Expressive writing and academic discourse: Bridging the gap for high school second language learners

Cynthia Katherine Case

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EXPRESSIVE WRITING AND ACADEMIC DISCOURSE:
BRIDGING THE GAP FOR HIGH SCHOOL SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition:
Teaching English as a Second Language

by
Cynthia Katherine Case
September 1999
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Approved by:

Sunny Hyon, Chair, English

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Date 7/1/99
ABSTRACT

High school level English Language Learners (ELLs) have a limited amount of time in which to become proficient in written academic discourse and attain parity with their native English-speaking peers. This reality, coupled with the explosive growth of ELL enrollment in our public high schools, makes it increasingly necessary for teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL), Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), and mainstream courses to find effective methods of articulating their respective curricula and facilitating ELLs' acquisition of the written genres which they must know in order to be academically successful in the mainstream. As part of this articulation, ESL, SDAIE, and mainstream teachers may need to examine differences in their curricula in order to bridge instructional gaps which may exist between their programs. For this thesis, a survey was conducted which attempted to identify those differences by comparing the types of writing assigned by high school ESL, SDAIE, and mainstream teachers. Writing assignment handouts given to mainstream and ESL students were collected and analyzed for the function of the writing assigned, the rhetorical strategies which they required students to employ, and the
degree to which the students were required to draw on reading and/or personal experience. Assignments were also analyzed for the amount of writing required. A comparison was then made of the mainstream, ESL, and SDAIE assignments along these dimensions.

The survey revealed that in mainstream and SDAIE classes, informational short response writing dominates the curriculum. Many of these responses consist of short answers to comprehension questions based on reading. Actual composing in the form of research reports using outside sources, argumentative essays, critiques, creative dramatic pieces, or personal expressive writing is seldom expected from any of the students. Brief responses (usually less than a paragraph) are also required in ESL classes; however, their major mode of expression is through personal expressive writing.

In order for ELLs to experience academic success in their mainstream high school classes and in post-secondary institutions, they must be given frequent exposure to and opportunities for practicing different genres of writing in every class. After students have transferred to mainstream classes, they should continue to be provided with the same breadth of opportunity in writing. Short written responses
to text are insufficient—for both ELLs and mainstream students. While the initial focus of writing instruction for beginning level ELLs may need to be on developing fluency through personal expressive writing, it should also include opportunities for students to display their knowledge in other less personal modes. If linguistically diverse high school students are to experience success in their mainstream classes, post secondary education, and the larger society, it is incumbent upon their teachers to provide a balanced curriculum that attends to the linguistic, personal, and academic needs of those students.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

From the planning of my proposal to the completion of this thesis, I have been blessed with the support of my thesis committee, colleagues in the San Bernardino City Unified School District, students at Pacific High School, family and friends. My heartfelt thanks to all of them for their unwavering enthusiasm and encouragement.

Special thanks go to Sharon Clark and Kathy Adams for long walks and talks that helped to clarify my thinking; Jan Shafran and Hellen Frances for e-mails that never ceased to brighten my spirits; Barbara McMahon for reminding me that conventional paths are not always the best ones to follow; and Gina Battaglia for recommending Natalie Goldberg’s Long Quiet Highway, a book that radically altered the direction of this thesis and my life.

I cannot even begin to express my gratitude to my partner, Luanne Rice. Her love and support have demonstrated to me that dreams can--and do--come true.

I am profoundly grateful to all of you!
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Many high school students who learn English as a second language are able to acquire basic conversational skills for social interaction in one to two years; however, depending on the amount of schooling students receive prior to their arrival in the United States, developing the level of proficiency needed to successfully produce written academic discourse may take from five to ten years (Thomas and Collier, 1997). Thus, English Language Learners (ELLs) who begin their study of English at the high school level are confronted with a challenge of acquiring academic parity with their native English-speaking peers at an accelerated rate and in a limited time. ELLs, like their English-speaking peers, are expected to meet all graduation requirements in four years; consequently, in the space of only four years, ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers and teachers of Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) content classes must ensure that the content and context of their instruction resembles instruction given in mainstream classes. Perhaps most important, their instruction must facilitate ELLs' acquisition of written genres which students must know when
they transfer to mainstream academic courses at both the high school and university level.

