

Teaching ESL writing: 3 perspectives



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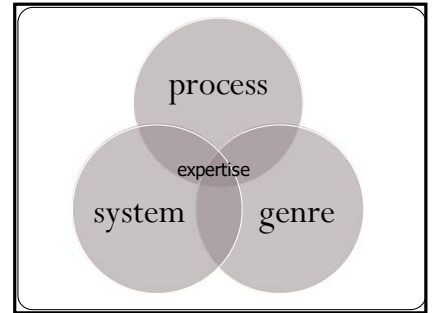
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knowledge of 5 things:

- Content knowledge
- System knowledge
- Process knowledge
- Genre knowledge
- Reader knowledge

What is the most important?

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Three approaches to writing....

- FOCUS ON TEXTS
- FOCUS ON WRITERS
- FOCUS ON READERS

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1 Focus on texts


Writing as a noun not verb

- Writing as object
- Writing as discourse

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1.1 Texts as objects


- Writing is a rule-based structure
- Independent of contexts, writers or readers
- Good writers are good at grammar



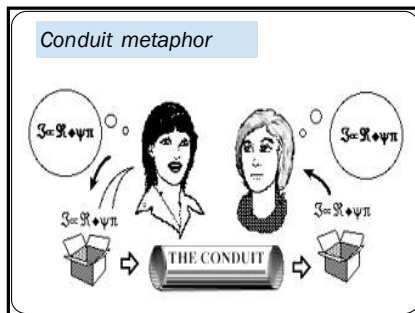
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Classroom practices

- Familiarisation
- Controlled writing
- Guided writing
- Free writing




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Assumptions of texts as objects


- Meaning is contained in words
- Mind to mind transfer of ideas through language
- Need only coding and decoding skills



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Is accuracy enough?


- Accuracy only one feature of good writing
- All texts code writer's assumptions about readers' knowledge
- Have to balance what needs to be said with what can be assumed



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1.2 Texts as Discourse


Texts are attempts to communicate with readers



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Discourse


- Forms are resources to accomplish goals.
- Language in action
- Linguistic patterns point to wider contexts
- How do texts work as communication?



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What is genre?

Genre is a term for grouping texts together, representing how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situations.




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Problem - Solution narrative

Situation	• I am a teacher of EFL writing
Problem	• My students couldn't express themselves in writing
Response	• I adopted a genre-based approach
Evaluation	• Now they can all write beautifully

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Genre is a staged, goal-oriented activity

Jim Martin

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An Explanation: describe a process or how something works

Stage	Example
Intro	Many animals like hedgehogs, badgers and mice hibernate during winter.
Steps	This is because it gets much colder and darker during the winter months. Food become harder to find. Therefore, they find a safe place to sleep and store energy until the plants start to grow again and food is more plentiful.

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Features of explanations...

- Generalised participants
- Timeless present tense
- Temporal connectors –next, then, after that
- Causal connectives – because, therefore, consequently
- Mainly doing/action verbs

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Instructions: describe how something should be done


Goal: Banana Muffins

Materials: bananas, oil, sugar, egg, flour & milk

Steps:

1. Preheat oven to Gas 5 or 220c.
2. Mix bananas, oil, sugar, egg & milk
3. Mix in flour
4. Spoon into non-stick muffin tins and bake for 15 - 20 minutes.

Result You have 10 golden banana muffins



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Features of instructions.....

- in chronological order
- very direct, in simple present or imperative
- Short, simple sentences
- Sign posts indicating sequence, e.g. first, next, while, etc
- using mainly doing/action verbs

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Grammar


- Not traditional, abstract grammar
- Grammar is a resource for producing texts

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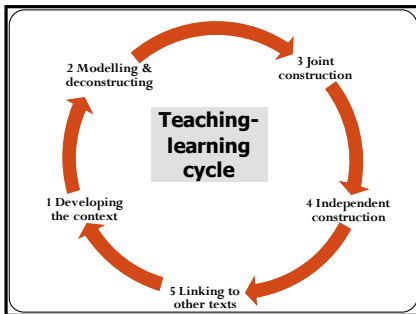
Pedagogy

Making grammatical choices explicit allows students to write effectively

Raising students awareness encouraging them to notice, reflect on and produce well-formed texts



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1 Developing the context

Purpose and settings

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2 Modelling and deconstruction

Examples and revealing stages and features

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Teacher supported practice

3 Joint construction

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Students write alone with teacher monitoring

