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Second Language Writing and Research: The Writing Process and Error Analysis in Student Texts

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Abstract

Academic writing requires conscious effort and much practice in composing, developing, and revising. Second language learners in a second language are also faced with social and cognitive challenges related to second language writing instruction and research on composing processes have been the theoretical basis of second language writing pedagogy. However, language proficiency and competence underlies the ability to write. Therefore, L2 writing instructors should take into account both strategy development and working with students. This paper explores error in writing in relation to particular theories of the writing process in L1 and L2. It can be argued that a focus on the writing process is appropriate for second language learners if attention is given to linguistic development.

Introduction

The ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill; it is usually learned or culturally transmitted in instructional settings or other environments. Writing skills must be practiced and learned through the process of composing, which implies the ability either to tell or retell pieces of information in the form of new information into new texts, as in expository or argumentative writing. Perhaps it is best viewed as a continuum from the more mechanical or formal aspects of “writing down” on the one end, to the more complex and creative aspects of composing (Omaggio Hadley, 1993). It is undoubtedly the act of composing, though, which can create difficulties for students writing in a second language (L2) in academic contexts. Formulating new ideas can be difficult, and reworking information, which is much more complex than writing as telling. By putting thoughts into writing, the writer engages in “a two-way interaction between continuously developing knowledge and content” (Scardamalia, 1987, p. 12). Indeed, academic writing requires conscious effort and practice. Compared to students writing in their native language (L1), however, students writing in the second language face challenges of the language as well as writing strategies, techniques and skills. They might also have to deal with readers who may or may not get beyond their language problems when evaluating their work. Although the pressure on the part of the readers may be warranted, students want to write close to error-free texts to meet the expectations of becoming more proficient writers in the L2. [-1-]

This paper explores error in writing in relation to particular aspects of second language acquisition and L2. I argue that the process approach to instruction, with its emphasis on the writing process and multiple drafts (Raimes, 1991), is only appropriate for second language learners if they are both able to identify errors in writing, and are proficient enough in the language to implement revision strategies.

A brief survey of the nature of L2 writing and L1 models of the writing process illustrates the challenges for second language writing. Further, certain social and cognitive factors related to second language learning involved in the language learning process also affect L2 writing. With a discussion of these factors, the ways in which writing and L2 proficiency are raised. It should then become apparent that the process approach to writing instruction if these two components are taken into consideration.

Models of L1 and L2 Writing

Most ESL students studying in post-secondary institutions have writing skills. However, the kind of writing skills valued by Western academic communities. The nature of academic literacy often contrasts with that of the students who bring with them a set of conventions that are at odds with those of the academic world (p. 30). In addition, the culture-specific nature of schemata—abstract mental structures representing knowledge of situations—can lead to difficulties when students write texts in L2. Knowing how to write a

does not necessarily mean that students will be able to do these things in English (Kern, 2000). We should take into consideration the influence from various educational, social, and cultural experiences. These include textual issues, such as rhetorical and cultural preferences for organizing information, referred to as contrastive rhetoric (Cai, 1999; Connor, 1997; Kaplan, 1987; Kobayashi & Ritschel, 1999), knowledge of appropriate genres (Johns, 1995; Swales, 1990), familiarity with writing topics, and instructional socialization (Coleman, 1996; Holliday, 1997; Valdes, 1995). In addition to instructional constraints, varying commands of the target language, which affect the way structural errors are treated, also play a role.

Much of the research on L2 writing has been closely dependent on L1 research. Although L2 writing is linguistically different in many ways from L1 writing (Silva, 1993), L1 models have had a significant influence on the development of a theory of L2 writing. However, a look at two popular L1 models will suggest the need for developing a distinct construct of L2 writing. [-2-]

The Flower and Hayes (1980, 1981) model focuses on what writers do when they compose. It identifies three major components: the rhetorical situation (audience, topic, assignment), the writer's persona, the construction of meaning, and the production of the formal text). By comparing L1 and L2 writing, here is placed on "students' strategic knowledge and the ability of students to transform information into text for purposes" (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, p. 116). However, the social dimension is important to consider, as writing is an individually-oriented, inner-directed cognitive process, but as much as an acquired resource for participation in particular communities" (Swales, 1990, p. 4).

In more recent studies that examine the goals students set for themselves, the strategies they use, and the metacognitive awareness they bring to both these acts, Flower and her colleagues (1994) have sought to establish the interaction of context and cognition in performing a particular writing task.

