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## Palliative Rx for ESL/native English writers in integrated classrooms

Nanao Kojima

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PALLIATIVE Rx FOR ESL/NATIVE ENGLISH  
WRITERS IN INTEGRATED CLASSROOMS

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State  
College, San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
English Composition

---

by  
Nanao Kojima  
September 1983

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Approved by:



Chairman

14 October 1983  
Date

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## ABSTRACT

Although many American colleges lack specialized English as a second language (ESL) programs, they must admit and educate second language students. To improve their writing abilities, these colleges put them into composition classes with native speakers of English. Most ESL students are handicapped linguistically and culturally; therefore, learning activities that are productive for native speakers are often inappropriate for them. By the same token, strategies that focus on the special needs of ESL students are inappropriate for native speakers. Integrated classes (classes comprised of ESL and native English speakers) have a crucial need for approaches and methods that meet the needs of both types of students.

I examined the literature of linguistics, English composition, and ESL composition. My research on the language acquisition process, the linguistic and cultural handicaps of ESL students, the similarities and differences between speech and writing, and the composing process leads me to conclude that the integrated class design is an extremely productive design for ESL students, that the best approach for teaching integrated classes is a process-analytic approach -- an approach that capitalizes on the cognitive abilities of ESL students and the well developed language "sense" of native English speakers.



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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Teachers of college-level basic writing courses disagree about many things, but they do agree on this one point -- teaching basic writing to a class comprised of both native English speakers and English as a second language (ESL) students is extremely difficult and disconcerting. The presence of two very diverse types of students in the same class vastly complicates the teaching task. In these integrated classes -- classes where both ESL and native English-speaking students are enrolled -- ESL students surprise, amaze, frustrate and amuse. Most teachers are well trained to deal with the writing problems of English speakers but usually lack the knowledge to deal with ESL problems. These teachers, when conversing with other teachers, often relate the comical and seemingly unconventional happenings in their classrooms. Their stories invariably have undertones -- pleas for good, useful schemes to solve their problems with ESL students. "What's a good way to teach Laotian students the noun and verb inflections? What's a good way to teach Japanese students the English tense system?" You can hear the confusion and frustration in their voices.

Teaching integrated basic writing classes is

particularly demanding because the methods and techniques that work well with native English speakers seem to be unproductive for ESL students. Why is this the case? Is it a linguistic problem, a cultural problem, or both? What special needs of ESL students must we understand to teach writing effectively? How can we promote writing improvement by both groups of students in our integrated classes? Are the currently popular approaches, methods, and techniques suggested by Shaughnessy, Murray, Moffett, Wiener and others appropriate for ESL students? Should they be modified, adapted for use in integrated classrooms? These are some of the questions that have led to this effort to determine the best ways to teach integrated classes.

I believe a great need exists to find productive ways to teach ESL students along with their native English-speaking peers in the same classroom. The proof of this need is all around us. Who in academia has not yet interacted with second language students? If there are any, they are few indeed. The need for effective approaches and methods for use in this type of teaching environment is urgent now, but this need is getting more and more critical. A recent article by Erik Larson in The Wall Street Journal portrays the problem we face:

The difference between Newcomer High School and almost any other is evident first in the din before classes start. The walls fill with clipped bursts of Spanish and singsong tones of Vietnamese, Chinese, and Laotian. . . .

The question is how a school system can teach these children English, the language of success in America, without letting them fall far behind their native-born peers or drop out of school in discouragement. And some would add without breaking the school system's budget. . . . The question is growing increasingly urgent. Children like those at Newcomer are flooding into education systems across the country, most of which cannot provide a special school for them as San Francisco does. Estimates vary, but the National Institute of Education says there are about 2.5 million children in the U.S. aged five to fourteen who are "LEPs," education jargon for "limited English proficient." They speak over 80 languages in all and challenge schools with a confounding array of socioeconomic backgrounds, school experience and cultural quirks. And within 20 years, the government predicts, their number will swell to 3.4 million.<sup>1</sup>

Larsen's article confirms what most of us suspected -- the size of our second language student population is growing rapidly. With this growth the need for improved ways to teach composition to ESL students economically and productively will become more and more pressing. But, will the constraining factors of money, facilities and college-level writing instructors improve as quickly and as much as the worsening need? Will we be able to support the type of programs like Newcomer's in our colleges?

Sandra McKay, an ESL educator, addressed the issue of teaching remedial writing to ESL students in combined classes with native English speakers. In her article, "ESL/Remedial English: Are They Different?", McKay contends that ESL

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<sup>1</sup>Erik Larsen, "Rise in Children with Little English Adds to Controversy over Bilingual Education," The Wall Street Journal, 22 June 1982, Sec. 2, p. 52, cols. 1-2-3.

students have unique writing problems that cannot be handled in remedial courses for native English-speaking basic writers. The reasons she gives for this belief that integrated classes will fail to meet the needs of ESL students are based on prejudices against regular English composition and narrow minded support of independent ESL programs. Her arguments fail to support her position. She writes:

Can the writing problems of non-native speakers be dealt with adequately in remedial courses for native speakers? Several factors would suggest this is not possible. First of all, even though the syntactic errors of both types of students are similar, the different reasons for these errors often demand different 'remedies'. Second, in terms of rhetorical dimensions of writing, foreign students and American students may be motivated by very different writing topics; furthermore, non-native speakers will need more explicit attention to English rhetorical patterns and contextual restrictions or word choices.<sup>2</sup>

McKay's arguments focus on only three aspects of writing. First, the ESL students' difficulties with syntax may be caused by different factors and may, therefore, require different remedies. Second, the assignment may be oriented to the interests of native English speakers and may, therefore, be inappropriate for ESL students. Third, ESL students may not be able to compose in the rhetorical styles of English paragraph and discourse patterns and may,

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<sup>2</sup>Sandra McKay, "ESL/Remedial English: Are They Different?", English Language Teaching Journal, Apr 1981, p. 315.

therefore, require more attention from teachers.

These arguments seem contrived; they rest on soft clay and are certainly unworthy of McKay's vast ESL expertise. Syntax is a matter of linguistic competence. The way to improve syntactic skills is by practice -- listening, speaking, reading, and writing. There is no better environment for the practice ESL students need than the integrated classroom where these students can interact with their native English-speaking peers. McKay feels that topics are important. The research in regular English composition bears this out: Sondra Perl's study of the composing process of basic writers and Donald Murray's published works on composition are significant in this respect. Perl found that writers write more and write better when they compose on topics that engage them.<sup>3</sup> Murray feels that poor assignments elicit poor writing.<sup>4</sup> The importance of topic is not new nor unknown to basic writing teachers. In bringing up the suitability of topic, McKay implies that ESL students' unfamiliarity with American cultural stereotypes is a prime

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<sup>3</sup>Sondra Perl, "A Look at Basic Writers in the Process of Composing," in Basic Writing, ed. Lawrence N. Kasden and Daniel R. Hoerber (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1980).

<sup>4</sup>Donald M. Murray, "Writing as Process: How Writing Finds Its Own Meaning," in Eight Approaches to Teaching, ed. Timothy R. Donovan and Ben W. McClelland (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1980).

cause of their writing difficulties. However, how would classes comprised of non-native students facilitate the learning of American cultural stereotypes? Wouldn't interaction with their native English-speaking peers be a better way? Muriel Saville-Troike would have us believe that this is the case. She writes:

We already have serious reason to question homogeneous grouping of students for special ESL instruction because of motivational considerations. Not only are they likely to become victims of the negative expectations of which are generated by such practices, but students will not learn the language itself as well under such circumstances as if it were being used to teach a content subject. Furthermore, they will not have the advantage of using English speaking peers in the language learning classroom as models or as targets for real communication.<sup>5</sup>

In her last argument, McKay implies that we as regular English composition teachers cannot teach ESL students to write in the basically linear style of English because they need "more explicit attention." Writing logically structured paragraphs and discourses emerges from a writing process -- of prewriting, writing, and rewriting -- a process which we have pushed students to use. I wonder how McKay teaches English rhetorical patterns? Her arguments seem to lack not only validity but good sense as well.

McKay ignores the most important issue. Many small colleges and universities cannot support separate ESL

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<sup>5</sup>Muriel Saville-Troike, Foundations for Teaching English as a Second Language (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1976), p. 78.

programs because they lack the required resources: money, facilities, and staff. Where the ESL student population is small, separate ESL programs are uneconomical, impractical, and unsupportable. The realities of limited funds, inadequate facilities, and small faculties are constraints which limit options considerably. For small colleges and universities, the most sensible option is a well managed and well taught, integrated-class composition program.

Many colleges have taught their ESL students with their native English-speaking students in this type of course design for many years, and they will continue to do so. The issue now is to improve and enrich writing programs that employ the integrated class design -- to determine approaches and methodologies that will be productive for ESL students as well as native speakers of English. It is in response to this issue that this thesis is presented.

My primary aim is to present an effective methodology. But, because understanding the linguistic and cultural aspects of second language acquisition is vital in coping with the instructional challenges involved, I have devoted chapters 2 and 3 to discuss these important aspects. In chapter 4, I present what I believe is a theoretically productive methodology -- a methodology that capitalizes on the writing process and the second language learners' analytic skills as the means to overcome their linguistic and cultural handicaps.



## CHAPTER II

### NON-NATIVE STUDENTS' LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE: A PROBLEM IN INTEGRATED BASIC WRITING CLASSES

The vastly different processes of first and second language acquisition have produced two diverse groups of students on our college campuses. The students who comprise these two distinct groups manifest unique traits. One group displays remarkable speech proficiency. The students in this group, having acquired the essentials of speaking English as toddlers, talk like language experts. As five or six year olds, they had already mastered the phonological and grammatical rules of their mother tongue -- English. The second group, in sharp contrast, lacks the speech fluency of the first group. These non-native students talk utilizing speech patterns that reveal their scant knowledge of their second language -- English.

The connection between speech and writing is a much thought about and frequently discussed topic. Is writing related to speaking to the extent that the lack of skill in one facility hampers the development of the other? Does a student's fluency of speech provide clues to the type and seriousness of the problems he/she must overcome to gain college-level writing proficiency?

Most of us quickly and steadfastly defend the premise that writing is not talk recorded, but at the same time none of us can adequately argue against the premise that writing reflects the spoken language. Obviously a person cannot learn to write unless he/she has learned to speak first. E. D. Hirsch, Jr. in his book, The Philosophy of Composition, states that much of the data concerning the psychology of language processing come from studies of oral speech, and that the results of these studies relate to writing as well as to speaking. He maintains also that it is impossible to draw a functional boundary between speech and writing.<sup>1</sup>

In many ways speech influences the improvement of writing skills. Speech must "pre-exist" writing, and speech competence (as opposed to performance) must precede the development of writing competence. For native English speakers this connection can be used to accelerate the improvement of writing skills. By the same token, ESL students are handicapped, and their problems are rooted in the difference between acquiring one's mother tongue and a second language.

There is nothing original about calling attention to this gross dissimilarity of English language competencies between ESL and native English-speaking students. All basic

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<sup>1</sup>E. D. Hirsch, Jr., The Philosophy of Composition, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 94.

writing instructors are aware of this difference; most instructors recognize it as a problem although they might not be able to define it specifically. Some instructors, failing to isolate or interpret its effects, simply ignore it and teach their students as though they were all native English speakers.

