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THROUGH STUDENTS' EYES: THE EXPERIENCES OF THREE ESL WRITERS[1]

ABSTRACT: A case study of three ESL student writers and their experiences in two different classrooms was undertaken in order to better understand the relationship between writing development and writing instruction. The study revealed the ways in which their disparate experiences in these classrooms affected their reflections about and attitudes toward writing. The findings point to the central role that students' beliefs, expectations, and perspectives play in the classroom; suggest the need to examine the constraints that shape instructional decisions; and underline the importance of investigating the contexts in which writing takes place.

Research on writing has given us insight into the complexity of the composing processes of both native speakers and ESL students. While these studies have revealed the generative, exploratory, and fluid nature of writing and have suggested the ways in which instruction can promote writing, too often, writing processes have been examined in experimental settings, thus making it difficult to determine the extent to which instruction and student writing are related. In order to better understand this relationship, therefore, researchers have undertaken studies of writing classes, studies which point to the links between the development of writing and writing pedagogy (see, for example, Graves, Applebee *Contexts,* Edelsky, Perl and Wilson). This classroom-based research has given

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us a fuller and richer "picture" of instructional context. It has revealed the constraints that influence and impinge upon both teaching behavior and writing development, it has helped us to understand how student writers acquire their assumptions and notions about writing, and it has suggested that what is taught and what is learned (or what is not learned) are interrelated.

Among the critical components of instructional context are students' own experiences, responses, and perspectives. As researchers (Brooke, Newkirk, Rose *When A Writer,* Ritchie) have demonstrated, students' unique and personal histories, reactions, expectations, and points of view play a central role in the writing classroom and contribute to students' assumptions about writing and their sense of themselves as writers and as learners. These factors are "important performers in the writing class, interacting in various ways, contributing shifting themes, tones and resonances to the way students . . . experienced the class" (Ritchie 157).

The investigation that I undertook was a further attempt to explore students' perceptions of and reactions to their classroom experiences. It consisted of a case study of three ESL student writers, but so as to determine the extent to which context impacts on students, this study examined these writers' experiences in two different classroom settings. In order to capture the writing classroom as it was seen through these students' eyes, and in order to trace their perceptions and reactions as they moved from one classroom situation to another, I collected interview data over the course of two semesters, meeting with each student four times each semester. These open-ended interviews lasted approximately two hours each (two went on for three hours), and were tape-recorded and transcribed. While the primary data of my study consisted of what students said about their classroom experiences, their attitudes toward writing, and their views of themselves as writers, I also interviewed these students' teachers and, in the case of two teachers, the tutors that were assigned to work with them. All of these interviews yielded a wealth of data, but it was not difficult to locate the dominant themes. The interview statements that were selected and included for the purposes of this study represent these themes. Finally, I carried out classroom observations, taking notes on the focus of instruction, the classroom interaction, and the roles that students and teachers played. These observations, along with the teacher and tutor interviews, provided other perspectives that could be brought to bear on the students' perceptions.

The three students that became the focus of my study were all enrolled in the same ESL precomposition course at the time that I met them and were chosen because each represented a different

level of writing proficiency. I discovered during my initial interviews that each of these students represented very different cultural and educational experiences as well. Carlos, who was judged by his precomposition teacher to be the best writer of the three, was from Colombia and had had extensive reading and writing experiences throughout high school. He complained, however, about most of the writing he had been required to do, both in high school and in a previous ESL course, because it had little to do with his interests. Mohammed, who was considered to be an average writer, was from Somalia and had taken grammar courses and been required to read and summarize his reading, but had not done any extensive writing. He had also taken two ESL courses in which he practiced paragraph writing and studied grammar. Mohammed admitted to not liking these courses because of the artificial topics assigned and the organizational formats he was expected to reproduce. Nevertheless, he indicated that studying grammar helped him, and his expectation was that teachers were supposed to correct, not comment on his ideas. Nham, the least proficient writer of the three, was from Cambodia, where he was in school for a total of only three years. He attended high school in the U.S., during which time he did well in science and math, but had great difficulty in ESL classes. He recalled studying grammar and doing very structured writing, but resisted this work because the teacher always seemed to appropriate what he wanted to say. Before entering the precomposition class, Nham attended a special summer program in addition to one other lower level ESL course in which he was encouraged to use writing for self-expression.