One of the problems they note is the transition students are required to make when entering a new academic community (a socially constructed convention in itself), where students need to learn how to operate within that community, which implies knowledge of the textual conventions, expectations, and formulaic expressions. As researchers, "conceptualizing this transition as a social/cognitive act of entering a discourse community, a student learning to negotiate a new situation and the role the situation will play in what is typically a socially situated, communicative act is later incorporated into Flower's (1994) social cognitive curriculum students are taught as apprentices in negotiating an academic community. Writing skills are acquired and used through negotiated interaction with real academic texts and responses. Instruction should, then, afford students the opportunity to participate in transactions with others (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). By guiding students toward a conscious awareness of how to interact, they then learn to write with a "readerly" sensitivity (Kern, 2000).

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) also propose a model that suggests reasons for differences in writing performance.

skilled writers. The basic difference is revealed in their two models of writing: the knowledge-based model involves more reflective problem-solving analysis and goal-setting. The latter model is more process-oriented, which is revealed through writing tasks that vary in processing complexity. The former is represented as a writing strategy. From their research with graduate students, they observed that students who were engaged in problem solving involving structure and gist as well as verbal transformation or intentional writing model is different from knowledge telling in that it involves more active participation through the composing process, and the purposeful achievement of those goals. The composition process is influenced by internal (writer) motivation and emotions and on external (teacher) assistance for its direction. In fact, Bereiter and Scardamalia encourages the more passive kind of cognition by “continually telling students what to do and when to do it, rather than encouraging them to follow their spontaneous interests and impulses . . . and assume responsibility for what becomes of their writing.” The ability to wrestle with and resolve both content and rhetorical problems calls upon a dialectical process. If we practice the kinds of writing tasks that develop knowledge-transforming skills, they are not just writing.

Both the Flower and Hayes, and the Bereiter and Scardamalia writing process models have been applied to the writing process approach in both L1 and L2 writing instruction. By incorporating pre-writing activities, such as brainstorming of personally meaningful topics, strategy instruction in the stages of composing, drafting, and revising, and group editing, the instruction takes into consideration what writers do as they write. Attention to the writer's process is a key workshop approach to instruction, which fosters classroom interaction, and engages students in writing. The L1 theories also seem to support less teacher intervention and less attention to content.

Despite their implications for classroom instruction, not all the components of these models are applicable to L2 writing. The knowledge-based model, in particular, does not recognize cross-cultural differences and issues related to second language acquisition and written language (Kern, 2000). Additionally, with native speakers, “writing ability is more closely related to the conventions of expository discourse” (Kogen 1986, p. 25). L2 writers, however, are in the process of learning the conventions of expository discourse; they often need more instruction about the language itself. Limited knowledge of vocabulary and grammar can also affect L2 writer's performance. In addition, the models do not account for growing language proficiency and second language development.

Similarly, composing, especially in the revision stage, challenges L2 writers. In his research, Flower (1981) observes that learners revise at a superficial level. They re-read and reflect less on their writing. Revision is primarily focused on grammatical correction. On the other hand, L1 writing ability is more closely related to the conventions of expository discourse who are skilled writers in their native languages and have surpassed a certain L2 proficiency level. For example, those who have difficulty writing in their native language may not have a repertoire of writing strategies developed (Sasaki & Hirose, 1996). These observations warrant consideration for L2 instruction in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writing that include less-skilled writers or those who have not yet developed a repertoire of writing strategies in their native languages.

In sum, social-cognitive theories of writing show us how social contexts for writing operate just as they do when a person is acquiring a new language. However, the problem with an explicit instruction (such as the process approach) to L2 instruction is that L2 writing also involves producing meaningful text in a second language. As a result, L2 students generally want more teacher feedback and revision stage. Consequently, in order to provide effective pedagogy, L2 writing instructors need to consider the factors involved in the process of second language acquisition and error in writing because of language development. [-4-]

The Sources of Error in L2 Writing: Social and Cognitive Factors

Social Factors

Both social and cognitive factors affect language learning. Exploration of social factors given in language learning, in proficiency type (for instance, conversational ability versus writing ability), and based on direct (self-report questionnaires) and indirect measures generally shows that learning concrete goals will have these attitudes reinforced if they experience success. Likewise, learning is affected by lack of success or by failure (McGroarty, 1996). Needless to say, although ESL learners may learn for academic purposes, many of them are financially and professionally committed to graduation. As a result, they have strong reasons for learning and improving their skills.