However, providing writing instruction that is accessible and comprehensible to ELLs and that simulates what is taught to mainstream students has been and continues to be a challenge for high school ESL and SDAIE teachers. An even greater challenge is faced by the students, especially those who enter the United States during their teenage years. McKeon (1994) has noted that due to the heavier cognitive and linguistic loads of secondary level classes, the older a student is on arrival, the more his or her limited proficiency in English will impede academic success. Collier's (1987) research supports this position: Those students who enter the United States after the age of twelve experience the most difficulty in acquiring academic English, particularly if they are taught solely in their second language.

Statistics provided by the California State Department of Education attest to the tremendous challenge ELLs face in becoming academically proficient in English. According to the Department's Language Census Report for 1997, only 6.7% of the approximately 1.4 million ELLs in the state of California were officially redesignated as Fluent English
Proficient (FEP) during the 1996-1997 academic year. In order to be considered fluent, students must demonstrate proficiency in reading, math, and written academic English by reaching at least the thirty-sixth percentile on state-mandated standardized tests in these areas.

This demographic dilemma--exacerbated by the limitations of time and the possible limitation in the instruction given in ESL and SDAIE courses--is one that educators and researchers are struggling to address. For if linguistically diverse high school students are to experience success in mainstream classes, post-secondary education, and the larger society, they must be able to appropriate "the oral and written forms demanded by the mainstream" (Delpit, 1995, p. 18).

Researchers working in high school and university contexts have investigated instructional practices for improving ELLs' academic success in the mainstream. One area of focus has been the possible misalignment of ESL and mainstream curriculum, especially in terms of writing instruction. For example, Berlin (1988) claims that some high school ESL instructors seem to favor expressive rhetoric over academic discourse. Horowitz (1986) found the same to be true for some university level ESL
instructors. However, proponents of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) suggest that the ability to compose personal expressive prose might not adequately prepare ELLs for the rigors of mainstream academic course work since "invention and personal discovery" tend not be emphasized in academic discourse (Horowitz, 1986, p. 455). In order to identify what types of written discourse are actually taught to linguistically diverse students and what types are taught to mainstream students, a number of surveys of writing tasks have been conducted. Like much of the research in this area, the majority of the surveys have been done in university contexts; nevertheless, the findings of these studies may have implications for secondary academic settings.

The remainder of this chapter critically reviews existing scholarship pertaining to the history and efficacy of two influential approaches to the teaching of ESL composition: Personal expressive writing and English for Academic Purposes. Additionally, several surveys of classroom writing tasks are reviewed. The review concludes with a discussion of the research questions evoked by the review and examined in this thesis.
Expressive Writing

Expressivism, like other approaches to ESL composition, seems to have been influenced by developments in L1 (first language) composition (Silva, 1990), specifically, the Process Movement (Johns, 1990). Dissatisfied with earlier prescriptive and linear approaches that "discouraged creative thinking and writing" (Silva, 1990, p. 15), ESL composition teachers sought a "positive, encouraging, and collaborative" (p. 15) classroom context in which their second language learners could "develop freedom and fluency" (Johns, 1995, p. 277) in their writing. For many ESL teachers, a process approach—one with an emphasis on personal expressive writing (that is, writing which emphasizes the telling of personal experiences and feelings without many formal constraints)—seemed to fill this void. As described by L1 composition theorist Murray (1997), the process approach explores "what we know and what we feel about what we know through language" (p. 4). In Murray's view, students who use the process approach use language to acquire knowledge about the world, then evaluate and communicate what they have learned.
It has been theorized by Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen (1975) that as writers mature, psychologically and linguistically, they are naturally able to write more objectively, without placing themselves and their feelings at the center of their work. As Brannon (1985) has noted, "they become more able to differentiate their own world view from that of others" (p. 19). As a result, their writing develops along a continuum from expressive personal writing to transactional or academic genres of writing. Supported by this hypothesis that expressive writing "is a kind of matrix from which differentiated forms of mature writing are developed" (Britton et al., 1975, p. 83), some ESL composition teachers have encouraged their students to write free, unstructured prose as a way of fostering their maturity as writers as well as their personal growth. This is, of course, a description of what takes place in an idealized expressivist classroom. In practice, there may be a continuum between courses where "the student finds his own subject" (Murray, 1997, p. 5), and "all writing is experimental" (p. 6) and courses with less expressivist objectives. Moreover, although expressivism has been associated with the process movement, not all contemporary
"process approach" classrooms emphasize personal experience writing. Rather, "process" simply refers to the idea that writing is done in steps: Prewriting, writing, and rewriting. Murray (1997) describes prewriting as "research and day dreaming, note-taking and outlining, title-writing and lead-writing" (p. 4). Writing is the production of the initial draft. Rewriting is "reconsideration of subject, form, and audience. It is researching, rethinking, redesigning" (p. 4).