This is unfortunate for the devastating impact of this competency difference is on the motivation of ESL students. Unless it is neutralized, these students will become progressively more discouraged, and their progress will reflect their frustration. Establishing a humanistic environment for all the students in the integrated writing class is the first task; therefore in this chapter my aim is to discuss some of the aspects of this problem, hoping to improve our understanding of it, and to suggest some ideas to blunt its ill effects.

#### First and Second Language Acquisition Processes

"The significant difference between the acquisition of one's mother tongue (L1) and adding a second language (L2) is that the former is merely learned while the latter must usually be taught,"<sup>2</sup> is how Clifford Prator describes in capsule-form, the immense difference between learning one's

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<sup>1</sup>Clifford H. Prator, "Adding a Second Language," in Reading on English as a Second Language, ed. Kenneth Croft (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers Inc., 1972), p. 23.

mother tongue and a second language. The common belief among linguists today is that learning one's mother tongue is a natural human process, much like learning to walk. No one takes a child by the hand and teaches him/her how to talk. Still he/she learns the language, all the intricate grammatical and phonological rules involved in it, and the socially appropriate use of it. Learning a second language is considerably different. It is an artificial, mechanistic process much like learning algebra, only much more difficult. Foreign language teachers contend that gaining proficiency in second language as an adult is one of the most difficult of human skills to develop.

A totally satisfactory theory of how a child learns his/her mother tongue has yet to be developed. Linguists admit that they are just beginning to comprehend this complex process and that their knowledge is far from being complete. Three theories are commonly reviewed in most attempts to explain this phenomenon: Skinner's operant conditioning theory, the social learning theorists' imitation of models theory, and Chomsky's "innate mechanism" theory.

Skinner's theory, a behavioristic approach, maintains that language like other behavioral activities is learned through reinforcement of specific verbal behavior. For example, an infant produces sounds randomly; parents and others in the environment reinforce certain sounds and sound combinations. When the child's utterances resemble

meaningful words, the child is rewarded by those adults around him/her with attention and praise. Culturally deviant sounds and sound combinations are ignored. In this manner appropriate sound and sound combinations become predominant in the child's repertoire. These stimulus response (S-R) activities continue until the child's speech resembles adult speech.

Linguists consider Skinner's theory to be inadequate because it views the child as an entity that simply responds to external stimuli and reinforcements. Additionally, this theory maintains that a child learns language by collecting and storing S-R connections, a concept which fails to explain the creative aspect of the child's use of language. These theorists believe the fact that a child understands and utters words and sentences he/she couldn't have used before discredits Skinner's theory.

Social learning theorists maintain that a child learns language by observing and imitating a model's verbal behavior. Children listen to language all around them, and even if they do not imitate speech immediately, they are acquiring information about the language from hearing others. Since a child must have auditory input for oral speech development or visual input for sign language acquisition, imitation undoubtedly plays an important role. However, the social learning theory cannot account for the fact that children's language is highly creative, that they understand

novel sentences and construct completely new sentences that they have never heard before. Like Skinner's theory, the imitation of models theory fails to explain that very important fact. For this reason, linguists believe that this theory does not adequately explain the language acquisition process.

Explaining the creative aspect of a child's language is the enigma. Chomsky suggests that a child's remarkable capacity to acquire language (learning the rules and using language creatively) is attributable to an innate physiological mechanism. This innate mechanism he calls language acquisition device (LAD).<sup>3</sup> The LAD enables a child to process language -- to learn and generalize the rules of language, to understand and produce original and appropriate sentences.

Chomsky's theory is supported by many linguists. Fromkin and Rodman in their text, An Introduction to Language, state: "Children must . . . learn the 'rules' which permit them to use language creatively. . . . Children, then seem to act like very efficient linguists equipped with a perfect theory of language, who use this theory to construct the grammar of the language they hear."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Paul H. Mussen, John J. Conger, and Jerome Kagan, Child Development and Personality, 4th ed. (New York: Harper-Row Publishers, 1974), p. 240.

<sup>4</sup>Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman, An Introduction to Language, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), p. 243.

Neurological evidence in the area of cerebral dominance also supports Chomsky's theory. A current developmental psychology text by Mussen, Conger, and Kagan discusses the psycholinguistic process involved:

The brain has two hemispheres and speech is usually more completely represented in the left one; for most people, this region, rather than the right hemisphere is usually dominant in speech, regardless of whether the individual is right- or left-handed. This dominance is not well established in the young child, however. For instance, a newborn or infant with a damaged left hemisphere develops language normally with the right hemisphere. With increasing age, the nervous system becomes less plastic, left dominance becomes firmer, and the ability to recover from damage to that hemisphere declines. If a two- or three-year old suffers damage to the left hemisphere, he loses language to some degree but, since his nervous system is still relatively plastic, he generally recovers quickly with the right hemisphere. Beyond adolescence, however, recovery is likely to be limited or absent; the degree of recovery is correlated with the firmness of cerebral dominance before injury.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever the process for acquiring one's mother tongue might be, the amazing fact about it is the remarkable ease with which a child accomplishes this complex feat. Amazing also is the fact that a child masters the essentials of speaking his/her mother tongue as a preschool child without concentrated, formal instruction. Clifford Prator points out that basically "all that remains to be done in school is to enlarge his vocabulary and to teach him to read and write, to make him literate."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Mussen, Conger and Kagan, pp. 240-41.

<sup>6</sup>Prator, p. 26.

Learning a second language is an entirely different matter. Although it usually has to be taught, a method has yet to be devised which will make learning a second language easy. Anthony and Norris describe three basic methods that are used to teach foreign languages and relate that in most cases, instructors use one of the countless number of combinations of these three methods.

The first method, the grammar-translation method, is basically a cognitive approach to the teaching of a foreign language. It embraces two primary activities: memorizing lexical items and grammatical rules of the language under study, and reinforcing this new knowledge by translation exercises. For example, students will memorize "the list of German prepositions which take the dative, or . . . the forms of the Latin verb 'to be' in the particular arbitrary order sum, es, est . . .,"<sup>7</sup> and when not memorizing vocabulary items or grammatical rules, the students will translate passages from the foreign language to English or vice versa.

This method is frequently criticized because it focuses on teaching "about" a language rather than teaching the language itself. Where gaining fluency in speaking and writing is concerned, it lacks effectiveness. However, if

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<sup>7</sup>Edward M. Anthony and William E. Norris, "Method in Language Teaching," in Readings on English as a Second Language, ed. Kenneth Croft (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1972), p. 42.



developing insight into how a language works is the objective, this should be the method of choice.

The second method, the direct method, is the exact opposite of the grammar-translation method. Where the grammar-translation method emphasizes memorization of grammatical rules, the direct method ignores this aspect. Instead, it concentrates on giving students command of the language by requiring them to use it in all their activities: conversation, reading, writing -- without benefit of translations. The strength of this method lies in its effectiveness in developing the students' control of the language. Its weakness is its disregard for the valuable increase in relevance that results from description and comparison of the native language and the language under study.

The audio-lingual method or some type of derivative method is commonly used today. In its pure form this method embraces two classroom techniques: "mimicry-memorization" and "pattern-practice." Anthony and Norris describe the essentials of this method in these terms:

"Mimicry" recognizes the linguists' assertions that language is primarily oral and that native speaker models are ultimately the only completely acceptable models for imitation. "Pattern" represents the systems of which the language is constructed. The language "item" to be learned is not an individual sound, word, or sentence, but that sound in contrast to other sounds of a phonological system; that word as the member of a lexical cluster; that sentence pattern in relation to other sentence patterns. The influence of behaviorist psychology is shown by the second term in each pair --

"memorization" and "practice" are the chief mechanism for establishing habit.<sup>8</sup>

Fundamentally "mimicry-memorization" and "pattern-practice" should be viewed as steps in a procedure. Students are initially presented new foreign language items. They gain control over these items through mimicry-memorization; then they progressively improve their mastery as recognition and production of these language items become unconscious habits.

#### Age and the Ability to Learn Language

How quickly and well a person learns a second language depends to a great extent on his/her age. A powerful connection exists between age and the ability to learn language. Beginning at about the age of two, children become for a short time linguistic geniuses. But at about the age of five or six, this talent begins to fade.<sup>9</sup> About the age of puberty, most of this talent has disappeared and learning a second language becomes exceptionally difficult. Muriel Saville-Troike maintains that "progress in language development normally begins to slow sharply at about the age of puberty," and that a consequence of this loss of ability is in learning a second language.<sup>10</sup> She writes:

The extent of a foreign accent is directly correlated with the age at which the second language is

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<sup>8</sup>Anthony and Norris, pp. 46-47.

<sup>9</sup>Fromkin and Rodman, p. 253.

<sup>10</sup>Saville-Troike, p. 12.

acquired. At the age of three or four practically every child entering a foreign community learns to speak the new language rapidly and without a trace of a foreign accent. This facility declines with age. The proportion of children who speak the second language with an accent tends to increase, but very slowly, so that by the age of 12, perhaps 1% or 2% pronounce words differently from native speakers. A dramatic reversal of form occurs during the early teens, however, when practically every child loses the ability to learn a new language without an accent.<sup>11</sup>

Second language learners' problems are not confined solely to the phonological aspects of the English language. That their speech contains many grammatical flaws is common knowledge. That they lack the necessary competence in the English language is obvious.

The concept of linguistic competence and linguistic performance is interesting and should prove helpful in clarifying my point about the ESL students' lack of competence in the English language. Briefly defined, linguistic competence is one's knowledge of a language, while linguistic performance equates to how one uses that knowledge in actual behavior.<sup>12</sup> Performance relates to the audible, surface aspects of speech -- the utterance. The competence that underlies this utterance is unconscious knowledge of complex linguistic rules. In speaking we observe these rules without conscious awareness of exactly what we are doing.

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<sup>11</sup>Saville-Troike, p. 12.

<sup>12</sup>Fromkin and Rodman, p. 7.

Frequently many of us can't even define the rules that we use. Fromkin and Rodman explain:

In discussing what you know -- your linguistic competence -- we are not talking about your conscious knowledge. We learn the rules of the language without anyone teaching them to us and without being aware that we are learning such rules. That this knowledge is learned is clear from the fact that you use it to speak, to understand, and to make judgments about sentences.<sup>13</sup>

Speech performance is rule-governed behavior, and it is based on one's linguistic competence. To a great extent one's speech reveals his/her knowledge of the language. If this is so, and I believe it is, many ESL students in our colleges are grossly deficient in their knowledge of the English language. They will have to cover a great amount of ground in order to "catch up" with their native English-speaking peers. And this, they must accomplish while being physiologically ill-equipped to do so. Should we wonder why motivating them is so important and so difficult?

#### Speech Competence and Writing Improvement

A recent trend in teaching writing to basic writers is the practice of instructing students to use their speech habits to guide their writing. The native English speakers' linguistic competence is an extraordinarily rich source of grammatical knowledge. The perplexity is how to bring to conscious awareness this extensive store of unconscious, linguistic knowledge.

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<sup>13</sup>Fromkin and Rodman, p. 7.

A technique recommended by Harvey S. Wiener consists of listening to the sentence one writes and relying on speech to compose syntactically correct sentences. Wiener describes his idea in the following passage from his book, The Writing Room:

The most remarkable truth, and the easiest one to forget, is that native speakers of English already have a well-developed sentence sense. Most students know a fragment when they hear one; they know a complete sentence when they hear one. Yet the errors in their writing seem to prove otherwise; run-on sentences, comma-splices, and fragments abound.