There is a direct relationship between learner attitudes and learner motivation. Gardner's research account for the role of social factors in language acquisition. It interrelates four aspects of motivation: (1) determines beliefs about language and culture), individual learner differences (related to learning contexts), and learning outcomes. Integrative motivation: individuals need to learn the target language to integrate into the community. In addition, instrumental motivation represented by the other language group may also inspire them. On the other hand, instrumental external influences and incentives play in strengthening the learners' desire to achieve. Learners interested in learning the language for a particular purpose, such as writing a dissertation, are more likely to learn the language learning takes place in isolation from a community of target language speakers, whereas if it takes place among a community of speakers, then instrumental orientation becomes more prominent. Despite problems in Gardner's research design, it can be concluded that motivational factors can influence their own, but they can create a more positive context in which language learning is likely to occur. (See Lambert, 1975; Schumann, 1978; Giles, Robinson & Smith, 1980; Giles & Byrne, 1982; Gardner & Lambert, 1989) models that focus on the social circumstances of learning in relation to second language acquisition.

Learners' attitudes, motivations, and goals can explain why some L2 writers perform better than others. In each of my ESL writing classes, I often ask students to fill out a personal information form before starting planning my course. The answers to questions such as, "Do you enjoy writing in English?" and "Do you hate writing in English?" are revealing. Most students will answer that they hate writing in English (and in

only taking the course for educational and/or career purposes. In fact, it seems that many conversation. Students may enjoy writing e-mail messages to friends around the world, but finding the right words, and developing topics, abound. However, if students show an over motivation), perceive that there is parental and social support, and have a desire to achieve motivation), they can become more proficient in their ability to write in English, despite the

Writing teachers should be aware of how the instrumental motivation of their L2 students. Common purposes for learners writing in an EAP context include writing a research paper, writing a business report for a multinational company. These learners may be less motivated, perceive that these tasks are not related to their needs. Even writing a standard research paper will need to write project reports and memos. If learners perceive writing tasks to be useful in a manner. Consequently, it is likely that they will be inattentive to errors, monitoring, and risk-taking. If students are highly motivated, then any sort of writing task, expressive or otherwise, are valuable.

Social factors also influence the quality of contact that learners will experience. Indeed, we believe that contact with the target language will result in more acquisition of the L2. Certainly, instructors recommend that learners for various purposes should read academic texts, attend academic lectures, and even work with students who are more acquainted with the discourse. However, if they do not engage in the texts, understand the content, or participate in sessions, these activities will have little effect on student progress. Interaction is key. A common problem at a foreign university is that they have difficulty meeting native speakers and getting to know them. Students who do not have as much interaction with native speakers as they had expected. In addition, they often prefer to speak their native language. Unfortunately, this pattern can slow down L2 development in a classroom. It is important for providing incentives or opportunities for interactions with native speakers. Generally speaking, if students enter into the L2, they will develop a higher level of proficiency and positive attitudes, which can lead to more success.

In short, learners may continue to exhibit errors in their writing for the following social reasons:

1. negative attitudes toward the target language
2. continued lack of progress in the L2
3. a wide social and psychological distance between them and the target culture, and,
4. a lack of integrative and instrumental motivation for learning.

Cognitive Factors

Academic writing is believed to be cognitively complex. Acquisition of academic vocabulary is a challenge. According to cognitive theory, communicating orally or in writing is an active process of selecting and organizing information, and correcting errors as the learner internalizes the language. Indeed, acquisition is a product of the complex interaction of the learner's internal mechanisms. With practice, there is continual restructuring as learners learn to write. Learners can achieve increasing degrees of mastery in L2 (McLaughlin, 1988). [-6-]

One model that applies to both speaking and writing in a second language is Anderson's (1985), which is divided into three stages: construction, in which the writer plans what he/she is going to write; transformation, in which language rules are applied to transform intended meaning into a written form; and execution, in which the writer produces the final text. Anderson's model is composed of three stages: construction, in which the writer plans what he/she is going to write; transformation, in which language rules are applied to transform intended meaning into a written form; and execution, which corresponds to the physical process of producing the final text. Anderson's model is described as "setting goals and searching memory for information, then using production rules to generate linguistic constituents" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p. 42). Writers vacillate between these processes to express in writing. Anderson's learning theory supports teaching approaches that combine declarative knowledge, practice in using this knowledge, and strategy training to encourage independent writing.

