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Reshaping ESL students' perceptions of writing

[Linda Lonon Blanton](#)

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Abstract

ESL students bring to their courses perceptions about writing that work against their becoming proficient writers. They often respond to each act of writing as if it were a test, thereby denying themselves psychological and

intellectual 'space' to work with written language. Students impatiently await the time when they can get it 'right'. One of our jobs as ESL composition teachers is to interact with our students in a variety of roles to allow them to perceive the development of their ability to write as the multifaceted, gradual, and organic process that it is. This article outlines a multistep writing programme in which students participate in the writing process and relate to their fellow writers (both classmates and teacher) in a number of different ways. Each of these ways is described in terms of the activities involved, and the degree to which writing proficiency is increased and students' anxiety about themselves as writers is reduced.

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