

JOURNAL OF BASIC WRITING

FALL 1986

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 2

What We Will Be
Richard Lloyd-Jones

Literacy Education and the Basic Writer:
A Survey of College Composition Courses
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Orthographical Theory and Practice, or
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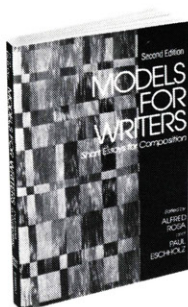
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Krashen's Second-Language Acquisition Theory
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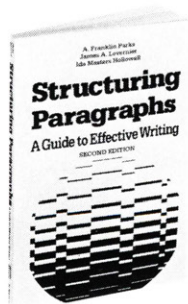
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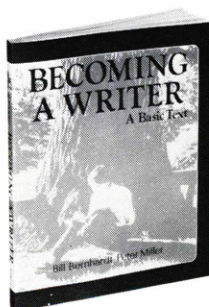
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CALL FOR ARTICLES

We welcome manuscripts of 10-20 pages on topics related to basic writing, broadly interpreted. Authors need not limit themselves to topics previously announced because JBW issues will no longer be devoted to single topics.

Manuscripts will be refereed anonymously. We require four copies of a manuscript. To assure impartial review, give author information and a biographical note for publication on the cover page only. One copy of each manuscript not accepted for publication will be returned to the author, if we receive sufficient stamps (no meter strips) clipped to a self-addressed envelope. We require the new MLA style (*MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 1984). For further guidance, send a stamped letter-size, self-addressed envelope for our one-page style sheet.

All manuscripts must focus clearly on BW and must add substantively to the existing literature. We seek manuscripts that are original, stimulating, well-grounded in theory, and clearly related to practice. Work that reiterates what is known or work previously published will not be considered.

We invite authors to write about matters such as the social, psychological, and cultural implications of literacy; rhetoric; discourse theory; cognitive theory; grammar; linguistics, including text analysis, error descriptions, and cohesion studies; English as a second language; and assessment and evaluation. We publish observational studies as well as theoretical discussions on relationships between basic writing and reading, or the study of literature, or speech, or listening; cross-disciplinary insights for basic writing from psychology, sociology, anthropology, journalism, biology, or art; the uses and misuses of technology for basic writing; and the like.

The term "basic writer" is used with wide diversity today, sometimes referring to a student from a highly oral tradition with little experience in writing academic discourse, and sometimes referring to a student whose academic writing is fluent but otherwise deficient. To help readers, therefore, authors should describe clearly the student population which they are discussing.

We particularly encourage a *variety* of manuscripts: speculative discussions which venture fresh interpretations; essays which draw heavily on student writing as supportive evidence for new observations; research reports, written in nontechnical language, which offer observations previously unknown or unsubstantiated; collaborative writings which provocatively debate more than one side of a central controversy; and teaching logs which trace the development of original insights.

Starting with the 1986 issues, a "Mina P. Shaughnessy Writing Award" will be given to the author of the best JBW article every four issues (two years). The prize is \$500.00, courtesy of an anonymous donor. The winner, to be selected by a jury of three scholars/teachers not on our editorial board, will be announced in our pages and elsewhere.

EDITOR'S COLUMN

The essays in this *JBW* issue, the second I have had the privilege of editing, competed with approximately forty others that arrived in our mails while space remained in these pages. This statistic tells me that teachers and scholars, experienced and new alike, continue to be inspired by the hopes of young men and women who lack the skills—though not the motivation or intelligence—to thrive in academic settings.

This statistic also helps justify the confidence in *JBW* implied by the recent grant awarded us by the Exxon Educational Foundation. We asked for the funds after our reorganization in 1985 when we realized that *JBW* was not reaching nearly the number of readers it could and should. Exxon agreed with our assessment and gave us a grant earmarked for one purpose: to increase our readership and thereby stimulate additional scholarship in the field of basic writing. Here are some excerpts from our letter of application.

More than ever, the needs of underprepared students demand the energetic attention of higher education. The demand of other priorities—critical thinking, computer technology, writing across the curriculum, and the like—threaten to sweep basic writers under the rug We seek to bring our training in close reading of texts and in critical analysis to the teaching of underprepared students We need therefore to get the word out. We want to reach the thousands of faculty teaching basic writing and ignite their enthusiasm for scholarship in the field.

To fulfill the mandate of the Exxon grant, we have organized a one-time, direct-mail campaign to tell faculty and administrators across the United States about *JBW*. The Scovill Group, experts in professional-development projects in the humanities, has served as consultant. The mailing will go out in late summer 1986. Indeed, many of our present readers who are on the mailing lists we have gathered will receive our material. The expense of “merging and purging” lists is enormous, so we wish to apologize officially to our valued readers if they get our introductory mailing—we hope the material can be passed along to colleagues who might want to subscribe.

Now to matter related to this issue. First, we welcome to the *JBW* Editorial Board nine additional scholar/teachers. Their names appear on our masthead along with our original group. These new members have been participating in our review process for about one year, starting soon after our previous issue was full. The services of all members of our Editorial Board are invaluable. *JBW* also called on a small group of external readers for specialized expertise. Alice M. Roy and Irwin Weiser, now part of the new group on our Editorial Board, were external reviewers from January 1985 through July 1985. Others were: Joanne Sher Grumet of The College of Staten Island and Joseph Trimmer of Ball State University. We thank them most gratefully.

Our collection of essays in this issue begins with the inaugural address of Richard Lloyd-Jones, University of Iowa, when he was installed in 1985 as President of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). When I heard his talk to an audience of hundreds of elementary, secondary, and college teachers and administrators, I knew immediately that his message was universal. *JBW* is honored to be the journal of record for Lloyd-Jones' historic speech.

Next we present a trio of essays about instruction in basic writing. Christopher Gould and John Heyda draw on their national survey of instructional emphases in basic writing to ask stimulating questions about the social agenda underlying our curricula. Katherine J. Ronald and Hephzibah C. Roskelly view listening as an act of composing and describe an innovative program for basic writers that fosters conscious listening and attentive writing. Ann B. Dobie, after reminding us that spelling can influence students' job opportunities, offers helpful techniques for teaching spelling with minimal intrusion on the central activities of our basic writing classroom.

Our second trio of essays concerns ESL students in basic writing classrooms. Warren Herendeen, a skilled storyteller as well as an expert in linguistics, literature, speech, and composition, narrates tales of tricksters and dilemmas that capture ESL students. Elizabeth Taylor Tricomi draws on Krasden's theory of second-language acquisition to offer thought-provoking insights for first-language writing teachers who seek to improve their students' control of Edited American English. Ann M. Johns demonstrates an inventive use of schema theory to help ESL students revise more successfully by learning to develop categories of reader expectations.

We conclude this collection by focusing on word processing, a new tool for teaching composition. Randall G. Nichols gives us a rich array of examples to explain his observations and conclusions about the effects of instruction in word processing on the composing processes of basic writers.

Lynn Quitman Troyka

Richard Lloyd-Jones

WHAT WE *WILL* BE

Editor's Note: *This is the inaugural address of Richard Lloyd-Jones, University of Iowa, when he assumed the presidency of the National Council of Teachers of English in November 1985. Professor Lloyd-Jones spoke to a huge audience of elementary, secondary, and college teachers and administrators. His remarks, directed to that diverse audience, do not mention basic writings specifically, but the issues raised are universals that inform English studies at all levels. We are honored that Professor Lloyd-Jones accepted our invitation to put his speech on record in the pages of the Journal of Basic Writing.*

"What We Will Be" is deliberately ambiguous. In a limited way it calls for predictions of the immediate future. Trustworthy and sensible administration requires a careful analysis of what has to be done soon. Prudence demands lesson plans for the week. At least some of our time must be devoted to what we will do on Monday morning.

"What We *WILL* Be," however, is another matter. An act of will requires a conscious decision to *BE* something in particular: it is not an accident of trends or an object of survival. Not passive to events but active in valuing what is essentially human, we chart a course to define ourselves.

As teachers of English or Language Arts we are defined by our preoccupation with language, most particularly the language of this nation. If you believe, as I do, that language is what makes us human, you probably believe that sharing a language defines a community. For the most part our memories depend on language, our eyes focus on what our vocabulary isolates, and our world is structured according to the rules of our syntax. So, too, we break through the lonely barriers of bodily sensation to share our lives by means of language. We know we *CAN* know our companions when "we talk the same language." When we become teachers of our language, we claim a place in the absolute middle of things, but many of us still feel isolated, unappreciated.

Richard Lloyd-Jones, director of the School of Letters, University of Iowa, was for nine years chair of its Department of English. He is co-designer of Primary Trait Scoring of essays and has written on testing, discourse theory, and educational policy. He was 1977 chair of CCCC and is 1986 president of NCTE.

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Is it that we define our tasks, as teachers often have, merely as filling the empty jug of the human head with information? The undraped form of an idea without some tangible substance perhaps suits abstract thinkers, but most of us come to abstractions only after a long apprenticeship among grubby details. How often have we put in some margin a request for evidence, for facts, for something concrete we could hit our heads against?

To be sure, we spend much of our time offering knowledge, the solid materials of experience. We have to supply or require information because no one can train an empty mind. What is the first graders' trip to the fire station but an effort to research the facts? Why do we tell the children to ask their grandparents—or someone's grandparents—what it was like to be a child so long ago? Why do we send people to the library? No one can expect to write or speak well without information. Because information is acquired by listening and reading, we can exhibit our devotion to language by testing our students on how much knowledge they acquire.

But however great the need for knowledge may be, still we are gorged on inert fact, we are buried under piles of data yet uninterpreted. Games of trivia while away the time on our way to the grave, but they don't necessarily get at the heart of the matter we claim to reveal in language. Facts are necessary, but not sufficient.

Do we instead assert that we teach people to think, that language is the tool of logic, and that writing and speaking are exercises in reasoning? We can affirm more formulas for sound discourse than our oversized classes have fingers. We will make intellectual order for the young people who never clean up their rooms. Most of us probably can, at least somewhat, but are we really ready to BE logicians?

Perhaps we should talk about how people are defined by language. I find myself for a moment sympathizing with the censors of literature, the bowdlerizers. At least, they believe that words matter. So, too, I have an odd sympathy for those who want to guarantee English legal status as a national treasure. They too believe that language and society are inextricably mixed even though they may confuse cause and effect. Hamlet was right to tell Gertrude to assume a virtue even if she had it not, for the symbolic acts and sounds of virtue would make her virtuous by experience. The enactment of laws, a verbal move, alters behavior, and changed behavior creates new language and beliefs. The makers of language govern society.

Writing and speaking are properly identified as rhetoric, words addressed to an evident audience. In speaking we can hardly avoid the audience, although we often misassess it, but in writing we frequently address some fragment of our private selves—or worse, several fragments, erratically, without much awareness. We leave our readers to fend for themselves.

Sometimes ignoring the reader merely means that we are inexperienced. A child writing for an executive is writing blind because a child

rarely has a chance to know what it means to be an executive. Imagining that form of otherness is quite impossible. Fortunately, executives are occasionally able to remember being children and are willing to interpret, but the skill of the reader is no excuse for the writer's not worrying about an audience. How are we as teachers of language to express the implied concern for others represented in discussions about audience? How are we to make sure that the concern is more than crass self-interest? How do we make clear that an act in language requires both a speaker and a listener, a writer and a reader?

Take the matter of punctuation or spelling or any of the myriad customs contributing to a standard manuscript. In a broad sense the customs of script represent our agreements on how to make sounds visible, and the graphic system (like the other systems of language) is redundant. A paper full of errors can still be understood, and may reflect powerful thought, but unexpected forms distract readers and suggest a kind of indifference to their convenience. Errors are discourteous.

The fuss we often make about mechanics is social in a different sense. We sometimes insist on conformity for its own sake. Probably children learn polite forms of social behavior and discourse without quite knowing why, except that it gives joy to parents and teachers. But some compulsive formalists manage to remove all joy and purpose from polite acts. In the end we are concerned that humans respect one another, and scribal conformity is one sign of respect, albeit a modest one.

We accept the momentary confusion caused by oddity if the whole expression still implies social respect. Even more, we become excited when we recognize the systematic differences of aliens of any sort, because we know their variations are grounded in their own experience and identity, and their willingness to address us offers hope that strangers can meet. We know ourselves better when we discover others. How do we teachers of English shed our image as morbid guardians of surface correctness without seeming to suggest that any rudeness is quite acceptable? How do we rouse delight in variations without sponsoring anarchy? How do we help students perceive the difference between variations that represent insulting indifference and those that represent the voice of the stranger?

Take the particular issue of dialect. Allow that complaining about dialect is like complaining about the tides. Both exist, no doubt, as laws of the physical or social worlds, but some members of the public, at least, think it is our patriotic duty to minimize dialects. They believe that one nation under God should talk one way. We might argue that as a nation we have not yet melted into a pond of identical droplets, that we are a mosaic of peoples fashioned into a design of a great nation. Others might even agree with me and still claim that dialects emphasize allegiance to the subgroup at the expense of loyalty to the nation.

Whatever image fits your political tastes, we still have dialect groups, and we have the underlying communities of spirit delineated by the use of the dialects. In a huge population probably most of us need to iden-

tify with some group whose scope we can comprehend. Dialect tells us who our friends are. As officers of public education (even if we teach in private schools), how do we balance private need against public expectation? As practical teachers how do we show our personal sympathy and support for students who cling to their dialect community for strength while we encourage them to explore a new and sometimes hostile world?

Sometimes one must deal with strangers. We have to decide how idiosyncratic we dare be in expressing our identity and allegiances. We sometimes have to say to our students, "Be yourself, speak in your own way, write in your own way." We must say on another day, "Blend into the mass, write in a standard way, create no unnecessary waves of individuality." Perhaps to some older students we say, "You are an engineer, for this technical report you are but a part of a person, and you must play your role well by writing like an engineer." The teacher of English then has to know the verbal dress of each group living in some subset of our language and thus becomes an arbiter of linguistic fashions. If teachers of English generally are obliged to be so wise, we need to have as members of our own community many of those who also live in other subcommunities. We cannot afford to let the standardization of tests or the insularity or indifference of people in dominant social groups or even the testiness of "outsiders" deprive us of the strength and knowledge of teachers who are also identified with minority groups.

It is harder even than that. If one speaks a language or a dialect, one will soon come to be what it requires, and if one denies a language, one will be something else, but the world community—even the national community—has many mansions. We cannot all live in the same room even if we are consigned to the same house. How do we talk through the walls? How do we teach people to read through linguistic variation, not overreacting to the signs of separateness? When we start worrying about the social effects of language, we are caught in a web of politics and psychotherapy. Once we talk of rhetoric, the door leading to our responsibilities for the future is open just as wide as when we talk of logic. Even wider.

But our search for the identity of the teacher of English is not over. What do we do with literature? In recent years teachers of English have been unsure of how to defend their interest in literature as requiring time in school. When we learn the stories and poems of a people, we discover the laws by which they are really governed, the behavior they think is rational. In literature a society defines its sense of reality.

When we teach literary texts rather than methods of reading, we are expositors of the past. Even "modern" literature is usually several decades old. Inevitably we are conservators presenting established values. Practically, that means we teach a canon of works expressing the status quo understood by the generation just past—or perhaps of a subgroup of that generation. Obvious problems arise. The status changes more rapidly than the canon does. The values of the society we quietly inferred to justify our selections of major works change subtly. Subgroups resent our claims

of what is “major.” This nation of romanticists has generally favored minor rebellions, even though it gets upset about social eruptions, so we are authorized or even urged to tamper with the canon just a little. Creation, an act of challenging the past, is identified by our romanticists as the highest goal of our craft as teachers, so we like to think of ourselves as always trying to tell the society in a mild way what it now believes—or ought to believe—as we concoct new reading lists.

We are thus vulnerable from two directions, at least. We occasionally teach works which are no longer relevant. We can perhaps agree generally that we err in saving chestnuts even if we don’t agree on which works should be eased out. We also teach the faddish or the simpleminded or the subversive. Well, at least some of the time we probably are victims of fashion, and we choose simple works so that some of our pupils will at least read something, and any piece of literature offering a solid point subverts someone’s sense of truth.

Any literature, good or bad, represents someone’s sense of the world, and if you get other people to see through your eyes, you alter their perception forever. Most of us believe that wisdom comes with understanding many different visions; some believe that innocence requires protection from ugly sights. Perhaps we all agree that confronting some visions and some experiences requires maturity, prior experience with many other views. But whatever notion of responsible selection you accept, you recognize that I am talking about how the teacher of English is defined by the duty of identifying the tales and songs the nation lives by. Others contribute their tastes, too, but we are the primary choosers. How do we say what represents or suitably challenges current values?

We perhaps should pay more attention to our attachment to literary works as blends of fact and truth, of passion and judgment, of individual vision and collective experience. These works represent the complexity of life for ourselves as well as for our students. It is hard to imagine anything more basic to our definition of ourselves as people who love language.

Yet, somehow we become so defensive of our own fragment of the academic world that we forget the inclusiveness of language. The dialects within our own profession seem to mark how we value instead extreme competence developed by small and isolated groups. We lose sight of the common interests which justify our claiming to be English teachers. We have probably aped the specialization of the sciences too much, and we waste a lot of spirit imagining snubs from one another. We take our virtues for granted and offer our wares diffidently, and we wonder why we are viewed as dilettantes.

We suffer but a minor malaise, though. We need to tidy up our sense of what we do, to create an agenda for our future. I believe in muddling through, especially in hard times, but I don’t think we have to settle for that. We have plenty of questions worth asking, just as we have a mountain of information worth giving to students and colleagues. What We WILL Be depends on whether we have the courage to use our knowledge of language to help people live more amicably, to learn with more feeling.

Christopher Gould
John Heyda

LITERACY EDUCATION AND THE BASIC WRITER: A SURVEY OF COLLEGE COMPOSITION COURSES

It is no secret that writing instruction varies widely from one educational setting to another. Certainly there are differences in curricular emphasis; it stands to reason that there are also disparities in the quality of teaching. Diversity is perhaps inevitable, and many consider it desirable.

But not every kind of difference is necessarily symptomatic of healthy academic pluralism. One particular criticism of college composition holds that an array of forces—e.g., pressure to increase class size and teaching load, the popularity of narrowly vocational degree programs, the relegation of Freshman English to the status of a service course—serves to preclude critical inquiry as a realistic instructional aim in writing courses that are part of the general-education curricula of most schools. Richard Coe, for example, has argued that increased access to higher education, along with the concomitant demand for college-educated workers in more and more lines of employment, really has not altered societal needs for a type of literacy quite distinct from the kind traditionally associated with a liberal education:

Increasingly hierarchical division of labor requires . . . many workers who can read for information, follow instructions, and (perhaps) write occasional short reports clearly and accurately; some workers with specialized reading, writing, and thinking

Christopher Gould, associate professor of English, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, teaches composition and technical writing. He has published articles in CCC, JGE: The Journal of General Education, and Style and recently has published a book on printing and bookselling in eighteenth-century South Carolina.

John Heyda, assistant professor of English, Miami University, Middletown Campus, teaches basic writing and literature.

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abilities to write longer reports and handle the decentralized implementation decisions (which require the ability to make low-level inferences correctly); and a few real professionals with genuinely critical reading, writing, and thinking abilities to serve in (and educate) the centralized managerial elite.

Critics who pursue Coe's line of reasoning contend that disparities in literacy education reproduce established socioeconomic class lines by restricting the mastery of complex reading, writing, and thinking skills to a relative few scholastically well-prepared college students who either enroll in elite institutions or qualify for placement in writing classes for accelerated learners. More likely to be deprived of these skills are students with limited or inferior educational backgrounds: specifically, many poor, minority, rural, and other nontraditional students—those individuals often presumed to have benefited most from increased access to higher education.¹ Certainly these are the students whose numbers are concentrated in remedial or basic writing classes, whether those classes happen to be taught in research universities or in community colleges.

We wish to examine the claim that the fortunes of basic writers are influenced by a tacit social agenda upon mass education—one that reduces writing and thinking proficiencies, for many college students, to mere "functional" literacy. Consideration of this claim seems relevant to the current ferment in composition pedagogy, particularly with respect to the emerging view of writing as a means of learning, as an act of discovery that engages intellectual activity more challenging than that involved in producing five-paragraph essays with precisely placed thesis statements and topic sentences. If composition pedagogy is moving toward a more enlightened approach, one might expect to discern evidence of such change in writing courses tailored to the needs of students less than adequately prepared for Freshman English.

The question of whether advances in composition theory have found their way into the classroom already has been addressed by Maxine Hairston, among others. Hairston examines the consequences of a presumed "paradigm shift" from the teaching of writing as static subject matter to the analysis and modification of a complex form of behavior—from "current-traditional" injunctions that students should "think first, then write," to a more cautious introduction of heuristic procedures that may lead to the discovery of outlook through the act of writing. Hairston (78-79) concludes that although "those in the vanguard of the profession" have either assisted or adjusted to such change, "the overwhelming majority of college writing teachers" cling to the current-traditional paradigm. The hallmarks of this paradigm, which underlies what we shall call "instrumental" pedagogy, are well-documented (see, for example, Young). They include emphasis of product over process, neglect of invention in favor of editing, a simplified linear model of composing, a conception of writing as an instrument for encoding an impersonal objective reality independent of the writer (as opposed to an in-

tellectual activity that generates new knowledge or meaning), the belief that good writing communicates this objective reality clearly and accurately, and the assumption that thought is separate from and antecedent to language.

Heretofore, analyses of current-traditional pedagogy, like those of Hairston and Young, have provided important functional definitions of a formalistic, instrumental version of writing instruction, while documenting its long-standing hegemony in the textbook and the classroom. We wish now to add to these discussions a neglected political dimension—a consideration of how the perpetuation of such instruction within basic writing courses may lead (whether by conscious design or not) to predictable social outcomes. Our thinking is influenced by a recent bibliographical essay by Henry A. Giroux, who delineates three pedagogical models for literacy education. “Instrumental pedagogy,” according to Giroux (342-343), “expresses itself through a purely formalistic approach to writing characterized by a strict emphasis on rules By emphasizing the transmission of information, the pedagogy used in this approach . . . removes the student from any active participation in either the construction of knowledge or the sharing of power.” On the other hand, “interaction” and “critical” pedagogies, according to Giroux (345), both demonstrate concern for “how students construct meaning.” We share Giroux’s conviction that an instructor’s vision of literacy is likely to engender a particular kind of pedagogy, and that this pedagogy, in turn, is likely to foster a particular kind of literacy.