In structuring information, the writer uses various types of knowledge, including discourse knowledge, sociolinguistic rules (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Organization at both the sentence and the paragraph level is crucial for the communication of meaning, and ultimately, for the quality of the written product (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987). Problems may be due to not knowing how to organize text or how to store the relevant information in memory. The writer is converting information into meaningful sentences. At this point, the writer translates or clarifies the goals, ideas, and organization developed in the construction stage. Revision is also a part of the process. Revision is a cognitively demanding task for L2 learners because it not only involves task modification of text in the writing plan (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996), but also the ability of students to receive feedback on their writing.

Due to the complex process of writing in a second language, learners often find it difficult to manage multiple tasks simultaneously. As a result, they selectively use only those aspects that are automatic or highly practiced (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). In order to enhance or facilitate language production, students can develop strategies that target component mental processes. O'Malley and Chamot have differentiated strategies into three categories: metacognitive, such as the organization of written discourse or monitoring (that is, being aware of what one is doing and evaluating the progress of a task); cognitive, such as transferring or using known linguistic information to facilitate learning; and social/affective, and using new vocabulary, and social/affective strategies, which involve cooperating with others.

Learner strategies can be effective, but they need to be internalized so that they can be used automatically. If an environment is perceived to be stressful or threatening, for example, writing as part of a high-stakes timed test conditions, learners' affective states can influence cognition. Emotional influences can have a negative impact on achievement and performance in L2, to a certain extent. Schumann (1998) argues that affective states can influence the framing of a problem and in adopting processing strategies. He states that we very often use affective states to frame a situation about which we have to make a judgment we often ask ourselves how we feel about it. "Affective states and constraints and competing tasks limit our cognitive capacities" (p. 247). This outcome may lead to decreased performance when they are under stress. [-7-]

Language transfer is another important cognitive factor related to writing error. Transfer refers to the similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been learned. The study of transfer involves the study of errors (negative transfer), facilitation (positive transfer), and

over-use (Ellis, 1994). Behaviorist accounts claim that transfer is the cause of errors, whereas a resource that the learner actively draws upon in interlanguage development (Selinker) has a positive effect on interlanguage development by influencing the hypotheses that learners construct. However, transfer errors can occur because:

[L]earners lack the necessary information in the second language or the attentional control to monitor their L2 language routine. But such an account says little about why certain linguistic forms transfer.

Despite the fact that L1 transfer is no longer viewed as the only predictor or cause of error, it is still difficult to distinguish empirically between instances of communication and language transfer in research. L1 transfer plays a complex and significant role in L2 acquisition. For example, when learners write under pressure, they often draw from their native language for the achievement and synthesis of meaning (Widdowson, 1994). Research shows that learners sometimes use their native language when generating ideas and attending to details. Recent studies, which have focused on characteristics of L1 languages and cultures, have helped researchers understand how L1 transfer studies have been valuable in our understanding of L2 writing development. However, many studies have made reductive, essentializing generalizations about ways of writing and cultural stereotypes about L1 languages (Fox, 1994; Leki, 1997; Spack, 1997). As a result, erroneous predictions about students' learning have occurred regardless of social factors, such as "the contexts, and purpose of their learning, their level of education, and prior experience" (Raimes, 1998, p. 143). In addition, learners are influenced by their L1, but they themselves continually change with new experiences. In spite of these criticisms, though, research on L1 transfer, epistemological rhetorical, and pedagogical traditions" (Kern, 2000, p. 176) and the impact of L1 transfer on the understanding of why learners make certain structural and organizational errors. [-8-]

Input and interaction also play important roles in the writing process, especially in classroom settings. L2 input, along with L1 transfer and communicative need may work together to shape interlanguage development. Research has focused on four broad areas: input frequency, the nature of comprehensible input, learner motivation, and collaborative discourse construction. Writers need to receive adequate L2 input in order to learn to use the rhetorical forms in the target language. If students are not exposed to native-like models of L2 writing, errors are likely to persist. Errors abound in peer review classes or in computer-mediated exchanges. Research on L2 writing compositions. Indeed, in many of my own classes, interlanguage talk or discourse is often limited. However, if the interaction, oral or written, allows for adequate negotiation of meaning, progress is made (Kern, 2000) for what happens when learners respond to each other on the computer and read their writing.