As Johns (1990) has noted, teachers who espouse expressivism encourage students "to write with honesty, for themselves" (p. 30); therefore, advocates of this non-directive approach to teaching composition assign personal journal writing, essays, and other activities that relate to their students' personal experiences (Johns, 1990). In her study of adult second language learners, Cadiz (1987) found that students who performed these kinds of tasks had more motivation and willingness to spend time on their compositions than they did with other assignments. A similar study by Lucas (1991) reached the same conclusion. She found that "many ESL students wrote more fluent, well-developed pieces about personal topics than about academic ones" because personal expressive writing was a "more
meaningful and less threatening activity for them" (p. 11). Murray (1989) explains that in writing for themselves, students feel more comfortable in taking risks, the results of which might initially produce writing of poor quality; however, it is "the awful, the clumsy, the illogical...the incoherent...in which new meanings may hide" (p. 107). It is, Murray claims, through these attempts, "from the nourishing compost of failure" (p. 103) that "good writing grows" (p. 107).

Also writing from an L1 composition instructor's perspective, Elbow (1991) concurs with this position and argues for the teaching of expressive discourse "that tries to render experience rather than explain it...to tell what it's like to be me or to live my life" (p. 136). In so doing, Elbow asserts that students will, through their own efforts, develop fluency and expertise as writers. They will only "learn to write well," he argues, "by writing a great deal--far more than we can assign and read" (p. 136).

Cody (1996), another advocate of expressivism, is convinced that the "thoughts and feelings of basic writers captured in expressive language can be developed into linear modes of writing, preparing basic writers to write academic discourse" (p. 95). Simply forcing students to
imitate or conform to prescribed rhetorical structures, he claims, disassociates writing from the "everyday lives of students" (p. 96). Cody claims that if students don't first experience writing through the expressive mode, they will perceive academic discourse as a language that they cannot appropriate, "a language that may even involve erasing the past to eliminate any traces of their marginalized or underprivileged conditions" (p. 96).

**Criticism of the Expressive Approach**

While the personal expressive approach has been widely used in many ESL classrooms, it has its critics in both L1 and L2 (second language) research circles. Vopat (1978), a one time advocate of expressive writing, admits that when his native English-speaking college students wrote papers that were "emotionally, psychologically, and/or intellectually urgent and honest for them" (p. 42), their "writing was engaging and often intensely personal" (p. 42). However, Vopat noted that once these students had left his class, many of them stopped writing at all. Others "who had recently written well and excitedly about their personal experiences were at a loss" (p. 42) when asked to write on less personal topics in their other classes. Instead of naturally maturing as writers, as
Britton et al. (1975) claim, "students in a student-centered program regress" (p. 44) in their composing ability. Reluctantly, Vopat came to the conclusion that "it is not sufficient that students tell the truth about their feelings" (p. 42).

Barrett (1987) supports this assertion and claims that writing about and for the self is unnecessary and inappropriate for college level ESL students. The focus of their writing should not be on the self and the creation or discovery of personal meaning. "Students should be assigned whatever it is that they will be needing to write outside their English classes" (p. 68). ESL researcher Daniel Horowitz (1986) agrees: "Generally speaking, the academic writer's task is not to create personal meaning, but to find, organize, and present data according to fairly explicit instructions" (p. 455), he says. Therefore, ESL composition teachers do their students a disservice when they focus on personal writing, for it is pedagogically unsound to give "university-bound students" assignments that are "essentially different from those they are given in the university" (p. 453).

Scarcella's (1996) research on secondary level ELLs' lack of preparation for university level writing suggests
that another problem with unstructured expressivist courses is their lack of focus on "the various ways in which meaning is expressed in texts and in specific linguistic forms used in texts" (p. 143). While personal journal writing and other expressive forms of writing may "promote writing fluency, they may not help students acquire standard English" (p. 143) forms necessary for academic writing. More "interventionist practices" are needed that provide students with "form-focused instruction and feedback" (p. 143).

