of writing assessment. Topics include key issues such as validity, reliability, fairness, biases, washback and developing rubrics and prompts. The book also covers Large-scale and classroom tests, the influence of technology, internet plagiarism, the politics of assessment and the machine scoring of writing and its effects on second language writers. This is an accessible, thought-provoking presentation of the conceptual and practical dimensions of writing assessment, both for the classroom and on a larger scale.

Hyland, K. (2019). *Second language writing 2nd ed.* **Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.**

Hyland introduces the theory and practice of teaching writing to second language learners. Written for pre-service teachers and those new to teaching writing, it sets out the key issues of needs analysis, course design, lesson planning, creating texts, tasks and materials, giving feedback and assessing L2 writing. Importantly, it shows how current research can inform classroom practice and includes a chapter on how teachers and teacher-trainees can conduct research of their own. The book includes recent work on automated feedback, plagiarism, social media, Virtual Learning Environments and teacher workload issues. It takes the stance that student writers not only need realistic strategies for drafting and revising, but also a clear understanding of genre to structure their writing experiences according to the expectations of particular communities of readers and the constraints of particular contexts. There are review exercises, reflection questions, examples and a glossary to help new teachers.

Hyland, K. & Hyland, F. (Eds.) (2019). *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues* **2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press**.

This edited volume provides an up to date overview of current insights and understandings on feedback on second language writing. Chapters written by experts in various areas of feedback emphasize the potential that feedback has for helping to create a supportive teaching environment, for conveying and modelling ideas about good writing, for developing the ways students talk about writing, and for mediating the relationship between students' wider cultural and social worlds and their growing familiarity with new literacy practices. The book includes updated chapters from the first edition on culture, appropriation, interaction, peer feedback and a state-of-play chapter on the impact of error correction on writing. It also adds new chapters on developing areas such as student engagement and participation with feedback, the links between SLA and feedback research, automated computer feedback and the use by students of internet resources and social media as feedback resources.

Manchon, R. & Matsuda, P. (eds.). (2016). *Handbook of Second and Foreign Language Writing.* **Berlin***:* **Mouton**

This edited collection provides an up-to-date view of theory and research in the field by internationally recognised authors. It offers a fairly comprehensive overview of developments and future directions in L2 writing in six parts: "Mapping the terrain," "Population and contexts," "Learning writing," "Teaching and assessing writing," "Researching writing" and "Interdisciplinary relations." In the introduction, Rosa Manchón argues that L2 writing research is an evolving, interdisciplinary field of inquiry and the chapters which follow demonstrate this through critical interpretations of research in a wide range of areas. In addition to showing how the field evolved, the volume provides state-of-the-art surveys of basic and applied research, overviews of research methods in L2 writing research, critical reflections on future developments, and explorations of existing and emerging interactions with other fields of inquiry.

About the Contributor

Ken Hyland is Professor of Applied Linguistics in education at the University of East Anglia. He was previously a professor at UCL/IOE and the University of Hong Kong and has taught in Africa, Asia and Europe. He is best known for his research into writing and academic discourse, having published 240+ articles and 30 books on these topics with over 48,000 citations on Google Scholar. A collection of his work was published as *The Essential Hyland* (Bloomsbury, 2018). He is the Editor of the *Bloomsbury Discourse Series* and Routledge *Innovations and Challenges in Applied Linguistics*, was founding co-editor of the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* and was co-editor of *Applied Linguistics.*