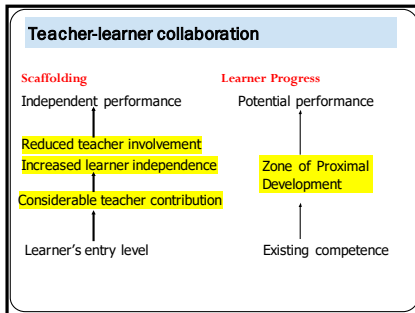
4 Independent construction

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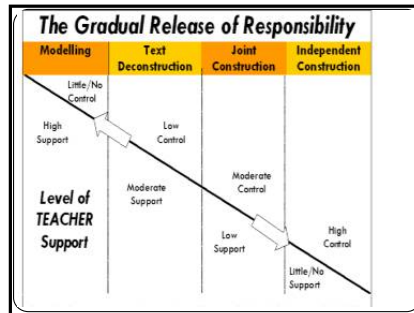
5 Linking to other texts

Relate to other genres and contexts

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Criticisms and counters

- Said to crush creativity by imposing models on students.
- Not inherently prescriptive
- Genres DO constrain us—as our choices are made within expected patterns.
- By understanding how texts are organised we can teach writing more effectively

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2 Focus on writers

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Writing is a process....

- What do good writers do when they write?
- Writing is a process of discovering and forming ideas.
- Writing is problem solving and not an act of communication.
- Based on cognitive psychology

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Flow chart tells us :

- Writers have goals and plan extensively
- Writing is constantly revised
- Planning, drafting, revising and editing are recursive
- Plans and texts are constantly evaluated

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Writing involves.....

- Prewriting
- Drafting
- Revising
- Editing
- Publishing

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Writing involves.....


- Prewriting
 - What do I want to say?
 - How do I want to say it?
 - Who will read it?
 - What do I need to know to start?
 - Who can I talk to about it?
- Drafting
- Revising
- Editing
- Publishing

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Writing involves...

- Prewriting
- Drafting
- Revising
- Editing
- Publishing

Are my thoughts organized?
Which ideas do I want to develop?
In what order do I want to say them?
Who can read this and offer advice?




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Writing involves...

- Prewriting
- Drafting
- Revising
- Editing
- Publishing

Have I read what I have written?
Are my details clear?
Should I add or take out parts?
Do my ideas link together?
Have I expressed my own views?
Have I supported my arguments?
Are my thoughts in a conventional order?
What suggestions have others made?




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Writing involves...

- Prewriting
- Drafting
- Revising
- Editing
- Publishing

Are my thoughts organized?
Have I used complete sentences?
Are my spelling and punctuation correct?
Have I formatted it properly?
Does it all make sense?
Has someone checked my work?




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Writing involves.....

- Prewriting
- Drafting
- Revising
- Editing
- Publishing

Does it need illustrations or tables?
How can I best present it?
Put it online or on paper?
Who do I want to read it?



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Overemphasis on psychological factors


Problems?

Fails to make language explicit

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Delpit: Invisible curriculum

Adherents to process approaches to writing create situations in which students ultimately find themselves held accountable for knowing a set of rules about which no one has ever directly informed them. Teachers do students no service to suggest, even implicitly, that 'product' is not important. Students will be judged on their product regardless of the process they utilized to achieve it. And that product, based as it is on the specific codes of a particular culture, is more readily produced when the directives of how to produce it are made explicit.



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Overemphasis on psychological factors

Not all writing is similar

Problems?


Restricts teachers role to feedback

Fails to make language explicit

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Process vs product

While a process approach will certainly make it possible for apprentice writers to become more effective at generating texts, this may be to little avail if they are not aware of what their readers expect to find in those texts. (Chris Tribble)



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3 Focus on readers



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Context includes the reader

- Who are you writing for?
- What does he or she know?
- What does she believe?
- How will she understand your text?
- Will she agree with your ideas?



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- Writers anticipate reader knowledge and reactions
- Emphasis on the **interaction** between writers and readers
- Process of writing is creating a text we assume reader will recognise
- Process of reading draws on assumptions of writer intentions



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Second language writers

- Unfamiliarity of expectations
- What is seen as logical, engaging, relevant or well-organized differs across cultures



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Academic English texts tend to:

- Be explicit about content and purpose
- Use precise language
- Focus on specific topics
- Use formal tone
- Be clear and concise
- Be organized
- Package information
- Spell out details and connections between sentences

Nominalization

Impersonalization


Connectives

Hedging

Citation

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Writer or reader responsibility?