To help teach about sentence error you can take advantage of this native sense by first of all making students realize that they have it; and then by helping them listen to the sentences they write. Oral exercises to develop the concept of a sentence are a solid beginning because they give students a sense of confidence about their language ability. Returning often to such oral activities reinforces that confidence and helps it develop.<sup>14</sup>

Mina Shaughnessy suggests that a concentrated program of writing practice will give students access to their unconscious knowledge of syntactic rules. About this idea she writes:

If it is true that many of the difficulties we see at the surface of sentences are the effort to recode speech into writing, rather than by an ignorance of common syntactic patterns, then the first objective in the improvement of written syntax ought to be to give the student access in writing to what he already knows as a speaker. This means practice, it means more writing than the student has ever done before. We have as yet no adequate record of the speech repertory of the student whose written language we have been analyzing, but the obvious sophistication of so many of these students as

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<sup>14</sup>Harvey S. Wiener, The Writing Room (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 87.

speakers and the general understanding we have from linguists about language acquisition suggests that many of their syntactic problems will disappear simply with more writing.<sup>15</sup>

Shirley Ann Rush and Suzette Elgin of San Diego State University, believing that unconscious grammatical knowledge can be brought to conscious awareness and that this knowledge, once brought to the conscious level, will help students write better, tested this notion in 1975-76. A test group and two control groups were established. The classroom procedure for the test group consisted of the following: the first two meetings of the week were used to solve problems in English grammar (each problem dealt with a single grammar mechanism of English, such as "the mechanism for forming yes/no questions, the mechanism for forming passive sentences,"<sup>16</sup> etc.), and the third meeting of the week was devoted to writing an in-class essay.

Rush and Elgin were disappointed with their findings. The writing improvement of the test group was no better than those of the two control groups. However, an interesting observation, and certainly a predictable one, was reported. They write that several of the students in the test group were "foreign students whose command of English was wholly

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<sup>15</sup>Mina P. Shaughnessy, Errors and Expectations (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 87.

<sup>16</sup>Shirley Anne Rush and Suzette Elgin, An Experimental and Evaluative Approach to Teaching Basic Writing Skills, monograph (California State Univ. and Colleges, 1977), p. 7.

inadequate to allow them to perform the task demanded of them."<sup>17</sup> The point that Rush and Elgin make is obvious -- ESL students are handicapped by their under-developed linguistic competence.

#### Helping ESL Students Gain Linguistic Knowledge

The effects of the dissimilarity in linguistic competence of native English speakers and ESL students, unless neutralized early in the semester, will adversely influence the motivation of the less capable ESL students. Basic writing instructors can blunt the negative effects of the problem by using learning activities that maximize student involvement, that demand active student participation, that shift the focus of attention away from the instructor to the students, and that allow ESL students to take advantage of the superior linguistic knowledge of their native English-speaking peers.

Structuring classes so that students are assigned to work in small workshop groups of four or five students is a good framework that allows access to these desirable features. In these workshop groups students plan and discuss their writing assignments during each phase of the writing process: prewriting, composing, rewriting, and proofreading. The actual composing and rewriting of their essays should be accomplished out of class. For example, after a topic for a

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<sup>17</sup>Rush and Elgin, p. 25.

paper is assigned by the teacher and the required instructions are provided, the students meet in their workshop groups and prewrite their compositions, each member listening, asking questions, and discussing ideas until all of them have had a chance to present their views. Then, after the rough drafts are prepared, the students read and criticize their work in these small, informal discussion groups. After each revision, students process their essays in the same way.

The benefits of this type of teaching technique are considerable. Mixing ESL students in workshop groups with their native English-speaking peers makes the superior knowledge of native speakers available to ESL students. The small size of these groups facilitates active involvement by ESL students and allows continuous interaction with native speakers. The boredom and frustration that often result from teacher-centered activities are minimized.

A special consideration regarding ESL students' motivation is the competition for grades which, by emphasizing the product instead of the process of writing, is counter-productive. For them grades are also a source of frustration since they usually come out at the bottom of the instructors' grading scales. I suggest that their "fear of failure" can be alleviated by allowing them to take basic writing on a "no-grade" basis and by permitting them to retake the course until they gain sufficient confidence and



skill to take it on a "graded" basis.

The special motivational problems of ESL students can be successfully dealt with in integrated remedial writing classes, and providing productive writing experiences is the necessary first step. Teacher centered activities that are normally simply boring for native speakers of English are, for ESL students, a source of discouragement and frustration because their competence with the English language makes such activities difficult. For all students, but especially for ESL students, involvement in the learning process is a "must." Also, constant interaction between ESL and native English speaking students will allow ESL students to take advantage of the native speakers' "sense of the language." The best training aids -- those not available to separate ESL programs -- are the native English speakers with their highly developed speech competence. Teachers of integrated classes act unwisely if they fail to use this resource.

## CHAPTER III

### CULTURAL ASPECTS OF INTEGRATED CLASSES

Once while fishing in the Black Hills of South Dakota, I was so intent in what I was doing that I failed to see a rattlesnake resting on a rock a few feet away. Soon, however, the rattlesnake made its presence known, and I solved my problem by exiting the premises hastily. In many ways the situation of teachers of integrated classes (combined classes of non-native speakers and basic writing American students) is much like the one I have described. Often these teachers are so engrossed in their job of instructing students to put words together in syntactically correct order to form sophisticated sentences, paragraphs, and essays that they fail to see the snake in the grass, or on the rock, as the case may be. Culture, specifically the unique problems that arise by combining students of dissimilar cultural backgrounds in the basic writing classroom, is the serpent, and it shouldn't be ignored lest it bite us on our bottoms.

The crux of problems induced by culture is described by Benjamin Lee Whorf. ". . . all observers," he writes, "are not led by the same evidence to the same picture of the

universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or are in some way calibrated."<sup>1</sup> Often restated by sociolinguists is Whorf's view: people from different cultures perceive the universe differently, as though they, as a distinct linguistic group, look through idiosyncratically tinted lenses at objects and events around them.

We acknowledge the validity of this viewpoint by our ready acceptance of stories that describe cross-cultural misunderstandings. Saville-Troike provides us with some good examples. In one account she tells about the anger generated among Texas students by Dominican Republic students who naively referred to the Texans as Yankees. In another, she talks about a French couple who, while on a trip to China, took their poodle to a native restaurant and requested dog food. The poodle was promptly cooked and returned to their table on a platter.<sup>2</sup>

What is the connection between language and culture that causes the latter to become a serious problem when ESL and native English-speaking students are combined in writing classes? In Teaching the Universe of Discourse, James Moffett points out that "speaking and writing are essentially

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<sup>1</sup>Benjamin Lee Whorf, "Science and Linguistics," in Readings in Applied English Linguistics, ed. Harold B. Allen and Michael D. Linn, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1982), p. 62.

<sup>2</sup>Saville-Troike, p. 47.

just editing and abstracting some version of what at some moment one is thinking."<sup>3</sup> Since but a few pages earlier, he had stated that culture "determines the thought of the individual through belief systems and postulates about nature built into its languages and supporting institutions,"<sup>4</sup> he alludes to a relationship based upon thought as the connector.

In a somewhat similar manner, Whorf defines thought as the intermediary between culture and language. Significant, however, is that he assigns to language a much more active and important role. In "Science and Linguistics," Whorf maintains that "language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas," but it also shapes ideas, and programs and guides mental activities. Ideas are formed in ways that are peculiar to a particular culture and differ greatly or slightly as cultures are similar or dissimilar. As Whorf puts it: "We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way -- an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in patterns of our language."<sup>5</sup>

Based on linguistic arguments, it appears that

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<sup>3</sup>James Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), p. 71.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>5</sup>Whorf, p. 61.

culture becomes a creator of problems because of its inseparable connection with thought and language. By manipulating our thought and language processes, it causes unique psychological, social, and learning difficulties.

The problems that are induced by cultural disjunction fall into two broad categories. In the first are the problems associated with attitude, such as ethnic/cultural stereotypes, ambivalence of non-native students towards assimilation, and motivational aspects. In the second are those problems associated with comprehension. Here we find errors that stem from the fact that semantic structures and social structures are closely tied together, and also those problems caused by interference of the mother tongue with the language under study. Regarding the latter W. R. Lee relates that the features of English are easy or difficult depending on its similarity or difference to the mother tongue of the language learner. He elaborates:

. . . English . . . appears variously against various linguistic backgrounds. Certain characteristics are thrown into relief in some countries and other characteristics in others, and this because of contrasts with the first language. . . . For speakers of Serbo-Croat or Czech, English is a language of several past tenses and puzzling article usage; but these are not a headache to Spanish or Hungarian pupils. Among the problems facing Turkish learners are English word-order patterns, so different from their own; yet word order is much less of a stumbling-block to the Italians or Dutch.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>W. R. Lee, "The Linguistic Context of Language Teaching," in Teaching English as a Second Language, ed. Harold B. Allen (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), p. 388.

Some readers might feel that interference problems should constitute a separate group. The negative effects of interference, I believe, are primarily those associated with confusion or failure to understand the logic and patterns of English. For this reason, where second language students are concerned, interference is really the core of comprehension difficulties.

#### Aspects of Attitudinal Problems

In his article, "A Social Psychology of Bilingualism," Wallace E. Lambert describes a study he conducted in 1958-59, with three colleagues: Hodgson, Gardner, and Fillenbaum. They employed a sizeable group of English-Canadian university students to listen to tape recordings and to evaluate the personalities of bilingual speakers in the guises of French-Canadians and English-Canadians. The study revealed that these students were strongly biased against the French-Canadian guises and favored the matched English-Canadian guises. The same speakers in their English-Canadian guises were rated as better looking, taller, more intelligent, more dependable, kinder, more ambitious and as having more character. When the same tapes were presented to a group of French-Canadian student-judges, the outcome was quite surprising. The French-Canadian students shared approximately the same prejudices against French-Canadians that were demonstrated by

English-Canadian students. The French-Canadians evaluated the English-Canadian guises as being more intelligent, dependable, likeable, and having more character. Only in two traits, kindness and religiousness, were the French-Canadian guises rated higher.<sup>7</sup>

The results of a similar study, employing 46 white and four black, Harvard Graduate School of Education student-judges, are reported by Bruce Fraser. The four black students chose to perform their evaluation arbitrarily so as not to influence the data obtained from their white peers. The experiment-design was based on the use of tape recordings of 24 speakers of six dialect groups: (1) radio announcers, (2) college-educated white Southerners, (3) college-educated black Southerners, (4) college-educated black speakers from Mississippi presently attending Howard University in Washington, D.C., (5) Southern black students from a small all-black Southern college in Mississippi, and (6) college-educated Southerners presently living in New York City. The judges rated the recorded voices on traits such as intelligence, friendliness, education, ambition, honesty, trustworthiness, talent, and determination. Fraser reports: ". . . interesting is the extent to which the rating seems to

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<sup>7</sup>Wallace E. Lambert, "A Social Psychology of Bilingualism," in Teaching English as a Second Language, ed. Harold B. Allen and Russell N. Campbell (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), p. 388.

be affected by the perceived race of the speaker,"<sup>8</sup> and maintains that this phenomenon is not uncommon. "The simple fact is that people will judge differentially on the basis of certain cues -- in this case speech alone -- because of their experience and certain, albeit inaccurate stereotypes."<sup>9</sup>

A classic portrayal of stereotyping on ethnic lines and its damaging effects, both social and psychological, is provided in this account by Edna Acosta-Belen:

Like any other group of immigrants that came to America, the Puerto Ricans tried to follow the path leading to the "melting pot." Those groups that were considered "white" in terms of this society's racial definitions were successful. Those who were considered "non-white" discovered that in spite of their efforts to "Americanize," they were rejected and stigmatized (Seda Bonilla 1971). This attitude created in them feelings of inferiority, identity crisis, and even shame at displaying their native culture and language to members of the dominant society. They soon discovered that acceptance into American society was not after all guaranteed by conformity, that is, by the adoption of the American culture and the English language. They were still considered inferior and pushed into a position of marginality within this society. Naturally, this has resulted in the internalization of a negative self-image.<sup>10</sup>

Stereotyping of the type and severity described by Acosta-Belen has caused a serious confrontation between the advocates of assimilation and those who fight against it.

