Robin Snead

"Transfer-Ability": Issues of Transfer and FYC
(WPA-CompPile Research Bibliographies, No. 18)

December 2011

The intent of this annotated bibliography is to offer researchers a broad overview of the discussion concerning transfer and first-year writing. Issues of knowledge and skills transfer are ubiquitous in discussions on the purposes, goals, and pedagogy for first-year composition courses (FYC) at the university level for two reasons. First, understanding transfer has implications for understanding how individuals learn to write in various contexts. Second, transfer is a significant force in the perception of first-year writing as an introduction to academic writing. As Wardle (2007) notes, "administrators, policy makers, parents, and students expect" that first-year composition (FYC) will bear primary responsibility for training students for writing "in the university and even beyond it.

Implicit in these expectations is the assumption that FYC should and will provide students with knowledge and skills that can transfer to writing tasks in other courses and contexts" (p.65). Research on transfer has implications not only for first-year writing pedagogy, including Writing-About-Writing (WAW) curricula (interested readers should refer to Doug Down's WPA-CompPile Research Bibliography #12 on this subject), but also for Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WID) programs.

Theoretical publications from educational and cognitive psychology are included here as they offer the foundation for discussions of transfer in composition. Research from psychology addresses various conceptualizations of transfer, such as "near" and "far" transfer (Perkins & Salomon, 1989), "lateral" and "vertical" transfer (Teich, 1987, discussing Gagné), or "low road" and "high road" transfer (Perkins and Salomon, 1988; 1989). Such conceptualizations describe the situations in which knowledge or skills learned in one context are likely to be applied in a different context.

Research from composition on knowledge and skills transfer in writing has largely focused on four questions. (1) What is the relationship between generalized and localized knowledge in writing? (2) Are there generalized writing skills that can be taught in freshman composition? (3) Can students perceive similarities and differences between writing situations that lead them to apply their learned skills appropriately? (4) Are there more effective ways of teaching for transfer? Underlying the questions concerning transfer are cognitive and social theories of writing, as well as associated theories of knowledge and expertise, which are widely discussed in the literature on transfer (Carter, 1990; Foersch, 1995; Smagorinsky & Smith, 1992). These researchers suggest that the dichotomy between localized and generalized knowledge and skills is overstated; while writing is domain and context specific, there are general skills that prove useful to novice and expert writers alike when faced with unfamiliar writing situations. However,

since the social turn in composition studies, writing specialists have questioned, some vehemently, the viability of general courses in composition. Socio-cultural theorists focused on genre, discourse communities, communities of practice, and activity systems call into question whether writing can be taught outside of domain- or disciplinary-specific contexts. Given the "situatedness" of writing, some researchers (e.g., Devitt, 2007) assert that the notion of general writing skills that might transfer across writing contexts is a fallacy.

Current scholarship on the issue of transfer and the viability of students transferring skills from first-year composition to the writing they complete in other academic disciplines yields few definitive conclusions. As several of the sources in this bibliography note, there is little empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis that transfer actually occurs. Difficulties in studying and measuring transfer may mask results. Further, there are complexities involved that may impede transfer, such as student perception (Bergmann and Zepernick, 2007), student disposition (Jarratt, et. al., 2009), and differing vocabulary among disciplines (McCarthy, 1987). Of course, as Perkins and Salomon (1988) maintain, transfer does not happen on its own. There does seem to be agreement that there are methods and strategies that encourage transfer and make it more likely. Strategies for improving the likelihood of transfer (such as the explicit abstraction of generalities and reflection leading to meta-awareness) must be incorporated into instruction. A few scholars (e.g., Beaufort, 2007; Foertsch, 1995; Frazier, 2010; Jarrett et. al., 2009) suggest ways to improve the likelihood of transfer, including a more explicit and focused effort to help students generalize from one writing situation to another, understanding how generalized strategies are realized in specific writing contexts, and articulation of connections between writing situations.