The recollected experiences of these students highlight those factors that served to shape their assumptions, expectations, and attitudes about writing before they entered the precomposition course. Carlos felt confident about his writing, but resented previous limitations that he felt had prevented him from exploring his interests. Mohammed had come to expect that writing in English was done to practice grammar and admitted to needing this practice. And Nham felt hopeful about continued opportunities to write so as to both develop his English and his ideas.

What happened to these students in their precomposition course?

During my classroom observations of the precomposition course, I noted the ways in which the teacher acknowledged, validated, and extended students' contributions. She recapitulated, paraphrased, and provided generalizations for students' ideas, whether they took the form of opinions, guesses, or new questions. She consistently

used phrases like, "So what you're saying is," "In other words," or "So what we're seeing is," thus legitimizing what students said and modeling the kind of engaged listening she expected of other students. She invited students to clarify and to challenge, and they did indeed ask questions of both her and one another. The in-class writing involved responses to questions that asked students to weigh the issue under consideration, to go off in new directions, to interpret, or to find as yet undiscovered connections. The composition topics which she offered, rather than assigned, and which always allowed for a student's own choice of topics, were extensions of the in-class reading, writing, and discussion, and by drawing on this work, she validated its importance. Even the grammar work grew out of and was given a context within the reading and writing. Finally, when students worked together and shared each other's writing, they responded to one another in the same way that their teacher had reacted during class discussions, as if they had internalized the role she played as an interested reader/listener.

My interview with this teacher revealed both the philosophical underpinnings of her instruction and the congruity between this philosophy and her practice. She spoke of wanting her students to explore their own thoughts because "it is critical to let students discover their personal ideas first rather than guessing what the teacher wants." She indicated the importance of finding out "what students know so that you can build on it." The readings she had organized around particular themes were chosen in order to provide alternative perspectives since she "want(s) them to understand that there's more than one point of view." Much of the writing was never collected or read but rather offered her students "ways into the reading and writing." With reference to topics students wrote about, she indicated that, while she provided suggested topics for writing, the most intriguing topics grew out of the class discussions. She also admitted that she allowed students the option of writing about whatever they wanted, explaining that it was essential that students "be involved if they are to make progress as writers" and that "because these students are beginning writers, they don't have the confidence and don't know how to write about a topic they're not interested in." She indicated that giving students confidence and getting them to say more were her primary goals: "Writing doesn't have to be a threatening, overwhelming task. But students are likely to think it is, unless a teacher can trick students into writing without their thinking about it." She spoke of providing students the opportunity to do self-evaluations of their own writing development so they could articulate what they thought they had

and hadn't learned and so that her instruction could better accommodate their perceived needs. Finally, she recalled her previous, more traditionally oriented, teaching experiences which gave her far greater control over what students were to produce but with which she came to be dissatisfied. She explained that her own transformation occurred when it was no longer "easier to blame the students."

The interviews with Carlos, Mohammed, and Nham reflect the ways their experiences in this writing course affected them. Carlos talked about being able to write easily about ideas that "came from [him], not the book," about "questions that made him think," about not being afraid because "all ideas are o.k. . . . . There's no right or wrong," about "writing for [him]self, not for a grade." He remarked that "the idea of a teacher is usually the idea of a grade. It means that I have to do my work because I need a grade, but if she asks me for work and I like the work, I don't do it for the grade. I can read my papers and see I'm doing better." He valued the freedom he was given to develop his own ideas ad the encouragement that "made [him] continue work on [his] papers." He referred to the kinds of questions the teacher raised in her responses and how he had learned to anticipate her concerns: "I can sit down and ask myself the questions that I know she's going to ask me." He characterized her responses to his writing and his subsequent revisions as a "kind of conversation between teacher and student. It's like we're working together on the same paper. It's a kind of team. Maybe it won't be perfect, but it will be the best we do." (Note the "we.") Finally, he remarked that what differentiated this teacher from others was that "she is not only a teacher, but a friend . . . who is helping me how to write . . . I can say she is also a student because she is trying to know something about us . . . she learns from us. Other teachers are trying to teach us something and forget about us as people."

Mohammed, despite his previous expectations that writing meant practicing grammar, spoke about the same factors that Carlos had identified. He talked about the ease with which he could now write because, instead of being given an outline to follow and instead of thinking first about mistakes, both of which had characterized his concerns the previous semester, "you can write down whatever you want to and then you can change it when your reread it." He described the process from which he felt his writing had benefited:

> She lets students get their ideas down first. While I am writing, I get ideas, and then you can start controlling, add things and switch things. Then she asks what student means

> and then student will understand how he was misunderstood. By doing this, I can know if my papers are clear, if it makes sense, if it's complete.