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<sup>8</sup> Bruce Fraser, "Some 'Unexpected' Reactions to Various American-English Dialects," in Readings in Applied English Linguistics, p. 226.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>10</sup> Edna Acosta-Belen, "'Spanglish': A Case of Languages in Contact," in Readings in Applied English Linguistics, p. 462.



Proponents of cultural pluralism -- the preservation of the culture and immigrant groups -- argue that assimilation processes aggravate the deplorable condition of racially differentiated minorities.<sup>11</sup> But those who believe in the necessity of assimilation argue that learning a second language equates to learning a second culture. One cannot, they maintain, become acculturated and remain separate. Learning culture-dominated behavior of a new group, such as language and thought, is naturally assimilative. Richard Rodriguez in his autobiography, Hunger for Memory, provides this pro-assimilationist argument:

Ethnic studies departments were founded on romantic hopes. And with the new departments were often instituted "community action" programs. Students were given course credit for work done in working-class neighborhoods. Too often, however, activists encouraged students to believe that they were in league with the poor when, in actuality, any academic who works with the socially disadvantaged is able to be of benefit to them only because he is culturally different from them.<sup>12</sup>

The question, then, is a philosophical one for the teacher of integrated classes who must deal with non-native students. The more successful he is in imparting American cultural concepts, generally the more severe is the student's alienation from home, family, friends, and cultural heritage. For me it is still hard, however, to understand why assimilation is so doggedly condemned, for like Rodriguez

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<sup>11</sup>Acosta-Belen, p. 462.

<sup>12</sup>Richard Rodriguez, Hunger for Memory (Boston: David R. Goldine, Publisher, Inc., 1982), p. 158.

I believe that assimilation is the best way to help non-native students attain the level of success they strive for. However, the answer seems to lie somewhere in between total assimilation and pluralism. Many educators recommend a sensible compromise, providing access to the full range of acculturation activities to those who want them while not discriminating against students who may resist total acculturation.

A somewhat less damaging but more insidious problem than this highly visible one is the language learner's ambivalent attitude about learning the new language. This ambivalence can create a situation in which even success can be painful. Lambert points out that "depending upon the compatibility of the two cultures, he [the language learner] may experience feelings of chagrin or regret as he loses ties in one group, mixed with the fearful anticipation of entering a relatively new group. The concept of anomie refers to such feelings of social uncertainty or dissatisfaction."<sup>13</sup>

Lambert's study of American postgraduate students taking advanced French at McGill's French Summer School revealed that as the students progressed in skill to the point where they thought and dreamed in French, their feelings of anomie increased markedly. To alleviate their discomfort, these students reverted to using English even though they had pledged to use only French for the duration of the training

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<sup>13</sup>Lambert, p. 396.

period. The apparent pattern revealed by this study (Lambert, Gardner, Barik and Tunstall, 1961) is that when students begin to really master a second language, they become so annoyed with anomie that they need to develop strategies to reduce the annoyance.<sup>14</sup>

In learning a second language, probably the single most important factor is the learner's attitude towards the group whose language he/she sets out to learn. Lambert suggests that a student's motivation derives from the type of orientation he/she has toward the new group's language. The orientation is instrumental in form if the purpose of learning the new group's language is utilitarian, such as getting ahead in one's career. The orientation is integrative if the student's aim is to learn more about the new cultural community in order to become part of it. According to Lambert, the integrative orientation sustains a stronger motivation than the instrumental; therefore the integrative acts as a much more powerful force for the attainment of success in learning a new language.

#### Aspects of Comprehension Problems

ESL students' comprehension problems are not the same as those exhibited by their native English-speaking peers. Although the problems appear to be similar -- misinterpreting

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<sup>14</sup>Lambert, p. 397.

instructions and failing to grasp the concepts being covered -- the causes of these misapprehensions are different. In a hypothetical verbal interaction between two men, the efficient manner in which they understand and agree on what is being discussed and what actions must be accomplished depend on whether they have a common background of knowledge. According to Benjamin Lee Whorf, if person A gives directions that are carried out by person B to A's complete satisfaction, both A and B have an amazingly complex system of linguistic patterns and classification in common.<sup>15</sup>

Obviously then, if A is the teacher and B is a native English speaker, their common linguistic knowledge will spur understanding and agreement. If B is a non-native student, the chance that understanding and agreement will occur may be substantially reduced. A simplified example of this point is a remark by the teacher about hot dogs which could have significantly different meanings to a Thai student whose culture prohibits the eating of dogs, and to an American student who knows that the remark has nothing to do with dogs.

Basically, the causes of comprehension problems of ESL students are different in two ways. The first is their under-developed knowledge of culture related concepts.

Regarding this aspect, David Abercrombie writes:

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<sup>15</sup>Whorf, p. 60.

Semantic structure and social structure are intimately connected, and it is here that the most serious difficulties for the language learner are probably to be found. A language is not only part of the cultural achievement of a people, it also transmits the rest of their culture system, and English words such as gentleman, respectable, genteel, shy, whimsical, sophisticated, self-conscious, lowbrow are only intelligible in their social setting. They must be explained by long and involved descriptions of social facts; apparent equivalents in other languages are almost always misleading.<sup>16</sup>

In "Second Dialect and Second Language in the Composition Class," James Nattinger defines this problem in more complex terms. He states that the main difference between native and non-native students is their knowledge of American cultural stereotypes. Facts can be grouped into two broad categories: "hard facts" and "soft facts." The actual objects and events as they exist in the universe are "hard facts." The culture-regulated, mental stereotypes of these events and objects are "soft facts."<sup>17</sup> Native English speakers who are proficient in "soft-fact" knowledge operate efficiently in our society. Non-native students whose knowledge of "soft facts" is inadequate are faced with the twin problems of managing a new code and a new system of relating thought to reality.

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<sup>16</sup>David Abercrombie, "The Social Basis of Language," in Teaching English as a Second Language. p. 22.

<sup>17</sup>James R. Nattinger, "Second Dialect and Second Language in the Composition Class," TESOL Quarterly. 12, No. 1 (1978), pp. 77-78.

The second way that comprehension problems of ESL students differ from those of native speakers is in the nature of interference -- the mother tongue and native culture almost always interfere with the learning of a second language. How interference processes affect writing improvement has been covered insightfully by experts such as Lado for vocabulary, Shaughnessy for syntax, and Kaplan for discourse development. Some of their thoughts are reviewed here to clarify this complex but fascinating subject.

To show how interference influences vocabulary study, Lado describes two situations using Spanish as the mother tongue and English as the language under study. In the first case, a vocabulary test with the words machete, suppuration, and calumniator, he points out that most of the Spanish speaking students would know these words even though they are among the 1,358 least used words in Thorndike's 30,000 word list. Since Spanish has words that are similar in form and meaning, these words, as difficult as they seem, are relatively easy for Spanish-speaking students. In the second case, however, simple expressions, such as fire the furnace and man the guns, are difficult for Spanish speakers because Spanish does not allow words to be used in this context. The nouns fuego (fire) and hombre (man) cannot be used as verbs in the way that nouns are often used in English.

Similarity and difference to the native tongue and culture are the key that determines ease or difficulty of

learning second language vocabulary items. Based on this scheme, Lado provides a structure that classifies English words and expressions according to their difficulty patterns. The taxonomy suggested by Lado defines seven categories, each manifesting a unique pattern:

Pattern 1: cognates (words that are similar in form and meaning). There are thousands of words that are reasonably similar in form and meaning. Spanish and English, for example, have words such as hotel, hospital, calendar. Even in unrelated languages such as Japanese and English, numerous cognates can be found. For obvious reasons, this pattern is an easy one.

Pattern 2: deceptive cognates (words that are similar in form but having different meaning). This pattern includes three sub-patterns: (1) words that are partly similar in meaning, (2) words that are altogether different in meaning but still exist in the native language, and (3) words that are different in meaning and represent meanings that are not grasped as such in the native language. In this last sub-pattern, an example is the word milk. Japanese borrowed the word and restricted its meaning to canned milk. For speakers of Japanese, fresh milk is not milk. Because this pattern can be more complex than merely attaching new meaning to old forms, it is considered extremely difficult.

Pattern 3: different forms (words that are different in

form and are similar in only some of their common meanings). Words in two different languages are rarely translatable in all their meanings from one language to another. For example, the word tree and the Spanish arbol are similar in only about four of their twenty or more meanings and uses. This pattern is considered average in difficulty.

Pattern 4: strange meanings (words that are different in form and with meanings that are strange). Lado clarifies this pattern with a discussion of the term "first floor." For many foreign students, first floor means the floor just above the ground level which in English is the second floor. Because it is confusing, this pattern is considered difficult.

Pattern 5: new form types (words and expressions that are different in construction such as idioms and two-part verbs, i.e., "call up"). For foreign students unfamiliar with this pattern, two part verbs are extremely difficult if the elements can be split up as in "call the boy up."

Pattern 6: different connotations (words that have widely different connotations between two different cultures). Taboo and offensive words are examples of this pattern. According to Lado this pattern is difficult.

Pattern 7: geographically restricted (words restricted to regional dialects). Understanding regional dialect differences is confusing for foreign students. For this



reason Lado rates this pattern difficult.<sup>18</sup>

In the area of syntax Mina Shaughnessy describes how interference factors produce some of the idiosyncratic errors of non-native students. She suggests that their problems occur primarily in such areas as "inflection of regular verbs (especially those endings involving the letters s and ed) and of nouns (both with the plural and possessive forms), the basic verb combinations in tense formation, the use of the article, and . . . the two part nature (subject-verb) of predication in formal English."<sup>19</sup> She maintains that these difficulties are largely due to the nature of the student's first language which accomodates these functions by other means. For example, the concept of the possessive 's is not a part of Chinese or Spanish. Chinese employs a special marker de following the word that would have the possessive marker in English. Spanish uses the word de preceding the owner. The possessive 's, therefore, poses a special problem for speakers of Chinese and Spanish who often ignore the possessive 's or use it indiscriminately.<sup>20</sup>

The English tense system is another source of great confusion for non-native students. About this problem

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<sup>18</sup>Robert Lado, "Patterns of Difficulty in Vocabulary," in Readings on English as a Second Language, ed. Kenneth Croft (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, 1972), pp. 283-89.

<sup>19</sup>Shaughnessy, Errors and Expectations, p. 91.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

Shaughnessy writes; "Students whose mother tongues either do not have these features or have alternative ways of creating tense distinction or have the features in some contexts and not in others can be expected to have difficulty remembering them or believing that they are important in getting their meaning across. This is especially true where the unlearned form serves no semantic purpose in Standard English -- that is, where it is redundant."<sup>21</sup>

Shaughnessy acknowledges the immense difficulties that foreign students must overcome to learn to write well, stating: ". . . one marvels even at the partial mastery of the formal verb endings that students from other language backgrounds demonstrate."<sup>22</sup> If the mastery of English syntax is difficult for native speakers of English, one can imagine how frustrating it must be for ESL students.