Finally, some scholars (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011; Rounsaville, Goldberg, & Bawarshi, 2008) have begun to study transfer by considering what knowledge and skills students bring with them *to* FYC from previous learning environments, with a particular focus on genre knowledge and metacognitive skill. Such studies contribute to a more complete picture of how students learn to write in specific contexts.

Excluded from this bibliography are studies that focus on transfer from the perspective of other disciplines, such as mathematics or science, although such studies may offer information pertinent to cross-disciplinary transfer.

Bergmann, Linda; Janet Zepernick

Disciplinarity and transfer: Students' perceptions of learning to write

WPA: Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators 31.1-2 (2007), 124-149

> Through a small focus-group study, Bergmann and Zepernick found that student perceptions of first-year composition are a primary barrier to transfer, in contrast with their beliefs about writing in disciplines other than English. While students characterized writing in other disciplines as expository, authoritative, objective, and even formulaic, writing in first-year composition was described as expressive, personal, and subjective. Students did not recognize composition (or English in general) as a discipline, and failed

to acknowledge the disciplinary expertise of English professors. Therefore, the authors conclude that it is not that students don't recognize situations in which skills learned in FYC can be transferred. Instead, it is that they "don't look for such situations" (139) because of the low value they place on their composition classes. Bergmann and Zepernick suggest that composition instructors should teach students "to learn to write" through an explicit focus on disciplinarity and the "cross disciplinary transfer . . . of rhetorical skills" (142).

KEYWORDS: skill-transfer, knowledge-transfer, FYC, longitudinal, data, interdisciplinary, WPA

Beaufort, Anne

College writing and beyond: A new framework for university writing instruction

Logan, UT: Utah State University Press (2007)

Beaufort's work opens with an overview of the often expressed concerns with FYC as a general writing skills course, framed by the question of why students who successfully complete FYC fail to produce acceptable writing in other contexts. Beaufort argues that such courses, in which writing produced devoid of authentic context (her position), teach students that the purpose of writing is to be graded rather than to communicate effectively with an audience, and that writing is a generic skill that applies wholesale to any situation, all of which leads to negative transfer. However, she asserts that freshman writing can work, if "taught with an eye toward transfer" and with a goal of teaching students to become "experts at learning writing skills in multiple social contexts." Beaufort offers a theoretical framework of five distinct yet "interactive" and "overlapping" domains of situated knowledge involved in acts of writing (discourse community knowledge, subject matter knowledge, genre knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, and writing process knowledge), and applies her framework in a longitudinal study of one student writer, Tim.

KEYWORDS: academy-workplace, longitudinal, case-study, data, FYC, history-course, engineering-course, skill-transfer, genre-study, development, discourse-community, framework

Carter, Michael

The idea of expertise: An exploration of cognitive and social dimensions of writing

College Composition and Communication 41.3 (1990), 265-286

Arguing that both general knowledge and local knowledge are important for writing development, Carter argues for a "pluralistic theory" of expertise that encompasses both in a continuum. General knowledge is important to help novices begin the path toward expertise, while local, domain-specific knowledge becomes increasingly important as the

writer develops. General knowledge remains useful for the expert when she is writing outside of her domain of expertise or is confronting an unusual situation. Carter argues that the goal of writing teachers is to assist students in gaining general knowledge about writing while moving them toward the domain-specific local knowledge of a discourse community. Just as writing development follows a continuum, so too should writing instruction, with the writer progressing from novice through advanced beginner and competent writer stages to expert. Though Carter does not discuss transfer at length, implicit in his pluralistic theory is that some general skills of writing do prove useful to both novice writers and expert writers working outside of their own domains.

KEYWORDS: expertise, novice-expert, contextualism, community, development, skill-transfer, Linda Flower, implicit, automaticity, sequence, expertise

Devitt, Amy

Transferability and genres

In Keller, Christopher J.; Christian R. Weisser (Eds.), *The Locations of composition*; Albany, NY: State University of New York Press (2007), 215-228

Given that "writing is a highly situated act," Devitt argues that the notion that writing skills can transfer across writing situations is fallacy. She claims that any writing skill that is so general that it could transfer across writing situations is a "virtually meaningless" skill. Although genres reflect similarities in writing situations, no two writing situations are identical, and even genres must be adapted to the particular expectations of each writing situation. Writers equipped with solid control over a set of genres (a "genre repertoire") are able to draw from those genres when confronting a new writing situation, which gives the writer a "place to start." Therefore, Devitt believes that first-year writing instructors can best serve students by helping them learn those genres that will be most useful for the writing situations they are likely to face in the future, and by teaching students genre awareness that will help them successfully adapt to unfamiliar writing situations they will encounter.