For ESL writers, writing about personal experience may not only be insufficient in preparing them for their academic goals, but it may also prove threatening from a cultural perspective. Leki (1992) has noted that some ELLs are from cultures "not accustomed to focusing on themselves in their writing" (p. 7). For such students, being asked to do personal expressive writing may be perceived as an encroachment on their privacy or regarded as insensitivity toward their cultural norms. This is especially true for students from countries such as Vietnam, China, and Japan where "group identification is strong" and the "concept of 'personal voice' quite foreign and difficult, not to
mention inappropriate to many social contexts" (Johns, 1997, p. 10).

Rooted in pedagogy and politics, Giroux's (1983) argument against the expressive approach is somewhat larger in scope. Giroux, an L1 researcher, asserts that a student's preoccupation with his or her expressive "journey into the self" (p. 220), renders him or her powerless against the hegemonic forces of the larger society. While expressive writing may be a useful tool for personal transformation, it does not, according to Giroux's analysis, give students "the opportunity to develop analytic and practical skills that they can use to understand and transform the relations that underlie the dominant culture" (p. 230).

Like Giroux, Bizzell (1982) criticizes the expressive approach from a political and pedagogic context. In her view, liberating a student's "authentic writing voice" from the "trammels" (p. 193) of the academy does not provide the critical training students need in order to "trace their victimage to social forces rather than to 'fate,' and hence to work toward control of their own destinies" (p. 196). In fact, according to Berlin (1988), expressive rhetoric does just the opposite. It is, he claims, "inherently and
debilitatingly divisive of political protest, suggesting that effective resistance can only be offered by individuals alone" (p. 487).

Whether their focus is pedagogic, political, or both, these theorists share a conviction that in order to succeed in their academic course work, all students must be helped to master genres other than personal expressive texts. While Horowitz, Barrett, Vopat's, and Scarcella's major concern is with preparing students for initiation into the academic discourse community, Bizzell, Giroux, and Berlin consider that initiation as a necessary step toward students' empowerment. According to these critics, "politically oppressed students" (Bizzell, 1982, p. 196) do not become personally, collectively, politically, or academically empowered through personal expressive writing. Rather, they are empowered through their appropriation of the "discourse which would otherwise be used to exclude them from participating in and transforming the mainstream" (Delpit, 1995, p. 165). Although these students "may intend eventually to criticize the forms of knowledge" valued by the academic mainstream (Bizzell, 1982, p. 206), they will have the knowledge to do so from an insider's perspective. For ELLs, acquisition of this knowledge has
been argued to take place in classes with an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) orientation.

**English for Academic Purposes**

EAP classes, as defined by Leki and Carson (1997) are writing classes where ELLs are required to display academic "content knowledge, mainly through writing" (p. 156).

Although many L2 composition specialists are proponents of English for Academic Purposes, there is widespread disagreement as to how such instruction can best be implemented in L2 settings. Proponents of content-based academic writing instruction (Shih, 1986; Celce-Muria, 1989; Snow and Brinton, 1988) believe that academic discourse should be taught in the context of students' specialized academic content classes (social studies, math, etc.). They maintain that "each discourse community has unique characteristics that must be ferreted out" (Johns, 1990, p. 29) and that it is the responsibility of the ESL teacher to teach his or her students the unique features of different disciplines. Spack (1988), on the other hand, prefers that instruction be based on more general writing tasks that are applicable to all academic courses.

Connecting writing to a specific academic subject (i.e., psychology or history) is viewed as a "means of
promoting understanding of this content" (Shih, 1986, p. 617). Shih contends that this model is preferable to other instruction that "isolates rhetorical pattern and stresses writing from personal experience" (p. 617). In a content-based composition class, instead of focusing on written responses to literary works or writing about personal experience (as one might do in some English composition classes), ELLs write about the subject matter they are studying in one or more of their other academic courses at the university. The "course itself simulates the academic process" (p. 618) through lectures, readings, and discussions that are followed up by ideocentric writing assignments. As in their other courses, students respond in various forms such as summaries, research reports, etc. "to demonstrate understanding of the subject matter" (p. 618).