Understanding and developing proficiency in English rhetorical styles of writing is yet another area where interference processes complicate matters. Robert B. Kaplan suggests that foreign students use patterns that are culturally unique in writing paragraphs and essays. Instead of writing in a dominantly linear pattern characteristic of English expository prose, foreign students use other styles that are non-English in appearance and that violate the

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<sup>21</sup>Shaughnessy, p. 95.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

expectations of native English readers. Their papers seem out of focus and disorganized because of their rhetorical styles. Kaplan writes:

Logic (in the popular, rather than the logician's sense of the word) which is the basis of rhetoric is evolved out of a culture; it is not universal. Rhetoric, then, is not universal either, but varies from culture to culture, and even from time to time within a given culture.<sup>23</sup>

By analyzing the compositions of six hundred foreign students who were grouped into three major language groups, Semitic, Oriental, and Romance, Kaplan determined that students of different linguistic groups employ culturally unique strategies to develop paragraphs and essays. Students in the Semitic language group use a complex series of parallel construction much like the conjoined sentences in the King James version of the Old Testament. The compositions of Oriental students are characterized by a feature which Kaplan calls an "approach by indirection." Speakers of Oriental languages have a tendency to write in a circular pattern, rotating around the focus of a topic but never discussing the topic directly. Instead, they move in ever widening circles as their discourses continue. Speakers of Romance languages (notably Spanish and French) have a tendency to digress and to insert extraneous information into their composition. Although they employ a basically linear

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<sup>23</sup> Robert B. Kaplan, "Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-Cultural Education," in Readings on English as a Second Language, p. 246.

pattern, they disrupt the linearity by frequent regressions.<sup>24</sup>

#### Suggestions for Coping with Cultural Differences

Last year while observing a class of basic writers, I learned two very important lessons. The class was comprised of sixteen native English speakers, two Spanish surname students, and one Vietnamese. The native English speakers interacted confidently with their instructor. They spoke expertly although their writing skills varied from poor to "almost good enough to move up to freshman composition." The two Spanish surname students, who seemed well adjusted, spoke and wrote as well as their Anglo peers. The Vietnamese student, whose English language skills were noticeably weaker, sat isolated and lonely even though she was surrounded by other students. She did not interact with her classmates or her instructor, nor did she participate in teacher-led discussions. About the fifth week she quit attending classes and stopped coming for tuition at the college learning center. This class lacked some very important ingredients: familiarity and friendly interaction among the students and between teacher and students. As you may have surmised, this barren, human-relationship situation contained the vital, first lesson.

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<sup>24</sup>Kaplan, pp. 249-57.

Probably because authors of writing texts feel that teaching writing is somehow different from teaching people, scant attention has been directed to this aspect of the composition classroom. Much is said about writing apprehension, but hardly anything about group processes to help the shy, withdrawn students. Harvey S. Wiener is one of a small number of educators who addresses this vital process, but even Wiener devotes but one short paragraph to it. In The Writing Room, he writes: "Bodies and faces on either side and across the room have names, and the sooner everyone starts using them, the sooner the identity of the class takes shape. . . . Throughout the term insist that all comments be directed to people by name. . . . If these steps seem sophomoric or wasteful, they are not. For establishing an air of familiarity and free exchange of ideas no single activity will pay more dividends than name exchanges as soon as possible."<sup>25</sup>

The class that I observed is a prime example of the battle lost because of a horse, lost because of a shoe, lost because of a nail. For obvious reasons an environment of familiarity is crucial for integrated classes. Cooperative interaction between ESL and native English-speaking students is a vital ingredient for effecting improvement in both cultural knowledge and writing skills.

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<sup>25</sup>Wiener, p.21.

The instructor's over-emphasis on Error was the basis of my second lesson. Believing that the crucial first step in developing good writers was pointing out their errors, he used his red pen generously to call attention to every writing mistake. Too many writing teachers tend to exaggerate the seriousness of Error. Their excessive concern shapes students who are afraid to say or do anything for fear of being wrong, but even worse, intimidated students hesitate to interact and help each other for fear of being wrong. If establishing a humanistic learning environment is a goal, the instructor's attitude about Error has to reinforce the quality of the writing process, not the product.

Fortunately Error seems to be losing much of its attraction, a significant improvement in the teaching of writing. Many educators, Shaughnessy, Moffett, and Halsted to name a few, agree that too much importance is given to Error. Moffett writes: "Avoidance of error is assumed in the motivation itself. But if he is allowed to make mistakes with no other penalty than the failure to achieve his goal, then he knows why they are to be avoided and wants to find out how to correct them."<sup>26</sup> Isabella Halsted expresses a similar view. She writes: ". . . the word, the sentence, or the organization of the essay are all simply ways of getting across what the student has in mind to say to someone else.

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<sup>26</sup>Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse, p. 199.

. . . let us in our emphasis show our students that errors are important for only one reason: they interrupt the flow between writer and reader."<sup>27</sup> And for those of us who think that stamping our errors is the most noble of human deeds, Shaughnessy passes on this bit: ". . . common errors will remain in a student's writing far beyond his course in English or even beyond college. It is hard to believe that the world will be much the worse for such an imperfection."<sup>28</sup>

If eliminating Error is not what teaching composition is about, then what should writing instructors be doing? In her article "Putting Error in Its Place," Halsted gives this answer:

The focus of a writing course should be communication. A student we judge to be well on the way to good writing shows basic awareness of what it is all about: there is a sensed audience and a point of view to be expressed, involving thought and demonstration. It is this basic awareness that we should develop in the class, in conference, in reading their papers. At all times, we should provide our students with an experience where no matter what the materials, they are encouraged to discover their individual points of view and are given the chance to see that these are worthy of attention, that others are listening, and that<sup>29</sup> there are effective ways to communicate them in writing.

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<sup>27</sup> Isabella Halsted, "Putting Error in Its Place," in The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook, ed. Gary Tate and Edward P. J. Corbett (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), p. 252.

<sup>28</sup> Shaughnessy, p. 123.

<sup>29</sup> Halsted, p. 252.

Because of the presence of students from different cultures, teaching integrated writing classes is exceptionally complex and difficult. It encompasses not merely teaching writing skills but, for the non-native students, teaching new patterns of thought as well. The non-native students' attitudes toward American cultural beliefs and institutions can become a source of discord. Their lower level of comprehension in comparison to their native English-speaking peers, and the interference of their native language and culture complicate classroom processes. In integrated classrooms, cooperative interaction between ESL and native English-speaking students is an important element. Teachers need to continually promote constructive group processes. Overemphasizing errors is a detriment to this end because students who are afraid to be wrong seldom have the courage "to stick their necks out" to help others.

Culture is a serpent which strikes those who ignore it.



## CHAPTER IV

### SHAPING A TEACHING APPROACH FOR THE INTEGRATED CLASSROOM

In my research for theoretically productive approaches, methodologies, and techniques for integrated classroom use, I reviewed the research literature in both ESL composition and regular English composition. I thought the task would be primarily one of searching through a large amount of enlightening data and carefully selecting the articles that suited my purpose, but I found that the literature in ESL composition is exceptionally shallow, that it lacks theoretical substance. The published materials in regular English composition, however, are exceptionally profound. It seems little of real value has been written to help teachers of ESL composition.

Much of the literature in ESL composition focuses on the need for control and guidance in teaching writing. Emphasis is placed on classroom techniques and grammatical correctness of the product. The ultimate aim appears to be grammatical perfection, not expression or communication. For example, Lynn E. Henrichsen tells us in her article, "Ten Perfect Sentences," how she elicits good writing from ESL students. The distinctive feature of her technique, she

says, is the "continuing insistence on 'perfection' -- a high standard of mechanical correctness."<sup>1</sup> According to her scheme students are required to write perfectly ten sentences on various topics. These sentences must be perfect in all the aspects of writing: syntax, word choice, spelling, punctuation, etc. The student's mastery of each writing assignment is based on the production of these ten perfect sentences; thus, if four sentences contain errors, these are thrown out and the student is required to produce four additional ones.<sup>2</sup>

Another example is Sawyer and Silver's "Dictation and Language Learning," which provides a dictation technique. The authors recommend that an item be read to the students for transcription three times. According to this scheme, the students' papers are collected and the errors marked after the first presentation. Then, during the second presentation

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<sup>1</sup>Lynn E. Henrichsen, "Ten Perfect Sentences," English Language Journal, 35 (1981), 310.

<sup>2</sup>The details of Henrichsen's scheme are fascinating although its value is questionable. A good view of her purpose is provided by this passage (p. 309): "Students are instructed to write as simply as they desire, the only condition being that the product must be perfect -- no forgotten periods, misspelled words, or omitted final -s's (on third person singular time-oriented present tense verbs or on plural nouns), . . . Students are not berated for performing poorly; the focus should be on the product, not its producer. . . . Whatever the rewards for reaching the objective, students quickly learn to stop writing beyond their capabilities and simplify their writing to a level where perfection can be achieved. . . . They have simplified by choice, not because they were forced to do so by the teacher."

the students attend to correctness of spelling and punctuation. After this second presentation, the teacher gives each student a copy of the dictation item with instructions to study it or to memorize it, if necessary. During the third presentation the students are required to copy the item perfectly.<sup>3</sup>

In a 1976 TESOL Quarterly article, Vivian Zamel expressed great concern with the poor quality of ESL composition research. She severely criticized this misguided, non-productive aspect of the ESL specialty contending that virtually no significant research work had been accomplished. This stagnant state of ESL research aggravated Zamel:

. . . methodologists have devised particular exercises which, while not based on learning grammar, qua grammar, are in fact based on grammatical manipulations of models, sentences or passages. For them, writing seems to be synonymous with skill in usage and structure, and the assumption is that these exercises will improve the students' ability to compose. Influenced by audio-lingual methodology, writing is seen as habit formed skill, error is to be avoided and correction and revision are to be provided continuously. . . . While the teaching of grammar is expressly rejected by these methodologists as having little to do with writing, the kinds of exercises they suggest are based on the conceptualization that writing entails grammatical proficiency. <sup>4</sup> Implicitly, grammatical facility means writing ability.

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<sup>3</sup> Jesse O. Sawyer and Shirley Kling Silver, "Dictation in Language Learning," in Teaching English as a Second Language, ed. Harold B. Allen and Russell N. Campbell, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), p. 227.

<sup>4</sup> Vivian Zamel, "Teaching Composition in the ESL Classroom: What We Can Learn from Research in the Teaching of English," TESOL Quarterly, 10 (1976), 69.

Much more serious than the void in research, according to Zamel, is the fact that many answers are already available in the research literature of English composition, but ESL specialists choose to ignore these answers:

We have acted as if teaching composition to ESL students is something totally unrelated to the teaching of composition in regular English classes and have thus deprived ourselves, I believe, of much valuable information. . . . While the field of English seems to be gaining from their research evidence, we continue<sup>5</sup> to suggest unfounded, though well-intentioned practices.

Like a hard-hatted, highway flagman, she directs us to look for answers in the research literature of regular English composition. She points us toward the writings of Janet Emig, Mina Shaughnessy, Sondra Perl, Nancy Sommers, Donald Murray and other English composition experts. Judging by my own research experience, I believe Zamel's appraisal of the quality of ESL composition research is accurate, and her instruction to turn to English composition for answers is sound advice.