KEYWORDS: FYC, pedagogy, skill-transfer, gen-ed, genre, academic, situational, repertoire, genre-awareness

Downs, Doug; Elizabeth Wardle

Teaching about writing, righting misconceptions: (Re)visioning 'First-year Writing' as 'Introduction to Writing Studies'

College Composition and Communication 58.4 (2007), 552-584

While much of this article is an explication and defense of the authors' proposed "writing about writing" pedagogy, there are explicit connections to transfer explored. Downs and Wardle address two prevalent misconceptions about FYC: that FYC can teach students

"academic writing" (a concept that defies singular definition), and that writing skills learned in FYC transfer to other writing contexts. They contend there is "little empirical verification" of such transfer, and, in fact, some evidence to suggest that such transfer does not occur. To address these two misconceptions, the authors suggest a transformation of FYC into "Introduction to Writing Studies," a course that "could teach about the ways writing works in the world" and about writing as a mediating tool. Based on the results of a pilot study with a research sample of eighty-four students in two universities, the authors conclude that this curriculum results in students' "increased self awareness about writing," increased confidence and improved reading ability, and increased understanding of writing (particularly research) as a conversation among writers. While not without its challenges and its critics (which are acknowledged and addressed), this curriculum, the authors assert, has the potential to increase transfer through reflective activities, a focus on abstracting generalities about writing, and increased context awareness, each of which helps students to understand how rhetorical strategies are realized in particular contexts for writing.

KEYWORDS: FYC, pedagogy, WAW, writing-studies, objective, metacognition, activity-theory, genre-theory, curriculum, student-opinion, data, case-study, self-evaluation, research-awareness, student-confidence, gain, needs-analysis, teacher-training, academic, AP English, content-analysis, contextual, basic-skills, honors, recursive, rhetorical, skill-transfer, writing-studies, WAC, WID, Charles Bazerman, Larry Beason, Carol Berkenkotter, John Dawkins, Linda Flower, James Paul Gee, Christina Haas, John R. Hayes, Thomas N. Huckin, George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Sondra Perl, John Swales, misunderstanding

Foertsch, Julie

Where cognitive psychology applies: How theories about memory and transfer can influence composition pedagogy

Written Communication 12.3 (1995), 360-383

Foertsch argues for a synthesis of social and cognitive approaches to composition to aid in transfer, noting that the dichotomy between generalized and localized knowledge is misleading. Drawing on memory studies from cognitive psychology that discuss semiotic (generalized) and episodic (specific) memory, Foertsch asserts that general and local knowledge skills should be taught together. While it is possible for learners to "abstract decontexualized general principles" from local examples, many students do not have sufficient local experience to draw from; therefore teachers must prompt students to make the generalizations, which are important to transfer. The author advocates for classes that involve comparative analyses that explore how generalized rhetorical strategies are realized in specific contexts, and to ferret out differences in the discourse conventions of various disciplines.

KEYWORDS: social, cognitive, research-method, pedagogy, contextual, model, skill-transfer, memory, schema, pedagogy, practice-research, pedagogy, cognitive, psychological

Frazier, Dan

First steps beyond first year: Coaching transfer after FYC

WPA: Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators 33.3 (2010), 34-57

Through an exploratory study, Frazier investigates the potential of "alternative teaching spaces" as a bridge between the writing completed in traditional FYC courses and discipline-specific expectations for writing. Employing a combined methodology of survey, one-on-one meetings, and focus group discussions, Frazier follows eight students' transition from FYC to courses in their majors that require writing during the first semester of their sophomore year. As he coaches these students in the concepts of genre analysis, discourse communities, and meta-cognitive reflection, Frazier concludes that work with transfer strategies and cross-disciplinary discussions of writing are best located in a "third space" environment outside of either FYC or WAC/WID courses.