He valued the teacher's primary focus on his ideas:

> The teacher wants to know about the ideas in your mind. She takes ideas serious. This makes me feel good. The teacher wants to talk to you, wants to know what's on your mind and you feel courage to revise . . . All these books won't help, you won't use your brain. You never develop your ideas.

He spoke of the freedom to write about topics he had chosen: "It's good to let students write on what students are interested because it encourage you to write." And the dialogic relationship, identified by Carlos, came up again with Mohammed: "From the conversations I have with her, I learn why it's better to organize again or add things or explain more, and from these conversations, I learn I can be a writer."

Nham's comments echoed much of what Carlos and Mohammed said. He spoke of no longer fearing writing because this teacher was "open" and valued what he had to say: "If teacher is too tight, ideas never develop." He talked about feeling comfortable with writing and realizing that writing "lets [him] think, lets [him] learn, and lets [him] learn English cause you look for words to express ideas." He spoke of wanting to write because "It's fun. I like to think. When you write, you think a lot, you learn a lot. For me, I didn't have a good education before. Now I have opportunity to learn and the writing lets me do that." He recalled hating writing throughout high school but indicated that his attitude was now very different: "[This teacher] doesn't change my ideas. She *follows* your ideas." He described the process through which his writing evolved:

> If I write something, there is many, many mistakes. But she doesn't care about that. She cares about the main ideas and shows me. When the main idea, the big thing comes, then you can work on small things . . . That's what a teacher should do. If you have to write only one draft, then you have to do everything at once. But if you can do it many times, you can work on important thing first.

He also spoke of his own development: "You can't be perfect right away. She's calm. She lets us think. She lets us talk. That's how I get my ideas. That's how we learn. I feel I want to study forever."

Clearly, the same themes resonate throughout these interviews. This writing classroom had affected all three students, their

previous experiences and expectations notwithstanding, in similar ways. All had come to view writing as a means of generating ideas and to see themselves as participants in this process. All had come to understand the organic, recursive, and open-ended nature of writing, and could appreciate how this had contributed to their own development. Students and teacher were indeed, as Carlos put it, a "team"; interaction both during classroom discussion and throughout the writing process was a kind of dialogue; students were recognized as knowers; and knowledge, both about writing and that which the writing was about, did not exist out there and get taken in, but rather evolved through negotiation and collaboration.

What happened to these students the following semester?

Carlos entered his ESL freshman composition course full of enthusiasm and eager to continue using writing as a means for exploring and communicating his ideas. As he indicated at the end of the previous semester, "I look forward to the writing course. Now I like writing and want to keep working." However, he encountered considerable frustration as the semester progressed because he felt that his own intentions were repeatedly undercut by the goals set by the teacher.

The classroom sessions that I observed focused on abstract discussions that defined, in essence, what was appropriate and what was not. During one particular class, the discussion focused on a student paper and the extent to which this text met a set of criteria outlined on the blackboard. The discussion was dominated by the questions raised by the teacher, to which only one or two students responded. Attempts made by the teacher to involve other students in the discussion were not successful. As the silence suggested, most students could not make the connection between the questions posed and the specific text under discussion.

My interview with the teacher indicated the constraints he was trying to address and some of the conflicts that he was aware of. For example, he acknowledged the importance of students' own exploration and inquiry, of allowing for greater collaboration, but had come to feel "at peace" with his decision that students produce certain kinds of prescribed texts. He explained the importance of producing papers that followed the rhetorical formats described and modeled in the composition textbook because students "would need these to function in all their courses." The following is representative:

> I have a kind of general uneasiness about controlling

> [students'] intellectual lives but I've become less uneasy with that, and I do know more than they do, and that really part of the traditional expectation is that student get direction from their teachers. And, in time, I'm beginning to see that a textbook knows at least as much as I do, and I can get some direction on what to emphasize for any rhetorical component such as comparison/contrast or argument or process analysis.

The conflict revealed here between the instructor's "uneasiness about controlling," on the one hand, and "know[ing] more than they do," on the other, had serious consequences. As the tutor for this course indicated to me, the major problem for most students in the class was their inability to organize papers well, but they could not understand the assignments that were meant to deal with this very problem.