#### Speaking-Writing Differences and Similarities

One of the main difficulties in teaching integrated classes is caused by the substantive difference in linguistic competence between ESL students and their native English-speaking classmates. The speech performances of native English speakers are very sophisticated. They display great

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<sup>5</sup>Zamel, "Teaching Composition," p. 68.

skill in grammar and in communicating culture-related thoughts. The average non-native speaker falls considerably short of the average native English speaker in knowledge of the English language.

Learning to speak a second language as an adult, we know, is an extremely difficult task. Neil Smith and Deidre Wilson provide this account:

If we measure general intellectual development in terms of logical, mathematical and abstract-reasoning powers, these powers are still increasing at puberty, when the ability to acquire native fluency in a language is decreasing rapidly. A child of eight who can beat an eighteen-year-old at chess is something of a prodigy; if an eighteen-year-old acquires native fluency in a language as quickly as an eight-year-old, simply by being exposed to it, and without any formal training it is the eighteen<sup>6</sup>-year-old, not the eight-year-old, who is the prodigy.

Descriptions such as Smith and Wilson's focus on speech. Obviously, there is a relationship between speaking and writing. There are differences, there are similarities, and there is a connection.

In their article, "Some Implications of Cognitive-Developmental Psychology for Research in Composing," Barritt and Kroll point out three important differences between speaking and writing. First, the modes and rate of acquiring these two skills differ markedly. Speech is learned earlier and much faster. Humans seem to be biologically equipped for

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<sup>6</sup>Neil Smith and Deidre Wilson, "Knowledge of Language," in Readings in Applied English Linguistics, ed. Harold B. Allen and Michael D Linn, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), p. 86.

speech but not for writing. Speech is natural; writing is technological and has to be learned through concentrated instruction. Second, in speech an audience is usually physically present. Interacting with their listeners, speakers gain immediate feedback and respond according to the demands of the situation and the context of the conversation. On the other hand, writers must imagine their audience and shape their writing to satisfy the imagined expectations and needs of imagined readers. Third, speaking is easy and writing difficult. In speech, translation from idea to utterance is instantaneous. Writing is much slower. In writing, ideas normally run ahead of expression.<sup>7</sup>

To this list, Nancy Sommers adds an important fourth difference. Speech is irreversible, but writing can be revised. To clarify this concept of irreversibility, Sommers quotes from Roland Barthes' "Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers":

A word cannot be retracted except precisely by saying that one retracts it. To cross out here is to add: if I want to erase what I have just said, I cannot do it without showing the eraser itself (I must say: 'or rather . . . ' 'I expressed myself badly . . . ); paradoxically, it is ephemeral speech which is indelible, not monumental writing. All that one can do in the case

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<sup>7</sup>Loren S. Barritt and Barry M. Kroll, "Some Implications of Cognitive-Developmental Psychology for Research in Composing," in Research on Composing, ed. Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1978). pp. 51-52.

of a spoken utterance is to tack on another utterance.<sup>8</sup>

That writing can be revised while speech cannot is a significant difference with important implications. For example, Shaughnessy believes that since ESL students possess cognitive abilities that far exceed those of children, they can learn rules and principles rapidly. This fact, she feels is a strong argument for studying composition analytically, and she discusses her position in these terms:

Fortunately, writing (particularly those steps of writing we call editing and proofreading) is congenial to analysis. It allows time for the deliberate application of principles or rules, for the introduction of unfamiliar patterns that would be washed over in the flow of speech. It does not require that the student first incorporate into speech the forms that he must use in writing. (The forms he acquires as a writer are more likely, over time, to work their way into his speech.) It requires instead that he be able to notice details he would ordinarily ignore and have ways of figuring out whether what he has written is right<sup>9</sup> or wrong according to the conventions of formal English.

As vital as the differences are to the teaching of composition, the similarities are also very important because they show the connection between speech and writing. Speaking and writing are alike in two important ways: both are governed by linguistic rules of semantics and syntax, and both are expressions of thought. This relationship points to a single human process that controls both modes. Most

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<sup>8</sup>Nancy Sommers, "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers," College Composition and Communication, 31 (1980), 379.

<sup>9</sup>Shaughnessy, p. 153.

theorists agree that inner speech is the basis for both speech and writing. Donald Murray describes the complex trimodal relationship of speech, inner speech and writing. He writes: "Children -- and some professors -- think out loud, but for most of us, our speech is socially suppressed, done silently. Since we continue to talk to ourselves within the privacy of our skulls, some of that talking, if made public, is writing. . . . This does not mean that writing is simply oral language written down. I believe we have a private speech we use when writing. When we know we may write, we silently practice expressing ourselves in our potential writing voices."<sup>10</sup>

Barritt and Kroll explicate this relationship with Vygotsky's ideas:

. . . Lev Vygotsky (1934/1962) was one of the first to theorize that speaking and writing are essentially different psychological processes. In brief, Vygotsky believed that the differences in developmental level in spoken and written language could be accounted for only through positing different cognitive pathways from thought to expression in the two modes. Vygotsky used the term inner speech to designate the verbal thought that precedes expression.<sup>11</sup>

Strategies to improve writing skills by improving inner speech skills are described by several authors. James Moffett maintains that writing, inner speech and meditation

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<sup>10</sup> Donald M. Murray, "Writing as Process: How Writing Finds Its Own Meaning," in Eight Approaches to Teaching, ed. Timothy R. Donovan and Ben W. McClelland (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1980), p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Barritt and Kroll, p.52.



are interrelated activities; thus, good writing will emerge from improving inner speech. The way to improve inner speech is to improve meditative skills. Moffett contends: "Youngsters need to develop inner speech as fully as possible and at the same time learn to suspend it. They must talk through to silence and through stillness find original thought."<sup>12</sup>

Walter J. Ong, S. J., maintains that writing is closely associated with the ability to imagine in one's mind what a written text would sound like when read aloud. The McGuffey Readers, popular decades ago, improved writing as well as reading because they developed this ability. These "sound conscious" reading texts provided training in public speaking and elocution contests. In the process they taught students to write.<sup>13</sup>

Joseph Collignon's teaching scheme has much in common with Ong's premise regarding the McGuffey Readers. In "Why Leroy Can't Write," Collignon contends that students write poorly because they can't hear the sound of their voices on paper. He maintains that writing courses should incorporate intensive reading-aloud activities, for this type of activity

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<sup>12</sup>James Moffett, "Writing, Inner Speech, and Meditation," College English, 44 (1982), 240.

<sup>13</sup>Walter J. Ong, "Literacy and Orality in Our Times," in The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook, ed. Gary Tate and Edward P. J. Corbett (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), p. 37.

develops the ability to hear sentence variety, rhythmic patterns and sentence balance. Writers who write well make fine sounds on paper because they hear them in writing. Collignon's technique indicates that writing improvement should be simply a matter of improving inner speech skills.

Unfortunately, where ESL students are concerned, approaches aimed at inner speech improvement are unproductive. Collignon, who reports immense success with native English speakers, reports dismal failure with second language students. Of this observation he writes: "I have found that those who have another sound system going through their heads have more difficulty hearing the English rhythms and inflections."<sup>14</sup> The ineffectiveness of his scheme with non-native students calls attention to the differences in linguistic competencies between ESL and native English speakers. Teaching strategies that are effective for one group may be totally inappropriate for the other. I believe Collignon's scheme misses the mark because it focuses narrowly on speech fluency and ignores the analytic competencies of ESL students.

While Collignon focuses on the similarities of speech and writing, Linda Flower attends to the differences. In "Writer-Based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph Collignon, "Why Leroy Can't Write," College English, 39 (1978) 858.

Writing," she discusses how inner speech thoughts are transformed into good writing -- writing adapted to readers. She invents the terms Writer-Based prose for the unpolished writing derived from inner speech and Reader-Based prose for the writing that has been transformed in structure and style for readers. Flower's thesis is that writing in the early stages of the writing process is often unclear and disorganized. To revise poor writing into good writing, students must be taught to recognize the shortcomings in their work and to correct them -- in other words, transforming Writer-Based to Reader-Based prose. The important implication is that analysis is as important, if not more important than linguistic competence.

The problem perceived by Flower is that many students have not developed the skills to analyze and transform their work. To them, Writer-Based prose derived from inner speech thoughts is "finished" writing. They lack the ability to identify the flaws in their writing, or if they do, they lack the ability to correct them. Flower suggests that a teaching approach should embrace two vital concepts: writing as process and writing as analysis. I agree -- students who know that good writing evolves out of a process and that it results from careful analysis and skillful revision will have the necessary tools for composing productively.

### A Process-Analytic Approach

I recommend a process-analytic approach for the integrated class. The obvious question that follows is: "What is it?". I call the approach process-analytic because what has to be taught is that writing evolves out of a process and because the complex subskills within the process require analytic skills. For example, the prewriting stage can be accomplished in various ways by many different invention strategies and all of them require analysis and decisions. The writing process provides a framework, an excellent one to produce good writing, but every activity requires analysis. We invent, we analyze, we write, we analyze, we revise, we analyze, and we revise again, and on and on.

Donald Murray tells us that writing occurs in three stages: prewriting, writing, and rewriting. Perl calls these stages, "features" because they occur not as separate stages but interact continuously during the composing process. Since Perl's assessment is correct, analysis must be continuously interacting also. Murray refines this notion:

The writer is constantly learning from the writing what it intends to say. The writer listens for evolving meaning. To learn what to do next, the writer doesn't look primarily outside the piece of writing -- to rule books, rhetorical traditions, models, to previous writing experiences, to teachers or editors. To learn what to do next, the writer looks within the piece of writing. The writing itself helps the writer see the subject. Writing can be a lens: if the writer looks

through it, he or she will see what will make the writing more effective.<sup>15</sup>

Perl investigated the composing process of basic writers, and she found that unskilled writers compose systematically. They invented, wrote, and revised. Their flawed writings were the product of their lack of proficiency to revise. According to Perl, basic writers used prewriting strategies although not with the skill of good writers. They wrote their drafts recursively much like good writers; they shuttled back and forth, rereading what they had written and moving forward. They even attended to the revision stage, but they lacked the necessary skills to find or correct most of their mistakes.

Perl's study reveals that unskilled writers don't have a set of rules and principles to guide them in their editing decisions. When they do know a rule, they don't know the exceptions, and they continually mismanage the revision process. "Indeed," says Perl, "their lack of proficiency may be attributable to the way in which premature and rigid attempts to correct and edit their work truncate the flow of composing without substantially improving the form of what they have written."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Murray, "How Writing Finds Meaning," p. 7.

<sup>16</sup>Sondra Perl, "A Look at Basic Writers in the Process of Composing," in Basic Writing, ed. Lawrence N. Kasden and Daniel R. Hoerber (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1980), p. 22.

Vivian Zamel, using a case study approach similar to Perl's, investigated the composing process of advanced ESL students. The eight participants (one Japanese, one Hispanic, two Arabic, two Italian, two Greek) were considered advanced ESL students because they could write successfully for their content courses. Zamel's purpose was to determine whether advanced ESL students used the same strategies in composing as native speakers of English. Her study reveals that advanced ESL students do use the same strategies. All the test participants composed in the same way as their native English-speaking counterparts. They employed similar prewriting strategies; they wrote and rewrote. As Zamel puts it:

All of the students wrote several drafts, indicating their struggle to discover and approximate meaning. . . . As students got closer to the final product, they were proofreading and polishing their texts. Changes in sentence structures were much more numerous. Vocabulary, tense, and punctuation were frequently focused on.<sup>17</sup>

Zamel's study indicates that a teaching approach based on the process theory of writing will be productive with ESL students as well as native English speakers.