KEYWORDS: FYC, knowledge-transfer, WAC, genre-study, survey, interview, focus-group, data, student-opinion, teacher-opinion, WAC, WID, 'third-space, metacognition

Jarratt, Susan C.; Katherine Mack; Alexandra Sartor; Shevaun E. Watson

Pedagogical memory: Writing, mapping, and translating

WPA: Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators 33-1-2 (2009), 46-73

Jarratt, et al. propose the concept of "pedagogical memory" as "an alternative framework" to the notion of transfer for "making sense of students' experiences with college writing." Based on a series of interviews conducted with upper-level undergraduates in two different years, the authors suggest that whether students connect learning in lower-division writing courses to later college writing is largely a matter of their ability to create narratives describing their experiences of learning to write. For Jarratt, et al., this ability is evidenced not only through the narratives themselves but also the interviewees' fluency in talking about writing and their "emotional dispositions" toward writing and writing classes. The authors note that the interview process itself allowed some students who were initially unable to create narratives to make meaningful connections in their writing experiences, which suggests that requiring students to focus and reflect on their experiences is beneficial. Two suggestions are offered for improving students' abilities to create pedagogical memories (and therefore to enhance transfer): instructors should spend more time helping students to "translate discourses about writing" in different contexts, and instructors should help students develop their pedagogical memories and articulate connections.

KEYWORDS: WPA, interview, data, skill-transfer, knowledge-transfer, student-reflection, WID, FYC, memory, pedagogy

McCarthy, Lucille

A stranger in strange lands: A college student writing across the curriculum

Research in the Teaching of English 21.3 (1987), 233-265

McCarthy reports on her naturalistic case study in which she analyzed writing assignments and maintained interview contact with "Dave" through three courses (Composition, Introduction to Poetry, and Cell Biology) in his freshman and sophomore years. While McCarthy saw similarities in writing assignments and opportunities for the transfer of knowledge learned in Composition to writing in the other courses, Dave did not. McCarthy determined that Dave's writing assignments were all "informational writing for the teacher-as-examiner" (243) with each assignment requiring either summary or analysis (244). Similar purposes for writing were stated by each of the instructors for the assignments (244). Despite these similarities, Dave believed that each class offered an entirely new and uniquely different writing situation, completely unlike anything he'd previously encountered. While the writing situations themselves were similar, what was different in each course was the discipline-specific conventions, and, of course, the content. Based on McCarthy's analysis, the issues with Dave's failure to transfer skills seem not so much to be an inability to utilize previously gained knowledge, but rather an inability to see beyond the content differences to discern similarities in the writing tasks themselves. As such, rather than approaching each writing assignment with a "toolkit" of skills and processes learned in Composition, Dave felt the need to, as Bartholomae states, "invent the university" with each new assignment. McCarthy concluded that differences in the vocabulary for discussing writing and the different response styles of Dave's instructors contributed to his conception of each classroom as a "foreign land" (252).

KEYWORDS: WAC, discipline, genre, competence, skill-transfer, case-study, longitudinal, college-span, think-aloud, protocol-analysis, interview, ethnographic

Nelms, Gerald; Rhonda Leathers Dively

Perceived roadblocks to transferring knowledge from first-year composition to writing-intensive major courses: A pilot study

WPA: Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators 31:1-2 (2007), 214-240