Hoping to gather some understanding of how teachers of basic writing perceive literacy and how their perceptions might guide instructional priorities, we decided to conduct a survey. Specifically, we wanted to determine what kinds of writing and thinking proficiencies teachers of basic writing stress, and we hoped to discover whether or not basic writers seem receptive to developing such proficiencies. We therefore designed a questionnaire that listed writing and thinking proficiencies (see Appendix), dividing them into the four general areas of competency posited by Haswell: Understanding Subject Matter (i.e., conceptualizing), Demonstrating Knowledge (i.e., casting concepts into language), Handling Language, and Influencing the Reader. Within each of these areas of competency, we randomly listed ten restricted writing and thinking skills ranging from the purely instrumental to the complex or critical. We have defined as instrumental those skills that presume a separation of thought from language; on the other hand, we consider those skills that accommodate an epistemic view of language (i.e., that acknowledge the potential of writing to create, rather than simply to encode, meaning) to be critical proficiencies.

Our questionnaire, then, consisted of four lists of skills, arranged in a completely random fashion. Those same four lists have been rearranged in a roughly hierarchical order, moving from instrumental to critical, in Figure 1 (see Appendix). Unavoidably, the precise order in which the four lists have been arranged in Figure 1 will invite dispute, as will the

rubrics, *instrumental*, *intermediate*, and *complex/critical*, to which we have assigned them. Presumably, we might have employed different terms, e.g., *formalistic* and *epistemic* or *analytic* and *holistic*. We resist, however, the notion that the lists shown in Figure 1, which contain all forty of the skills included in the questionnaire, should be viewed as developmental sequences, since to present these skills to students in such a fashion presupposes that critical thought can, indeed must, be deferred until inexperienced writers first have mastered simpler, atomistic competencies and, perhaps, have internalized the conventions of formal written English. Not only are we skeptical of such a mechanistic explanation of how people become literate, but also we see the empowerment of critical thought as a far greater motivation for adult learners. We believe, in short, that each of the lists in Figure 1 begins with three skills clearly integral to instrumental pedagogy and ends with three fairly complex skills that coordinate language and thought. We presume that a relatively strong emphasis of skills in the first category is likely to foster a more instrumental kind of literacy—one that is less conducive to critical inquiry—than a relatively strong emphasis of skills in the other category.

We asked respondents to use an ascending five-point scale to gauge basic writers' receptiveness to instruction in each of these forty skills (that is, their eagerness to develop and apply these skills, *not* their mastery of them). We then asked each respondent to indicate the emphasis assigned to the nurture and exercise of each skill in the course(s) for basic writers administered by the respondent's department. We mailed the questionnaire to 2,200 English departments (addresses were provided by a commercial list), asking that it be passed along to the instructor most concerned with the plight of the basic writer, whom we defined as "the student entering college whose difficulties with written communication leave him or her less than adequately prepared for the standard composition course(s)."

We received 221 usable questionnaires, admittedly a disappointing rate of response that necessarily must qualify any inferences to be drawn from the collected data.² Our sample is skewed slightly toward public institutions, 61.5% of our respondents, as compared to a national distribution of about 45%, probably because a greater proportion of public institutions offer basic writing courses. Also, two-year colleges are somewhat underrepresented (accounting for 31.2% of our sample, as compared to a national distribution of about 48%), possibly because the commercially prepared mailing labels that we purchased, consisting of the names and addresses of chairpersons of English departments, omitted two-year colleges that do not designate a single individual as coordinator of English courses. Otherwise, our sample seems to reflect the national distribution of colleges and universities by type: 35.3% of our responses came from four-year colleges without graduate programs in English (as compared to a national distribution of 29% for "general baccalaureate" colleges); 26.7% came from four-year schools offering only the master's degree in English (as compared to a national distribution

of 16% for "comprehensive universities"); and 6.8% came from doctorate-granting departments (as compared to a national distribution of 7% for "doctoral-level" universities).³ The representativeness of our sample as regards size of enrollment is slightly harder to assess. About half (51.1%) of the responding departments were situated in institutions with enrollments of fewer than 3,000 students; roughly another fourth (27.6%) were in colleges and universities with enrollments between 3,000 and 7,000. The combined figure, 78.7%, compares with a national distribution of 78% for colleges and universities with enrollments of less than 5,000 and 11% for schools with enrollments between 5,000 and 10,000.⁴ The remaining responses to our survey break down as follows: 14.0% from institutions with enrollments of 7,000 and 15,000, 5.4% from institutions with enrollments of 15,000 to 25,000, and 1.4% from institutions with enrollments of over 25,000. Eight respondents (3.6%) described the admissions policies of their schools as highly restrictive; 75 (33.9%) as somewhat restrictive; 48 (21.7%) as nonrestrictive but not open; 22 (10.0%) as open for all in-state students; and 68 (30.8%) as open for all students. In only 15 institutions was there no composition requirement (6.8%, as compared to 24% of the institutions responding to a survey of four-year schools conducted in 1974 by Smith); 73 required a single course (33.0%, as compared to 31% in 1974); 116 required two courses (52.5%, as compared to 45% requiring two or more courses in 1974); and 17 (7.7%) required three or more courses. Remedial work was required of at least some students in 171 (77.4%) of the responding schools.

In order to discover which proficiencies basic writers are most receptive to learning and which proficiencies teachers of basic writing are most inclined to emphasize, we computed mean scores. The proficiencies receiving the highest scores in each respect appear in Figure 2 (see Appendix). Correspondences between the two lists are evident: ten of the forty competencies appear in both. However, the apparent harmony between skills that instructors emphasize and those that basic writers seem receptive to learning may be deceptive. Apparently teachers believe that they place fairly heavy emphasis upon most of the forty competencies (average of all forty mean scores for teachers was 3.665), while their students seem relatively unreceptive to that instruction (average of mean scores for students was 2.721). In fact, in the case of only three of the competencies—"characterizing attitudes and emotional responses," "narrating a sequence of events," and "using technical devices (e.g., graphics, specialized terms, etc.)"—were students perceived as equally or more receptive to instruction in a particular skill than were their teachers inclined to impart it. These data may point to a morale problem in basic writing courses.

In fact, resentment of the basic writer's resistance to instruction was evident in a great many of the written responses placed at the end of the questionnaire. When asked to account for inconsistencies between what courses emphasize and what students seem receptive to learning,

many respondents attributed such inconsistencies to the basic writer's lack of motivation and persistence. Here are some representative comments:

—“By and large the differences result from the discrepancy between passionate instructors and lukewarm students.”

—“Inconsistencies . . . come from the teachers' zeal, which is greater than the students'.”

—“In general, basic (remedial) students don't recognize needs and fail to accept with enthusiasm strategies for improvement.”

—“They are freshmen and 'know it all.' They lack the intellectual discipline to really labor to achieve the effect.”

—“50% of our students seem to lack the ability to profit from the education available to them. College is not for everybody.”

Looking more closely at the specific skills most emphasized by basic writing teachers, we find that nine are skills that we have termed “instrumental,” while five fall into the “intermediate” category, and one is a “complex/critical” proficiency. Included are four items from the category of skills titled “Understanding Subject Matter”; another four come from “Handling Language”; and five others come from “Influencing the Reader.” From each of these three categories of skills, basic writing teachers seem to select for emphasis the competencies that we consider the most instrumental. The one apparent anomaly involves an item from the category of skills titled “Demonstrating Knowledge”: instructors reported giving considerable emphasis to “making and qualifying generalizations,” a skill that we believed to entail critical reasoning. The anomaly bears scrutiny.

At the time we designed our questionnaire, we regarded “making and qualifying generalizations” (placing unconscious emphasis, perhaps, on the word *qualifying*) as a relatively complex critical thinking proficiency—one usually applied by writers after they have synthesized data gathered from personal experience, observation, or research; have weighed evidence; and have drawn inferences. We suspect, however, that respondents associated “making and qualifying generalizations” with the cruder, more instrumental matter of formulating general assertions—thesis statements and topic sentences. Because, admittedly, we must operate largely on conjecture at this point (and because we view the overemphasis of thesis-generation as fundamental to the survival of instrumental pedagogy and thus to the neglect of critical literacy in basic writing courses), we wish to set forth the basis of our inference in some detail:

1. Four of the skills most emphasized by instructors directly involve the formulating of thesis statements and topic sentences. They are “deciding on a controlling idea or set of ideas,” “directing the reader's attention (with topic sentences, subject headings, etc.),” “making summarizing statements and giving examples,” and “formulating and qualifying generalizing sentences.” And while another four (“finding a focal point,” “discerning significant

details,” “focusing on detail,” and “retaining concepts and organizing facts”—relatively instrumental skills all) are connected more indirectly to the casting of thesis statements and topic sentences, they clearly are compatible with the kind of instruction that makes the generalizing assertion the conceptual staple of basic writing courses.

2. Of the four skills directly related to the formulating of thesis statements and topic sentences, those most emphasized are the ones we considered most instrumental. Furthermore, the less emphasized skill, “formulating and qualifying generalizing sentences” (again, note the presence of the word *qualifying*), was one to which teachers discerned much less receptiveness among students; neither it nor “making and qualifying generalizations” reappears in the student-receptiveness list of Figure 2 (see Appendix). Finally, in the single case where the word *qualifying* was not accompanied by the word *generalizing*, the skill in question (“qualifying a position or stance”), received a much lower mean score (ranking twenty-first in teacher emphasis), despite the fact that this skill probably should be exercised whenever a writer makes responsible, valid, mature generalizations. Respondents seemed to feel that they were more likely to make contact with basic writers when emphasizing thinking skills that lead to generalizing assertions—thesis statements and topic sentences—possibly to satisfy the rigidly dictated organizational schemes featured in dozens of remedial rhetorics, workbooks, and programmed texts.
3. Significantly, several thinking proficiencies that logically might be assumed to precede the formulating of general assertions, at least under ideal circumstances of critical inquiry, get comparatively little instructional emphasis. Each of the following skills ranked in the lower half of skills emphasized by teachers: “recognizing relationships among data,” “forming inferences,” “qualifying a position or stance,” “distinguishing between fact and inference,” “examining biases and judgments,” “coordinating sources,” “weighing evidence,” and “analyzing the validity of sources and questioning opinion.”

In short, among the fifteen skills most emphasized by teachers, the nine that roughly might be classified as thinking skills (numbers 1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14) suggest collectively the prevalence of the current-traditional paradigm in basic writing courses: instruction governed by the assumption that inexperienced writers should begin with a thesis, construct an outline (often consisting of topic sentences), and then finally search for supporting evidence. In other words, prescribed form regulates thought. The practical implications of this pedagogy were put nicely into focus by an incisive comment from a basic writing teacher in a small liberal arts college:

The student becomes conscious, on demand, of weighing (and selecting) evidence for a thesis; the teacher tends, once it is strongly emphasized, to move on, granting the student's gradual learning to do it. . . . The teacher emphasizes functional recall and organization. . . . The teacher makes detail an instrumental mode of writing.

Of the six remaining skills most emphasized by instructors of basic writing, five might be classified roughly as languaging proficiencies. (Our hesitant reliance here on a reductive dichotomy should not be construed as assent to the notion that language can be separated neatly from thought—a notion inherent to instrumental pedagogy.) Four of these five languaging skills (ranked 2, 3, 7, and 8) are essentially editorial competencies: “writing standard grammar and syntax,” “employing standard punctuation,” “exercising proofreading skills,” and “editing for coherence and economy.” Note that, again, the least instrumental of these, “editing for coherence and economy,” is also the least emphasized skill, as well as one for which instructors perceived very little receptiveness among students—it ranked twenty-ninth in that respect. The study of language in the basic writing courses that we surveyed, then, seems to emphasize editing written products to meet standards of formal correctness rather than generating new meaning or knowledge through rhetorical manipulations of language (e.g., developing voice through “establishing a persona” or “establishing and sustaining a tone”). Instruction seems predicated on the assumption that knowledge precedes language (and consequently can be retrieved and encoded in the shorthand of generalizing assertions), that it is a system or instrument for transmitting predetermined meaning or preexistent knowledge rather than a complex form of behavior that generates new meaning and knowledge.

Presented with the foregoing data, one might be tempted to blame the neglect of critical thought in basic writing courses on the oversimplified view of literacy held by many instructors. However, such an explanation fails to account for the common belief that basic writers actually prefer instruction in functional literacy—for the fact that of the fifteen skills in the student-receptiveness list of Figure 2, nine are skills that we have termed “instrumental.” Although we have only the perceptions of their teachers to rely on, we are not inclined to dismiss casually the claim that basic writers really desire functional literacy: we do not view this notion as mere rationalization of established practice. For one thing, comments placed at the end of our questionnaire suggest that at least some teachers of basic writing are committed to achieving more ambitious goals—to making better application of the current literature—yet recognize the resistance of most basic writers to such goals. Among those comments were the following:

—“As Perry dualists, [basic writers] *like* rules and regulations, surface details, correctness. That's not what they *need*.”

—“Students generally see some utilitarian value to. . . editing skills.

More sophisticated sorts of editing (such as working for a more concise, forceful style) do not carry the same sort of obvious utilitarian value, nor do the thinking skills that we stress heavily."

—"Composition involves application of concepts. This is certainly not the same as most of the educational experiences these students have had in the past. For instance, this is not the same as giving the student facts which are regurgitated back on an examination. Applying compositional concepts is even different from giving the student a model algebra problem and then assigning similar problems. The students have not been prepared to perform the various mental processes necessary to write a thoughtful, organized paper. They are more receptive to technical matters (grammar, footnotes)."

—"Look at the nature of high school education in combination with the fact that this is, on the whole, a polytechnic and therefore practically oriented university. The students come to us thinking in terms of what the minimum knowledge and work necessary to get through the torture of composition are. This attitude is reinforced by many of the professors here who see the writing requirement as a necessary evil, barely necessary, which is required of their students but which is of no 'practical' value. The attitudes and expectations of the teachers who teach the composition classes are, as you might expect, that writing is important—for itself, as a way of learning how to think."

These arguments are, of course, familiar: students with weak scholastic backgrounds are not often attuned temperamentally to the traditional aims of liberal education; prior schooling has conditioned basic writers to seek algorithmic approaches to thinking and problem solving; many instructors and academic advisors in vocational programs dismiss general-education requirements as service courses at best, as mere hurdles to be cleared at worst. Yet the fact that each of the respondents quoted above apparently strives, in the face of frustration, to foster something beyond mere functional literacy leads us to suspect that students' genuine resistance to learning many critical proficiencies has helped to shape the instrumental priorities of many basic writing courses.

We recognize at least some evidence, however, that basic writers are more open to other kinds of instruction than commonly is supposed, just as their teachers seem not entirely content with established instructional practice. On the one hand, basic writers seem relatively receptive to instruction in a few noninstrumental skills (items 4, 12, and 14 in the student-receptiveness list of Figure 2), even though their teachers do not emphasize these skills. On the other hand, teachers, for their part, say that they emphasize heavily a few other noninstrumental skills (items 8, 10, 14, and 15 in the instructor-emphasis list), even though they do not believe their students are very receptive to learning these skills. The consequent difficulty to find a mutually acceptable way to transform the basic writing course into a more rewarding undertaking for both parties is, no doubt, painful and frustrating for students and teachers alike. In despair, many of the instructors who responded to our survey seem

resigned to teaching the most instrumental kinds of proficiency, believing that basic writers are probably no less receptive to learning these skills than they are to learning any others. One respondent described the self-perpetuating stalemate that results in these terms:

Whereas students usually identify lack of mechanical and graphic skills as 'the problem,' these matters are also those in which they evince the least interest. I see also a reluctance in students to address problems of validity of sources, examining bias, whereas we regard these matters of content as paramount.

We hasten to observe at this point that the resignation we find typical of our respondents differs sharply from the view that prevails in the current literature devoted to basic writing. Nevertheless, we feel safe in reaffirming Maxine Hairston's distinction between "those in the vanguard of the profession" and "the overwhelming majority of college writing teachers." Because the former are more active professionally, their views are reflected in journals, monographs, and conferences. The latter, less successful in juggling the constraints of heavy teaching loads, inordinately large classes, and disproportionate salary scales, do not read the literature or attend professional meetings. Of course, we cannot assert with unqualified assurance that our limited sample of basic writing teachers reflects the views of the overwhelming majority to which Hairston refers. We hope it does not. Nevertheless, we believe our survey reflects the attitudes of a substantial number of basic writing teachers who seem, often halfheartedly, to emphasize skills that they believe basic writers *want* but may or may not actually *need*. The failure of basic writers to demonstrate mastery of these instrumental skills, upon which they themselves presumably have placed priority—or even to evince much enthusiasm for trying to achieve such mastery—seems to invalidate any claim that basic writing courses should address more complex skills. Consequently, students and teachers must often try to make contact on highly inhospitable territory—the study of skills that students are not particularly eager to learn and that many teachers deem unworthy of serious attention in higher education. Whether this depressing stalemate can be blamed on the failure of teachers and students as individuals or whether it reflects a systemic problem inherent to American mass education, we must leave the reader to decide.

While we recognize that, due to its response rate, our survey hardly constitutes an unqualified indictment of developmental composition programs in general, we do believe that it portrays the basic writing course, as it is taught on a good many campuses, as a theoretically impoverished enterprise, sustained by a narrowly instrumental vision of literacy—one that has been challenged successfully at more advanced levels of English study.⁵ More specifically, the following assumptions seem to prevail in these courses:

1. Thought precedes language and can be neatly separated from it; epistemic or heuristic applications of language are diminished or ignored. One respondent remarked tellingly: "The emphasis is on grammar rather than rhetoric."
2. As a consequence, successful writing is writing that communicates clearly and accurately preexistent information or knowledge, external to the writer. Operating on this assumption, one instructor attributed the shortcomings of basic writers to the fact that "they have not yet acquired enough knowledge to write material demanding discrete powers of intellect or observation." Such thinking exemplifies the "banking" concept of education (whereby students are seen as vessels to be filled with preexistent facts) to which Paulo Freire has attributed the failure of traditional remedies to adult illiteracy.
3. Writing can be approached as a rule-governed activity—an approach that basic writers actually prefer, whether they are able to articulate that preference or not. Remarked one basic writing teacher: "We teach a structured, rather rigid approach to basic writing—our goal is to get students to write a five-paragraph theme in standard English, using accepted conventions of punctuation. . . . Our students seem to be as practical minded as we are, although their enthusiasm is less than ours."
4. Writing courses "cover" subject matter rather than foster proficiency at process; basic writers' shortcomings can be attributed to their failure to master this subject matter. According to one instructor: "I think *receptivity* is the wrong word. We need to focus on *deficiencies* in the students' preparation and then try to cover the most essential topics before the semester is gone."

Clearly, these questionable assumptions have not held sway in more advanced levels of English study for a long time. Perhaps their presence accounts for Mike Rose's severe assessment of basic writing courses as "intellectually substandard, placed in the conceptual basements of English departments, if placed in the department at all, ghettoized" (126).

Do our findings point to any feasible improvements in the climate of basic writing classes? Perhaps. It is encouraging to see that some teachers of basic writing are receptive to change. For instance, one respondent from a small state-supported institution remarked:

The problem . . . is that surface amenities are given far more attention than the actual writing process. For example, the departmental syllabus is directed towards the error count for comma splices, misuse of semicolons, and the like. . . . However, the department now has in its employ several specialists in the field who hope to turn the program into one more appropriate to the twentieth century.

Another basic writing teacher, apparently disenchanted with purely formalistic instruction, reported: "Our developmental course focuses upon

letting students experience success at communicating from personal experience.”

While we may find such sentiments laudable, the proposed remedies (turning to a new generation of technicians or “specialists” for relief, subordinating the mastery of skills to the fostering of “self-expression”) are, at least in themselves, sadly inadequate, because the problem is not purely technical nor purely therapeutic. Rather, the full political implications of an increasingly vocationalized curriculum with unequal access to critical literacy must be examined. To put the matter more succinctly, we believe that the decision to teach instrumental literacy to basic writers entails more than purely pedagogical issues. A substantial body of scholarship (e.g., Freire, Giroux, Lentricchia) argues that such instruction inhibits the growth of critical reasoning and reinforces authoritarian modes of thought, while, perhaps, restricting access to more desirable lines of employment. Others may insist that because many basic writers wish only to survive in a world that demands functional literacy, college English departments are obligated to provide them with such skills. However, such reasoning—apart from ignoring historical evidence, documented by Levine, that purely functional literacy cannot be taught effectively to adults—assumes a purely vocational model of higher education, wherein curricular decisions are routinely governed by the laws of supply and demand. Further, we feel that it signifies uncritical assent to the mythology of bourgeois liberalism, more precisely to the belief that the value of literacy resides chiefly within its enablement of academic and business success. We do not wish to cast scorn upon this mythology nor to challenge the privilege of instructors to decide, finally, that they want to teach functional literacy to basic writers. We suggest only that there are political issues entailed in such a choice, just as there are political issues entailed in the decision to produce and market big cars, sugary breakfast foods, or violent TV shows. Those political issues merit examination and debate.

Undeniably, the apparent resistance of basic writers to critical literacy (or at least their teachers’ perception of it) remains an obstacle to more ambitious objectives for remedial writing courses that serve the current needs of mass higher education. However, if some of those needs are not examined critically and challenged, at least they must be recognized as a force that shapes instructional priorities, consciously or otherwise.

At least two avenues of inquiry still might be pursued in surveys similar to ours. First, would a comparison of remedial, standard, and honors composition courses reveal important differences in assumptions about literacy? Second, might there be some more reliable way to gauge basic writers’ receptiveness to instruction in critical literacy skills? It seems plausible that the teachers we surveyed unconsciously may have underestimated their students’ receptiveness to kinds of instruction precluded by departmentally mandated syllabi or textbooks.

Before any investigation of literacy education for the basic writer can effectuate improvements in pedagogy, however, we must dispel the

notion that basic writers are “cognitively immature” and consequently incapable of critical thought.⁶ Such a view was expressed frequently in written comments at the end of our questionnaire, perhaps most vigorously by one respondent from a community college, who wrote beside the skills listed beneath “Understanding Subject Matter”: “Skills referred to below demand high-level cognitive development, not an attribute of basic writers anywhere.” Similar sentiments were voiced by an exasperated instructor in a four-year college: “I quit marking your questionnaire. In our remedial classes we teach spelling, sentence structure, grammatical correctness, etc. The items you list belong in advanced courses.” We do not wish to excoriate the typically capable, sincere teacher of basic writing who, often lacking the autonomy to redefine curricular objectives, clings to such dubious assumptions about learning; however, we do believe that basic writers are entitled to a type of instruction that is more ambitious and politically alert.

Appendix

Questionnaire Mailed to 2200 English Departments

Dear Department Chair:

Would you please pass along this questionnaire and the enclosed return envelope to the member of your department you believe to be most concerned about the plight of the “basic writer” in your composition program. By “basic writer” we mean the student entering college whose difficulties with written communication leave him or her less than adequately prepared for the standard composition course(s) offered in your department.