Based on this study, Zamel makes several suggestions to improve process-based writing programs for ESL specialists and their students. Her proposals are interesting because they are basically the same ones made by English composition

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<sup>17</sup>Vivian Zamel, "Writing: The Process of Discovering Meaning," TESOL Quarterly, 16 (1982), 203.

experts. For example, Zamel suggests teaching prewriting strategies, assigning topics that engage the students' interests, providing ample time for writing and rewriting to promote discovery, focusing on process instead of product, intervening frequently to guide students, providing opportunities to share writing. Such proposals apply equally well to ESL students and to native English speakers.

I think most, if not all of us, believe that composition instruction should emphasize the writing process instead of the perfection of the product itself. In the process-analytic approach that I envision, revision is the main focal point. Although the prewriting and drafting stages are vital elements in the process, revision is where writing is shaped and meaning discovered, where poor Writer-Based prose is transformed into good Reader-Based prose. This kind of revision is comprised of two types of editorial behaviors. The first type includes all the activities that a writer accomplishes to discover the real meaning of his/her inner speech thoughts and to analyze, restructure and reform the writing for an imagined audience. The second includes the improvement of style, diction, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. The first type focuses on the expression of ideas and the concerns of the audience, the second on language and correctness. Students should be taught to manage both types of editorial functions.

The demands of teaching rewriting strategies bring

some questions to mind. What can composition instructors teach students to improve their rewriting skills? How should a process-analytic course be designed to allow students to experience the writing process? What are the major pitfalls for the teacher? And as we concern ourselves with these questions, we have to keep in mind the needs of both our ESL and our native English-speaking students.

In studying the revision strategies of student writers and experienced adult writers, Nancy Sommers found that student and experienced writers revise in drastically different ways. Student writers perceive revision as a rewording activity. They approach their writing with a thesaurus strategy, improving their work primarily with word changes and compliance with the precepts of effective writing. They fail to notice the redundancy of ideas, but they are alert to the redundancy and superfluity of words. Sommers writes: "When revising, they primarily ask themselves: can I find a better word or phrase? A more impressive, not so cliched, or less hum-drum word? Am I repeating the same word or phrase too often?"<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, experienced adult writers approach revision with a holistic strategy -- to discover a framework or pattern for their ideas and to discover meaning in their writing. They look at their first drafts as merely attempts

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<sup>18</sup>Sommers, p. 381.



to define their territory. In subsequent drafts they shape and form their writing to suit their imagined readers -- readers who are reflections of themselves and who function as "critical and productive collaborator[s]." <sup>19</sup>

Sommers' study reveals that many of the problems of student writers can be attributed to either direct or latent instructions from their teachers. Their revision techniques are thoughtfully conceived strategies designed to meet the demands of a teacher-based audience "who expects compliance with rules -- with pre-existing 'conceptions' -- and who will only examine parts of the composition (writing comments about those parts in the margins of their essays) and will cite any violations of rules in those parts. At best the students see their writing altogether passively through the eyes of former teachers or their surrogates, the textbooks, and are bound to the rules which they have been taught." <sup>20</sup>

Sommers' findings imply that there are productive revision strategies that can be taught, that we have failed to teach these strategies, and that we are overly concerned with compliance with rules of usage rather than expression of meaning.

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<sup>19</sup>Sommers, p. 385.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 383.

Undoubtedly, developing and communicating meaning is primary, and grammatical correctness is a poor second. I don't believe, however, that we can totally ignore this aspect of writing. Lately, the trend is toward downgrading the importance of grammar. For example, Dennis E. Baron writes: "The arbitrary standards of correctness must be ignored, the relative means of effectiveness must be stressed, the students must develop a self-confident attitude towards his language."<sup>21</sup>

To what extent should we stress grammatical correctness? How intensively should we teach grammar? In her study of the composing process of basic writers, Perl found that unskilled writers need tools -- a framework of concepts, principles, and rules -- to guide them in revision. Zamel writes: "Syntax, vocabulary, and rhetorical form are important features of writing, but they need to be taught not as ends in and of themselves, but as the means with which to better express one's meaning."<sup>22</sup>

In Errors and Expectations, Shaughnessy provides a framework for teaching grammar that will help students by systematizing what they already know and by serving as the basis of new knowledge. The cornerstone of her strategy is

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<sup>21</sup>Dennis E. Baron, "Non-Standard English, Composition, and the Academic Establishment," in Readings in Applied English Linguistics, p. 442.

<sup>22</sup>Zamel, "Writing: The Process," p. 207.

the introduction in class of four grammatical concepts: the sentence, inflection, tense, and agreement. Years of observing basic writers have convinced her that these four concepts underlie most of the grammatical difficulties of unskilled writers. She maintains that even an introduction to these concepts will equip these students with practical strategies to check their own work. Teaching these concepts is not an easy matter, she says, because "grammar is a web, not a list of explanations, and often a seemingly simple feature of instruction will be located at the interstices of several grammatical concepts."<sup>23</sup> She suggests teaching these concepts by approaching them from two angles: cognitively by teaching principles and rules (at least where the rules can be found), and sensorially by helping students see and hear correct usage.

In dealing with grammar and errors, the most crucial factor is attitude -- both the teachers' and the learners'. Kroll and Schafer in their article, "Error Analysis and the Teaching of Composition," describe errors as useful tools and sources of data with which we can help students solve their writing problems. Errors can be approached with two different attitudes -- product oriented and process oriented. The attitudinal orientation makes errors either useful or devastating. The authors provide a chart from which I have extracted three key issues:

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<sup>23</sup>Shaughnessy, p. 130.

Issue: What is the attitude toward error?

Product Approach: Errors are "bad." (Interesting only to the linguistic theorist.)

Process Approach: Errors are "good." (Interesting to the theorist and teacher, and useful to the learner as active tests of his hypothesis.)

Issue: How can we account for the fact that a learner makes an error?

Product Approach: It is primarily a failure to learn the correct form (perhaps a case of language interference).

Process Approach: Errors are a natural part of learning a language; they arise from learners' active strategies: over-generalization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete rule application, hypothesizing false concepts.

Issue: What are the emphases and goals of instruction?

Product Approach: A teaching perspective: eliminate all errors by establishing correct, automatic habits; mastery of the Target Language is the goal.

Process Approach: A learning perspective: assist the learner in approximating the Target Language; support his active learning strategies and recognize that not all errors will disappear.<sup>24</sup>

We shouldn't overemphasize the importance of errors, nor can we totally ignore them. Kroll and Schafer suggest that errors are tools to help students overcome their writing difficulties, windows through which we can see their writing problems.

When a class is taught in accordance with the process

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<sup>24</sup>Barry M. Kroll and John C. Schafer, "Error Analysis and the Teaching of Composition," College Composition and Communication, 29 (1978) 243.

analytic theory, a great deal of time must be spent in evolving writing and in analyzing and transforming it into work that is suitable for reading. I visualize a class occupied in prewriting, writing, and rewriting activities with frequent interventions by the teacher and ample interaction among the students in small workshop groups. Chirinos, Rundquist, and Washburn provide a methodology which approximates this design.

In a ten week quarter, the students are assigned four themes. Each theme is developed in seven well defined steps. The process begins with: (1) in-class prewriting activities consisting of research readings on the topic and review of sample student-essays; (2) a teacher-led discussion of invention strategies and of the merits of the sample essays; (3) preparation of the rough draft. It is in steps four through six where, I believe, the strength of this methodology lies. These steps are quoted:

4. The rough draft was collected and read. In the next class period, the teacher and an undergraduate assistant met with students individually and discussed the structure of the composition and the coherence of ideas. At this point, grammatical problems were largely ignored although mistakes which interfered with understanding were commented on.

5. A first draft was prepared, generally in final form. Another class period was used to discuss this draft individually with students. Now emphasis was placed on grammar, paragraphing and cohesiveness.

6. A final draft was submitted. In preparing this draft, the students received considerable individual help

from the tutors in the General College Reading and Writing Skills Center.<sup>25</sup>

The final step, step seven, was grading and returning the final draft.

As a methodology for integrated classes, a process-centered strategy has many benefits. It focuses on revision as the most important feature in writing. It provides adequate time for rewriting to shape and perfect discourses. It allows teachers to intervene often to guide students during the composing process. It focuses on both types of revision -- the one which aims to improve form and meaning, and the one to improve diction, grammar, punctuation and other surface elements.

Small workshop activities, according to Chirinos, et al., were used to perform grammatical exercises. "In groups, they worked on punctuation, definite and indefinite article usage, present and past participles."<sup>26</sup> I feel small group activities would be more profitable if they are integrated into the composing process itself, that is, as a device to allow students to help each other prewrite, write and revise. By using small workshop groups in this way, the focus would shift away from the teacher to the students. Writing would

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<sup>25</sup>Sally L. Chirinos, Suellen Rundquist and Lisa Washburn, "Adaptations in the Teaching of Composition to Non-Native Speakers of English," Alternate Higher Education, 6 (1982), p. 189.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

be shared, and "feedback" from peers would be incorporated into the students' writing strategies. In classes where ESL and native English-speaking students interact in small groups, the ESL students will benefit both culturally and linguistically -- cultural references will be clarified and speech competencies sharpened through informal discussions.

English composition teachers are often too anxious to help students with their writing, too helpful in improving the students' work. They provide too many ideas and instructions to the students, thereby hampering the students' urge to think for themselves. In a process-analytic approach, this type of instruction, although generated by the best intentions, is ill-advised. Murray tells us: "The greatest hazard for the teacher is the natural tendency not to respect the forces and instead to supply the student with the teacher's information, to make the teacher's connections, to use the teacher's language, to read what the teacher sees in the text."<sup>27</sup> Although the teacher shouldn't withhold information students need, the students should be allowed to evolve their own writing, their own meaning. Murray believes a good way to help students is by asking questions that will cause them to question their own drafts.

The teacher's role is the crucial one of providing a course framework that allows students to experience the

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<sup>27</sup>Murray, "How Writing Finds Meaning," p. 17.

writing process and to provide constructive instruction to help students use the process effectively. The process-analytic approach suits the integrated classroom teacher's needs well in this respect for it capitalizes on the students' strengths and not their weaknesses; it takes advantage of both the ESL students' analytic abilities and the native English-speaking students' well developed speech abilities.

#### Conclusions:

I started this project thinking that syntax, vocabulary, and discourse development, as the most important features of writing, should be the basis of instruction for ESL and native English-speaking students. Since then I have changed my mind because of what I have discovered in the research literature of English composition and ESL composition. Linguists tell us that children internalize grammatical rules early and that they lose this natural ability rapidly until about the age of puberty when most of this special ability is gone. Linguists also tell us that, because of this phenomenon, learning a second language is extremely difficult. For this reason, teaching approaches and methodologies based on upgrading linguistic competence are unproductive for ESL students although they work well with native speakers of English. For integrated classes an approach based solely on the improvement of linguistic competence would be unproductive. It would only aggravate



the problems caused by the differences between ESL and native English-speaking students. It would certainly magnify the linguistic and cultural handicaps of ESL students.