Nelms and Dively report on a study utilizing survey and focus group methodology to explore far transfer (as defined by Perkins and Salomon) from FYC to writing intensive (WI) courses at an institution with a two-course FYC sequence taught by GTAs with "considerable freedom" of course design. Five themes emerged, several acting as "roadblocks" to transfer. Student desire to "compartmentalize" learning led to an inability

to make connections across contexts. While some skills, including an understanding of the connection between thesis and support, an ability to analyze, and familiarity with the principles of citation, did transfer into WI courses, other skills identified as "commonly addressed" in FYC did not. Further, WI instructors lamented the lack of time they had to address context-based writing in their courses, and although they recognized the essential nature of invention, peer response, and metacognition for writing success, they had not incorporated these strategies into their class meetings. Nelms and Dively note the significance of student dispositions, including lack of motivation, indifference about writing, and entitlement that are shown to limit transfer. Finally, they contend that the disparate vocabulary utilized in FYC and the content courses also hindered transfer; though instructors were often discussing the same concept, the different vocabulary prevented students (and instructors) from seeing connections. The authors recommend increased communication between FYC and WI instructors to bridge vocabulary differences, as well as teaching for transfer through contextualization, reflection, active learning, and the use of the "hugging" and "bridging" concepts of Perkins and Salomon.

KEYWORDS: skill-transfer, knowledge-transfer, FYC, longitudinal, focus-group, data, interdisciplinary, WPA, WAC, advanced, intensive, pilot study

Perkins, David N.; Gavriel Salomon

Are cognitive skills context bound?

Educational Researcher 18.1 (1989), 16-25

Perkins and Salomon open with an historical overview of the debate over general versus contextualized knowledge before addressing the question of the title with a "yes and no." Rather than supporting either side of the dichotomy, the authors assert that this is a false dichotomy masking important complexities, and they argue for a synthesis of general and contextual knowledge and skills. Though they agree that empirical evidence suggests transfer is "wishful thinking," they contend that is due more to a lack of guidance in the decontextualization of knowledge that is necessary for high road transfer. They point out that individuals facing atypical or unfamiliar situations activate general knowledge, and that when "cued, primed and guided" through teaching, transfer can occur. Likening general skills to "hands," Perkins and Salomon explain that general skills are "gripping devices for retrieving and wielding domain-specific knowledge." As such, general and context-specific knowledge should be "intermingl[ed]" in instruction.

KEYWORDS: skill-transfer, review-of-research, general knowledge, contextualized, false dichotomy, activation, cuing, priming, guided

Perkins, David N.; Gavriel Salomon

Teaching for transfer

Educational Leadership 46.1 (1988), 22-32

> Perkins and Salomon open with an assertion that is borne out in the research on transfer—"transfer does not take care of itself." Instead, educators must understand the mechanisms of transfer and teach to encourage it. The authors distinguish low-road transfer (applying skills and knowledge to situations that are very similar to the context in which the material was learned) from high-road transfer, which requires the "deliberate mindful abstraction" of skills or knowledge learned in one context in order to use those skills or knowledge in another, very different context. Reflection is key for high-road transfer, as individuals must develop generalizations through forward reaching thought (actively considering how knowledge might be applied in future contexts) or through backward reaching thought (searching previous experiences for knowledge that would apply to solving a current problem). Perkins and Salomon suggest that high-road transfer often fails to occur because conventional instruction offers little help to students in decontextualizing knowledge and in making connections across domains, and they offer the strategies of "hugging" and "bridging" as ways to teach with transfer in mind.

> KEYWORDS: skill-transfer, knowledge-transfer, pedagogy, cognitive, low-road, high-road, contextual, reflection, generalization, decontextualization, teacher-strategy

Reiff, Mary Jo; Anis Bawarshi

Tracing discursive resources: How students use prior genre knowledge to negotiate new writing contexts in first-year composition

Written Communication 28.3 (2011), 312-337

> Reiff and Bawarshi point out that while most studies of transfer focus on what students can learn in FYC and apply to other contexts, another fruitful direction for research is to focus on "incomes," or those skills students have prior to FYC. Reporting on a cross-institutional research study focused on genre knowledge of incoming FYC students, the authors conclude that students they identify as "boundary crossers" are more likely to experience high-road transfer (as defined by Perkins and Salomon) than those who are "boundary guarders." Boundary crossers are characterized as students with less confidence in their prior genre knowledge, who talk about their writing in terms of strategies rather than genres, and who engage in more "not" genre talk (explaining what genres an example of writing is "not"). Conversely, boundary guarders are those students who are more confident in their prior genre knowledge, who focus more on applying known genres to a new writing situation rather than applying strategies, and who demonstrate less "not" talk. High-road transfer requires the abstracting and repurposing of concepts, and the authors suggest that boundary crossers are likely more open to "the

need for reinventing and reimagining strategies" (326). Further research is needed to discover if boundary crossers are more successful in FYC and beyond.