Dear Respondent:

We are undertaking a survey of instructional and administrative practices in college composition programs. We are particularly interested in examining the ways in which composition programs (and the English departments in which they are housed) have responded to the new type of student who has made so unsettling an appearance in composition classes over the course of the last ten to fifteen years. This type of student—variously described as the “non-traditional,” “career-oriented,” or “underprepared” student—has had a considerable effect on composition teaching, not to mention current administration of writing programs. New approaches to the teaching of writing and rhetoric have been initiated to encompass the needs of such students. New programs and courses have been established to accommodate the presence of these students on campus.

We hope you will recognize that, unlike some questionnaires, ours is not principally concerned with finding out how well students exhibit

mastery of the final stages of putting together a polished written product. Given the difficulties the basic writer has in mastering skills at all stages of the composing process and how little presently is understood about how best to confront such difficulties in the classroom, our effort is to gain insight into precisely who this student is and how he or she responds to instruction in skills and tactics applicable to all stages of writing. In Part I, we ask you to evaluate your students' receptiveness to instruction in the areas listed. In Part II, we ask you to determine which of these areas currently receive the greatest attention in your department's teaching. Part III provides the opportunity to comment on any perceived problems in teaching composition to the basic writer which may have been brought to light by your answers to Parts I and II. We are interested particularly in comments you might have concerning any inconsistencies or incongruities in your responses.

Christopher Gould
Language Arts Division
Southwestern Oklahoma State
University

John F. Heyda
Department of English
Miami University at
Middletown

Part I. Please indicate the degree of receptiveness among basic writers in your composition courses to instruction in the following areas of writing competence. We ask you to rate students' receptiveness to instruction on a scale of one to five, where five signifies a great deal of receptiveness and 1 signifies very little. The four general categories of writing competence are identified by Richard H. Haswell in "Tactics of Discourse," *College English* 43 (1981): 168-78.

UNDERSTANDING SUBJECT MATTER

Characterizing attitudes and emotional responses	12345
Discerning significant details	12345
Forming inferences	12345
Recognizing relationships among data	12345
Examining biases and judgments	12345
Distinguishing between fact and inference	12345
Finding a focal point	12345
Deciding on a controlling idea or set of ideas	12345
Retaining concepts and organizing facts	12345
Qualifying a position or stance	12345

DEMONSTRATING KNOWLEDGE

Narrating a sequence of events	12345
Weighing evidence	12345
Defining terms and concepts	12345
Making and qualifying generalizations	12345
Isolating details and recalling specific facts	12345
Focusing on detail	12345
Coordinating sources	12345
Recognizing and using transitions	12345
Finding the appropriate word or expression (e.g., metaphor)	12345
Using technical devices (e.g., graphics, specialized terms)	12345

HANDLING LANGUAGE

Combining and coordinating sentences	12345
Using a dictionary (to solve problems of usage, spelling, etc.)	12345
Editing for a forceful style (e.g., writing for concision)	12345
Employing idioms and other conventional expressions	12345
Formulating and qualifying generalizing sentences	12345
Establishing a persona	12345
Establishing and sustaining a tone	12345
Writing standard grammar and syntax	12345
Employing standard punctuation	12345
Defining and explaining rhetorical problems	12345

INFLUENCING THE READER

Analyzing the validity of sources and questioning opinion	12345
Establishing priorities among topics developed	12345
Using appropriate appeals to reason, ethics, emotion	12345
Directing reader's attention (with topic sentences, subject headings, etc.)	12345
Anticipating and simulating reader's response	12345
Making summarizing statements and giving examples (moving back and forth between abstract and concrete)	12345
Creating emphasis (with transition, subordination, parallelism, connotation)	12345
Editing for coherence and economy	12345
Using footnotes and bibliographical sources	12345
Exercising editing and proofreading skills	12345

Part II. Please indicate the degree of emphasis given to the following areas of writing competence in instruction provided the basic writer in your composition program. We ask you to rate emphasis on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 signifies great emphasis, 1 little or no emphasis. [Questionnaire lists again, in the same order, forty competencies arranged under four separate headings.]

Part III. If you recognize any inconsistencies or incongruities between responses to Parts I and II, how would you account for them? (Also, if you would care to comment on our questionnaire, please feel free to do so.) We ask that you use a separate sheet of paper.

Figure 1

Understanding Subject Matter

Instrumental	Deciding on a controlling idea or set of ideas
	Finding a focal point
	Retaining concepts and organizing facts
Intermediate	Discerning significant details
	Recognizing relationships among data
	Characterizing attitudes and emotional responses
Complex/Critical	Forming inferences
	Qualifying a position or stance
	Distinguishing between fact and inference
	Examining biases and judgments

Demonstrating Knowledge

Instrumental	Narrating a sequence of events
	Isolating details and recalling specific facts
	Focusing on detail
Intermediate	Defining terms and concepts
	Using technical devices (e.g., graphics, specialized terms)
	Finding the appropriate word or expression (e.g., metaphor)
Complex/Critical	Recognizing and using transitions
	Coordinating sources
	Weighing evidence
	Making and qualifying generalizations

Handling Language

Instrumental	Writing standard grammar and syntax
	Employing standard punctuation
	Combining and coordinating sentences
Intermediate	Employing idioms and other conventional expressions
	Using a dictionary (to solve problems of usage, spelling, etc.)
	Formulating and qualifying generalizing sentences
	Editing for a forceful style
Complex/Critical	Establishing and sustaining a tone
	Establishing a persona
	Defining and explaining rhetorical problems

Influencing the Reader

Instrumental	Exercising proofreading skills
	Establishing priorities among topics developed
	Directing reader's attention (with topic sentences, headings, etc.)
Intermediate	Making summarizing statements and giving examples (moving back and forth between abstract and concrete)
	Creating emphasis (with transitions, subordination, parallelism, etc.)
	Editing for coherence and economy
	Using footnotes and bibliographical sources
Complex/Critical	Anticipating and simulating reader's response
	Analyzing the validity of sources and questioning opinion
	Using appropriate appeals to reason, ethics, emotion

Figure 2

Proficiencies That Basic Writers Seem Most Receptive to Learning

1. Narrating a sequence of events (3.916*)
2. Deciding on a controlling idea or set of ideas (3.280)
3. Finding a focal point (3.168)
4. Characterizing attitudes and emotional responses (3.068)
5. Combining and coordinating sentences (3.005)
6. Directing reader's attention (with topic sentences, headings, etc.) (3.005)
7. Retaining concepts and organizing facts (2.991)
8. Writing standard grammar and syntax (2.977)
9. Employing standard punctuation (2.972)
10. Discerning significant details (2.882)
11. Focusing on detail (2.874)
12. Recognizing and using transitions (2.864)
13. Employing idioms and other conventional expressions (2.840)
14. Using a dictionary (2.823)
15. Making summarizing statements and giving examples (2.790)

*Degree of receptiveness on an ascending scale of one to five

Proficiencies Most Emphasized by Teachers of Basic Writing

1. Deciding on a controlling idea or set of ideas (4.592*)
2. Writing standard grammar and syntax (4.384)
3. Employing standard punctuation (4.373)
4. Finding a focal point (4.364)
5. Combining and coordinating sentences (4.134)
6. Directing reader's attention (with topic sentences, headings, etc.) (4.102)
7. Exercising proofreading skills (4.065)
8. Editing for coherence and economy (4.009)
9. Making summarizing statements and giving examples (3.995)
10. Making and qualifying generalizations (3.958)
11. Discerning significant details (3.940)
12. Focusing on detail (3.935)
13. Retaining concepts and organizing facts (3.931)
14. Formulating and qualifying generalizing sentences (3.907)
15. Creating emphasis (with transition, subordination, parallelism, etc.) (3.903)

*Degree of emphasis on an ascending scale of one to five

Notes

¹Ohmann's critique of freshman composition is well known. Disparities among educational institutions are addressed more directly by both Abel and Lazere.

²Although the ten percent response was disappointing, we believe our sample compares quite favorably with that of Witte et al. in the FIPSE-funded Writing Program Assessment Project, undertaken about the same time as our survey. Researchers involved in that project received 127 responses from more than 550 contacts made with members of the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA). However, since questionnaires were mailed only to the 259 individuals who previously had signified their willingness to participate in the survey (by responding to the initial contact), the forty-nine percent response reported in the project's published reports actually represents a substantially smaller sample than the one we received.

³Percentages are based upon data cited in *Standard Education Almanac*. Distribution by character of institution (public vs. private) is based on all 3,280 colleges and universities surveyed in *SEA*. Distribution by type of institution (two-year college, etc.) is based on the 2,508 institutions that fall into the four categories named; omitted are institutions listed as "professional" and "new."

⁴The percentage is based upon data collected by the American Council on Education. The remaining percentages reported by the Council are as follows: 10,000 to 20,000, 7%; 20,000 to 30,000, 2%; over 30,000, 1%.

⁵The situation may not be much better in most standard composition courses, however; see, for example, Burhans. The findings of the Witte et al. also seem to suggest that standard composition courses provide an environment inhospitable to the nurture of critical literacy. For example, more than two-thirds of all directors of composition surveyed listed "writing mechanically correct prose" as a "real goal" in courses under their administration, making it the most frequently cited "real goal." "Reading critically and insightfully," on the other hand, ranked tenth among seventeen goals; "connecting writing and thinking" placed fourteenth. "Thinking critically" was cited only as an "ideal goal," and even then only by twenty percent of the directors of composition and ten percent of the other instructors surveyed.

⁶Addressing this assumption, Rose asserts:

All too often these days we hear that remedial writers are 'cognitively deficient' These judgments are unwarranted extrapolations from a misuse (or overuse) of the developmental psychologist's diagnostic instruments, for as Jean Piaget himself reminded us in one of his final articles, if we are not seeing evidence of formal operations in young adults, then we should either better acquaint them with our diagnostics or find more appropriate ones. . . . We must assume, Piaget warns, that in their daily lives our students can generalize and analyze, can operate formally (127).

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LISTENING AS AN ACT OF COMPOSING

Moral, by The Cat: You can find in a text whatever you bring, if you will stand between it and the mirror of your imagination. You may not see your ears, but they will be there.

Mark Twain, "A Fable," 1909

We began to explore the idea of listening as essential to writers in 1983 while we were team-teaching English 098, the most basic level of basic writing at the University of Louisville. The students in this course are the most unskilled beginners, unprepared even for the regular developmental sequence that leads to freshman composition. These are the students who have difficulty both at the conceptual and mechanical levels. The readers of their placement test essays commented that they "failed to recognize the requirements of the task as defined in the assignment," and "they had serious problems with word order, sentence structure, and recognition of sentence boundaries." In fact, we created English 098 that year precisely to give these students a psychological advantage—to keep them out of the deadly cycle of failing remedial English semester after semester. They reminded us of the most poignant of Mina Shaughnessy's students, those who, as some of their detractors complain, "shouldn't be allowed in the university." Yet they are smart—we could tell that by their speech. They are surely at home with talk and banter. But that facility does not necessarily, or even usually, transfer to the other language arts—reading, writing, or even listening.

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We focus on listening simply because it is the most neglected of these language arts. In the last several years, repeated calls for a new integration of reading, writing, and speaking have changed our approaches to teaching composition. We encourage more talk in the classroom because cognitive psychologists have stressed the crucial developmental relationship between speaking and writing.¹ We pay more attention to our students as readers because psycholinguists and literary response critics have demonstrated that reading is as much an act of composing as writing.² A revival of interest in the history of rhetoric has led us to reapply classical models, where students continually read, imitated, recited, rewrote, and discussed their own and others' work.³ However, despite the emphasis on our students' revolving roles as readers, writers, and speakers, little attention has been paid to them as *listeners*, except perhaps in a negative way—as teachers complain, “my students don't listen.”

We agree that students don't listen well. Shaughnessy taught us that writing teachers should constantly try to figure out reasons for students' lack of skill. So, we asked ourselves—what is a listener? What does a listener do? We began simply by positing that a listener is one who hears “voices.” Those voices may be spoken or written, one's own or another's. We knew our students had trouble hearing those voices. Although their headphones attested to their comfort with the passive sort of response to music that lulls a hearer, we found that they had trouble “hearing” or “seeing” what was on the pages of the texts they wrote or read. They also seemed unable to hear our instructions or the comments of their classmates. Sure, they read the suggestions for improvement, but they could not seem to apply them to their own work in any independent, active way. Therefore, we decided to change our orientation toward the relationships among the language arts. Instead of concluding that basic writing students can't write because they don't read, we speculated that perhaps they don't write well because they haven't learned to listen.

In *One Writer's Beginnings*, Eudora Welty supports the idea that a writer must be able to “hear” a written text:

Ever since I was first read to, then started reading to myself, there has never been a line read that I didn't *hear*. As my eyes followed the sentence, a voice was saying it silently to me. It isn't my mother's voice, or the voice of any person I can identify, certainly not my own. It is human, but inward, and it is inwardly that I listen to it. It is to me the voice of the story of the poem itself. The cadence, whatever it is that asks you to believe, the feeling that resides in the printed word, reaches me through the reader-voice. I have supposed, but never found out, that this is the case with all readers—to read as listeners—and with all writers, to write as listeners. It may be part of the desire to write. The sound of what falls on the page begins the process of testing it for truth, for me....

My own words, when I am at work on a story, I hear too as they go, in the same voice I hear when I read in books. When I write and the sound of it comes back to my ears, then I act to make changes. I have always trusted this voice (11-12).

Clearly our students are not this conscious, either of a reader-voice or a writer-voice. We decided, therefore, to design exercises that would enhance their awareness of the connection between listening and composing, both before writing begins and after a first draft is completed. We decided that recognizing the voices in any text, read or heard, was an essential part of making sense of what we read and write and possibly, as Welty says, the impetus for writing or, more importantly, rewriting. If readers aren't listening, they cannot select and organize information in order to respond to it. If writers aren't listening, they cannot gain enough distance from their texts to revise them. And we found our students singularly unable to respond to texts they read, or even to "see" what was on the pages of their own drafts.

Richard Larson recently suggested that readers interact with texts not by seeing them, but through hearing them. In "The Rhetoric of the Written Voice," he claims that auditory appeal makes a reader want to "keep company" with an author, or to engage with a text in the first place:

I am suggesting that our experience of a written text—the transactions in which we participate with a writer when we read—has elements of a dramatic encounter; it includes a response by the reader's imagination—his or her auditory imagination—to the sounds heard during this imagined encounter with the text. I am suggesting that part of our response as readers is to the way we *hear* a text in our imagination and that every written utterance we encounter has its own imagined sound to which we as readers respond (116-117).

The listening response that Larson describes is dramatic and active, not the passive stance that some teachers have assumed in their students. We realized that in previous classes, when we had thought about listening at all, we had conceived of it too literally, as decoding words in order to get to meaning. We expected students to listen to us, to classmates, to assignments, to readings, and sift from those "texts" the information that told them how to complete any given writing task. However, we did not recognize that such sifting is an active process, requiring the same skills of prediction, hypothesizing, checking, revising, and generalization, that reading and writing demand. Our exercises, therefore, are designed to make students conscious of themselves as active listeners who create the voices they hear as they read/listen and write/listen. Eudora Welty, again, describes this critical distinction between active and passive listening:

Long before I wrote stories, I listened for stories. Listening *for* them is something much more acute than listening *to* them. I suppose it's an early form of participation in what goes on. Listening children know stories are *there*. When their elders sit and begin, children are just waiting and hoping for one to come out, like a mouse from its hole (14).

We wanted our students to become these kinds of anticipating listeners and to be conscious of listening *for*, for the unspoken as well as the spoken meaning. We also wanted to instill in them some of the sense of drama that both Welty and Larson describe—the playful encounter with language that is missing from too many classrooms.

Besides learning to hear and respond to the voices in the air and on the page, learning to listen *for* helps students practice the skills they need for composing, as both readers and writers. Listeners must predict what is coming in order to make sense of what is immediate; they must revise those expectations in light of what they are hearing; above all, they must make associations among what they hear and what they already know. They must make what they hear meaningful. James Britton clarifies the listening/composing relationship as he describes the connections between listening and a child's developing facility with language:

As he [the child] listens to people talking, he must be taking in more than they say: he must be perceiving the general *forms* utterances take: 'forms' in terms of what words may occur before and after what other words. It may be that the listening is not so different from the speaking as would first appear (46).

Listening *for*, then, can make what students hear meaningful by requiring their active participation in making sense of a spoken or written text. As students match the given to new information and formulate hypotheses through guessing and revising guesses, they can gain some sense of control over what they might want to say in writing, some reason to write at all.

Moreover, listening *for* makes students aware of the community in the classroom because it involves both their semantic and episodic memories. As Endel Tulving and Wayne Donaldson define them, semantic memory is a thinker's mental thesaurus—the conventions, procedures, and linguistic choices shared by a group. It is more or less public, whereas episodic memory is private—the autobiographical, associative narrative of feelings and events triggered by certain cues (380-402). Listening *for* exercises both kinds of memory. As students consciously listen *for* texts and retell what they have heard, they learn that their individual perceptions and associations from episodic memory are valid. And, listening to other students retell the same story, through *their* episodic memories, triggers the group's semantic memories as they learn to share and add to the group's conventions and repertoires.

Beyond that, becoming aware of themselves as listeners who create meaning can help students think of themselves as meaning-makers when they write. It can make them realize that meaning is negotiated within an interpretive community.⁴ That interpretive community becomes real to the students because it is audible in the classroom. They have listened to each other—listened *for* each other—actively changing the way they see their classmates and their own writing. Basic writing students, particularly, get stuck in a passive stance toward their own texts, not listening to the voices they have created.

In the rest of this essay, we will describe the exercises we devised to make our students conscious of what Welty and Larson say that experienced readers and writers do unconsciously. In short, we wanted our students to learn to hear the reader-voice in external texts, so that it might become internal in their own texts—and so that they might hear their own writer-voices as they compose and revise.

Of course, what teachers hope for from all their writing students is that they attend to their writer-voices as they compose and their reader-voices as they edit and revise. If we teach students to listen *for* those voices as they are read to and as they read and comment aloud, we allow the external to become internal and functional when students write. As students find themselves beginning with expectations, making predictions, deriving and challenging generalizations, in the immediate aural medium, they learn what listening *for* means and learn how to transfer those auditory skills to their own writing.

The English 098 students we team-taught could be identified easily on a placement test by their lack of facility in using the written word. Their prose was characterized by serious syntactical problems—inability to use normal word order consistently, lack of attention to verb forms and sentence boundaries. They often encountered difficulty in generating even a page of writing. Early in the semester, we also discovered that many of our students who read their own work aloud would not truly read but comment upon what they had written with statements like “I start out by...” or “And then I say....” These comments demonstrated their discomfort with their own writer-voices. However, as their oral marginalia often indicated, these students were fluent as they spoke. Our attempt was to help them take their oral facility into writing.

What we wanted was to show our students that their fluency with spoken language could be used to improve their fluency in writing and reading. We wanted them to realize, as Ann Berthoff says, that writing is “related to everything you do when you make sense of the world,” to talking, thinking, reading, and listening (8). The exercises we designed were intended to make our students more aware of what they do as they compose texts in writing and in reading. We began by playing to their oral strengths in listening and talking by showing them that listening actively is a necessary part of composing.

The first exercise in listening *for* asked students to retell the story of 1984. After reading a short excerpt from Orwell’s novel, students had

written a preliminary diagnostic assignment discussing what terrible punishment would cause them to surrender to Big Brother. Then we told them the rest of the story, inviting them to take notes as they listened. We let them know that they wouldn't be able to include everything as they retold what they had heard. We hit the high points of the story—information about Oceania and Winston Smith's job, the love affair and its symbolic rebellion against Big Brother's ideology, the eventual discovery, the punishment of the traitors, the aftermath. Students wrote their summaries and returned the next day to tell those stories to each other.

This exercise, which focused on students' listening skills, taught them several valuable lessons about composing:

1. Strategies of organization—beginnings, middles, ends—are set by the form of a narrative itself, but developed by writers as they retell a story.
2. General and specific ideas occur naturally both as they tell details of the story and move to the next point by generalizing.
3. Retellings of the same plot can take many different forms.

This last was perhaps the most striking and useful lesson students discovered. As they read their retellings in small groups, they saw what one listener had emphasized, what another had ignored, what one listener had developed in detail, what they themselves had merely mentioned. Most surprising to them was that all the stories were successful; that is, each response transferred effectively the story the students had listened to, to other listeners. The students learned that although they had all listened to the same plot, they listened for different, though equally valuable, specific details and generalities. Their listening *for*, then determined the form, style, and content of the responses they wrote.

A few brief examples from drafts of opening paragraphs serve to illustrate this point:

Pamela:

Winston Smith sits in his few spaces that's called his work area. He knows he must do everything right because Big Brother is always watching. The Ministry of Truth is where he works. It's not really truth, it's lies, because everything in Oceania means the opposite. He works there in the records department destroying the past, making sure everything Big Brother says is true and recorded.

William:

This is the story about George Orwell's famous book 1984. The book deals with two main characters. Big Brother, who is the party, the dominant one in power of everyone more like the president of the United States except with greater power. Winston Smith is the second, who works for Big Brother in his ministry of truth. Now in 1984 the Earth is completely different from now. It is divided into 3 countries—Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia. Big Brother is in control of Oceania and his picture is everywhere, on posters, coins, and even watching you in your cubic room that is considered home.

Damon:

It's 1984 there are only 3 countries in the world. Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia. There is always some country fighting the other, all the time. Oceania is where our hero lives his name is Winston Smith. He works for the party in control of the country headed by a dictator type figure called Big Brother. He is the records clerk in the ministry of truth. When Big Brother predicts something and turns out to be wrong Winston would change the records to make it look like Big Brother predicted the future.

These students had heard basically the same details: the reduction of countries, the lie of the ministry of truth, the character of Big Brother, the lack of privacy and space. However, each student listened individually, choosing distinctive details. Some repeated our language; some created their own terms. Some retold all the details; some generalized or added comments of their own. The responses show how fluent basic writers can become once they make connections between what they hear and what they write. Their concluding paragraphs also show that they trusted our emphasis on individual perceptions:

Pamela:

Winston started keeping a diary which was illegal. At the same time he loved Julia and on one such occasion they were caught together. Winston is then taken to Room 101 where they torture him. He had never lost faith in Julia or lost his memory. But when they told him about the rats and he finally gave in and said do it to Julia and Julia said do it to Winston. And then Julia went off and Winston said I Love Big Brother.

William:

Winston was left inside a cell to rot because of his disbelief. His teeth and hair began to fall out. He was left to starve, all beaten badly until Winston couldn't take anymore and said he believed everything Big Brother said was true, not really giving up for the love of his girl, Julia. The thought police knew Winston was lying so he was placed in front of a cage filled with rats. See Winston was feared of rats and big brother new it and when Winston was place in front of the rats he broke down. "Take Julia, why don't you do this to her." Winston was defeated by Big Brother. Winston was freed and forgiven. As he walked away with defeat to the nearest pub he noticed sitting directly across from him Julia. They stared each other in the eyes with no emotion. They both walk opposite each other knowing they had been defeated.