We can see that writing in a second language is a complex process involving the ability to construct a text in order to express one's ideas effectively in writing. Social and cognitive factors are also involved in assessing the underlying reasons why L2 learners exhibit particular writing errors. For instance, the errors of Spanish speakers living in the United States may be due to a multiplicity of factors, including the influence of the Spanish language, and cultural norms (Plata, 1995). Spanish-speaking writers must undergo a transformation from the Spanish language for that of English. For this transformation to happen, some students

replacing their birth name with an English one, can help them to become more immersed because learners are less familiar and less confident with structural elements of a new language. Even new uses of writing, writing in an L2 can have errors and be less effective than writing in the L1.

The Sources of Error in L2 Writing

There are several ways to think about error in writing in light of what we know about second language acquisition: how texts, context and the writing process interact with one another. As mentioned, students produce texts that contain varying degrees of grammatical and rhetorical errors. In fact, the more rich and creative the text, the greater the possibility there is for errors at the morphosyntactic level. This is common among L2 writers who have a lot of ideas, but not enough language to express what they want to say. What we classify as an error, which is associated with learner competence, may actually be a "derailment" related to learner performance (Shaughnessy, 1977). These "derailments" are common in academic voice and make their sentences more intricate, especially when the task requires

From behaviorist and mentalist perspectives of error, which have emphasized the product over the process, which focus on underlying process (why the error is made), researchers have attempted to explain errors by hypothesizing their possible sources (Bartholomae, 1980; Hull, 1985). Although reading and analyzing learner errors can help us identify the cognitive strategies that the learner is using to process information, we should be analyzing learner errors that we elevate "the status of errors from undesirability to that of a natural part of the learning process" (p. 53). [-9-]

Whether an error, mistake, or "derailment," awkward discourse can occur for a variety of reasons mentioned. First of all, learners may translate from L1, or they may try out what they assume is correct in the target language, although hindered by insufficient knowledge of correct usage. In the learning process, there is also interference from developmental stages of interlanguage or from nonstandard elements in the L1 (e.g., students writing in their native language as well). They also tend to over-generalize the rules of their L1 to the target discourse structures. In addition, learners are often unsure of what they want to express, or they may lack the vocabulary in the target language. Finally, writers in L2 might lack familiarity with new rhetorical structures and their uses (Kaplan, 1987; Kutz, Groden, & Zamel, 1993; Raimes, 1987). L2 writing relates closely to native language writing in different contexts. Students may not be acquainted with English rhetoric, which can lead to writing that is different from native English speakers. Rhetoric and writing are direct outcomes of sociocultural and political contexts. They are representations of the writer's unique experiences within a particular social milieu. For example, students may write in accordance with a set of rhetorical norms (such as the "eight-legged" essay) that differ from those of native speakers (Williams, 1989).

Repeating a previous mistake, or backsliding, is a common occurrence in L2 writing. More often, however, when "learner interlanguage competence diverges in more or less permanent ways from the target language, fossilized errors can be problematic in writing because the errors become ingrained, like

reappear despite remediation and correction. They can be common among immigrants where the emphasis is on fluency and not linguistic correctness. Errors in writing, fossilize the reader who has had little experience interacting with L2 speakers and texts.

Implications for Teaching: Proficiency, Instruction and Response to Error

Although instructors may think of errors as part of a language learning process related to specific contexts (Carson, 2001), and writing as a skill developed over time, most L2 learners' writing is form- and product-based. That teachers draw conclusions about intellectual ability on the basis of errors has been well documented (Sternglass, 1997; Zamel, 1998). Variability in writing, which is typical of L2 learners, is a major issue in addressing proficiency issues. The definition of proficiency has consequences for L2 students who must complete tasks across the disciplines, cope with the demands of academic English, and receive recognition for their efforts.

One problem in assessing language performance is that it must address the many factors that influence it. According to Bialystok (1998), any definition of language proficiency is deeply entangled in the formalist approach, which attempts to explain language as code. According to this perspective, proficiency is "an unknowable abstraction that reflects the universal competence of native speakers" (p. 502). The functionalist approach, which explains proficiency in its relationship to communication in specific contexts, is "an interaction with a linguistic environment" (p. 502). In conversation, often both parties assume the advantage of verbal and nonverbal communication; however, in written discourse, communication is one-way and the writer may need to provide more background information in order to communicate clearly.