KEYWORDS: prior-knowledge, genre, FYC, student-strategy, learning-style, composing, data, resources, ethnographic, data, student-attitude, 'boundary-crosser', 'boundary-guarder', repurposing, abstraction

Rounsaville, Angela; Rachel Goldberg; Anis Bawarshi

From Incomes to outcomes: FYW students' prior genre knowledge, meta-cognition, and the question of transfer

WPA: Writing Program Administration 32.1 (2008), 97-112

While many FYC-based studies of transfer focus on whether students are able to transfer knowledge and skills from FYC into other course, this research focuses on what students bring to FYC, specifically the genre knowledge and meta-cognitive abilities of students prior to their composition courses. This article reports on two phases of a three-part study, including data from a WebQ survey, writing sample analysis, and interviews. Findings suggest that although entering students have experience with a wide range of genres associated with the domains of school, work, and "outside of school," they do not activate this prior knowledge when presented with a college writing assignment. Authors conclude that students need more coaching to develop the meta-cognitive skill that would enable them to make appropriate connections between known and new writing situations. Further, the authors identify the development of this meta-cognition as a significant goal for FYW.

KEYWORDS: WPA, FYC, metacognition, survey, genre-awareness, interview, student-opinion, data, prior-knowledge, background, skill-transfer

Russell, David R.

Activity theory and its implications for writing instruction

In Petraglia, Joseph (Ed.), *Reconceiving writing, rethinking writing instruction*; Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum (1995), 51-78

While not explicitly addressing the problem of transfer, Russell employs activity theory to elucidate the issues with FYC as a course in general writing skills instruction (or GWSI), issues that Kitzhaber (1960) identified as informing the abolitionist debate in composition. Russell points out that both the object and tools of the FYC activity system are ambiguous, because "those involved in it are teaching and learning the use of a tool [writing] for no particular activity system, and the tool can be used for any number of object[ive]s [in myriad activity systems] and transformed into any number of forms [genres]." Using an analogy of a ball, Russell asserts that there are no writing skills generalizable to all activity systems (just as there are no ball-handling skills generalizable

to all games played with balls), and therefore the stated goal of FYC, to introduce students to the skills of academic writing or public writing, is impossible. Learning to write must take place within specific activity systems—specific discourse communities. To address the ambiguities in FYC, Russell suggests that universities shift to the Writing Across the Curriculum model, in which writing instruction occurs within the activity system of a particular discipline, and to offer a course that focuses on writing itself, with the objective of "teach[ing] students what has been learned about writing in those activity systems that make the role of writing in society the object of their study."

KEYWORDS: activity-theory, pedagogy, implication, FYC, curriculum, needs-analysis, disciplinary, academic, transfer, WAW, universal

Saloman, Gavriel; David N. Perkins

Rocky roads to transfer: Rethinking mechanisms of a neglected phenomenon

Educational Psychologist 24.2 (1989), 113-142

In this article, Saloman and Perkins explain the "how" of transfer, offering a discussion of the mechanisms of the phenomenon. Drawing on three examples, the authors contrast low-road transfer and high-road transfer. Low-road transfer occurs when extensive, varied practice leads to the automatization of a learned element. It is unintentional and "driven by reinforcement." In contrast, high-road transfer is characterized as "mindful, deliberate processes" that lead to generalizations or abstractions applicable across contexts. It is non-automatic and conscious, and requires "explicit instruction aimed at provoking" such abstractions. While low-road transfer begins in the learning context (through practice), high-road transfer begins in the transfer context. Salomon and Perkins continue by commenting on reasons that expected transfer may not occur, including a poor level of mastery of the concept or material, insufficient practice (for low-road transfer) or lack of instruction required to provoke mindful abstraction (for high-road transfer). Passive or inert knowledge is identified as an additional factor hindering transfer. The authors conclude by stressing that "the conditions for high-road transfer can be fairly straightforwardly engineered" in the classroom. If instructors want transfer, they must teach for it.