At the high school level, several schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District have adapted the content-based approach to meet the academic needs of their growing ELL population. An experimental program known as "Humanitas" sought to focus on "academic competence in addition to language communication skills" (Wegrzecka-Monkiewicz, 1992, p. 139) through the teaching of content-
based thematic units that demonstrated the "interconnection in all areas of knowledge" (p. 139).

Another variation of content-based instruction is the SDAIE model. Common in both middle and high schools, SDAIE courses are academic content classes offered exclusively to ELLs. Instructors make the language and content of the courses more comprehensible through the use of visuals, realia, repetition, and language modification (Celce-Murcia, 1989). In this model, the ESL instructor may or may not serve in an advisory capacity for the SDAIE teachers. Those who do offer support sometimes do so by highlighting key vocabulary and content taught in the other classes.

Usually found in university contexts, the adjunct model of content-based instruction links university ESL composition classes with content classes through the "coordination of the course syllabi" (Snow and Brinton, 1988, p. 37). Snow and Brinton suggest that this linkage of classes provides students with "the reading, writing, and study skills required for academic success" (p. 35). For example, at the university level, this might involve the coordination of an ESL class and a basic psychology or history class. Both instructors would exchange syllabi and "discuss their goals for students" (Johns, 1997, p. 78).
The ESL instructor would then have the opportunity to become familiar with the content instructor's expectations, readings, and written assignments. As in most academic content classes, the written assignments would probably include summaries, abstracts, research papers, and expository essays. Personal writing is not emphasized (Johns, 1997). In this way, the content of the ESL class mirrors that of the other class and is "absolutely authentic" (Johns, 1997, p. 85). Instructors of these courses "teach and evaluate as they have always done" (p. 85). Therefore, students experience the rigors of a mainstream academic course, but they receive extra guidance in meeting the writing requirements of the content class.

Spack (1988), a critic of content-based academic writing instruction, argues that while it is the responsibility of ESL writing instructors to initiate their students into the academic discourse community, they "cannot and should not be held responsible for teaching writing in the disciplines" (p. 40). In Spack's view, this task should be accomplished by the teachers of those disciplines. Since ESL composition teachers lack expertise in the content areas, their instruction is better focused on "general principles of inquiry and rhetoric, with
emphasis on writing from sources" (p. 29). Specifically, says Spack, ESL writing instructors should involve their students in working with data, "summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting" (p. 43) and evaluating and synthesizing information from a variety of texts. The strategies learned form this type of general academic writing instruction will then "transfer to other course work" (p. 40).

Surveys of Writing Tasks

Concerned with preparing ESL students to write in their content classes, a number of EAP and other L2 composition scholars have conducted surveys of writing tasks in university settings. These surveys have sought to determine what general and specific academic writing tasks are required of ESL students in mainstream content classes. Additionally, a few surveys in secondary school settings have been conducted, although their focus has been on writing instruction for native English-speakers. These types of survey research allow writing instructors at both levels "to present students with usable models and realistic advice about appropriate discourse structures for specific tasks" (Horowitz, 1986, p. 447).
University Surveys

Horowitz' (1986) university survey examined the actual writing assignments given to students in all academic disciplines and found that outside of English and ESL classes, personal expressive writing was not assigned. Instead, students were required to summarize and/or respond to readings, write research reports, and be able to synthesize multiple sources. Braine's (1995) study analyzing and classifying writing assignments from the natural sciences and engineering courses had similar findings. As in Horowitz' (1986) study, assignments were collected and classified according to genre. In Braine's sample, 75% of the assignments were classified as experimental reports which required students to write summaries of the report, paraphrase information given by the instructor and readings, and analyze and interpret data.

In order to ascertain whether or not ESL students were receiving appropriate preparation for this type of academic writing, Smoke (1988) and Ostler (1980) "assessed students' perceptions and experiences" (Smoke, p. 9) about their ESL writing courses. Overall, students in both studies felt that they needed more rigorous preparation for the demands
of content courses, with "more emphasis placed on...writing research papers" (p. 9) In Smoke's study, 87% of the students surveyed said they needed assistance with writing research reports. Several students reported that they had never been required to write such papers in their ESL classes and had dropped any mainstream classes where a research paper was required.