With reference to topics, the teacher talked about "tightening the reins." And when asked about Carlos in particular, he offered the following:

> He'll get through in a kind of mediocre way. I think he thought he worked hard, but he didn't work hard enough. There's a certain kind of avoidance. He does what he's told, but not more than that. He's not what I would call an intellectual, which is the stuff of a college . . . It's interesting that I know very little about him or about any of my students.

One of the things he knew little about was that Carlos, whom he characterized as a student who "does what he's told, but not more than that," wrote quite a few pieces on his own which he showed me, but which he never felt comfortable sharing with his teacher.

This foreshadows what Carlos revealed about the frustration he had experienced. For example, he couldn't understand why students weren't writing more:

> This is a writing class. We're supposed to write a lot. Why don't we write in class? We learn things like finding a thesis . . . but why don't we do writing? If he teaches something today, why don't we practice it? If we practice, we're going to master it. When I write, I just follow steps, but we need to practice.

He also experienced considerable tension because he was interested in writing about a particular topic for the assigned research paper and had collected data over a period of several weeks. But he was troubled because he wasn't sure whether this topic would fit the teacher's requirements for a "controversial paper," and he was

hesitant to approach the instructor to discuss this dilemma. As a result, Carlos wrote an entirely different paper, one that he knew would meet these requirements, but one that he had no involvement or interest in whatsoever. Carlos' own inquiry had thus been sidetracked by what he was given to believe was, as he put it, "the correct way."

Mohammed and Nham, the other two students in my study who, like Carlos, had looked forward to further opportunities to write, found themselves together in another ESL section of freshman composition, and again, like Carlos, came to feel discouraged over the course of the semester. In this particular class, the teacher stressed that she wanted to promote engaged and meaningful writing, but in the final analysis was not able to reconcile this professed philosophy with her need to have students fulfill the goals of a less explicit agenda. Thus, while classroom sessions were given over to small groups that commented on excerpts of students' writing, it became obvious that students had little sense of the purposefulness of this activity. They seemed to understand that these sessions, in fact, had little to do with the ways in which writing was evaluated by the teacher. As the tutor for the course put it, "the group work wasn't effective because the final message came from the teacher."

During my interview with the teacher, she discussed what she called her "process orientation" and her commitment to focusing on meaning. She described the thematically organized readings, the sequences of activities that led to final drafts, the peer review. However, classroom instruction that focused on finding thesis sentences and formulating introductions and conclusions, her responses to student writing, and the uniform structure students were expected to reproduce in their papers, revealed her real priorities. For example, for one assignment, despite the fact that the teacher did not explicitly specify that she expected them to follow a particular format (in fact, she indicated in the interview that it was important not to tell them this), this is indeed what she was looking for. As the tutor for the class indicated, "There was an expected way papers were to be written." Thus, when students' own intentions led to interpretations that did not conform to the preexisting framework, as was the case for both Mohammed and Nham, they experienced conflict.

My interviews with Mohammed pointed to the concerns and problems as he perceived them. Although he appreciated that the instructor had tired very hard to explain what she wanted, he felt that "the rules" she gave them made it not only very difficult to write papers but often confused him. Furthermore, he admitted to

not being able to write papers when he had no interest in or little information about the topics assigned: "The problem I have is the subjects. If you're not sure what you are writing, you can't organize it." He also found it difficult to make predictions because of what he viewed as mixed messages: "Teacher first said she wanted something from our experiences, but we read all this stuff and she really wanted that." He consistently felt disappointed after papers had been returned to him because rather than being credited for his ideas, his organizational and grammatical problems were pointed out. Finally, and most importantly, Mohammed's own sense of himself as a writer seemed to have been undermined. By the end of the semester, he sensed that he had learned little from the course and that his initial confusion had never left him: "I'm just not making progress. I don't know why. Maybe I need a different level course. Last semester felt like I made progress, but it went away."

My interviews with Nham demonstrate the impact that the teacher's agenda had on his sense of himself, not only as a writer, but as a learner. By midsemester, he began to reveal his anxiety and talked about having "tried so hard, but it never comes out right." He called himself a "stupid person who can't do anything the way she wants it. Since class started, I have not learned improvement . . . Next paper will be wrong. I'm sure." He consistently voiced his concern about getting things right:

> I get satisfaction because I'm thinking and getting my ideas out. But I'm worried because I don't think it's what the teacher wants. And when I worry, I cannot put more ideas out.