KEYWORDS: skill-transfer, knowledge-transfer, pedagogy, psychological, mechanism, neglect

Smagorinsky, Peter; Michael W. Smith

The nature of knowledge in composition and literary understanding: The question of specificity

Review of Educational Research 62.3 (1992), 279-305

Smagorinsky and Smith discuss three positions that emerge from the literature on knowledge and knowledge specificity in composition and in reading. For their purposes,

they define knowledge as including content knowledge (both factual and experiential knowledge), knowledge of form, and conditional knowledge (knowledge of when particular content or various forms apply in a given situation.) The first position receiving focus is the argument for general knowledge, which the authors suggest includes the teaching of heuristics and techniques such as brainstorming and freewriting. Proponents of this position, Smagorinsky and Smith suggest, believe in offering students forms and procedures for writing that can apply across contexts. A second position is that of task-specific knowledge, which holds that each writing task requires different types of knowledge. Instructors who hold this position, the authors note, offer students composing procedures specific to various tasks (i.e. writing a business memo). The third position is the argument for community-specific knowledge, which asserts that even task-specific knowledge is not enough; different communities employ similar structures (such as argument) in different ways. Smagorinksy and Smith agree with those who argue that the distinctions (or "trichotomies") between the positions are never absolute, and they support the assertion of Perkins and Salomon that "general cognitive skills . . . always function in contextualized ways" (298). They do believe, however, that it is important for curriculum planners to give thought to these positions, and they claim that each position is most effectively placed at a particular level of education.

KEYWORDS: composition-studies, literary-studies, skill-transfer, knowledge specificity, task-specific, community, theory, review-of-research

Smit, David William

The end of composition studies

Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press (2004)

As the pun of his title suggests, David Smit's *The End of Composition Studies* focuses both on the goal of composition courses, as well as on his proposal that we end composition courses as they are currently conceived—as courses in "general" writing skill that is expected to transfer to any writing situation. Smit devotes one chapter specifically to the concept of transfer, noting the "unpredictable" nature of transfer, and arguing that transfer depends on a writer's "background and experience," neither of which can be controlled by the instructor. He further maintains that transfer, when it does occur, results from a writer's ability to perceive similarities between contexts or writing situations. That given, Smit contends that teachers can best increase the chances of transfer by helping students recognize similarities between contexts. Smit also argues for writing instruction that immerses novice writers in domain and context-specific writing situations (taught by practitioners, not general "writing instructors"), as well as instruction that "makes writing in different courses more related and systematic," drawing explicit attention to not only the differences, but also the similarities in writing in different contexts. He proposes a three-course sequence beginning with an "Introduction to Writing as Social Practice," followed by two courses that engage writers in writing within a discourse community.

KEYWORDS: transfer, curriculum, English-profession, pedagogy, pedagogy, future, idiolect, skill-transfer, WAC, WID, writing-studies

Teich, Nathaniel

Transfer of writing skills: Implications of the theory of lateral and vertical transfer

Written Communication 04.2 (1987), 193-208

Teich discusses R. M. Gagné's theory of lateral and vertical transfer as it applies to writing (Gagné, *The Conditions of Learning*, New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1965). Teich notes that Gagné did not apply his own work to writing, remaining instead in the domain of language learning, and his theories have since been misapplied by those who relegate all writing skills to the level of lateral transfer. According to Teich, writing involves two domains of knowledge—content knowledge and knowledge of "rhetorical and compositional skills." While the mechanical skills of writing may involve lateral transfer (or learning transferred to a new situation of approximately the same complexity), situational knowledge (both content knowledge and rhetorical knowledge appropriate to a specific context) is a matter of vertical transfer (learning transferred to a more complex situation). Situational knowledge is complex because it involves an intersection of the writer's content knowledge and purpose, the subject matter, and the writer's understanding of the rhetorical context. Because a writer's familiarity with content and subject matter is important, Teich advocates a "balanced" writing program involving a combination of teacher-designed writing assignments and student-centered "reflexive, personally meaningful writing." Finally, Teich asserts that our knowledge of vertical transfer supports situated writing assignments, those assignments that are context-based and involve real audiences and specific purposes. However, for the purpose of teaching "specific knowledge and skills," it is essential that we include "personally meaningful writing assignments" in the curriculum.