The process theory of instruction is recommended because it allows ESL students to capitalize on their highly developed cognitive abilities. This approach allows students to transform inner speech writing to Reader-Based prose through analysis and revision. Zamel's research reveals that ESL students compose using the same strategies as their native English-speaking classmates. Perl's study reveals that unskilled writers produce flawed essays because they lack the necessary skills to analyze and correct their work. Revision is the most important stage of the writing process, it is the key to good writing. Since both native English speakers and ESL students are responsive to the process-analytic approach, I believe we should adopt it for use with integrated classes.

Students need to be taught prewriting, drafting, and revision strategies. Also, they should be provided a framework of grammatical concepts, principles, and rules to guide them in revising. They should be allowed to compose within a course structure that allows students ample time to write and rewrite and that allows teachers sufficient opportunities to intervene during the process of writing.

Errors are important but only to the extent that they are tools which help teachers and students improve writing

skills. The teachers' and students' attitudes about errors make them good or bad. Error analysis is a useful technique for discovering students' misconceptions about grammar.

Many benefits accrue from small workshop group activities. Native speakers of English are excellent sources of both cultural and linguistic information for their ESL peers. As Moffett puts it, "People learn to talk and write by listening and reading as much as by anything else."<sup>28</sup>

The process-analytic approach requires teachers to intervene frequently during the writing process. If they perceive intervention as a chance to give students ideas and to form the students' work, they are doing more harm than good. Teachers' questions and comments should direct students to question, analyze, and revise their own work. Teachers must intervene but not interfere.

When money, staff, and facilities are inadequate to support separate ESL programs, colleges and universities teach writing to their non-native students right along with their American students. Often these institutions make adjustments to their curricula, but generally teachers have to be the "workhorses" and carry the load. They help or frustrate learners, promote or "flunk" students, make or break dreams. California State College San Bernardino

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<sup>28</sup>Moffett, "Writing, Inner Speech, and Meditation," p. 234.

(CSCSB) uses the integrated class structure. How effectively are the teachers coping with the special needs of ESL students? Believing that this question is an interesting one, I conducted a survey of ESL students and teachers to gain a feel for the effectiveness of CSCSB's basic writing program. The data obtained from this survey are described in the appendix.

I selected this thesis topic because I felt insecure about satisfying the writing needs of ESL students, and I sensed this same insecurity among teachers and graduate assistants. It seemed to me that second language learners have a handicap in basic writing classes, that because of this handicap certain approaches, methodologies and techniques would be productive while others would be unproductive. For the integrated basic writing class, the best approaches, methodologies, and techniques, of course, are those that meet the needs of both ESL and non-native English-speaking students. This was the task -- find the best ways to teach integrated basic writing classes. Based on my research, I believe that in integrated classes the needs of both ESL and native English-speaking students can be met most effectively with approaches, methodologies, and techniques based on a process-analytic design.

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## APPENDIX

### California State College San Bernardino's Basic Writing Program: A Survey of ESL Students' and Teachers' Perceptions

English 100, Cal State San Bernardino's basic writing course, is taught to integrated groups of ESL and native English-speaking students. The number of ESL students in this college is relatively small; thus, the classes, comprised of approximately twenty students, have only one or two ESL students if any at all. In this type of class framework, how effectively are teachers meeting the special needs of ESL students? Are the students satisfied with the course? Are the teachers productive in coping with the special problems of ESL students?

To find answers to these questions, a two-part survey was conducted. Two questionnaires, one for ESL students and one for instructors, were the tools used to obtain data. Eight students, seven in ENG 100 and one in ENG 101 (regular freshman English), and five instructors/graduate assistants participated. Although the samples are small, I believe that valuable data were obtained.

The small size of the test groups allows compilation of the responses on the questionnaires themselves. This I

have done. The students are identified #1 through #8 on the student questionnaire, the teachers by #1 through #5 on the teacher questionnaire. I believe the responses of each participant can be tracked more easily from the first to the last question with this format. This design should facilitate the relationship of a participant's response from one question to another. The students' questionnaire is at figures 1, 1a and 1b; the teachers' is at 2, 2a and 2b.

### Student Survey

The first seven questions are biographical. The learner's age (question 2), the length of time he/she has spoken English (question 1) correlate with speech fluency (question 4). For example, students #1, #5 and #6 who started to learn English late and have spoken English for a short period perceive their fluency as poor or below average. Students #2, #3, #4, #7 and #8 who started as children or young adolescents indicate greater fluency. Speech fluency also correlates to the students' abilities and interests to interact with their native English-speaking peers (question 16). Students #2 and #7 show little inhibitions in relating to their peers while the other students appear hesitant. Questions 8 through 11 address the students' perception of writing improvements. Except for one student who felt he or she improved little in overall writing ability, the opinions are extremely positive -- the course is perceived as

productive. Questions 12 and 13 focus on teacher-student relationships. Most of the students' responses indicate trust in their teachers' abilities to see them through the course successfully. None of the students suffers from writing apprehensions. Question 14, which centers on comprehension, is meaningful when interpreted with the data in questions 1 and 2. The students who indicated that they had no problems with understanding discussions are those who learned English early and spoke it well -- students #2, #5 and #7. Question 15, aimed at gaining students' opinions about the instructors' ESL knowledge, points to a possible weak area. Two students felt teachers were unaware of the special needs of ESL students, and three students were non-committal.

#### Instructor Survey

The responses to questions 1 and 2 indicate that all participants have experiences teaching ESL students. Questions 3 and 4 together provide data which are significant. Syntax, considered a major problem by all teachers, is a matter of linguistic competence -- syntactic skill is difficult to develop in short courses such as ENG 100, but three of five teachers use the same standards to promote ESL students as they use for native English speakers. The philosophy and the criteria for evaluating ESL students should be reviewed. Perhaps, supplementary standards should be established. Questions 6, 7 and 8 focus on teaching

approaches and methodologies that instructors either use or believe should be used based on their experiences. Their responses seem to substantiate the fact that current theories of teaching English composition are effective for ESL as well as for native English speakers. Questions 9 and 10 ask instructors to evaluate their abilities to deal with ESL students in an integrated class environment and to assess their feelings about teaching ESL students.

### Conclusions

Comprehension seems to be the major problem in teaching composition to ESL students. All the instructor-participants sensed this deficiency. The ESL students whose linguistic competencies were underdeveloped confirmed this comprehension problem.

Instructors focus on syntax as the major problem of ESL students. Syntactic skills of second language students are difficult to improve rapidly, and requiring them to meet the same standards as native English speakers to be promoted to ENG 101 may be more frustrating than attainable. This issue requires the attention of administrators and faculty.

ESL students perceive the CSCSB basic writing program as essentially effective in meeting their writing needs. To a great extent, however, the instructors lack confidence in their abilities to teach second language students.

Student Response Summary Sheet

ESL Students' Opinions  
about English 100

Please indicate your response by ✓ or by filling in the blank spaces as appropriate.

1. How long have you spoken English? #1 #2 #3 #4 #5 #6 #7 #8  
2--15--4.5---7---2---2--12?--4

2. How old were you when you learned to speak English? #1 #2 #3 #4 #5 #6 #7 #8  
31---4---13---12--19--23--6?--12  
 (? = data derived from non-specific response)

3. How did you learn to speak English?

#1234 678 #5  
7 school in the U.S.  
1 school in native country  
0 other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. In comparison to native speakers of English, how well do you speak English?

#2 #34 78  
 #1 5 #6  
 a. 1 as well as native speakers  
 b. 4 not as well but can always express what needs to be said.  
 c. 2 poorly. Have difficulty expressing what needs to be said.  
 d. 1 in between b and c above. Can usually express what needs to be said.

5. How did you learn to write English?

#12345678  
8 school in the U.S.  
0 school in native country  
0 other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 1

12. Do you feel confident in your instructor's ability to help English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students pass this course?

#1234	67	<u>6</u>	yes
		<u>0</u>	no
#5	8	<u>2</u>	undecided

13. When writing for this class, do you feel afraid because the instructor always points out the bad mistakes in your paper?

#34	678	<u>0</u>	yes, very much afraid
#12	5	<u>5</u>	no, not afraid at all
		<u>3</u>	slightly only

14. Do you feel that the discussions in this class are too difficult for ESL students to understand and participate in?

#2	#6	<u>1</u>	yes
	5 7	<u>3</u>	no
#1	34 8	<u>4</u>	sometimes they are too difficult

15. Do you feel this course is difficult because the instructor is unaware of the special needs of ESL students?

#5	8	<u>2</u>	yes
#1	67	<u>3</u>	no
#234		<u>3</u>	don't know

16. How many native American students in this class did you get to know well enough so that you could talk to them comfortably?

#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8
0	--Lots--	2	---	2	---	0	---
				0	---	0	---
						19	---
							2

Figure 1b

## Instructor Response Summary Sheet

### Instructors' Opinions of English 100

Please indicate your response by ✓ or by filling in the blank spaces as appropriate.

1. Do you have one or more foreign (ESL) students in your present English 100 class?

#123 5	<u>4</u>	yes
#4	<u>1</u>	no

2. Have you taught foreign (ESL) students in previous English 100 classes?

#34	<u>2</u>	yes
#12 5	<u>3</u>	no

3. Foreign students write English in non-Englishlike ways. In your opinion what is (are) the cause(s) of this problem?

#234	<u>3</u>	the nature of syntax errors
	<u>0</u>	paragraph and discourse organization
#1 5	<u>2</u>	both syntax and organization
(#5)	<u>(1)</u>	other, i.e., vocabulary, etc. (specify) <u>vocabulary</u>

( ) = alternate choice

4. To what extent do you feel the problem(s) noted above have to be improved before promoting ESL students to English 101?

#4	<u>1</u>	Most of the errors must be eliminated.
#2	<u>1</u>	Communication of ideas is most important. (Only major problems need to be corrected.)
	<u>0</u>	Satisfy standards I have for ESL students.
#1 3 5	<u>3</u>	Satisfy standards I have for all students.

Figure 2

5. Some instructors feel that a serious problem in the composition classroom is the ESL students' inability to comprehend discussions and activities. To a great extent this would depend on the student; however, do you generally agree?

#12345	<u>5</u>	yes
	<u>0</u>	no

6. Do you feel that teaching rules, principles, and analytic methods (figuring out whether what has been written is right or wrong) is an effective methodology to improve ESL students' writing skills?

#1 3 5	<u>3</u>	yes
#2	<u>1</u>	no
#4	<u>1</u>	undecided

7. Some people feel that ESL students can benefit greatly from their native English-speaking classmates. They recommend that writing assignments be accomplished in small workshop groups where interaction between foreign (ESL) and native speakers can be maximized. Do you agree?

#1 345	<u>4</u>	yes
	<u>0</u>	no
#2(3)	<u>2</u>	undecided

( ) = alternate choice

8. Some instructors feel that the best way to improve writing is by writing -- lots and lots of it -- supplemented by useful comments by the instructor, graduate assistant, and other students. Do you agree?

#1 345	<u>4</u>	yes
	<u>0</u>	no
#2	<u>1</u>	undecided

9. Do you feel ESL students benefit as much from your class as the average native English speaker?

#1	<u>0</u>	yes
	<u>1</u>	no
#23 5	<u>3</u>	depends on the student but generally no
#4	<u>1</u>	depends on the student but generally yes

Figure 2a



10. Do you feel as confident about your ability to deal with ESL students as you do with native English speakers?

#3	<u>1</u>	yes
#12 4	<u>3</u>	no
#5	<u>1</u>	don't feel as confident but the difference is insignificant

Figure 2b