Damon:

Within time the thought police catch Julia and Winston both together. They take them to the ministry of love to punish, beat, and starve them. All of this time Winston kept his loyalty to Julia. Until they found out the one thing he was most afraid of. Rats, they put a cage over his head and threatened to let them chew his face up. He finally breaks and asks them to do it to Julia. Not long afterward, he sees Julia in a restaurant they hardly speak. This is evidence that Big Brother has won and Julia and Winston are now unpersons.

In these concluding paragraphs, the students all comment on the most shocking episode in our telling of the story, the scene where Winston Smith comes literally face to face with the rats he dreads. But each listener chooses to emphasize the scene differently: one concludes with it; two use it to lead to a broader conclusion. Each writer uses individual perceptions, heard while listening *for*, to find appropriate strategies for completing the narrative.

Our success in having students recognize in this external way the reader-voice as they listened for the story of 1984 in the teacher's retelling and in the re-retelling of their classmates led us to assign a more difficult task that would ask students to listen *for* the writer-voice of a short story and determine what it demanded from them as readers.

The story we chose was Dorothy Parker's "You Were Perfectly Fine," a very short, funny and bitter little tale of the woe that attends the inability of a man and woman to communicate honestly. The two characters discuss the events of a party the night before where the man has become so drunk that he can remember nothing. The plot develops through his date's reminding him of his successively more embarrassing activities, all the while assuring him that he was "perfectly fine." The

story culminates with her revelation of a promise he has made to her in the park, ending with his request for a drink to counter the “collapse he feels coming on.” Parker tells this story almost entirely through the dialogue of Peter and the girl. Since neither character is at all frank about feelings or motivations, their personalities are not ordinarily clear to students whose skill in recognizing the writer-voice through their own reader-voice is limited at best. This second exercise is more demanding in two ways. First, it is the writer-voice students must listen *for*, not the interpretive comments of our 1984 retelling. Second, because the writer-voice is ironic, students must listen *for* the mocking tones behind the voices of the characters in the dialogue. In this task, students must use their listening skills more consciously as they suspect, reject, and identify motivations while they listen and read.

To counteract the difficulties in getting past the untruthful conversation between the two characters, we played a tape of the conversation read by two of our colleagues. Their voices revealed to the listeners in the class the two characters’ real feelings that are implied by the writer-voice on the page—the man increasingly uncomfortable and making the pretense of remembering his promise, the woman determinedly cheerful and cheerfully determined to hold the man to his promise. The writer-voice demands that readers hear through the dialogue and listen *for* clues about motivations and about the writer-voice’s ironic intention. For sophisticated readers, hearing that kind of writer-voice presents few difficulties. Our less fluent readers would not have overheard the ironic writer-voice lurking behind the dialogue they read. But the tape allowed them to listen *for* that voice.

Students listened to the tape as they followed the written story. Then they began to discuss their speculations about the relationship between the two characters. For the next class, we asked them to write about which character they felt more sympathy for and why. Later, they read these statements aloud to the class, and we asked them to list adjectives to describe each character and then to combine some of the male/female adjectives to make a statement about men and women, for example: “When men are guilty and foolish, women are strong and manipulative.” Our final assignment asked students to write about relationships between men and women using the characters’ relationships in the story and their own experience or observation as support. Had we begun with this final assignment, students would have been unable to accomplish a task that required them to “hear through” the writer-voice on the page to the character’s feelings and the writer’s ironic comment upon them. They would have remained caught, as Shaughnessy characterizes basic writers, between “cases and generalities,” (240) staying either with unsupported conclusions about Parker’s point or with details from the story that led nowhere. But by beginning with the oral reading to hear the writer-voice, and by listening *for* details and generalities to synthesize their own conclusions, the students were able to complete their tasks with some success. As they read rough drafts aloud, their listeners commented just as

they had upon the tape, and students heard how their own writer-voices transferred to their listeners.

After considering this notion of using the auditory dimension to provoke some consciousness about composing acts, we extended the earlier listening and retelling assignments. We told our students the story of *King Lear* and asked them to listen and retell, beginning as we had with the 1984 assignment. This time, after they listened, wrote, listened to each other, and commented, we asked them to write a sentence or two that generalized about what they felt the writer-voice seemed to be trying to tell them. As a final writing task, we asked the students to begin with those generalizations and write a paragraph that explained why that general statement fit into their retellings. We had introduced the concept of generalizing early in the semester. (In the 1984 exercise, for example, students explained orally what they thought Orwell felt about the system he described. We called these comments "generalizations.") So students were familiar with the term and understood how to aim for controlling statements. Here is a response called "Actions Speak Louder than Words" from one of the class members:

Leonard:

William Shakespeare's story, "King Lear," gave some detail examples of the expression, "Actions speak louder than words." King Lear's daughters, Regan and Goneril, told the King exactly what he wanted to hear, to satisfy his desires and to gain the reward for this deed. Regan's and Goneril's actions through-out the story didn't show the love that they proclaim for him. But Cordelia, the King's youngest and favorite daughter, who refused to tell the King of her love, show her affection to him when she went to his side after he was forced into the woods by the other daughters. The same holds true for Gloucester and his two sons, Edgar and Edmond. But Edgar showed his love for his father through the action of going to Gloucester's side after he was banished from his home by Edmond. This saying, "Actions speak louder than words," is true even today, because this is one of the ways I use to determine the well-meaning of others.

Unlike many of his classmates who described in gory detail the battles and the "vile jelly," Leonard concentrated on parent/child relationships, and his generalization clearly derived from the story he retold. His final paragraph takes the general statement "actions speak louder than words" and explains just how he decided upon it. Leonard has here the beginning of an expository essay, one that proceeded from his own written narrative, that in its turn was preceded by his listening *for* that narrative. Of course, not every student succeeded in transferring the composing skill learned in listening *for* to composing an essay that employed it. Every student could provide a generalization, but a few students failed to work back from generalization to details for support, relying in-

stead on a retelling of the story. For these students, Leonard and others who succeeded became a resource. Students listened to Leonard's essay and listened for his explanations of how he had composed it from his original perceptions in the first response. By working in groups that revised details to accommodate generalizations, all the students learned more about how to use support for a controlling idea. This series of assignments follows the sequence of stages of reading response from subjective through transitional toward objective stances, but it begins a step further back by allowing the oral, and the aural, to find a place in the composing process.⁵

At the end of this series of listening exercises, we found our students more capable of controlling the movement among generalities and details, and more importantly, more sure of the control they had over their reading and writing. Consciously listening *for* stories and their meanings showed our students that, indeed, they could find something unique to say to us and their classmates. Moreover, the overt practice in listening transferred to their own papers as they began to read drafts aloud and listen *for* the connections between intention and performance. Finally, we saw them begin to listen *for* and correct the errors that had helped place them in English 098. Each of the fifteen students in the class successfully wrote the final exam (a more complex version of the placement test essay). They moved on to the last developmental course before freshman composition with more confidence in their strategies for becoming college writers.

What we learned with our basic writing students, and what is now being supported by people like Richard Larson, is that listening *is* composing. All of us who teach composition should want to teach listening. When students learn that they can listen *for*, they begin to hear the sound of their own voices and realize, like Twain's cat, that though they may not see their ears, those ears will be there as they compose and revise.

Notes

¹ Many composition theorists have applied cognitive psychologists' studies of language acquisition to the college classroom. James Britton and James Moffett draw heavily upon cognitive theorists to argue for more attention to speaking/writing activities in composition. Their major sources are Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Jerome Bruner. A more recent study of these relationships is edited by Barry Kroll and Roberta Vann.

² Excellent descriptions of the fluent reading process include those of Frank Smith and Charles Cooper and Anthony Petrosky. Literary response critics disagree about the exact extent to which a reader "composes" any given text. Two theorists who represent a middle ground—where a reader "transacts" with a text to create meaning—are Wolfgang Iser and Louise Rosenblatt.

³ There are several new essays on classical rhetoric's application to modern pedagogy. See especially Susan Miller; Robert Connors, Lisa Ede, and Andrea Lunsford; Joseph Comprone and Katharine Ronald.

⁴ Stanley Fish introduced this term. He believes that literary readers exist as members of groups that set implicit limits on interpretations about what a text "means." Individual readers are members of communities—though they are often not aware of the fact—whose assumptions (about form, genre, language, rhetoric) determine the kinds of attention a text gets and therefore its meaning.

⁵ Joseph Comprone describes these stages of response to a literary work. He terms them "progressive exercises"—where students develop structures to organize their progress through a text, "transitional" exercises—where students expand their responses to networks of structures in the text, and "symbolic" exercises—where students look back to earlier responses and reword them with a view toward audience. See also Hephizibah Roskelly.

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Ann B. Dobie

ORTHOGRAPHICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE, OR HOW TO TEACH SPELLING

Until a few years ago I, like many teachers of composition, dealt with orthographical errors in student papers by routinely marking "sp" beside each misspelled word and occasionally delivering an injunction to "look it up in the dictionary." Having done my duty, I moved on to other matters, rarely questioning whether further assistance from me was either needed or possible. If I had gone on to consider my role in improving the spelling of my college freshmen and had concluded that I should offer more help than I usually gave, I would have had to reach the unhappy realization that I simply did not know how to do much more than I was already doing. I only knew how to mark the errors and point out the correct forms.

The issue was strikingly brought to my attention when I was asked to serve on a search committee for a new director of the Alumni Office at my university. The applications turned up one candidate with outstanding experience and splendid letters of recommendation from former teachers, alumni, and other persons of prominence in the community. The committee, impressed, was moving towards approval when one of its members pointed out three misspelled words in the applicant's own letter. As the only English instructor of the group, I was neither very surprised nor bothered by the offending words. I stood alone, however. My colleagues on the committee reacted with shock and dismay. They reasoned that anyone who could not submit an application with the minimal correctness of properly spelled words wasn't the person for the job. Needless to say, the position went to another applicant, one with less spectacular credentials but with a correctly spelled introduction to

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his work. This small incident led me to acknowledge that the difficulties of English orthography are more perilous than I had thought. I was also forced to conclude that they are widespread. Homonyms, inflections, foreign words, and consonant alternations give even intelligent, well-educated people problems. Honors students as well as potential dropouts find themselves uncertain about how to spell even common words. The fact is that many Americans complete their basic schooling with only a moderately firm grasp of how the language is spelled, and large numbers of Americans graduate from high school and go on to college or work with spelling habits that can at best be called nonstandard. Finally concluding that I could no longer disregard the glaring lack in the spelling skills of many of my students, I set out to survey the recent research on the teaching of spelling and to devise methods to help students who are poor spellers, using a minimum of classroom time.

I found that the problem is not a new one. Benjamin Franklin, hoping to improve the spelling of his new countrymen, undertook to improve the situation in 1767 by trying to bring order to the orthographic confusion of the language (Allred 5). His was only one of many plans to come, for simplifying a system which so many writers have failed to master. None has been notably successful, and although reform is an issue discussed today, the strong resistance met in some quarters coupled with a natural reluctance to embark on troublesome change will probably defeat current efforts towards spelling standardization. William J. Stevens is typical of those who object to reform. He argues that phonetic spelling, the reform most frequently suggested, would probably cause as many problems as it would solve. To cite only one, homonyms would be spelled alike, thus further confusing their semantic differentiation. He also objects to the fact that respelling words phonetically would divorce them from their etymologies, and thus make the language poorer (86).

Faced with the fact that many writers of English spell poorly and with the probability that reform is a distant and unlikely prospect, some educators have advocated simply dropping the issue and admitting the impossibility of teaching it with sufficient effectiveness to justify the time spent on it. Bobbie M. Anthony cites several studies which indicate that the teaching of spelling is useless. She mentions a study from the 1950s which states that an average of twelve minutes a day is sufficient for classroom spelling study. Any more, it says, is ineffective. She goes on to report a study made ten years later which found that, unlike other subjects, spelling does not profit from substantially increased classroom time. Extended periods of study are not paralleled by an increase of spelling achievement. To check those findings, Anthony conducted another study in 1971 that determined that neither teacher nor student variables influence class spelling achievement. It suggested that classroom time spent studying spelling is, on the average, wasted. Her conclusion is, therefore, that spelling should probably be eliminated as a serious concern of the classroom (130-133).

With less scientific arguments many teachers of composition have arrived at conclusions much like those of Anthony. Their position is

understandable if not defensible. They are probably not trained to teach spelling. Their primary concern is with more complex problems of writing—i.e., logic, structure, stylistics. The result is that students continue to make spelling errors and reap the penalties. And, as I learned from my committee experience, the penalties are not all academic ones. Although most people will say that spelling is not a high-level intellectual attainment (Clifford 253), they go right on to make judgments about a writer's intellect based on the accuracy of his or her spelling.

Until recently, spelling research has been primarily concerned with such matters as comparisons between oral spelling and silent spelling, with test-study vs. study-test methods. Current research, however, has involved itself with more sophisticated questions. It has as a consequence learned that the ability to spell is not simply a low order memory task, but a highly complex and active intellectual accomplishment acquired by a comprehensive study of how the English language is represented in writing. Learning to spell, therefore, cannot be restricted to the study of the relationship of letters and sounds, but must take place in the context of general language study. Instruction should provide opportunities for students to explore the ways in which the spoken language is related to the written form and to discover how they can apply that knowledge in spelling. It should not be confined to "spelling programs" or "units."

If, then, spelling is more than a matter of assigned word lists, what general approaches to instruction are available to teachers? On one approach most authorities are in agreement. Researchers repeatedly stress that an inductive approach is preferable to one in which a teacher presents the subject as a series of codified rules. Carol Chomsky speaks providing students with a strategy based on the realities of language, meaning that teachers should help students search for a systematic reason why a word should be spelled the way it is. Chomsky argues that it is more productive to learn how to look for regularities than to memorize the spelling of isolated words (306-309). Richard Hodges argues that an inductive approach is effective because the process is closer to the one naturally used by good spellers. He reasons that because good spellers have intuitively absorbed the basic orthographical principles underlying many words, poor spellers should discover the rules behind spelling for themselves (46).

Two separate studies done in 1975 found that induction is a more fruitful means of study than teacher presentation. They found that if students discover their own mistakes and the reason for a particular spelling, they will adopt the correct spelling more quickly. Robert Fitzsimmons and Bradley Loomer, for example, came to the conclusion that having students correct their own tests is the "single most important factor" in their learning to spell (20).

Earlier research, by Grace Fernald, had already pointed out that spelling is a multisensory process. It brings into play the visual, auditory, and haptic (kinesthetic and tactile) senses. Her work suggests that an effective teaching program should use as many of those senses as possible (32). Believing that English is primarily a visual language, Homer

Hendrickson emphasizes the visual sense for those who would become good spellers. Defining visualization as the ability to see, know, and manipulate some person, place, or experience, he speaks of it as the "highest priority for those who would become good spellers. He goes so far as to state that it is the highest order of thinking that man can do" (2).

A substantial body of data has also been gathered concerning the phonology of English and its relationship to spelling. Although controversy still exists about some of the conclusions that have been drawn, there is considerable agreement about the importance of careful listening in improving spelling. As Carol Chomsky points out, phonological theory has recently produced a more positive view of English orthography than the traditional belief that its irregularity makes it a relatively poor system for representing the spoken language (287). In fact, a 1963 study at Stanford University sponsored by the Bureau of Cooperative Research of the United States Office of Education showed that English orthography closely approximates the structure of the oral code. Using computer techniques to analyze 17,310 words from the "common core" vocabulary, it proved that the spelling of English phonemes is much more consistent than was heretofore believed (Horn 38). In addition, Paul Hanna has reported that more than half of the consonant phonemes have particular spellings that occur 80% or more of the time; thirty of them are represented by thirty different graphic options 84% of the time. Many of the vowel phonemes have particular graphemic representations 80% or more of the time in the lexicon, although twenty-two of them are represented by twenty-two different graphemic options 62% of the time (188,192).

Recent research has also discovered that the development of spelling ability does not happen piecemeal. It is a holistic endeavor in which several aspects of word structure are experienced with each written language encounter: correspondences of sounds and letters, letter sequences, word building, etc.

And finally, as Dorothy Thompson points out, short segments of study are more effective than long ones. Speed should be encouraged in each activity to maintain concentration of the student. The atmosphere should be relaxed enough to allow students to feel free to drill aloud and to make mistakes without fear, but intense enough to move quickly (16).

The ordinary course in composition cannot afford to give over much of its already crowded schedule to the teaching of spelling, regardless of the effectiveness and inventiveness of the general methods and approaches surveyed above. My plan is for a short course in spelling, using only fifteen to twenty minutes of each class. Although a period of three to four weeks is recommended for a class that meets three times a week, an instructor can extend the course, or even shorten it by using selected portions of it. The emphasis is on introducing techniques that students can use on their own over a long period of time. With sufficient self-discipline, students will be able, after this short course, to turn themselves into more confident and effective spellers.

The daily schedule opens with a test of twenty words and an immediate self-check of the test, followed by the introduction of methods for building spelling skills. The test words should be drawn from papers written by the students and grouped so that they fit the skill-building exercises to be taken up that day. The test check is carried on by the use of an overhead projector, with students checking their own quizzes. (Arthur Gates and others have found that testing before studying is an effective way of helping students to find their weaknesses. Because most writers are unsure of their spelling, they cannot tell when they are going wrong (18).) Following Virginia Irwin's practice, each word's problem is discussed as the class goes through the list on the transparency. Color-coded transparencies can be used to aid students in locating the troublesome aspect of a word, but a simpler method is to underline or capitalize the problem spots (1-2).

BELIEF COMPARATIVE envIRONment occuRRence

After class, students should record their missed words on 3 X 5 cards, one word to a card. Jenevies Sharknas asks students to include the pronunciation and at least one sentence showing how the word is used in context (64). The cards can also be used by the students to quiz each other at the beginning of class each day as everyone gets settled.

Outside of class students should also study each of the missed words using Norman Hall's Letter Mark-Out Corrected Test. That is, they mark out any letter or letters missed in a word, write the correct letter or letters above the marked-out ones, and then rewrite the complete word to the side of the original misspelling. The advantage of the process is that it focuses attention on the parts of the word that are misspelled (477).

visable visⁱble visible

Significantly, a study done by C. G. Rowell indicates that repeated copying of words alone has not been proven to have any positive effectiveness whatsoever (255).

As noted earlier, researchers have found that although each speller has individual eccentricities, several major causes are responsible for the bulk of orthographical errors. James Conely has found four major ones: the eclectic nature of the language itself, mispronunciation of words, confusion of similar words, and mistaking etymologies (243-244). The following skill-building exercises were designed to deal with those problems.

1. *Sensory Development.* Students respond positively to learning techniques that offer specific remedies for spelling problems. The most successful, and therefore the most popular ones are based on use of the visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic senses. Many procedures emphasize the first one. For example, following the suggestion of Mary Clifford, students can improve their visual memory by writing a word in the air, using a finger to make the troublesome letters especially large,

or they can write on paper, putting the problem spots in red or some other bright color (261). Leon Radaker emphasizes visualization by asking students to imagine words as if they were on an outdoor movie screen. The image should be stabilized and held as long as possible (370). A similar procedure has a student mentally trace the letter of a word.

Most learning techniques that invoke the auditory sense involve pronunciation. One such procedure has been found to be especially helpful to native speakers who drop the final syllable when they say a word, and thus fail to write the syllable as well. It requires them to emphasize the problem portion of a word as they say it. For example, the person who habitually leaves off the final *-d* of *used* should practice pronouncing the word as "you-said." Mentally visualizing each letter while stressing the syllable reinforces awareness of it.

Delayed copying, as explained by L. A. Hill, combines several senses by requiring students to see, say, hear, and feel the word while studying it. First they look at the whole word, then look away, pronounce it, and write it from memory. Then they check it against the original. The process is repeated if necessary (238).

2. Mnemonic Devices. The most widely used mnemonic device is association. A time-honored practice, it calls for students to form ridiculous associations that will fix the correct spelling of a word in their memory. For example, principal uses *a*, the first letter of the alphabet; the opposite of *all wrong* is *all right*.

3. Word Groups. Another method of building skills by classroom activities involves discussion of word groups. The groups can be composed by students or presented on transparencies prepared by the instructor. They can be portmanteau words that have double letters—e.g., *misspell* and *roommate*: they can be words with the schwa sound, ambiguous consonant sounds, or silent consonants. The skill-building exercises used in class should provide strategies for dealing with the group under discussion. Carol Chomsky points out, for example, that when dealing with words that have silent consonants, it is helpful to associate each one with a root word in a different form that does not silence the letter. For instance, the *g* in *sign* is easily heard in *signature*; the *c* in *muscle* is apparent in *muscular* (307). Groups of words that have consonant alternation become easier to spell after the exchange is noted and discussed. For instance, words such as *coincidental-coincidence*, *pirate-piracy* provide a pattern for other words in which the letters *t* and *c* are exchanged.

Finally, discussion of word families improves vocabulary, syntax, and sentence structure as well as spelling. Elizabeth Carson has her class take a word and compose sentences using it in as many different forms and parts of speech as they can devise (4).

4. Phonics. The subject of phonics continues to be controversial, with its defenders and disparagers still arguing. However, it can be used to some small extent in classroom work, if only to heighten students' awareness of what they are saying and hearing. Specific activities can begin with the dictation of nonsense words—e.g., *lamash*, *glothe*, *smurg-*

ing, words that show that many English locutions have predictable spellings based on frequent sound-letter combinations. Students should be made aware that they can depend on their ears to some degree.

Homonyms and their problems must be addressed at some point in any discussion of spelling. Thomas Pollock, who made an extensive study of about 50,000 misspelled words in high school English papers, found that the third largest group of spelling errors grew out of confusion of homonyms and near homonyms (1-2). When sound alone cannot help the student distinguish between two words, Virginia Irwin's advice is helpful. She says to select the easier of the two words to remember, learn how to spell it and when to use it, then use the second one on all other occasions (1-2).

5. **Rules.** The learning of rules and jingles is a less effective method of study than others described here because it is not inductive: it does not allow students to discover for themselves how a word "works." However, if instructors decided to use such techniques, I recommend they follow Thomas Foran's "rules about rules."

- a. Some rules should be taught, but only a few, and only those that have few or no exceptions.
- b. Teach only one rule at a time.
- c. Teach a rule only when there is need for it.
- d. Teach rules inductively, and integrate them with groups of words.
- e. Review rules frequently.
- f. Focus on the ability to use rules, not simply quote them (23-24).