KEYWORDS: skill-transfer, Gagne, proficiency, cognitive, lateral, vertical, implication, genre, WAW, personal, pedagogy

Wardle, Elizabeth

"Mutt genres" and the goal of FYC: Can we help students write the genres of the university?

College Composition and Communication 60:4 (2009), 765-789

In this article, Wardle argues for a fundamental change in the goal of first-year-composition courses, giving up "teaching to write" and replacing it with teaching about writing. As research studies indicate, the assumption that first-year-composition courses can effectively introduce students to the various genres of the university, which will transfer to other courses, is flawed. Generic conventions cannot be successfully learned and practiced outside of the rhetorical context of specific discourse communities. Attempting to teach the "institutional features" of a genre out of context ignores the

exigency, the purpose, and the evolutionary nature of the genre, resulting in "mutt genres" which bear little resemblance to the actual disciplinary genre, therefore hindering transfer. Wardle advocates instead for a course that would teach students about language, discourse, and general principles of writing, the disciplinary knowledge of composition.

KEYWORDS: FYC, pedagogy, WAW, academic, genre, skill-transfer, contextual, discourse-community, 'mutt genre', knowledge-transfer, meta-awareness

Wardle, Elizabeth

Understanding "transfer" from FYC: Preliminary results of a longitudinal study

WPA: Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators 31.1-2 (2007), 65-85

Wardle approaches transfer through a study activity systems, arguing that individual or task-based studies are too narrowly focused. Further, she suggests that transfer may not be obvious because skills may be "applied differently" in different contexts. Researchers, she argues, need to think in terms of the transformation of skills rather than the transfer of skills from context to context. Offering preliminary results of a longitudinal study of seven students, Wardle reports that students rarely generalized skills learned in FYC to their other courses. Low teacher expectations and the lack of challenging writing assignments led students to believe that they did not need their FYC skills to be successful in their other courses. When faced with challenging writing assignments, students were reticent to put forth the effort and avoided the challenge (by withdrawing from the course or by accepting a lower grade). Wardle argues that the activity system of the school does not encourage generalization through engaging, challenging assignments, context-specific support, and opportunities for teacher feedback. While little generalization was reported, meta-awareness about writing and rhetorical strategies proved the most beneficial and useful knowledge gained in FYC; therefore Wardle concludes that this may be "the most important ability our courses can cultivate" (82).

KEYWORDS: skill-transfer, knowledge-transfer, FYC, longitudinal, data, WPA, case-study, student-opinion, WAW, 'generalization', interview, textual feature, researching, scholarly-article, reading, disciplinary, academic, contextual, preliminary

Winterowd, Ross

Transferable and local writing skills

JAC: Journal of Advanced Composition 01.1 (1980), 1-3

Winterowd suggests that all writing skills fall into one of two categories: local skills and transferable skills. Local skills are defined as those skills that are domain-specific, such as knowledge of the genres of a particular field. Transferable skills, according to Winterowd, are the "basics" of writing, including such issues as control of diction. Following Stephen Krashen's learning-acquisition theory, Winterowd asserts that the

transferable skills, general skills that are important for competent writing across domains, must be acquired through modeling, practice, and feedback, while local skills can be taught. Two "scenes" for writing instruction are suggested: a writing workshop (for acquisition) and a writing laboratory (for teaching local skills as well as editing).

KEYWORDS: academic, style, strategy, techcom, mode, community, syntax, flow, register, audience, organizational, MX, development, implicit, technique, imitation, advanced , skill-transfer, WAC, editing, genre, process