He spoke of students' unwillingness to participate in class:

> I would assume that teacher is too tight . . . She doesn't expect students have different ideas. It's not open for students to give ideas. I assume she wants students to have ideas she wants. That's why students have a hard time. For me, since I start this class, I keep my mouth shut.

By the end of the semester, he summed up his thoughts in the following way:

> I feel really inadequate. The way she teaches, it has to be correct. She's so tight, strict. That's why I'm not prepared for it. For student who is not concerned about introduction, thesis sentence or conclusion, that makes them confused. How to find these things before they have ideas. I know I still have trouble . . . If a teacher is tight and won't let go, student

> is afraid to put his ideas. I have more ideas even, but I know it's wrong. The more information I put into paper, the more wrong. So I leave things out. When a teacher is so tight, your lose everything.

His sense of failure and his conclusion that he has consistently been unable to write "correctly" have left him feeling disillusioned and defeated.

Listening to these students' voices, one can hear the common themes that symbolized their experiences as they moved from one instructional context to the next, this despite the fact that these students represented a range of language and writing ability as well as very different literacy and schooling backgrounds. And what they perceived about their experiences explains the disparate ways in which the two semesters impacted on them. During the first semester, the interview data suggest, they felt acknowledged for what they could contribute. They were given to understand that their attempts to articulate their thoughts played an important part in their development as writers and language users. And they seemed to appreciate the rationale for the collaborative and open environment that was established to promote this development. In sharp contrast, their reactions to the second semester revealed the extent to which this confidence in themselves was undercut. These students were troubled by their inability to make their intentions fit those of their teachers. They seemed to question the purposes of the writing practiced and assigned, didn't quite understand what they were asked to do and why, and felt confused when their work was found inadequate.

Although the focus of my study was these students' perceptions and responses, I was struck by the ways in which my classroom observations and interviews with the teachers and tutors served to corroborate and inform what the students' had said. During the first semester, writing was promoted by engaging students in rich and integrated experiences with language. It was assumed that writing would evolve as ideas were generated, shared, and responded to. It was in this way, the teacher felt, that texts could be shaped to approximate more closely the target language—academic discourse. Given this situation, it is not surprising that Carlos, Mohammed, and Nham, who had worked diligently and consistently throughout the semester, were viewed by their teacher as having made excellent progress.

The goals of the two freshman composition classes, on the other hand, were shaped by a set of different concerns. Although these two courses were quite different from one another from the

standpoint of curriculum, the sequence of assignments, the topics students wrote about, these were surface features. At a deeper level, they represented an instructional model whose goal it was to promote and sanction a particular kind of discourse. As a result, when students' attempts to generate their own meanings led to less standard texts, and this, as might be expected, happened to the greatest degree in the case of Nham, their unique interpretations were neither understood nor acknowledged.

What implications can be drawn from the findings of this study?

Findings from case studies such as this are not meant to be generalizable; after all, they are tied to the experiences of individual students in the context of particular instructional settings. At the same time, however, such studies are illuminating precisely because they reveal that it is the particularities of classroom events and the ways in which these events impact on students that shape these students' experiences and their perceptions of these experiences. Thus, while the "stories" of Carlos, Mohammed, and Nham may not have been representative, may even have been idiosyncratic, the significance of this study lies in the realization that, as teachers, we are always dealing with the unique and individual realities and interpretations of students and must take these into account. As researchers (Brooke, Purves, Ritchie, Rorschach and Whitney) have argued, because they play a central role in the writing classroom, students' beliefs, expectations, and perspectives, need to be explored. By doing so, we are likely to discover the discrepancies between our intentions and goals and those of our students, we are likely to locate the mismatches between students' perspectives and our own. In the case of Carlos, Mohammed, and Nham, such an exploration would have helped explain why they were experiencing difficulty in their composition classrooms. These students had internalized and were operating according to a set of assumptions about writing that was at odds with the concerns and goals of their composition instructors, and this conflict, as this study revealed, had serious repercussions.