Language requires a combination of formal structure, that is, a clear set of standards, and recognition of variations from the rules. Consequently, a proper definition of language proficiency is "one against which to describe language skills of users in different contexts" (Bialystok, 1998, p. 502). Language performance, then, acknowledges personal characteristics, topical or real-world factors, and other factors related to the social and cultural context (Brown, 2000).

Alongside the cultural and curricular aspects of standardization, there is variability in the ultimate level of proficiency they achieve, with many failing to reach target-language competence. Individual learner differences in motivation and aptitude, in addition to the use of an associated system for monitoring for obtaining input and for learning from it (Ellis, 1994; Krashen, 1982). However, proficiency is defined, functionally balanced system, and proficiency as the degree of deviation from this system. "Proficiency, as statistically analyzed," Klein (1998) advocates acknowledging learner varieties. According to this perspective, error-free by definition and characterized by particular lexical repertoire and particular intonation patterns. In fact, it may be more useful to think about proficiency as a process, one in which learners adjust to the linguistic and situational contexts (Ellis, 1994). From a functionalist perspective, context-specific factors should take into consideration learner variability and error within particular contexts. Nevertheless, the more proficiency (however defined), the better the writing quality. In fact, both language proficiency and writing quality are related.

should be, accounted for in evaluating L2 writing performance and instruction (Grabe & K

Valuable insights from research in second language acquisition and writing development linking the two processes—acquiring a second language and developing writing skills, especially Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) have stressed the benefits of process approaches to knowledge-transforming tasks. Taking the concept of “knowledge transformation” further this way is also an opportunity for knowledge building, “as the writer both tries to anticipate and carries on a dialogue with the text being composed” (p. 77). However, if students have their writing errors, and if they do not receive enough conceptual feedback at the discourse level, they may backfire. Instructional approaches that can be used effectively with L2 writers show to be alike. [-11-]

First of all, students may be able to communicate more effectively if they are exposed to not only essays, but also a variety of genres of writing, including flyers, magazine articles, letters, and other texts, students’ awareness can be raised with regard to the way words, structures, and genres can be made aware of different types of textual organization, which can in turn affect L2 students (Cumming, 1991, 1998). Models can also be used for text analysis, which can help L2 writers see how processes work in authentic discourse contexts. Depending on the learners’ levels of proficiency and writing skills, the knowledge-telling model of the five-paragraph essay. However, as the students progress, they should be able to “serve the writer’s purpose instead of the other way around” (Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1998). The practice of scripting and performing texts in order to sensitize students to the many voices in the target language are reinforced.

In addition to the use of written models, Cumming (1995) also points out the benefits of cognitive modeling, which involves explicit demonstration of the strategies experienced writers use when planning, revising, and editing. Cumming advocates that ESL instructors make explicit use of thinking or procedural-facilitation prompts in the classroom mode of assessment. Both these approaches promote knowledge-transforming models of writing in student portfolios, self-review checklists, and teacher and peer responses. In addition, self-assessment can be effective, as it affords both students and teachers the opportunity to consider writing development. However, to evaluate their own work requires additional instructional tools, and it may not be effective if used as a component of one-to-one tutoring sessions, which in contrast to the classroom environment provides environments for the textual, cognitive, and social dimensions of error identification to be addressed. Cumming (1995) states that “writing processes and their immediate concerns about language, ideas, and texts” (p. 393). Unfortunately, nonetheless, the use of specific prompts for cognitive modeling in different aspects of composition instruction and error identification, has proved to be valuable.

Apprenticeship models of instruction, which developed out of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, are becoming more common. Proficient students who are also fairly skilled writers can benefit from this approach. They know and can do, but their learning is extended into what Vygotsky termed the “zone of proximal development.”

instruction, collaborative construction of opportunities and active participation (Lantolf, 2000). Process models enable learners to utilize the new language as a tool in the process of becoming second language users. For fostering writing expertise, “students are supported by a scaffold of prompts and explanations, by teacher support, and by reflection that connects strategic effort to outcomes” (Flower, 1994, pp. 14-15). Knowledge of genres, reflecting on strategies for approaching a variety of literary tasks, and reflection on language use are important components of socio-literate methods (Johns, 1999). [-12-]

Students come to class both to improve their language proficiency and become more confident writers. Teachers also present diagnostic feedback that helps learners improve their linguistic accuracy at every stage. To provide students with ample amounts of language input and instruction, as well as writing practice, teachers use a variety of writing and reading, referred to as “intertextuality” (Blanton, 1999), and feedback to full extent. Modeling, through modeling, for instance, is only one part of the teaching process; providing student models. Essentially, we need to consider factors related to language proficiency, second language acquisition, and giving feedback. Specifically, the effectiveness of feedback may depend on the level of student proficiency, their cognitive style, the clarity of the feedback given, the way the feedback is used, and the context of the class (Ferris, 1997; Goldstein, 2001; Omaggio Hadley, 1993). Classroom settings, course content, and materials are also important (Leki, 1990). Systematically encouraging learners to reflect on what they have learned and the appropriate choice of language forms has pedagogic value.