Following the diagnostic quizzes, the discussion, and the skill-building exercises, there must be a final test. In such a "short course" it can take several forms. It can be given by the traditional "teacher calls out the words" process—a time-honored method, but one that does not necessarily test each student on his or her problem words. Coming a bit closer to that goal, the instructor can have pairs of class members test each other, following the drill pattern already established. Of course, the most highly individualized test is the one put on cassette tape for each student. This method is especially effective if the university has a well-equipped writing center.

The final test is not likely to reflect astonishing changes in student spelling. Every teacher knows that significant improvement is a long-term process, and a few weeks of study will not bring miraculous results. This program, however, has a number of aspects that recommend its use. From an instructor's point of view, it provides some individualized instruction without the need for expensive machines. It can be used with large groups or small ones. To teach it requires no special training or expertise, and it can be employed in the traditional classroom over a period of several weeks without seriously impeding other work that must go on there. From the students' point of view, such a program has even more positive aspects, because it gives them specific techniques by which they can continue to learn and improve long after the course is over. In a world that uses spelling as a criterion of judgment, having the means to develop basic spelling skills is no small advantage.

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Warren Herendeen

OF TRICKSTERS AND DILEMMAS IN ESL WRITING CLASSES: AN EPISTOLARY ACCOUNT

Dear Lynn,

This epistolary account about tricksters and dilemmas in ESL writing classes is prompted by your tale of a need for new sources of vitality in general in writing classes. If we listen close to home, I think we may hear vital signs in tales that come down to us in oral traditions such as that of the Cherokee.

Once upon a scholarly time, in search of a means to illuminate Vygotsky's theory of concept-formation as a gloss on Marx, I retold a sly tale of Sequoia and his fabled linguistic trick (I recently witnessed another retelling in a brief television film). In *Correspondence Two* I wrote, "...Sequoia, chief of the Cherokee, was fascinated by the spectacle of American soldiers being talked to by their mail and by their talking back to blank white leaves which were then folded, sealed, and dispatched. Sequoia noticed many other conversations the soldiers had, with books and newspapers: all was so different from Cherokee ways of communication. Suddenly, an idea was born: Sequoia would discover how to make the leaves speak Cherokee. He listened carefully, counted the syllables in his language, devised a syllabary, laboriously figured out how to symbolize the sounds, and then on heaps of bark chips wrote every Cherokee word he knew or heard. Unfortunately, his wife, in the indignation of her ignorance, burned his heaps. He left, on a quest for a better system and for a new wife more sympathetic to Cherokee linguistics.

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“Finally, Sequoia succeeded in inventing an alphabetic system that could perfectly analyze the Cherokee language. Placing his trained young daughter in a Cherokee meeting, he left while discussion ensued, returning to read back to the amazed Cherokee his daughter’s verbatim record of the meeting. Thus was the transforming concept of writing brought to the Cherokee. It was not a heap of broken bark chips, nor a complex of words organized by similarities of sounds or spellings, nor a pseudo-concept such as an assessment of the skill demonstrated by his daughter in taking the minutes of the meeting. Rather, it was a concept, an abstract method that permitted the exchange of one mode of expression for another, of orality for literacy. It expressed its own value no matter what literary form it took and embodied a reflective dimension. This is writing, essential tool of thought in civilized societies.”

Having told this tale, I was diverted subsequently into speculations on the value of such catalysts in writing. As a concept, a tale seemed to generate another concept in an intellectual and imaginative dialectic. I continued this line of reasoning briefly in the essay on Sequoia and Vygotsky, asking: where does this leave the basic writer who allegedly cannot think in concepts?

My experience with nontraditional students and non-students—inmates of the New York State prison system, a South Bronx gang I helped organize into a block improvement council, and ESL speakers with little or no formal training in their first language—revealed no instance in which these persons demonstrated an inability to think conceptually. In one instance, one of the South Bronx group, a high school dropout after his freshman year, had composed a dozen notebooks containing chapters organized by various techniques (dreams, TV skits, adventures on and off the block, et al.).

I have wandered on many wayward paths in my search for vital catalytic sources, but it was in a summer class at Columbia on orality, literacy, and technology (offered by the talented linguist Professor Clifford Hill) that I first came to see the immense catalytic power of the trickster and dilemma tales, whether African or American, in writing classes. Later, I tried them out in my ESL classes, where I have continued my habit of writing responses along with my students and then reading my responses to the class just as they do.

What works? Not every trickster or dilemma tale works perfectly or absolutely as a catalyst, but all are at least initially provocative. Luckily, there are countless tales to draw on and they are frequently brief, so one need not bank on an all-or-nothing roll of one trickster and his tale. The teacher needs to beware primarily of the seeming simplicity of trickster and dilemma tales. And, they should be introduced very carefully, with thoughtful explanations and explications of unusual terms. On the whole, I have found it best to start with a tale I devise myself.

For example, I once told my students that terrorists had taken over a tourist ship at sea and blown it up. Passengers ran for their lives to the lifeboats only to discover that all the lifeboats but one had been destroyed. Fifteen panic-stricken passengers managed to clamber into the one lifeboat and escape from both the sinking ship and the desperate arms of the passengers left behind. One of the fifteen aboard the lifeboat turned out to be an officer of the destroyed ship. It soon became evident to those aboard that the lifeboat was able to accommodate no more than eight people safely. Fifteen brought the boat to water level and slightly below. The saved began to cup their hands to capture the water in the boat and toss it out. As night came on, a storm broke. Rain poured down on the boat and the waves rose and fell on the sinking craft. The officer suddenly reached to his side and gently eased a very elderly man into the water. The old man's young grandson and granddaughter watched with horror. No one moved. The officer said nothing, but looked grim. The remaining passengers looked death at the officer. The storm continued, and about each half-hour, as the boat sank yet further beneath the waves, the officer gently eased another passenger into the water, always the oldest among the group. By midnight, the storm was dying and the boat floated just above the water line. The first lights from heaven showed the passengers sitting mutely, stonefaced, looking accusingly at the officer. With the dawn came a military craft which sighted the lifeboat, soon taking the survivors aboard. They promptly accused the officer of murdering seven old men and women on the lifeboat. At the trial, the jury listened to prosecution and defense arguments and then made its determination. The judge imposed a sentence.

I asked my class what the arguments were, what the jury decided, and what the judge's sentence was.

By listening critically to the story, the students were able to propound a number of possible answers to the questions posed. As argument after argument was presented for the defense or the prosecution ("at least he saved seven lives"; "but he also saved himself"; "he murdered seven people"; "he set himself up as God"; "he should have sacrificed himself as an example to the others on board and then let those who wished to follow suit, do so"; "he had to act coolly and professionally and no one else had his qualifications"; etc.), I thought the students would benefit from writing out their thoughts in expository form. Once written, the drafts were read to the class and further critical listening and critical thinking were evident.

Those who had thought it a relatively simple issue to decide, found out differently. Those who were impatient to get rid of a tedious, atypical event found that dilemmas can sometimes be partly resolved by thought and that impatience is hardly an appropriate form of expression when matters of life and death are involved. (I divulged at a strategic point that my account was based on a true story that occurred in Philadelphia in the nineteenth century.) The social compromise outlined in the lifeboat story led easily to new fields of speculation and to new assignments.

As I thought about these matters, I decided to introduce one or two short dilemma-tales of African origin, but without the terminological trappings (such as the African names of the characters) that might have been a distraction. Thus, I told the tale of a pregnant panther who killed the husband of a pregnant human wife. The human mother later died in childbirth, but her baby lived. The panther baby undertook to care for the human child secretly until both were about twelve. At that time, they set upon the panther mother and killed her. They had many wonderful adventures during the next year. But, suddenly, the young panther sensed danger and warned his human brother to go back to his own kind. The human boy agreed reluctantly after securing the young panther's promise to visit him in the village every night at midnight, bringing fresh meat each time. This went on for years, even after the human boy had grown up and married. But one night, the panther lay down by accident next to his human brother's wife, who, reaching for her husband, found a beast's body in his place. Her husband was tongue-tied in shock as alarmed neighbors rushed in and killed his panther brother.

Now, Lynn, all is not reading for pleasure! I expect an epistolary return in which you surmise what the human brother did the next day when he thought about how he had treated his panther brother. My students offered many answers after our critical discussion of the possible ways of interpreting the story. They seemed somewhat more sophisticated by this point than they had been when first analyzing the story about the lifeboat (and how the fourteen remaining passengers should have tossed the officer into the water or how the government should have awarded him a Congressional Medal of Honor for heroism at sea). Now they thought that perhaps the panther brother had not been quite properly treated; perhaps his human brother had been cowardly and ashamed of his panther brother; perhaps the story was an allegory about gratitude, or an allegory that could be adapted to another society and thus show its universality. Perhaps, they surmised, the human brother became a monk and repented for what he had done; perhaps he had a better relationship with his wife as he outgrew his animal sympathies; perhaps he committed suicide in despair over his inhuman ingratitude to the panther brother who had raised him—and who had killed his own mother in punishment for what she had done to his human brother's family. Perhaps the human brother never ate meat again.

In taking the idea of this allegory as the basis of another assignment, I found the results encouraging for its release of imagination. As I recall, one story concerned a drug-abuse problem experienced by a Black family living close to the Spanish Harlem section of New York City. The Black family—a mother with fatherless children—was ruled by a woman who had succumbed to drug addiction. In her mad desire for a fix, she had, while pregnant, assaulted a married Puerto Rican man, robbed him, and accidentally killed him. His death caused his Puerto Rican wife to give birth prematurely; she died in childbirth, but her child lived. The boys born to the two women grew up near each other and became very close

friends. But, over the years the Black woman, still a drug addict, became more and more violent, abusing her son physically and verbally. The neighbors noticed this violence and also noticed that the two boys—José and Joe—were inseparable companions. There was quite a lot of talk about this but the situation endured for years. When they were twelve, the boys decided to form a gang of just themselves called the Two Panthers. One night José visited Joe just as a fight was beginning. In the ensuing fracas, José, trying to protect his brother, accidentally pushed his friend's mother into a broken chair. She fell backwards, hit her head sharply on the iron clubfoot of an old gas range and died immediately of an injury to the brain. The boys were happy for a year, wandering around their mixed neighborhood at 116th and 117th Street in New York City. But soon the neighbors began to talk more openly. The Two Panthers spoke about it. Joe felt that he had better go back to his own people. José almost cried, but Joe said he would visit him often, when nobody was around, and he would bring José gifts from time to time as tokens of their endless friendship. This went on for years. Eventually José found a job in a meat market and got married. Joe found jobs hard to get and began dealing in drugs. Joe would visit José from time to time, always at night, and bring him money sometimes, a few joints, or other small tokens. One night, the police chased Joe up and down 157th Street, down Prospect Avenue, until, breathless, he reached the fire escape at José's place. He climbed up and went in the window as José rose to meet him. Joe fell down on the bed exhausted, forgetful of his agreement made years earlier that he would never enter José's apartment, but wait for José on the fire escape. José's wife awakened and began screaming when she saw a strange man next to her. The neighbors were aroused and ran to the door and banged loudly. The police following Joe heard the suspicious sounds, broke in the door, and shot Joe as he sprang to escape through the window. José did not say anything to the police about who Joe was or how Joe came to be there. But, after that, José went about with a sad face and in a little while he went inside himself and would no longer talk to anyone. You can still see him of a Sunday at the Bronx Zoo. He sits in front of the panther cage, watching as the great and beautiful beasts restlessly walk behind the bars, sometimes stopping to look curiously at their perennial visitor, sometimes stretching and showing their claws and teeth as they incline their stomachs to the ground. Sometimes a light snarl seems to escape from their well-fed jaws.

In trickster tales we often see tricksters pulling tricks for the sake of the trick itself, but sometimes it is for the sake of establishing social cohesion in a universe which at times seems almost to shout its objection to any such cohesion. Sometimes the tricksters are hardly more than cheap charlatans (some Duke or Dauphin on his way to a presidency or vice-presidency perhaps). But the best trickster stories seem to me to lie at the heart of great cultural myths. Among these are the Ananse tales from Africa, a charming and somewhat gross example of which concerns Ananse's tricking a king to gain his daughter. Ananse pretends to describe

the king's daughter's physical features while in reality scratching himself in a garden of prickles which he has to clean in order to win the daughter. Later, when he explains his trick to his new bride, she indignantly moves to her own mat. Ananse then pours water on her and threatens to expose her apparent enuresis to one and all in the village if she does not reunite her mat with his. She is conquered, not by male superiority but by an uncomfortable practical joke with a moral such as lies at the heart of Petruchio's trick of love for Kate. When the mats are together, the loving order of heaven is established on earth.

These assignments and discussions led to other assignments such as requests for stories without endings. These would potentially lead the student (and the teacher) into the region of myth where the supreme trick and trickster lie in artful anticipation of human attention. A student thought up a situation in which, in the eighteenth century, a slave had escaped from his master after killing his brutal owner. Hunted down, the slave took refuge in a cave where he watched a spider spin a web in the fading light. In the morning, as the slave foresaw, the dead master's friends and household and soldiers of the local militia came seeking the slave. They were approaching...

In answer to the question, "What did the slave do?" my students were now wiser than ever. The slave had thought all during the night of all sorts of tricks by which to get away. He may have blocked up the cave, left footprints that pointed away from the cave—or, overslept because his alarm clock failed to go off. Students were well on the way to greater discoveries through critical listening, critical thinking, and critical writing. *Critical* came to mean *creative*.

Having resolved the slave's seeming dilemma with a variety of tricks, I offered the following to their collective ingenuity: "A young wife fed her husband's old mother every day. The old woman was unable to move, except to eat. One day she suddenly sank her teeth in the young wife's hand and refused to let go. Her eyes told you she knew what she was doing. No one could figure out what to do."

Some students thought of cutting off the young woman's hand; others suggested pinching the old woman's nose. Rising higher, a trickster of negotiations suggested asking the old woman to nod her head once in the affirmative and twice in the negative about various propositions, such as: Would she let go if she were moved to a decent nursing home, were guaranteed three edible meals per day (instead of stale rice that was forced down her throat by her daughter-in-law), and given proper medical care? The old woman nodded once. The trickster asked both women to sign and say, "I do." When the old woman said, "I do," the trickster whipped the young woman's hand out of the old woman's mouth. As screams subsided, all were satisfied, heaven was again in order, and out in the yard the merry note of Chanticleer was heard.

Yet, I was still not certain that we had entered deeply enough into the region where the trickster artist ultimately dwells. I therefore told a famous tale in language appropriate to the English proficiency level

of my English as a Second Language students. This tale (set in the eighteenth century) concerns a young Indian silversmith, with a limp, named He-Who-Discovers-Something. He had come to a neighboring Cherokee village to find his uncle. He failed to find his uncle but did find a wife. Most of the time he sat around making silver buckles and necklaces to sell to the pale people of the town nearby, but occasionally he would take a walk in the woods and sit by a tree and listen to the leaves talk as the wind inspired them. His favorite tree was a huge oak that seemed as high as heaven and whose roots reached down into the eternal beginnings of the tribe. He-Who-Discovers-Something began to sit more and more frequently by his oak tree, and finally began staying out all night, to the indignation and consternation of his wife. To her endless inquiries as to what he did out all night, he would merely reply that he was listening to the leaves talk. To him, the side of the oak was like a door of a great and mysterious tepee whose splendid skirt covered the earth and was stitched to the stars. The leaves seemed to whisper in their own language about the mysteries within the tepee, but He-Who-Discovers-Something could not make out what they were saying. After a long time, however, the brave began to make out a word or two. The words became a sentence and the brave suddenly realized that the leaves were speaking to him: "This door is for you but you are not permitted to go in at this time." Well-pleased with his discovery, He-Who-Discovers-Something picked up pieces of bark and began to carve the syllables of the talking leaves on each chip he picked up. These chips grew into piles. Villagers came by. His wife came by. Enraged by the sight of worthless chips, she set them on fire, wounded the old tree, and nearly asphyxiated the talking leaves. The forest sang unkindly of the Polluting Squaw. He-Who-Discovers-Something still sat by the oak and began to dream again of its mysterious interior as the leaves sang their lullabies. Many years went by, during which a Cherokee woman who loved the sounds of the talking leaves came to sit with the brave. A daughter was born to them by the oak and the busy leaves sang a birthday hymn to the baby girl. He-Who-Discovers-Something taught his daughter the meaning of the syllables of the talking leaves, and by the time she was twelve she had carved the syllables she had learned onto eighty-six bark chips, smiling the while at her father and mother because she had need of so few bark chips for the multitudinous speeches, songs, and outpourings of the whispering leaves. He-Who-Discovers-Something was himself now frequently whispered about by the talking leaves. The mysterious tepee that reached to heaven beckoned him always within but the leaves spoke, saying that it was not permitted for him to enter. At last, near death, he importuned the leaves once more. The branches bent to hear his last words. "Why has no one else ever come to enter this way in all these years?" The leaves spoke saying, "Because this way was only for you, a gateway now closed." The child of He-Who-Discovers-Something listened to the leaves and wrote down every word. She held her father's head in her hands and came out to the mysterious tepee, word for word,

what the leaves had said, verse after verse, minute after minute. Then she began to smile through her tears, sighing, and singing, "Because this way was only for you, a gateway now closed. Because this way was only for you, a gateway now closed."

He was tricked! Why did he believe the leaves? Maybe he should have listened to a higher authority. But look what happened to him: at least he was able to trick the leaves into giving him the gift of written language! It chanced that He-Who-Discovers-Something is one translation of the name Sequoia, and by this charm of language, we are involved in both a trick and revelation. Thus, there is more to critical thinking, listening, reading, and writing than principles and logical deductions. There are also intuitions and perspectives. Sometimes the trickster cannot make this point without absurdist logic, without pouring water on his wife, without poltergeisting his situation.

As you may have supposed, Lynn, my students were at first baffled by tricksters and dilemmas and I learned to be very careful (and slow) about introducing them. The trick, however, was always more powerful than their frustration at not being able to think of much, at not being able to reason culturally or think critically. In their impatience, they first offered crackpot, slapdash, immoral, demeaning, and coarse solutions ("Kill her!"). Their solutions at first mirrored only one level of consciousness, but soon higher levels and superior solutions were found.

I heard recently that the 500 most common words in English have 54,000 different meanings. So, it is not surprising that these trickster and dilemma tales radiate many options and complexities, many ambiguities and branchings that lead to imaginative solutions. For example, one discovers in one of the Ananse tales, that the "high" god is tricked by the son of the trickster. How high can such a "high" god be? And yet, how much more human such a high god is, than one "high" in other senses! If students can be thus tricked into imaginative thoughts to be written down for an assignment, we may find ourselves in the celestial domain of true trickery at long last, and see why the trickster is at once so loving, so comical, so whimsical, so imaginative, so paradoxical, so obnoxious, so dangerous to stability, so functional in stability, so rangy in his manifestations—sometimes a Mr. Apollinax, an Apuleius, or, for those who have read *Marius the Epicurean* ten or twenty times, he will sometimes seem even a Walter Pater.

Editors, teachers, writers come to realize that there is a trick at the heart of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. There are the complexities of code creations based on random selections of symbols which are then figured out by the receiver who knows some trick lurks at the center of the mysterious signal system. Simply, we may say or hear something about wanting or having a light or a cigarette, knowing that such is merely a trick to establish communication, to bring our mats together. Or, we may compose an epistolary account of tricks to trick readers into more imaginative and artful writing assignments, to lift the level of trickery in the classroom and establish communion with the

countless tricksters in our world in the heart of their dilemmas (for a trickster sometimes solves a dilemma but is sometimes lost in one). It is not necessarily a shame to be a trickster or suffer a dilemma, for if Shakespeare was James's magician of a thousand masks, Chaucer may serve as our master juggler of a thousand tricks. Students begin to sense the sheer glee involved in thinking in this way—this newly legitimated way perhaps—and they write little sallies, in our tricky language, which, especially in my students' papers, are often strung with the mysterious, idiosyncratic interlanguage gewgaws of the second language learner en route to trickster fluency in the target language.

Assignments yet to come will seek dreams from my students. They will wake up, write down the dreams they remember, bring their reports to class, and ask the class to help them understand their dreams. Then they will write more about themselves and their dreams. Thus, by a strange return to their beginnings, they will gain insight into the tricky ways our psyches are constructed, for many dreams are extraordinary tales of dilemmas from which there seems no escape until we awaken and drown in a reality of another kind by a trick of our psyche.

As you can see, Lynn, this epistolary account has become a story without an end. Just to show the unexpected twists and turns which innocent in-class activities may have: I attended today an all-day Faculty Seminar at Mercy College on "Ethics Across the Curriculum." The witty speaker seemed to me to have caught the fancy and attention of our 250 faculty members to an unusual degree. The substance of his remarks was effectively illustrated, even punctuated, by numerous stories which characteristically concerned some trick of thought or language or deed and some dilemma of a moral kind. As I listened, I reflected that, at heart, the expository mode and the narrative mode do not seem very different. As for He-Who-Discovers-Something, the gateway may in some sense be closed after revelation—after exposition or narration—perhaps because the revelation has been made. Such is my modest gloss on Kafka's famous parable, as enabled by a Cherokee linguistic trickster. What difference morally or intellectually if the mode is one or the other? We can hear both, for Linnaeus could love and name a tree and so could, and did, Sequoia.

Faithfully,

Warren

Warren Herendeen

P.S.: *Correspondences Two* is a broadside published by Boynton/Cook in early 1985. Those interested in tricksters and dilemmas will find handy sources, such as Paul Radin's *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*, with commentaries by Karl Kerenyi and C. G. Jung, with a new introduction by Stanley Diamond for the 1972 Shoken Books edition (originally published in 1956); William R. Bascom's *African Dilemma Tales* (Mouton Publishers: The Hague, 1975); and Robert D. Pelton's *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight* (University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, 1980). But the thoughtful listener will realize that tricksters and dilemmas suffuse our universe, and examples are not far to seek.

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Elizabeth Taylor Tricomi

KRASHEN'S SECOND-LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORY AND THE TEACHING OF EDITED AMERICAN ENGLISH

Recent research in composition theory has provided writing teachers with an abundance of information and techniques for teaching most parts of the writing process. They have only to pick up a journal or attend a conference in order to be supplied with the latest ideas on everything from heuristics, to conferencing, to teaching revising through word processing. When teaching the mechanics of writing, to help students gain control of Edited American English (EAE), however, many writing teachers feel at a loss. On this topic, one research study after another has shown that the formal study of grammar does not improve students' writing.¹ Writing teachers know, in fact, that the deviations from EAE in their students' papers are apt to be the most distracting and damning flaws to general readers and perhaps to many professors as well. Faced with this situation, what are writing teachers to do? One answer is that instead of basing their pedagogy exclusively on the results of group comparison studies² or on personal conviction grounded in experience, they can turn for guidance to research on language acquisition. Particularly useful in this regard is the second-language acquisition theory of Stephen D. Krashen which has major implications for the teaching of writing in the first language.