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Discourse communities


- A way of joining writers, texts and readers together
- John Swales – groups with collective goals
- Ann Johns – groups with common interests



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Barton's definition

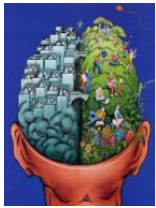
A discourse community is a group of people who have texts and practices in common, whether it is a group of academics, or the readers of teenage magazines. In fact, discourse community can refer to the people the text is aimed at; it can be the people who read a text; or it can refer to the people who participate in a set of discourse practices both by reading and writing.



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Different strokes for different folks

- Social sciences:** analysing and synthesising multiple sources
- Sciences:** describing procedures, defining objects, and planning solutions



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University textbooks

5 Applied Linguistics books			5 Biology books		
No.	% of total	Word	No.	% of total	Word
423	0.8663%	language	166	0.4304%	species
149	0.3052%	speech	150	0.3889%	DNA
128	0.2622%	example	143	0.3708%	spores
127	0.2601%	interaction	135	0.3500%	organisms
106	0.2171%	act	117	0.3033%	bacteria
101	0.2069%	communication	116	0.3008%	fungi
97	0.1987%	students	95	0.2463%	figure
93	0.1905%	text	89	0.2307%	organism
93	0.1905%	acquisition	75	0.1945%	RNA
91	0.1864%	acts	68	0.1763%	spore
90	0.1843%	face	62	0.1607%	cells
89	0.1823%	input	59	0.1530%	section
86	0.1761%	rules	58	0.1504%	genus
85	0.1741%	communicative	55	0.1426%	cell
79	0.1618%	knowledge	49	0.1270%	disease

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Academic word list Hyland & Tse (2007)
4m words

Disciplinary specific frequencies & meanings

- Consist** means '*stay the same*' in social sciences and '*composed of*' in the sciences.
- Volume** means '*book*' in applied linguistics and '*quantity*' in biology.
- Abstract** means '*remove*' in engineering and '*theoretical*' in social sciences.

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Economics specific words Ha & Hyland (2017)

6.2 million word corpus from economics and finance, 837 words which had a specific meaning, even if they had a general meaning too.

asset
risk
interest
income

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Case studies, Exercise, empathy, writing, Design, Methodology, Narrative, Recount, Research reports, Essay, Explain, Problem, Question, Literature, Survey, Proposal, narrative, recount, critique

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Assignment variation Gimenez (2007)

	Level	General	Nursing	Medicine
Essay	1-3	✓	✗	✗
Reflective Essay	1	✗	✗	✓
Care plans	1-2	✗	✓	✗
Case studies	2-3	✗	✓	✗
Care critique	2-3	✗	✗	✓
Portfolios	2-3	✗	✓	✗
Article reviews	2-3	✗	✓	✗
Argumentative writing	3	✓	✓	✓
Dissertation	3	✓	✓	✓

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Comparative tasks

Mixed genre portfolios

Audience analysis

W. Best Practices in Teaching Writing

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mixed genre portfolios

- Students write a range of different genres, collect them together with a commentary
- Gives a more accurate view of students' writing
- Helps them to see the differences in genres
- Consciousness raising function

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An argumentative essay.

'Why did you organise the essay in this way? What stages organise it? Are you satisfied with this? Who is it for?'

A research-based library project. (All notes, drafts, etc.)

What difficulties did you encounter writing this? What did you learn from writing it?

A summary

Why did you select this summary? How is it organised? Why is it organised like this? What are the basic parts of all the summaries you have written?

A writer's choice.

What is this? When did you write it? Why did you choose it?

An overall reflection of the portfolio. (A letter to the teacher integrating the entries)

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Comparative tasks

- Same feature in L1 and L2 texts
- Textbook advice vs use in target texts.
- Same feature across two genres

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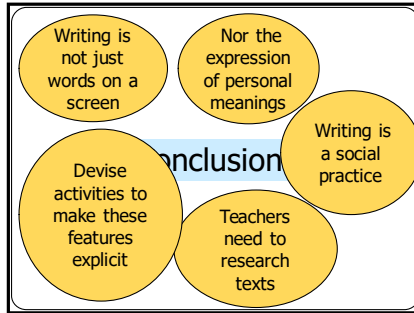
Audience analysis

- Study real readers by interviewing target audience
- Who am I writing for?

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Audience analysis			
A	B	C	D
What do I know About the topic?	What does my reader already know about it?	What does my reader not know?	What is my reader's attitude likely to be?
Customer bought some biscuits. There was a Cockroach in one	As for A	What the company will do about it, eg apologize, refund the price.	Customer is probably very angry, she will want compensation.

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