A further implication of this study is the need to examine the constraints that motivate and shape the instructional models we adopt, the expectations that underlie our practices, and the decisions we make about our students. In the case of the precomposition teacher, her main concern was involving students in their own meaning-making through writing, for it was her conviction, fueled by her own teaching experiences and her understanding of the pedagogical shift in composition, that the

acquisition of norms of discourse and language would evolve as students attempted to articulate and reflect upon their own ideas. Her conviction notwithstanding, however, she suspected that her focus on engaging students in inquiry and fostering individual development would not necessarily be congruent with the concerns of the following semester. She realized, to some extent, that she may have been encouraging students to take part in what Brooke characterizes a "disruptive" form of activity that is incompatible with more traditional school-based goals. As she admitted, "Sometimes I feel like I am throwing them to the wolves."

The composition instructors, on the other hand, felt obligated to put aside students' own purposes for and responses to writing and focus instead on practicing and producing "academic" texts that reflected fixed norms and conventions. Why these composition instructors chose to adopt this framework, this despite their knowledge of recent theory and practice, is an intriguing question to explore. It could very well be that these instructors were responding to what they perceived as the larger institutional demands of writing in the academy, demands which required them to take on a more authoritative stance. They knew, for example, that these students eventually needed to pass a rigorous college-wide writing exam that applied a common set of criteria for evaluating all student writing and may have felt that their instructional focus addressed this concern. Furthermore, both instructors taught the two required freshman composition courses interchangeably, and the standards they brought to bear on assigning and evaluating student work may have been influenced by the analytic writing and lengthy research papers they expected students to undertake in their second semester.

Yet another constraint may have been the ESL composition textbooks which both teachers relied upon, textbooks which, like those written for native speakers, represent a very limited and limiting view of writing, prescribing narrowly defined tasks and formulaic rhetorical formats (Rose, "Sophisticated, Ineffective Books"). Thus, despite the "uneasiness" Carlos' teacher admitted to, he nevertheless viewed the mastery of these tasks and formats as necessary precursors to students' future academic work. In the case of Mohammed's and Nham's instructor, despite the invitation she extended to her students to use writing for exploration and interpretation, the concern with convention and form dominated.

What becomes obvious is the struggle these teachers faced as they allowed their interpretations of their roles within the institution to supersede what they knew about language acquisition and writing development. Given these interpretations, it is

understandable why what these teachers knew and what they had even occasionally tried to implement were subordinated to what they perceived as the institutionally sanctioned curriculum. That this phenomenon, whereby teachers' perceptions of institutional pressures subvert their attempts to engage students in genuine acts of learning, is an all too familiar one (Applebee, "Problems," Sola and Bennett), and underlines the need for instructors to reflect upon the incongruities between what they know and what they actually do. And when they make decisions that, upon analysis, seem to contradict what they otherwise believe, even espouse, they need to explore the constraints that influence these decisions and consider alternative, theoretically sound, ways of addressing these pressures, or even resisting them altogether (Bizzell, Myers, Rose "Language of Exclusion"). The work of Bartholomae and Petrosky not only demonstrates that such alternatives are possible, but suggests that instructors need to address institutional concerns together if they are to provide students with coherent, sustained, and integrated experiences as they move from one course to the next.

One final implication underscores the importance of investigating the contexts in which writing takes place. The different ways in which the three students in this study were affected by their two classroom experiences attest to the fact that what students do and do not do as writers and how they come to view themselves as writers are a function of instructional context. Thus, it is critical that research explore more fully the experiences of writers within classroom settings and examine the ways in which the behaviors, strategies, and difficulties of writers are related to and determined by situation-specific factors. As Reither has argued:

> Writers and what writers do during writing cannot be artificially separated from the social rhetorical situations in which writing gets done, from the conditions that enable writers to do what they do, from the motives writers have for doing what they do. (621)

But this recommendation to study writers within instructional settings should not be taken up by researchers alone. Ideally, such investigations would involve teachers in studies of their own. This teacher-generated research, because it is connected with the web of factors and circumstances of their specific situations, and because it allows them to "reclaim the classroom" (Goswami and Stillman), is likely to have a far greater impact on their teaching than the reported findings of others. By looking closely at their students and raising questions about why they seem to write the way they do, by paying attention to students' reactions to tasks and assignments, by

considering students' own intentions and purposes for writing in relationship to their own agendas and goals, teachers are likely to discover the picture of the classroom, as seen through students' eyes. And, as is the case with all learning, this new perspective is what ultimately might compel these teachers to revise, to see again, with new eyes.

Note

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 1988 International TESOL Convention in Chicago. I am indebted to Sondra Perl and Nancy Wilson whose book, *Through Teachers' Eyes,* suggested a title for this paper.

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