Central to Krashen's theory of second-language acquisition is his distinction between language *acquisition* and language *learning*, a distinction which other second-language acquisition researchers have called "perhaps the most important conceptualization in the field and [one which] has made possible the most productive models of SLA [second-

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language acquisition] yet developed" (Tollefson, Jacobs, and Selipsky 1). According to Krashen, acquisition is a subconscious process while learning is conscious. Although both play a role in developing second-language competence, acquisition is far more important, since the competence developed through it, is responsible for generating language and thus accounts for language fluency. Competence gained through learning, or the "Monitor" as Krashen terms it, can only modify language generated by acquired language competence. In other words, the second-language student can use learned rules to "monitor" or correct his language either before or after the moment of production. Monitoring serves a limited function, however, since it can operate only when there is sufficient time, when the focus is on form, and when the necessary rule has been learned. Normally these rather limited conditions are met chiefly when a person is writing or taking a discrete-point grammar test.

According to Krashen, learned competence and acquired competence develop in very different ways. In his view, language learning occurs through the formal study of rules, patterns, and conventions, a study which enables one to talk about and consciously apply the knowledge gained. Language acquisition, however, occurs quite differently, for it develops *exclusively*, Krashen believes, through "comprehensible input." That is, second-language students acquire language competence by exposure to language that is both understandable and meaningful to them. By concentrating on meaning, they subconsciously acquire form. The most valuable input for acquisition is language that goes just a step beyond the structures which second-language students have already acquired (or, in Krashen's terminology, $i + 1$, where i represents language at the students' current level of competence). No matter how appropriate the input, however, acquisition will not occur if a student's "affective filter," or collection of emotional responses that impede comprehension of meaning, is raised. Importantly, Krashen insists that learning does not turn into acquisition except in a certain convoluted way. This can occur only if second-language students successfully monitor their language production so that they provide their own grammatically correct comprehensible input. This self-produced input then becomes part of the total necessary for acquisition to take place (Krashen, *Principles and Practice* 9-124; Krashen and Terrell 7-62).

Obviously first-language acquisition is not identical with second-language acquisition, but there is evidence which suggests Krashen's formulation of the second-language acquisition process may be highly significant for first-language writing teachers. To begin with, much of Krashen's work accords with, indeed derives from, research in first-language acquisition, especially research which points to the importance of the comprehensible input supplied by the caretakers of young children. Furthermore, his prime evidence for the existence of the Monitor parallels the observed behavior of the first-language writing students. Krashen posits the existence of the Monitor largely upon studies based on the discovery that people, both children and adults, acquire the morphemes of a

second language in a remarkably similar order. Alterations in this natural order can be observed, however, when subjects receive formal instruction in late-acquired morphemes (the -s ending of English third-person singular present-tense verbs, for example) and then are given tests which require them to focus on form with ample time to respond. Under these conditions, they are able to supply morphemes which they have not yet shown evidence of acquiring. If these subjects are subsequently placed in situations where the emphasis is on communication, rather than form, they revert to the natural order of morpheme acquisition. All this suggests to Krashen that competence gained through learning is distinct from that gained through acquisition and that the former, the Monitor, manifests itself only when the focus is on form and there is sufficient time (*Principles and Practice* 12-25).

The results of these morpheme-studies are quite similar to the oft-observed phenomenon of first-language writing students completing grammar exercises perfectly and yet failing to transfer to their own papers the knowledge used in completing the exercises. They also seem pertinent to the studies indicating that formal study of grammar does not improve first-language students' writing abilities. In both cases students are generally unable to make use of formal knowledge of rules in situations where the emphasis is on meaning rather than form, thus implying a differentiation between learned and acquired grammatical competence in first-language students as well.³ This conclusion is supported by William Labov's observations of many educated Black speakers who spoke nonstandard English as children, learned standard English later, and are usually able through "audio-monitoring" to maintain it in their speech, but slip back into the vernacular when they are "tired, or distracted, or unable to hear" themselves or, conversely, when "intensely excited, emotionally disturbed, or very much involved in the subject" (35), in other words, when conditions are not conducive to monitoring.

Stimulated by the apparent parallels between Krashen's theory of second-language acquisition and the process of first-language acquisition, a number of researchers have begun to apply Krashen's work to the development of first-language writing skills.⁴ Included among these is Krashen himself. In this monograph *Writing: Research, Theory, and Applications*, Krashen hypothesizes that writing competence in the first language develops in the same way as second-language competence, that is, through exposure to comprehensible input. In the case of writing, however, it is reading that supplies the comprehensible input: "Writing competence . . . comes only from large amounts of self-motivated reading for interest and/or pleasure" (*Writing* 20). Much of Krashen's discussion of writing centers on the acquisition of the principles of rhetorical structure rather than features of EAE. He says when reading fails to provide all the necessary rules and conventions of grammar and punctuation, at least some can be taught for use in editing. In other words, teachers can help students fill in the gaps left by incomplete acquisition of EAE by teaching for conscious rule-learning (*Writing* 35). It seems to me, though, that Krashen's work, especially his theory of second-language acquisi-

tion, has far more wide-reaching implications for writing teachers seeking to improve their students' control of EAE.

At first consideration, it might seem that since writing provides sufficient time for monitoring, writing teachers should instruct their students in as many of the rules and conventions of EAE as possible, should load their Monitors up so to speak, and then help them turn their attention to form by encouraging or even insisting on careful editing. Such thinking contains several problems, however. First of all, as Krashen notes, only a few of the rules that govern any language, including English, have been described by linguists and of these, even fewer are known by the best teachers and so can be successfully taught to most of their students. Many writing teachers well-versed in traditional grammar have discovered this to be true when they have attempted to explain to ESL students the nature of their errors, only to find that they themselves do not know the rule that applies. Closely allied to this point is the fact that many rules are neither "learnable" (capable of being easily understood) nor "portable" (capable of being carried around in one's head and applied readily). Particularly telling is Krashen's observation that many people apply learned rules incorrectly, often overgeneralizing (*Principles and Practice* 92-97). This phenomenon can be found in both the *he can talks* of the dialect speaker who has just learned the standard third-person singular present-tense form and the hypercorrect *between him and I* of certain learned speakers who are overtaught the use of the nominative form. There is also some evidence that the rules of traditional grammar can be understood and applied only if they have been previously acquired (Hartwell 119-20). Add to all this the difficulty people often experience in shifting their attention from the meaning of what they have written to its form and the impracticality of their retaining a great many rules in their minds, and a picture of the sizable limitations of rule-learning appears.

In view, therefore, of the limitations and even drawbacks to conscious rule-learning, applying Krashen's theory does not lead to teaching—for conscious use—as many features of EAE as possible. Instead, his work, with its focus on the power of acquisition and the weaknesses of learning, suggests that writing teachers seeking to improve their students' control of EAE should emphasize language acquisition much more than they usually do. This does not mean that they should never teach for learning, for in some situations it is the most practical approach, but rather that they should recognize the limitations of such instruction and employ it only when necessary. In this regard, Krashen's work provides a valuable tool that can be used both to analyze and evaluate a number of pedagogical practices and to help construct a coherent philosophy of instruction in EAE. In the remainder of this paper I will discuss a number of teaching techniques in the light of Krashen's model of second-language acquisition, indicating both those which would seem to help students make use of and develop further their acquired language competence and those which appear to impede it.

Since Krashen's research indicates that acquired competence is so much more accessible and reliable than learned competence, teachers should help students exploit their acquired competence in whatever ways possible. One way of doing this is to teach students editing "tricks" that draw upon their ear for language. One such trick is covering up the first item in a compound prepositional object to check for proper pronoun use. For example, covering up *John and* in the phrase *to John and I* will immediately show most students that *me*, not *I*, is required in that location. Students can also be taught, in the manner described by Kathy Martin, to read a paper backwards from the last sentence to the first in order to "hear" fragments (4) and to expand contractions in order to determine if they work in a particular construction. The techniques developed by Robert DeBeaugrande, which build upon the "grammar of talk" or the unconscious knowledge of grammar used in everyday conversation, provide further examples of ways students can use their acquired competence in editing their papers. For instance, DeBeaugrande instructs students who have difficulty recognizing fragments to try to turn a "sentence" into a question which can be answered with a *yes* or *no*. If this is impossible, the collection of words in question is a dependent clause or some other construction, rather than a complete sentence (358-67). All of these "tricks," and many others which individual writing teachers have undoubtedly developed, possess the great advantage that they do not rely upon knowledge of terminology and rules which may be difficult to understand and learn, frequently incomplete or misleading, and easily misapplied. Rather, they build upon a sophisticated body of knowledge which students have already acquired.

But what if students' acquisition of certain constructions seems incomplete or practically nonexistent? In these instances, teachers can encourage acquisition through avoiding certain pedagogical techniques and employing certain other ones. Chief among techniques to avoid when teaching for acquisition is the use of what Thomas Friedmann calls "error-based" exercises (391).⁵ These are exercises which require students to choose the correct form out of several incorrect alternatives or to locate and correct the errors of grammar, punctuation, or usage in a passage. Through their input of erroneous or nonstandard forms, such exercises impede rather than promote students' acquisition of standard forms. Instead of teaching students, they merely test whether they are able, through either acquired or learned competence, to supply the correct forms.

In place of error-based exercises, it is far preferable to use students' own papers when teaching for acquisition. Rather than labeling their errors, however, and explaining how to correct them, teachers can discuss their students' sentences in terms of the confused or ambiguous meaning they convey. For instance, they can describe the ambiguity created for them as readers by a misplaced modifier without ever mentioning the term. Similarly, stumbling when reading out loud a sentence that lacks proper punctuation illustrates the appropriate placement of a comma

far more powerfully than a lecture on its various uses. Once aware of how their sentence structure or punctuation interferes with their communication of meaning, students can then, with assistance, attempt to repair them. In this way, they can strengthen their somewhat shaky acquisition of certain structures. Julia Falk helps to explain how this occurs when she describes the importance of errors in language acquisition: "Only through errors can the learner test hypotheses, revise them, and continue to develop" (441). By discovering through readers' responses that certain structures do not convey the intended meaning, students are encouraged to reformulate some of their hypotheses about the language. To the extent that this process is subconscious, acquisition occurs.

This method works well with a number of errors including misplaced or dangling modifiers, ambiguous pronoun reference, incorrect verb tense, faulty comparatives, and faulty or missing punctuation. For sentences that are more badly mangled, containing errors of the sort David Carkeet calls "strange" because of their resistance to categorization according to the usual handbook labels (682), a slightly different method is in order. Some examples of sentences of this sort follow:

"But I've come to realize that in the neighborhood where I was living was not a place for ladies especially at night."

"It is not overall change throughout these five years in Key Club that I have shown to be mature."

"But there is a limit that each one person want to do what he or she should do something by oneself and don't need any advice from anybody."

*"But now, after realizing how important it is to be myself, that I see how much I have matured."*⁶

For these sentences, simple discussion is again helpful. In dealing with "strange" errors, however, teachers cannot simply describe how part of the sentence is misleading because often the meaning of the entire sentence is garbled. Instead, the teacher must ask what the student meant by the sentence. When explaining, the student will often state another sentence which can be substituted for the original. If not, the teacher can try through questions and suggestions to lead the student to revise the sentence successfully. Here Valerie Krishna's observation that the logical subject of these "strange" sentences often appears in "prepositional phrases, object noun clauses, adjectives, adverbs, or other ancillary parts of the sentence" and her suggestions for helping students improve them can be useful (130). If the student is unable, even with help, to revise the sentence, the teacher may suggest a revised version. It is extremely important that the teacher's version conform to the student's intended meaning. Often I have thought I understood a garbled sentence, only to discover through conversation with its student-writer that I did not at all. If I had merely inserted my revised version, I would not have helped since my grammatically correct sentence would not have expressed the student's intended meaning. It is also important, when revising such sentences, to use as much of the original grammatical structure and wording as possible. The aim is to supply Krashen's $i + 1$, not the best possible version of the sentence.

Krashen states that a teacher can promote acquisition by providing students with appropriate comprehensible input. The only alternative procedure for language teachers which he describes is that of presenting students with a rule and then helping them practice applying it, a procedure which leads of course to learning. It is difficult to believe, however, that discussions of how meaning can be expressed, especially when that discussion does not include complex terminology and sophisticated analyses of how syntax went astray and thus does not turn the attention to form, would not aid in facilitating acquisition. Obviously discussing and revising one sentence in this way would be far from sufficient for acquisition to occur, but it would provide one more bit of comprehensible input, a bit that presumably would be particularly powerful since it would constitute the student's own meaning, expressed, with some assistance, by the student himself or herself.

Some errors, however, are not amenable to this approach since they merely distract attention rather than disrupt meaning. Often these errors are in items that convey redundant information. The *-s* ending on third-person singular verbs, for example, is redundant because the person and number are also carried by the noun or pronoun subject. Other items of this sort include the *-ed* ending of past-tense and past-participle forms, subject-verb agreement, possessive forms, some conventional forms of punctuation such as the placement of quotation marks, and certain commonly confused words such as *their/there* and *its/it's*. For errors on these items, writing teachers cannot concentrate on meaning in hopes of facilitating acquisition. Instead they must either wait for acquisition to occur naturally, if at all, or decide to teach for learning.

For teachers who choose the latter alternative, Krashen is again instructive, particularly in his description of the limitations of the Monitor and his resulting advice to teach for conscious use only simple, straightforward rules which are both "learnable" and "portable." Of course, what is learnable and portable for one student may not be for another. By keeping in mind Krashen's description of how the Monitor functions, as well as their own estimations of their students' conscious knowledge, teachers can determine the appropriateness of attempting to teach a particular rule to a particular student. It would be a waste of time, for example, to try to teach the *whoever/whomever* distinction to a student who has difficulty picking out subjects and verbs in simple sentences.

Krashen's emphasis on the limitations of the Monitor or learned competence also suggests that teachers should present rules in the way that makes them easiest to apply, that cuts down as much as possible on the amount of mental activity necessary to retrieve and employ them. This implies that teachers should not use contrast to teach features of EAE, as Friedmann observes in a different context (393-96). It may seem eminently reasonable to teach *it's* in contrast with *its*, but a student taught in this manner will forever associate the two and be forced to sort out the meaning of both before choosing one. Similarly, contrasting the plural *-s* ending of nouns with the singular *-s* ending of verbs only obfuscates

a point which is difficult enough for many students. An extension of this principle is that only one variation of a rule should be taught at a time. A student whose papers are replete with one type of subject-verb disagreement will be needlessly confused, not enlightened, by a comprehensive lecture on all the rules for subject-verb agreement.

Instead of instructing by contrast, it is often possible, even when teaching for learning, to blend inductive methods relying on acquired competence with overt rule-teaching. For example, the teacher can present a passage written in the present perfect to a student who regularly omits the *-ed* ending of this form and then ask the student about the time frame conveyed by the verbs. If the student answers correctly, the teacher can then point out the form of the verbs, particularly the *-ed* ending. In this way the teacher links the student's acquired sense of meaning with the standard form.⁷ The student can then practice the form by completing non-error-based exercises. Controlled composition exercises in which students change instances of one form throughout a passage to another form (simple past tense to present perfect, for example) work well for this.⁸ It can also be effective to have students write a paragraph or short paper on a topic that elicits the form just presented and then to ask them to underline and check for correctness all instances of the form. Both types of exercises are superior to the usual handbook sort of exercise in that they require students to manipulate language rather than merely fill in the blank or choose the correct answer.

Helpful though they may be, these exercises are still exercises. When completing them, students' focus is on form; they are working in a context in which it is relatively easy to monitor or apply conscious learning. It is therefore important that teachers help students learn to monitor effectively when they are editing their own papers for those items they have learned consciously. One way of doing this is through what might be termed guided editing. As teacher and student read together the student's paper, the student corrects any errors. If the student skips over an error in a rule or convention discussed previously, the teacher comments on it in a manner designed to reflect the way the rule was presented. As much as possible, these comments should yoke meaning with form. For instance, if the student omits the *-ed* ending of a past tense verb, the teacher can say, "You seem to be describing an event that occurred in the past. What form of this verb do you use for an action in the past?" When such a union of meaning and form is impossible, the teacher can refer to the appropriate rule in the simplest possible form. An omitted *-s* on a present-tense verb with a third-person singular subject, for example, might prompt the teacher to state, "The verb in this sentence is in the present tense and its subject is *she*. What form of the verb do you need to use?" In subsequent sessions, the teacher can encourage greater student independence in discovering and correcting errors by indicating only the word(s), line, or sentence in which the error appears and letting the student attempt to determine the exact nature and appropriate correction of the error. If the student has difficulty, the teacher can provide the required assistance.

Work of this sort on errors in items not easily taught for acquisition can be coupled with the techniques described above which encourage acquisition. That is, teachers can also refer to editing "tricks," discuss the ambiguous or confused meaning in student sentences resulting from errors in EAE, and rework garbled sentences with their writers. By talking students through their papers in this manner, teachers act on the belief that errors in student papers do not require a reteaching of the rules broken or more workbook exercises. Rather, they indicate students' need for guided practice in editing their own papers, practice of a sort which is designed to strengthen developing acquisition whenever possible and to promote automatic and accurate monitoring when not.

Of course, guided editing can be employed only when teachers have the luxury of working individually with students in either a conference or writing-center setting. When teachers' responses to student papers must be confined to written comments, Richard Haswell's system of "minimal marking" can be helpful. In this system, the teacher places a check next to a line in a student's paper in which an error in EAE occurs. Two errors warrant two checks, and so on. Then, fifteen minutes before the end of a class, the teacher returns the papers to the students with instructions that they find, circle, and correct the errors. Haswell estimates that when he uses this method, students are able to correct sixty to seventy percent of their errors. He does not distinguish between acquisition and learning, but uses instead the word "conceptual" to refer to errors resulting from both incomplete acquisition and incomplete learning. Nevertheless, he speculates that students are able to correct many of their errors because they are "threshold errors" which "occupy a kind of halfway house between purely conceptual and purely performance-based" (602). This suggests that his method promotes development of both acquired and learned competence. In other words, "minimal marking" encourages students to refine their hypotheses constituting acquired knowledge or reminds them to apply their learned knowledge. In this way, it functions similarly to guided editing, although less directly. By demonstrating which errors students are unable to correct on their own, it provides a means of winnowing down the number of errors that need to be dealt with more explicitly in a guided editing session.

These suggestions do not of course include all the possible applications of Krashen's work to the teaching of EAE, nor are the specific practices I recommend generally original with me. My debt to others is obvious. What I have tried to do, however, is to indicate how Krashen's work can be used to blend isolated practices that many teachers have found effective, into a consistent, logical approach to teaching EAE, an approach based on a well-substantiated theory of language acquisition. Certainly Krashen's work cannot answer all the questions writing teachers have about teaching EAE. It does not, for example, explain the differences between acquisition from oral language and from written and their pedagogical significance. It does not take into consideration students' different learning styles; might, for instance, a visually oriented student be

expected to acquire more readily from written discourse than one more aurally attuned? It also has little to say about the barriers which often intrude between language competence and language performance and the ways teachers might seek to remove them. As Krashen and others complete more research, presumably they will answer more of these questions and perhaps modify certain details of his theory.⁹ Whatever the changes, Krashen's model of second-language acquisition should remain extremely useful for writing teachers because of its vivid distinction between the two sorts of language competence, acquired and learned, that their students possess, and particularly because of its delineation of the power and desirability of acquisition, the limitations of learning, and hence the desirability of teaching as much as possible for acquisition.

Notes

¹Kolln warns, however, that before accepting in full the conclusions of these studies, we should review critically their research designs.

²For a description of the inadequacies of group comparison studies, see Newkirk (48).

³Of course the opposite can occur: Students can become so preoccupied with rules that they are unable to write. (See Rose.)

⁴See Winterowd, "Developing" and "From Classroom Practice," also Pringle.

⁵Although Friedmann never refers to Krashen, his recommendations throughout his article are very much in accordance with Krashen's theory.

⁶These sentences were taken from placement essays written by entering SUNY-Binghamton students in Fall, 1981.

⁷For other discussions of the advantages of inductive learning, see D'Eloia (238-241); Fraser and Hodson (51); and Shaughnessy (129-30).

⁸For a description of controlled composition, see Correll.

⁹Stevick has proposed a modification which posits a more complex interplay between acquired and learned competence than that described by Krashen (270-279).

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Ann M. Johns

THE ESL STUDENT AND THE REVISION PROCESS: SOME INSIGHTS FROM SCHEMA THEORY

An increasing number of immigrant, bilingual, and international students are enrolled in college and university basic writing classrooms across the United States. Though at some universities, non-native students are assigned exclusively to ESL classes; at others, most are enrolled in classes designed for native-speakers of English, either because they are too advanced for ESL classes or because there is an insufficient number of ESL classes to accommodate them. At San Diego State University, for instance, nearly 50 percent of the students in the second semester basic writing course do not speak English in their homes (Johns, "Academic Skills").

When these students appear in native-speaker basic writing classes, their instructors are faced with new challenges; for these students, barriers to proficient writing often differ considerably from those faced by their English-speaking classmates. Since much of these students' ESL instruction may have been focused on sentence-level errors, they have not produced much English discourse. Because of this, teachers find that at the discourse level these students often have difficulties producing writing which is considered coherent by English-speaking readers, i.e., text which meets English-speaker expectations for topic organization and development (Carrell, "Cohesion" and Ulijn). These coherence problems may

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be difficult for the teachers to address, for they involve reader expectations which are seldom discussed in textbooks; and, for the students, meeting readers' expectations often involves abandoning the structures for organizing content which are basic to their first languages and therefore central to the manner in which they develop ideas (see, e.g., Kaplan "Contrastive Grammar" and Walters).

To enable ESL students to produce English text which is "reader-considerate," which meets the expectations of speakers of English (Armbruster & Anderson "Producing"), it is necessary to work with their writing at the discourse level, and to discuss with them the expectations of English readers. The focus, then, is upon the interaction between reader and text, and upon the students' understanding that audiences speaking different languages may require different approaches to topic development and organization.

Useful in developing instruction which focuses upon reader-text interaction are the insights and pedagogical strategies of schema-theoretical approaches, based upon the notion that "what we [as readers] understand of something is a function of our past experience or background knowledge" (Carrell, "Role of Schemata" and Miller & Kintsch).

SCHEMA THEORY

The term "schema" was first used by the cognitive psychologist, Bartlett, in 1932, to describe "an active principle in our memory which organizes elements of recall into structural wholes" (15). Rumelhart, drawing on the substantial consensus that has arisen in the field of cognitive science, in the past fifty years, has recently spoken of a schema theory in this way:

A schema theory is basically a theory about knowledge—a theory about how knowledge is represented and about how that representation facilitates the use of knowledge in particular ways. According to schema theories, all knowledge is packaged into units. These units are the schemata. Embedded in these packets of knowledge, in addition to knowledge itself, is information about how this knowledge is to be used. A schema, then, is a data structure for representing our knowledge about all concepts. ...Perhaps the central function of schemata is in the construction of an interpretation of an event, object or situation.... The total set of schemata we have available for interpreting our world in a sense constitutes our private theory of the nature of reality. The total set of schemata instantiated at a particular moment in time constitutes our internal model of the situation we face at that moment in time or, in the case of reading a text, a model of the situation depicted by the text (23).