We must be aware of the complexities involved in the revision process and respond to writing with sensitivity, confidence and competence. Ideally, learners should be encouraged to analyze and evaluate their own writing and that of others. Teacher commentary, student reactions to commentary, and student revisions in writing are all important. Teachers intervene in writing instruction, and how L2 writers react to the feedback influences their writing. Should we stress early mastery of the mechanical aspects of writing, or should we urge their students to focus on content until after a first draft has been written? Again, process models of writing instruction allow students to revise and reshape their plans, ideas, and language. In classroom practice, the focus is on idea development, content identification and grammar correction. Ideally, instruction and response serve to motivate students to think, problem solving and critical thinking, in addition to further writing practice (Cumming, 1989; White, 1998). A process approach may be effective, but if writers’ linguistic ability sets limits to what they can do on their own, then we need a combination of process instruction and attention to language development.

Focused error correction can be highly desirable, but problematic; In addition, there are many reasons for many teachers when reading L2 student writing is to edit the work, that is, focus on the form rather than the content. It resembles target language discourse. Teachers can correct errors; code errors; locate errors; and provide feedback. In fact, benefit, attention to errors “provides the negative evidence students often need to reject incorrect forms and to form language is formed or functions” (Larsen-Freeman, 1991, p. 293). [-13-] However, if this focus is on form, then language, discourse, and text are equated with structure. It is then assumed that the student’s text and correct it (Rodby, 1992). In addition, some feel it may not be worth the time and effort of providing feedback on sentence level grammar and syntax, since improvement can be gained by writing more.

1986). Practice alone may improve fluency, but if errors are not pointed out and corrected student writing, as mentioned earlier. L1 research may advocate for focusing on conceptual errors, except for a “note reminding the student that the final copy needs to be edited” (We have indicated that students both attend to and appreciate their teachers’ pointing out of Ferris, 1995, 1997; Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988). In support of this claim, Fathman and feedback and revision in an ESL context, concluded that grammar and content feedback, v affect rewriting. However, grammatical feedback had more effect on error correction than content. Grammatical and rhetorical feedback should be attentive to the writers’ level of p Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996; Lee, 1997; Leki, 1991). Overly detailed responses may overw revision, whereas minimal feedback may result in only surface modifications to the text. F what to do with various suggestions and how to incorporate them into their own revision responses on revision should be examined. (See Sengupta (2000) for research on the effec learners’ writing proficiency and perceptions about writing).

Summary and Conclusion

For English L2 writers, the process of writing in an academic environment is challenging. I improve their writing is to keep writing–thinking that with enough practice in writing and i reflection), they would eventually acquire the fundamentals, or at least the standard, requ approach to instruction, characterized by practice, collaboration, and the opportunity for writers, it is apparent that many L2 writers do not have the necessary linguistic ability to re points out:

[A]lthough we should not cripple our students’ interest in writing through undue stre of second language factors on writing performance is something we have to reckon w the process would automatically resolve the difficulty caused by these factors. (p. 268

Kern (2000) also mentions that process-oriented teaching does not acknowledge the influ processes. He has characterized it as inattentive to “learners’ understanding of links betw will allow them to construct meanings in ways that are appropriate within the immediate context” (p. 182). [-14-]

Feedback is of utmost importance to the writing process. Without individual attention and not take place. We must accept the fact that L2 writing contains errors; it is our responsibil correction and regulation. Indeed, L2 writers require and expect specific overt feedback fr form and structure of writing. If this feedback is not part of the instructional process, then writing and language skills.

In order to learn more about L2 writers’ use of language in the process of writing, we need

utilized in exploring the composing process in L1 writing, such as think-aloud protocols. We compose in both their native languages and in English to understand more about their learning the role of translation, and transfer of skills. Certainly, ethnographic research in L2 writing acquisition of communicative competence, will help to create a more comprehensive theoretical

About the author

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