The "knowledge units" of which Rumelhart speaks are also referred to as "topic types" or "conceptual frames." These units consist of content

slots, "for each constituent element in the knowledge structure" (Anderson and Bower 369). The slots "consistently co-occur over a wide range of different topics" (Johns & Davies 9). Schema-theorists believe, then, that there are canonical knowledge units with predictable content slots that reflect the expectations of the native-speaker reader. For example, in a text in which the knowledge unit is Physical Structure, readers expect content slots for *part*, *location*, *property*, and *function* to be filled with information from this discourse, not once, but several times (Johns & Davies). A newspaper article of the Accident Type (the knowledge unit) has seven slots (not all of which are obligatory), including *the nature of the accident*, *the setting*, *the cause*, *victims*, *comparison with other accidents*, *comments on the accident*, *public figures involved* (Zuck & Zuck).

Schema theorists posit that when a person begins to read a text, one or several sets of schemata, consisting of knowledge units, their content slots and the networks of which they are a part (Anderson & Bower), are instantiated. The reader mentally revises—or discards—this set to accommodate the content and the structure of the text (Minsky) and uses the set to organize and store information from the text in memory (Meyer, Schank & Abelson).

The degree to which readers grasp intended meaning from and remember text depends, to a large extent, upon whether the reader-selected schemata are consistent with those of the text writer. If the reader lacks the necessary schema set, or if s/he selects an alternative set, s/he will have difficulty appropriately processing and recalling the discourse. If, for example, a Chinese writer of English develops a topic using the "eight-legged essay form," common in traditional Chinese rhetoric (Kaplan), then the English reader may not have appropriate schema set to process the text. Therefore, the text may be incoherent to the reader.

Most of the work in schema theory research and model building has been done on the knowledge units of stories (Mandler & Johnson). From "story grammar" work have come some valuable contributions to classroom teaching (Mavrogenes, Rand). Recently, however, there has been research completed to discover knowledge units and their slots as reflected in written scientific texts (Johns & Davies) and history texts (Armbruster & Anderson).

READER EXPECTATIONS AND REVISION

In this paper, discussion of the application of schema-theoretical approaches to ESL writing will focus on the first revision of an essay by a Chinese-speaking student, a sophomore enrolled in a second-semester basic writing class at San Diego State University. This student, whom I will call "You-min," completed this draft on the topic "Discuss a problem in Your Community" during a two-hour class period.

In assigning this essay, I followed a consistent approach in my classes—that of asking students to produce writing without prior instruc-

tion in form. This approach is followed because it is important to focus upon the generation of ideas and the establishment of meaning before the imposition of structure (Murray). Like Zamel, I believe that:

As students continue to develop their ideas in writing, considerations of organization and logical development come into play. The question, then, is not of choosing to attend to organization or not, but of when and how to do so (154).

This particular essay, by You-min, was selected for several reasons. First, though it contains sentence-level errors, it is at the discourse level where English-speaker reader expectations are not fulfilled, i.e., where coherence breaks down. Second, it was chosen because an increasing number of refugee and international students enrolled in colleges in this country are from the Orient. Many of these students are of Chinese origin (including some Vietnamese and Laotians) or influenced by Chinese culture (including Koreans and Japanese). Third, it was chosen because it seems to be characterized by the "Oriental circular development" described by Kaplan, which, though it may be consistent with the schema sets of Chinese speakers, is not consistent with those of the English readers for whom the student is writing. Kaplan notes that this type of development does not meet English reader expectation because:

There is a lot of seemingly unnecessary wandering around the topic. The papers are characterized by an inability to get to the point and stick with it: in the traditional sense (i.e., American rhetorical traditional), they lack unity and coherence (12).

In approaching the revision of this essay, I acted as English reader and text processor for You-min as we worked through the text. Using schema-theoretical concepts and aided by articles on prediction (Pearson & Johnson) and on modeling of the reading process (Davey), I demonstrated how the English-speaker might impose a schema set and then seek out organization and meaning from text.

I began by explaining reader expectations, and how these are established by the writer. To illustrate my point, I drew a tree diagram (Figure 1 in Appendix), simplified from those in artificial intelligence literature, to show how reader expectations are elicited by the writer text. These expectations are first elicited by the title and the introductory paragraph (Dooling & Lachman). We read You-min's title, which is "How to Solve the Problem of Teenagers." From my instantiated schemata, I predicted that the text would be of a Problem/Solution type. The title was recorded next to the Problem/Solution heading on the Expectation Chart. Also noted were the content slots to be filled: *situation*, *problem*, *causes* (often embedded in problem or situation), *responses or solutions*, and *evaluation* (Hoey).

With You-min, I then looked at the introduction:

In the past five years, juvenile delinquency increased to almost thirty percent of the overall crime in Hong-Kong. This remarkable increase put the police department to pay more attention to the teenagers. The delinquents were around twelve to eighteen years old and mostly involved in burglary, robbery and group fighting.

In this paragraph, three of the five content slots of Problem/Solution texts are alluded to: *situation*, *problem*, and *responses or solutions*. As reader, I asked myself (and You-min, the writer) the following questions: "What is the situation?" "What is the problem?" "What are the responses to the problem?" The answers, as prerevealed in this paragraph, are ones upon which You-min, the writer, and I agree. The *situation* is "Hong Kong in the past five years." The *problem* is "increase in juvenile delinquency." The *response* to the problem is "to pay more attention to the teenagers." As we answered each question, I continued to add to the Expectation Network of the Problem/Solution text, showing that from the reader's content slot predictions, established by the title and first paragraph, must stem all content included in the coherent text.

You-min and I then moved to the first internal paragraph and the lower nodes on the network chart:

Juvenile delinquency is an increasing problem in nowadays society around the world. Why is it increasing, is a controversial question to whether is the society, the parents, the education system or the teenagers themselves. Almost 90% of the arrested delinquents complained that they were either abused by their parents or did not feel any love in their family. There is always a generation gap between parents and adolescents, the one's who think that already grown up and mature, but their parents usually deny. Problems start to create from this point and things getting worse without the parents attention. Especially in Hong Kong is overpopulated, and modernized small city. They have not much time to pay attention to their children. Also, the education system derives a lot of pressure to the youngsters because of the limited number of universities and technical colleges in this small place. All this stress on those teenagers makes them either to face it or to escape from it—get into crime or dope. Nowadays the delinquents are sent to a special training center to teach them skills and make them to participate in recreation activities to bring back hope to them and become good citizen. Beside this, there are voluntary professional psychologists, socialist to from a non-profit organization to help solving their personal problems. More recreation centers and library were increasing by been built to give teenagers a place to spend their time meaningfully. In another way, law has been set up to let nobody under 21 is allowed to go into bar, dance rooms or any other place where alcohol or sex is involved. Group gather-

ing in public place is limited under police department permission to avoid any group fighting occur.

I asked You-min under which category or content slot the new information (in "nowaday society around the world") in the first sentence of this paragraph should go. We decided that it should go under *situation*. Yet a different situation, "in Hong Kong in the past five years," had already been established. She was able to see the first possibility for incoherence between text and reader, in her failure to keep her promise made in the introduction. I recorded this first breakdown in the network chart—as under "Situation" in Figure 2 in the Appendix.

We then moved to the second sentence in this paragraph, in which You-min first begins to fill the *causes* slot. Here, she mentions four causes, "the society, the parents, the education system, and the teenagers themselves." I recorded these causes under the appropriate content slot, stating that as reader I expected each of them to be discussed. In fact, only two causes were mentioned in any detail, "the parents" and "the education system." Again, You-min saw a possible breakdown in coherence as the expectations of the reader for all four causes were not fulfilled. We recorded this breakdown on Expectation Network.

I then turned as reader to the next content slot discussed in her essay, "Responses," noting to You-min that the reader may expect a change in content slot to be signaled by indentation. We looked at the introduction and saw that the prerevealed response is "to put the police department to pay more attention to the teenagers"; yet in the text You-min has mentioned "special training centers, psychologists, socialists, recreation centers, and libraries," in addition to the contributions of the police departments. We marked this on the network chart, again showing a possible breakdown in coherence due to confusion with the slot information which had been prerevealed in the introduction.

Because the Evaluation slot of the essay had not yet been filled, I, as reader, expected the final paragraph to be devoted to content in this slot:

The adolescents who are the most need care and love an away that they want the public looks at them as adults, create an increasing problem in society. This problem, people think, should gather the parents, the teachers, the socialists and the police effort to find out the solution.

As You-min and I read this part of the text, I speculated that she might be evaluating the responses by suggesting new ones, e.g., "gather the parents, the teacher, the socialists and the police." This isn't clear, however, since some of the solutions mentioned have been suggested previously in the text. Again, there is a possible breakdown in coherence between reader and text.

When I finished the reader-expectations processing of the essay and we examined the completed Expectation Network Chart (Figure 2 in Appendix), You-min could see exactly where the possible breakdowns between the reader's expectations and writer take place. We reviewed the questions about the content (e.g., "What is the situation?"), the answers for which should be placed in the higher nodes of the Expectation Network Chart and made revisions on the chart. Next, we made revisions on the chart so that what was prerevealed was actually mentioned in the essay. She was then ready to begin the "holistic revision" process, which, incidentally, was quite successful.

This approach, based upon the schema-theoretical concern for the interaction between writer and text, has become very important to revision instruction in my classrooms. My ESL students have benefited from the guidance which it provides and the freedom within the question constraints which it allows. I find this type of teacher intercession in the revision process superior to isolated comments in the margins, for the questions and the Expectation Network Charts give the writers assistance in revising in an organized manner from the top down.

However, this technique could become formulaic if employed incorrectly. Therefore it is necessary to mention its appropriate place in the revision process, noting what must proceed and follow it and emphasizing that allowances for writer meaning and reader interpretation must always be made. It must first be pointed out that You-min and I began to discuss the problem-solution categories and reader expectations only after she had completed her first draft and established a problem-solution structure for her discourse. It is she who imposed form upon her text. My responsibility was to assist her in making that form more coherent for the English reader, by suggesting the questions that must be answered and the types of answers to the questions that are expected, i.e., how the content slots should be filled to be consistent with what she had prerevealed in the title and the first paragraphs.

There are a number of activities which follow this exercise as well, all of which are devoted to increasing the writer's understanding of audience and of the variation in text which is possible, even within the problem-solution constraints. One such activity involves the distribution of copies of this essay to the class, who, individually or in groups, come up with a series of questions, prompted by what was prerevealed in the introduction and the initial sentences in the paragraphs (Johns, "Learning First"). This multiple-audience technique is particularly valuable in a class such as You-min's, in which the majority of her classmates are English speakers. After hearing these questions, You-min may attempt to answer some of them by revising the paper; or, as is often the case, she may find that her classmates' questions parallel mine since, as English speakers, we approach the text with similar schema sets. In further revisions, You-min is encouraged to experiment, exploring how various alternatives to topic development and other coherence features might satisfy her as writer as well as meet English readers' expectations. Sometimes

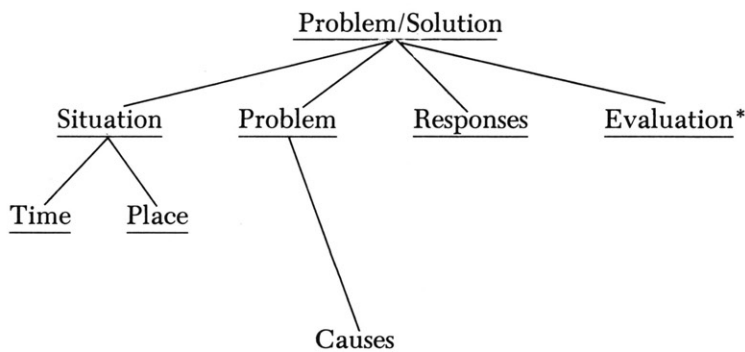
she is asked to write about the same subject to a variety of audiences (e.g., her sociology professor, her mother), predicting the questions they might ask and answering them within the text.

The aim of this technique, then, is to give students a systematic method for predicting audience expectations, for filling content slots of a particular type of data structure such as problem-solution. As basic writers increase their proficiency and their knowledge of audience becomes more complete, they no longer need this guidance. Their intended meaning, and a number of other features such as use of metadiscourse (Kopple), become more important to the development of an essay which satisfies the writer and meets reader expectations.

Appendix

Figure 1

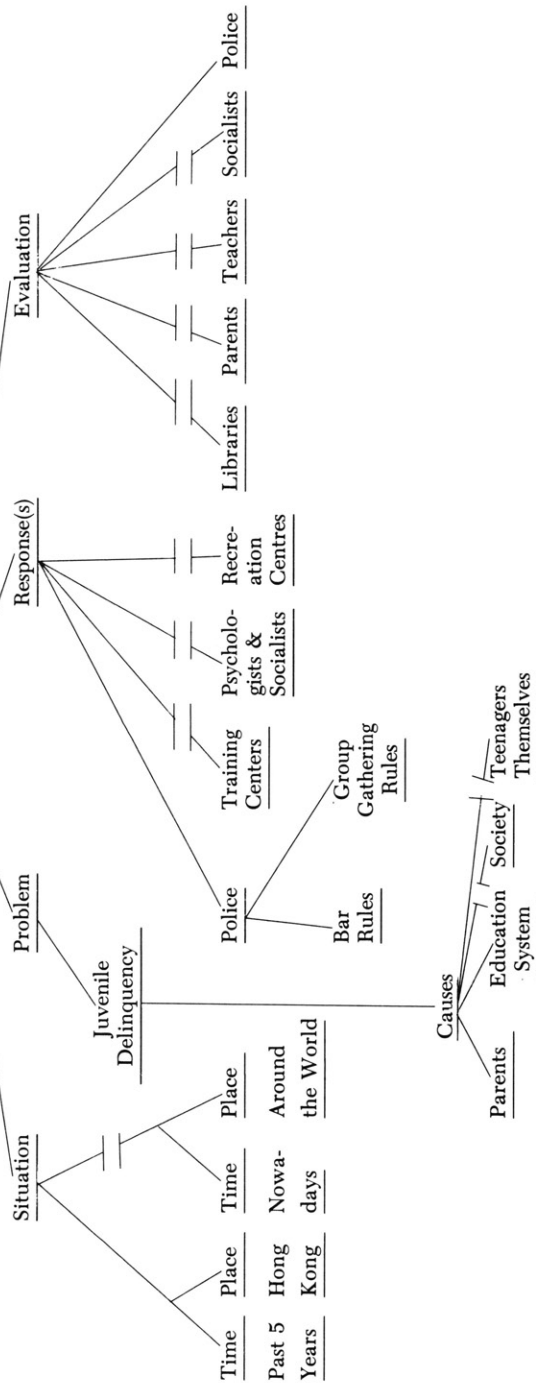
Model Expectation Network Chart Knowledge Unit: Problem/Solution



*Nonobligatory.

Figure 2

Expectation Network Chart from “You-Min’s Essay”
Title: “How to Solve the Problem of the Teenagers”



= Indicates a breakdown between expectations of content and the manner in which slots have been filled.

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Randall G. Nichols

WORD PROCESSING AND BASIC WRITERS

BACKGROUND

When a word processing system became available to me, I began using it in my work, and I noticed that my papers and the ways I went about composing were changing, sometimes with pleasing results and sometimes not. Increased revising probably had made my final products better, but I was bothered that I didn't feel "finished" with many texts—I submitted them with the nagging feeling that more improvements could have been made. At the same time, I was teaching sections of basic writing at The Ohio State University, and some of the faculty were beginning a pilot project in which the writers would use a word processing system. I wondered, then, if the composing processes and products of the basic writers would be affected by use of such a system.

The writers with whom I worked were the least skilled of the students coming in to Ohio State University for their freshman year. They were enrolled in the first of a two-course sequence into which they had been placed on the basis of two screenings. The first screening was their having scored 15 or below on the English section of the ACT. They were then required to write a placement essay which was read by teachers of basic writing. Based on this essay, the writers could have been placed in regular Freshman English or in either of the two "remedial" courses, neither of which counted for credit toward graduation but did count toward a grade point average. The students who placed in the first of the two courses had their writing problems not only in focus, organization, and development, but in surface-level features as well.

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Many anecdotal and glowing reports led me to believe that the very serious composing problems of the writers I was teaching might begin to be corrected if they were to use a word processing system. More rigorous studies, too, have been reported. In *Writing & Computers*, Daiute summarizes research about word processing by reporting that physical and psychological constraints may be eased so that the computer complements writers' capacities, does some of the drudge work, and reminds student of their potential audience (68). She states, "Many writing teachers believe that reducing the burdens of manual cutting, pasting, and recopying will encourage students to act more like experienced writers, who revise extensively" (37).

Several studies have examined some of the effects of word processing and related programs on the composing processes of writers similar to the basic writers with whom I was working. Collier studied the effects of text editing on the revision strategies of students of various skills levels in an introductory, college composition course. Kiefer and Smith examined basic writers using the text analysis programs of *Writer's Workbench*. Bridwell, Johnson, and Brehe studied experienced college writers. Bridwell, Sirc, and Brooke examined writers from upper-level composition courses. Kane reported on eighth graders with a range of composing skills. However, no studies examined only basic writers' use of word processing alone.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Given the absence of research about the use of word processing by basic writers, I posed a broadly stated question. I wanted the first look at these writers using word processing to seek answers wherever they might lie: *What effects does word processing have on the composing process of basic writers?* Though I felt the approach to the study should be broad, I knew that I'd have to look to current research and theory about composing to guide my reporting of any findings that might emerge. One way of studying effects is to examine the composing processes in order to understand, as Hairston (84) explains, both how and why text is produced. The process approach to composing has given rise to interrelated views of the process.

One view of process is that writing is more linear: that view describes *stages*, or steps, in the process. Rohman and Wlecke; Elbow, Legum and Krashen; and Applebee have described the writing process in terms of stages. King summarizes the descriptions of the stages as: pre-writing (all preparatory activities up to text production), articulation (text production), post-writing (all activities in revision). The primary differences in the theories are in "the numbers and labels of their writing process components" (Humes 4). Humes concludes that a shift away from linear theories is occurring because they tend to "describe the growth of the written product" (4). Emerging theories grow out of concerns for the internal, cognitive processes and view composing behaviors as *recursive*, that is, each behavior is called on again and again.

In "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing," Flower and Hayes have described what they believe are these cognitive processes, and the three major components are: 1. task environment, including the rhetorical problem and text-produced-so-far; 2. long-term memory, including topic, audience, writing plans; 3. writing processes, major aspects of which are planning, translating, and reviewing (7). The theory proposes that writing is a set of orchestrated thinking processes that operate recursively and are *goal-oriented* and proposes that the goals are created by writers during composing.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the theory is the proposal that writing is goal-directed and that writers generate their own goals. Flower and Hayes believe that two categories of goals exist: 1. process goals, the plans writers have for carrying out the act of writing, and 2. content goals, those things a writer wants to say to an audience (16). Some goals are a mix of process and content goals and may change as writing proceeds, depending on various influences of each of the components of the model.

Based upon these theories and Perl's (*Coding*) instrument for coding specific composing behaviors, I was able to specify my research question further with four objectives, to examine the effects of word processing on: specific composing behaviors alone, composing stages, recursiveness of processes, and goals.

METHOD

Given the broad nature of the research question and inherent idiosyncrasies of writers, I chose a naturalistic approach to the study. Multiple case studies constitute such an approach. Further though, I wanted to see, as "cleanly" as possible, the effects of the word processing system alone. So to "control" for any effects on texts which might occur as a result of the writers having conversations with people outside the research situation, they wrote within a self-contained session for both the conventional (pen and paper) and word processing sessions. To control for effects of previous experience with a word processing system, I asked for writers who had not used such a system.

I explained the study to my students on the first day of their freshman term. They were told that any volunteers for the study would not have to complete a short writing assignment that would be given to the rest of the class; would have their composing studied and explained to them in more depth than to other class members; and would likely know how to use the word processing system better and more quickly than the other members. Six writers volunteered. One, James, was used for a pilot test of the procedures, and another could not participate because of equipment and scheduling problems. Consequently, I asked Tess, who had shown interest, to participate. She did so without noticeable hesitation. Five writers, then, participated: Keith, Tess, Diana, Gary, Gina.

For the conventional session, the writers came one at a time to a private room in a library. I explained the verbal protocol method (described below) to them, they practiced it, and then they were interviewed about their writing generally. They then used pen and paper to explain the major reason one of their teachers was effective. The topics used in this study were pretest and posttest topics assigned to all writers in the basic writing program. The topics were chosen because most students were likely to have had experience with the topics and thus would not be penalized for a lack of content for a test. Afterwards, the writers were interviewed about the session. Then they were given four hours, altogether, of formal instruction and practice using the *Bank Street Writer* word processing program and an Apple IIe Microcomputer. Also, they practiced for between four and seven hours of their own time. Finally, from seven to ten days after the conventional session, they used the word processing system to write about the major reason someone was their best friend. Lastly, they were interviewed about the final session and the overall experience. During the study, the writers received no instruction in composition.

In "Protocol Analysis of Writing Processes," Flower and Hayes have argued the merits of both the protocol method and retrospective self-reports which immediately follow composing. The retrospective report is hampered because much memory loss occurs between writing and reporting. While the verbal protocol method requires writers to report aloud about what they are doing and, therefore, suffers less from the problem of memory loss, it may interfere with some processes writers might otherwise employ.

Having tried each procedure with James in the pilot test and finding he was much better able to report what he was doing and why as he composed, I used the verbal protocol method here. Finding the best method for gathering data about composing processes is a research issue which is yet to be resolved (Perl, "Five Writers"; Bridwell, Johnson, Brehe).

As they wrote, the writers spoke about what they were doing and why. Audio and video tapes recorded text production and the writers' verbalizations. I collected all notes and drafts. Later, the tapes were transcribed to a four-column format: 1. text produced, 2. codes for composing behaviors, 3. duration of behaviors, 4. verbal protocol. I added a code for computer interventions to Perl's system of coding behaviors and applied the system (See Table 1, Appendix) to the behaviors of the writers in this study. Results were informally validated by checking them with the writers and with an instructor of basic writing at Ohio State University.

RESULTS

In *Coding the Composing Process: A Guide for Teachers and Researchers*, Perl distinguishes between instances of planning (when writers say what they think they will do) and metacomments (when

writers exit from the writing task to comment knowledgeably about their own writing behaviors). However, in "The Dynamics of Composing: Making Plans and Juggling Constraints," Flower and Hayes distinguish between writers' process goals (*how* writers go about writing) and content goals (*what* writers want to say to an audience). Making these distinctions often was very difficult, so for coding purposes I counted as planning (PL) all instances of verbalizations that appeared to be plans, metacomments, or goals.

Also, to make surer comparisons, I counted occurrences of most behaviors within the first 50 words of text produced in each session as well as having counted total occurrences.

In the word processing sessions, only Keith attended to formatting beyond the level of indenting paragraphs. This is curious, but may have been a result of my inadvertently conveying that I was interested mostly in processes that occurred while they entered text. Formatting did not become a major activity for the writers in this study, as it does for many writers.

Table 2 (Appendix) displays counts of coded behaviors for the conventional sessions and for the word processing sessions. Considering outstanding differences in counts of coded behaviors, duration of sessions (Table 3, Appendix), and words produced in sessions (Table 4, Appendix), the following eight trends emerged in the word processing sessions. I considered differences to be outstanding if at least four of five writers exhibited a change in the same direction and if, for the coded behaviors, the differences were of 10% magnitude or more. In the word processing sessions:

1. There was a tendency not to produce second, physical drafts. Tess, Diana, Gary, and Gina did not, and Keith read his second printout but did not make any changes in it.
2. Total writing episodes, "putting pen to paper," increased, and the lengths of the text strings produced during episodes were shorter.
3. Edits increased.
4. Readings of the topic (from a paper given the writers) increased in the beginnings of the sessions.
5. Verbalized assessments of the texts decreased.
6. Use of the word processing system caused interventions in composing that otherwise would not have appeared.
7. The sessions were of shorter durations.
8. Writers produced more words.

Beyond data counts, one way of portraying differences, or their absence, in sessions is to present final texts from both sessions. I do this for Tess and Gina. However, the texts do not show the processes and, so, do not offer a complete summary of the effects of word processing. Also, the texts presented here have been formatted slightly more neatly than the originals, and the texts from the conventional session are typed, so some of the insight and "feel" for what occurred in production is lost. Finished texts don't show the struggles the writers went through.

Tess: Conventional Session

The major reason my teacher was effective, was that the style of her teaching was not only understanding, but she had a clear knowledge about what she was teaching. She also helped student tutor on whatever subject they needed help on or just what they didn't understand. Not only did she give new ideas and new prospects toward her style of teaching, she also advised me on how I should go about doing things in a certain way. Not only was she a teacher she was also a activities advisor and helped me get involved in sports and student council. And last but not least she is an all around good sport.

Tess: Word Processing Session

Throught my life I have known many people, some have been very nice to me and some have been not so nice, but the major reason I remember my good friends is because they treated me with respect, and as an equal. there are many meanings to the word respect. The one that I think that relates toward me is the one that states the willingness to show consideration or appreciation of a fellow man or person. Thus to be equal to another person is being the same for all members of a group. These are, in my opinion the two major reasons what a friendship should be baised upon.

Gina: Conventional Session

Through my 12 years of schooling I have had many teachers. Although, I have had a good number of well trained teachers one stands out above the rest. Mrs. Grimm, my science teacher, name is ironic in that she always had a smile to share instead of a frown. Posters, paintings, and plants filled the room showing her personality. One poster in the front the room was an ape with the caption "I'm thinking." This made a joke of using the brain, however it made the point in her class one either thinks or fails. During her lectures she would use humor by relating the subject to us in a funny but familiar way. For example, when our class studied sol, liquids, and gel, she referred to sol as being grapes in jello. The reason being because the grapes were suppend in the jello. Because of her use of household terms, I never will forget certain ideas or concepts. Even though she in a easy way her word choice always showed her wide vocabulary and inteligents. Often she revealed personal facts about herself. In these times my classmates and I learned that her schooling took place both in the U.S. and in Germany. Traveling as she did her knowlge came from people and books.

Along with her easy way of teaching, her testing was just as fair. Each test had a combination of multiple choice, essay, and True or False questions. This gave the students the chance to answer the questions in different ways. For instance, some pupils have trouble with essays. Therefore, the multiple choice and true and false question gave them the ability to better their grades on the test. While, others like myself didn't do well on the test. However the many homework assignments brought up our grades. Each night a reading assignment was assigned and a quiz the next day. So if one did her homework the quiz the next day would be a easy A. Looking back Mrs. Grimm was my best teacher. Her good training skills showed in all areas of her teaching

Gina: Word Processing Session

To me a friend is someone I can share my ideas and interests with. Fortunately, I have one very special who I have known well for many years. Throughout these years we have went to school, gone on vacations, and grew up together.

Cathy and I lived across the street from each other for two years before we even became friends. The reason for our unneighborly manner was simply that we went to different schools and had different friends. When we started high school we rode the same bus and became friends. During our high school days we went to every football game, basketball game, and dances together. We both enjoyed getting loud and rowdy at the games. During the evenings, we would study together at her house. Because I spent a lot of time at her house, her parents and I also became friends. Her father and I would get into these water fights almost every night. These games turned into a daily war between the two of us. Each day our tricks became worse. For example, he would put mustard in my shoes if I left them lying around or throw water in my face just to see my expression. One night while he was watching TV, I got him back by sewing all of the necks of his tee shirts closed and tied all of his underwear in knots. Of course we did this all in fun. My friendship grew both with Cathy and her family. And we started doing things together. For the past four years we have gone on vacations together. This works out great because neither of us have a sister and need someone to run around with besides our parents.

Religion is another thing we both share. Even though our religions are different, we are still able to share ideas. When her grandfather was ill with cancer she would often ask me to pray for him and when my family went into the hospital I asked her to pray for them without any hesitation. With some friends I am unable to do this with. But with Cathy we do not hold anything back.

To me a friend is someone I can share my ideas with and time with without getting bored or embarrassed. She also one whom my family treats her as a part of the family and her family treats me as a family member. And through the years our friendship will grow, this is how I feel about my friend Cathy.

Beyond data counts and final products, the writers' comments and my observations about and conversations with the writers offer a more holistic understanding of each writer.

Keith tried to "get it right" before and as he wrote/entered text. In his conventional session, he rehearsed considerably before he committed text to paper, so he made very few revisions during his second drafting. His final draft was virtually just a neater version of his first draft. In his word processing session, he rehearsed more just before entering text, edited relatively less, and did not revise. He was even more compelled to "get it right." Further, he did not have to write a second, physical draft, and so he did not. In these ways, word processing was compatible with Keith's most obvious process goals. It seems contradictory that Keith's word processing session was slightly longer than his conventional, but this was caused by his making an effort of several minutes to format his text and by my having to stop the session briefly to leave the room.

In contrast to other writers, Tess' planning may have changed most obviously. She began using the word processing system immediately and did not outline, a behavior which took about half of the conventional session. When asked about this, she said, "I guess it's because of the computer because you don't need to make outlines or drafts or anything...but on paper...." This change also can be explained by her knowing I was interested in how she used the system and by her thinking her writing task should be made easier. She also decided that outlining on the computer would be difficult, so she did not. She tried to adjust to the system.

However, she struggled with composing throughout the word processing session. She paused more often in long silences. She resorted to looking in a dictionary for clarification of her ideas and for content to support her contention about someone being her best friend. The recursiveness of some of her composing processes, especially planning, increased.

These differences appear to have caused no qualitative changes in Tess' laboring to find and settle on stable processes and content. She remained apparently confused about why and how she was composing and what she wanted to say. At one point in her word processing session, she struggled to decide whether to use "equal" and "respect." Then she edited other words for spelling. She fell silent for a long time. She rehearsed explanations of "equal" and "respect." She was silent again. Then she said, "That's pretty funny. You can't—think of why it's important."

Diana's processes during her word processing session were much the same as those in her conventional session. I was most struck by her in-

ability to explain her goals and planning. For example, at one point in her word processing session she paused for 17 seconds and said, "I'm trying to think of some more to write down." I asked, "Why?" She replied, "Well—to me it seems like I should have more to say." She could not say why she attempted to add more. In fact, except for the fact that she had to press keys, she appeared to take no obvious notice of the word processing system. In this way, word processing was compatible with Diana's process goals.

Gary said that he tried to avoid much of the struggle associated with writing—outlining and "stuff like that." In the conventional session, he rehearsed considerably before writing, and he often edited and revised at the end-point of text production. He said that he thought he was able to use the word processing system to avoid work and work more quickly. For instance, he produced no second draft, revised far less (14 to 3 times) and finished more quickly. Those behaviors fit his contention that "using the computer is so much easier." However, his editing increased tremendously, from 18 to 49 instances, so his assessment was not completely accurate. However, he was able to adapt word processing to many of his process goals such as finishing quickly.

Gina, too, adapted the word processing system, but with different results. In her conventional session, she planned often and at various levels. For instance, "just to get started," she alternated between making notes and producing a few sentences, a strategy whereby her content goals changed often. Though the counts for planning and revising do not appear to have changed much (69/64 and 25/31, respectively), I believe both behaviors increased considerably and did so during her silences, which increased from 101 to 234 instances. Also, the videotape failed to record the last quarter of Gina's word processing session, and no counts could be made during that time; otherwise, increases for these behaviors would be more obvious. The word processing system appears to have encouraged her to plan and revise much more often. In this way, the word processing system was compatible with Gina's approach to composing.

However, this "compatibility" increased Gina's frustration. Her editing, revising, and planning increased, and she sensed she was taking longer than she had in the conventional session. At one point she asked, "Am I taking too long?" She did not want the session to be longer, she was not making progress toward a finished paper with which she was satisfied, and so she was frustrated. At the end of the session, she said she would have preferred to "go away from it" (the text) and finish later.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

1. *Specific Behaviors:* The writers tended toward increased edits at the point where they had just finished writing, production of shorter text strings, and fewer verbalized assessments of their work. Also, these results plus the writers' statements that they could see the words more clearly, suggest that the writers attended more to the point at which text was being produced.

The writers tended to produce more words in the word processing sessions. Keith changed from a more expository mode in his first paper to a narrative mode in his word processing session, which might account for the increase, and increases for Tess and Diana appear minimal at first glance. However, when the fact that the word processing sessions were shorter is considered, the increases are pronounced; the writers produced more words in less total time.

2. *Stages*: Unlike in the conventional session, the writers tended not to produce second, physical drafts in the word processing session. Only Keith produced a printed copy, read it, and printed again; he made mostly format changes after reading the first printout. All the others printed only one final copy to give to me; they reviewed text on the screen. When processes are seen as more or less distinct "stages" that follow in order from prewriting to composing, to editing, the stages became obscured or even disappeared in the word processing sessions. The writers in this study showed a tendency to start at the beginning of their texts and plan, revise, and edit almost simultaneously until they reached the end of composing. At least under the circumstances of this study, the notion of recursiveness captures the ways basic writers work.
3. *Recursiveness*: When processes are conceived as distinct behaviors housed under the rubric of recursiveness, differences in sessions were more obvious. Use of the word processing system caused interventions in composing that would not have appeared otherwise. For instance, just after having "booted" the system, the writers reread the topic to get their bearings again. Also, typographical errors increased editing and caused production of shorter text strings, so that after the editing, the writers reread at least the last word or two produced, to think about where they were "headed" before the intervention. Recursiveness, then, was increased by use of the word processing system.
4. *Goals and Plans*: Four of the writers adapted the word processing system to their typical goals and plans. Those writers—Keith and Gary, especially—who expressed an aversion to spending time writing and revising used the system to do less of each. Diana's plans appeared to be the same. Gina revised and planned often in her conventional session, and these behaviors increased in her word processing session. The writers used the system mostly to do "more of the same."

DISCUSSION

The results of the study are telling as much for what they show about changes that *did not* occur as for what they show about changes that did.

In "The Computer as Stylus and Audience," Daiute has proposed, first, that word processing is likely to encourage some writers to experiment and revise because physical constraints are eased; and, second, that such a system stimulates writers to take a reader's point of view and encourages control of cognitive processes because it makes writers more conscious of them. Evidence from this study indicates that many basic writers, upon initial exposure to word processing, do not respond noticeably in these ways.

Both the quantity and quality of revising are not likely to increase dramatically. Even knowledge of the text-block-moving capability may not generally encourage revision. After several hours and days of word processing, only one writer, Gina, ever used that capability. This finding is similar to that of Bridwell, Sirc, and Brooke, who report that writers used the computer to extend revising strategies used in conventional composing, and similar to Collier's, who found that, "A text editor has little or no advantage over the traditional mode of revising for most of the domains of text" (22).

Of course, revising is a function of goals and plans writers make. Upon initial exposure to word processing, basic writers are not likely to show obvious differences in the kinds of goals and planning they display—except that they may adapt the system to some global composing patterns—because they have no greater awareness of audience or of their own cognitive processes. When I asked the writers in this study why some behavior was occurring, I often heard a hesitant, "—because—" or "—I don't know," from all the writers. The blinking cursor may act as an audience (as Daiute suggests), but this means little to writers who have limited skills for composing for an audience.

Further, evidence suggests that word processing initially causes many interventions in composing. Writers who are not sure of system commands and who are not excellent typers will find editing and revising more complex, even difficult. Add to this situation basic writers who are unsure of their skills and of rules for composing, and they may become even more "dogged" in focusing on the hunt for errors and on just-written text, hoping that text will lead to what to write next. Collier's subjects showed similar increased facilitation with the manipulation of words and phrases/clauses *and* their surface structure errors increased (22). For basic writers, increases such as these probably are detrimental in that they interrupt the writers' attention to overall plans and goals about their audiences and further complicate an already complex task. Yes, the interventions are interruptions. They certainly cause interruptions in short-term and long-term memory and, in turn, some basic writers may become frustrated.

In many ways, Gina was the most interesting of the writers to observe. She exhibited a characteristic of experienced writers in that she worked at more global levels of her text, often reformulating her content goals according to what she discovered as she wrote, and revising the whole of her text as a consequence. Word processing encouraged her revising. Later, Gina tested out of the next basic writing course in the sequence and went on to regular Freshman English, where she received a *B +*. She used a word processing system throughout her first year of school, whereas the other writers reported that they did not use a system often or at all after the study, partly because they did not have easy access to a system, but partly because they did not “see” much advantage to it.

Gina’s example suggests that “better” writers are more likely than basic writers to learn, adapt, and continue using a word processing system in advantageous ways. This often may be the case. Collier, for instance, reported that, “Using a text editor is clearly an advantage for the superior student and is of some advantage for the average student” (22). However, Gina’s word processing session was not without problems. Her paper from the word processing session is poorer mechanically than her earlier paper. Her revising increased so much and became so complex—and she was so busy with system commands—that she became frustrated and consciously decided not to correct spelling and formatting when she finished the session. And we have evidence that not even more experienced writers will benefit in every instance. Gould found that writers experienced in both composing and word processing adopted “poor composing strategies” when writing letters and that the writers were led to “thinking less and typing more” (605). If experienced writers sometimes use word processing in less than useful ways, many basic writers are certain not to show any advantage, at least initially.

IMPLICATIONS

This study should be replicated, with particular emphasis in two areas. First, the degree to which the writers in this study attended more to meaning or to surface features caused by mistyping or by misuse of the system is unclear. The writers said they could see the words “clearer,” which may imply attention to meaning, but they also expressed concern about having mis-hit keys. Given observations about the writers’ goals and increased edits, I suspect that the writers increased their attention mostly to surface features.

Second, we need to examine basic writers’ use of word processing under various circumstances, not just in one writing session or within an initial introduction to word processing. If, in other circumstances, increased word production occurs—as Collier (22) found with his student writers—and is accompanied by increased sentence-embedding transformations, use of word processing could mean positive changes in syntactic fluency and text effectiveness. Revision, too, should be examined under various circumstances. Revising within a writing session may not change dramatically, but in contexts outside the kind presented by this

study, the number of sessions and the number of text-enhancing revisions, therefore, may increase.

Interruptions in composing caused by word processing systems are likely to decrease when systems include routines that help with editing functions such as spelling—if writers learn to edit at a time when they are not constructing meaning. As a corollary, students should be given easy, constant access to word processing systems so they have more optimum conditions under which to practice using systems.

Improved systems and increased experience with a system may alleviate some of the difficulties basic writers are likely to encounter, but still, learning and using system commands are tasks required beyond what is needed to write with pen and paper. They will cause interruptions in composing, and the time needed for learning word processing systems probably is greater than we might guess. One of the requirements for volunteering for this study was the writers' judgment that they typed fairly well. These writers and some of their classmates, in 10 weeks of using the system, did not become comfortable with some of its procedures, block-moves of text, for instance. Some students even changed class sections to avoid using word processing.

Daiute, in *Writing and Computers*, suggests that, in order to decrease the interference caused by inexperience with word processing, some writers "...should compose familiar material on the computer until they no longer have to think about the commands" (67). This approach is useful for many writers, but the problem for most basic writers is more difficult; they struggle to compose even with familiar material. It makes more sense for teachers to separate initial learning of a word processing system as much as possible from the composing task. This need not be the case for every writer, and the time needed to attain proficiency with a system will not be the same in every instance, but we need not confound many basic writers' composing tasks with learning word processing.

Finally, I think teachers of basic writers should be prepared for a variety of student reactions to word processing. Certainly many writers will be enthusiastic about its use. Not having to recopy an entire text, for instance, seems a blessing to most of us. But some basic writers won't express attitudes about, or even be aware of, the effects of word processing; some will become frustrated by its adding to an already difficult task; and some will simply avoid word processing out-of-hand. Under these circumstances, I think the best we can do for basic writers is to offer advice, instruction, and opportunities for word processing, without requiring its use. Our primary responsibility is to help writers gain experience in communicating with words, not in word processing. Composing is more than word processing.

Appendix

Table 1

Explanation of Codes (items 1-12 per Perl)

1. **Planning (PL)**—instances when writers say what they think they will do. Includes strategies and intentions for global and local structures of the writing.
2. **Metacommenting (MC)**—instances in which writers exit from the writing task to comment knowledgeably on their writing behaviors.
3. **Rehearsing (Rh)**—voicing words which lead to text production.
4. **Writing (W)**—text production, including those times when text is spoken as it is written.
5. **Reviewing (Rt, Ra, Ra-b)**—instances when writers read the topic, last few words of text produced, or several sentences of produced text.
6. **Assessing (A)**—instances in which writers make judgments about what they have written.
7. **Commenting (C)**—statements writers make about the room they are in, how they feel, researcher presence, for instance. Comments about anything but their composing or the computer-assisted system.
8. **Questioning (Q)**—instances when writers ask about anything but the computer system.
9. **Revising (RV)**—changes in already-produced text, including additions and deletions. Does not include changes in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
10. **Editing (E)**—changes in already-produced spelling, punctuation, grammar. Includes additions and deletions to text.
11. **Silence (S)**—instances in which no overt behavior occurs, including both writing and talking.
12. **Researcher Intervention (RI)**—instances in which the researcher asks a question, makes a comment, or otherwise interrupts the writer.
13. **Computer Intervention (CI)**—instances in which the computer or program intervenes (e.g., to scroll text) or the writer stops composing to comment about or use the computer-assisted system.

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Table 2
(For Explanation of Codes, See Table 1)

Counts of Specific Behaviors^a

	KEITH			TESS			DIANA			GARY			GINA ^c		
	TOTAL	W/50 ^b WORDS		TOTAL	W/50 WORDS		TOTAL	W/50 WORDS		TOTAL	W/50 WORDS		TOTAL	W/50 WORDS	
PL:	34/31	12/7		14/55	5/15		24/32	3/17		18/31	4/14		69/64	25/22	
Rh:	49/50	16/11		10/36	7/14		13/4	11/3		51/24	16/12		3/0	1/0	
W:	112/124	19/20		64/90	18/22		25/34	13/21		118/111	16/28		157/233	10/16	
RT	2/4	2/4		5/5	0/5		8/4	7/4		1/4	1/4		4/6	3/6	
R:Ra		9/3			5/8			2/10			5/15			2/0	
Ra-b		3/2			9/11			1/1			0/0			1/0	
A:	16/4	5/1		9/7	1/3		0/0	0/0		15/8	0/3		5/0	1/0	
C:	9/15	4/3		17/25	0/3		15/12	4/2		8/11	0/1		28/22	4/6	
Q:	0/0	0/0		5/3	0/0		1/1	0/0		0/0	0/1		2/3	1/1	
RV:	1/0	0/0		5/5	2/1		0/0	0/0		14/3	1/1		25/31	1/2	
E:	26/35	5/2		35/34	7/5		3/10	1/2		18/49	3/6		59/98	3/6	
S:	42/53	14/13		41/118	12/30		51/48	31/31		87/54	17/18		101/234	14/28	
RI:	29/37			12/46			27/33			21/21			58/88		
CI:	20			11			5			20			21		

^aConventional session/word processing session

^bWithin first 50 words produced

^cOnly first three-fourths of Gina's word processing session recorded on videotape, so some counts reflect this.

Table 3

Session Lengths—in minutes (Conventional/Word Processing)

KEITH	TESS	DIANA	GARY	GINA
60/65 minutes	72/67	25/19	55/39	85/132

Table 4

Words Produced (Conventional/Word Processing)

KEITH	TESS	DIANA	GARY	GINA
180/397 minutes	109/113	79/85	139/178	350/420

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The National Testing Network in Writing, The New Jersey Department of Higher Education, and The City University of New York announce the **FIFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON WRITING ASSESSMENT** on April 5, 6, and 7, 1987 in Atlantic City, NJ. This national conference is for educators, administrators, and assessment personnel and will be devoted to critical issues in assessing writing in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary settings. Discussion topics will include theories and models of writing assessment, assessing writing across the curriculum, the impact of testing on minority and ESL students, computer applications in writing assessment, and current research on writing assessment. Contact: Dr. Mary Ellen Byrne, New Jersey Department of Higher Education, 225 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08625 or call (609) 987-1962.

Call for proposals: **10TH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON DEVELOPMENT/REMEDIAL EDUCATION**, New York College Learning Skills Association. Title: "Coming of Age." Date: April 26, 27, 28, 1987. Place: Holiday, Rochester, NY. Keynote Speaker: Dr. John Gardner. Proposal deadline: October 24, 1986. Contact: Gretchen Starks, Development Studies Division, Community College of the Finger Lakes, Canandaigua, NY 14424, (716) 394-3500, Ext. 390.

9TH ANNUAL WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION: EAST CENTRAL REGION CONFERENCE will be held May 8 and 9, 1987 at Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH. Theme: "Partnerships: Changes, Challenges, Choices." Sessions on such topics as university and secondary school Writing Center administration, services, and funding. Also Dr. Frank O'Hare, The Ohio State University, will present a workshop. Proposal deadline: December 5, 1986. Contact: Sherri Zander, Director, Writing Center, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH 44555, (216) 742-3055.

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