An earlier study by Kroll (1979) revealed that the ability to write reports and business letters was perceived by ESL students to be most useful for their future academic needs. Personal expressive writing, on the other hand, was not deemed necessary by students. Of the freshmen international students surveyed, 93% stated that in their first year at a U.S. university, they had not been required to write research papers requiring literature synthesis "outside of English class" (p. 223); nevertheless, they ranked report writing as one of the most useful types of writing they could learn. As a result of her findings, Kroll strongly urges that "students be given the opportunity to gain familiarity with modes of discourse that they themselves will be called upon to use" (p. 226), including research papers.
While concurring with Kroll's recommendation, Hafernik (1989) also stresses the importance of helping students to "express both their personal and more objective ideas clearly so that they may become successful academic writers" (p. 65). However, the findings of Leki and Carson's (1997) survey of ESL university students enrolled in EAP classes suggest that in those classes too much emphasis is placed on writing about personal experiences. Instead of holding students accountable for demonstrating their knowledge of a text, instructors frequently limit assignments to "writing without source texts" or, if writing in response to text, "to writing without responsibility for the content of source texts," simply using texts as a "springboard for ideas" (p. 39). Leki and Carson conclude that such a focus misses "the opportunity to engage L2 writing students in the kinds of interactions with text that promote linguistic and intellectual growth" (p. 39).

Secondary School Surveys

At the secondary level, there is a paucity of research pertaining to the writing needs of ESL students; however, two studies of L1 writing may have implications for ESL writing instruction.
Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen's (1975) survey of secondary level writing tasks examined writing across the high school curriculum and concluded that there are three basic categories of writing assigned by secondary school teachers: Transactional or informative, personal expressive, and poetic or creative writing. Transactional or informative writing is defined as writing that seeks to inform. If reflects a "concern for accurate and specific reference" and excludes "the personal, self-revealing features that might interfere with it" (p. 83). This type of writing may often be "text responsible" (Leki & Carson, 1997, p. 41) as it often requires students to communicate their comprehension of knowledge of specific texts without referring to personal experience or prior knowledge. It should be noted, however, that informative writing may sometimes include assignments based on learners' prior knowledge rather than an outside source text. In contrast, expressive writing is "relaxed and intimate, as free as possible from outside demands, whether those of a task or of an audience" (Britton et al., 1975, p. 82). Poetic writing, on the other hand, seeks to please both the writer and the reader (1975). Like expressive writing, it is not fettered to expressing knowledge of text. Rather,
the source of the writing is the writer's imagination. Poetry, short stories, and dramatic pieces are representative of this mode.

In their survey, it was found that 63.4% of the writing assignments came from the transactional category. Expressive writing accounted for 5.5% of the assignments, and it was found almost exclusively in English classes. The remaining assignments were from the poetic mode. Britton et al. concluded that overall, the writing assignments they analyzed did little to foster independent thinking or creativity in students; rather, "attention was directed toward classificatory writing which reflects information in the form in which both teacher and textbook traditionally represent it" (p. 197).

Applebee's (1984) survey found the same to be true for both mainstream and ESL classes. Informational writing dominated the curriculum, and "opportunities to use personal experience as the basis for writing were limited" (p. 43). However, it should be noted that the type of informational writing most often required of students involved, as in Britton et al., "writing but not composing: Fill-in-the-blank exercises, worksheets requiring only short responses...and the like" (p. 2). For ESL students,
note-taking was a dominant writing activity, and like their English-speaking peers, they seldom did composing organized "around a thesis" (p. 113).

Such was not the experience for the ESL students in Harklau's (1994) study contrasting learning environments for L1 and L2 students at one high school. "Although writing opportunities in mainstream classrooms were inconsistent in frequency and quality, every student in ESL classes...received rich and plentiful experiences with written output" (p. 5). Students were taught to write in a "variety of genres" including "descriptive and narrative compositions," and those at the most advanced level of ESL "were required to do a library research report using outside sources" (p. 6). In contrast, as in Applebee's study, in some mainstream classrooms "students did nothing more than locate and repeat verbatim information from textbooks" (p. 5).

Summary and Conclusions

Much of the scholarship on second language writing instruction has been centered in university contexts and seeks to answer the question of what types of instruction best facilitate ELLs' preparation for mainstream academic course work. While the types of writing students are
required to do in the mainstream have been identified in a number of surveys of university writing tasks, there is much debate as to the efficacy of different approaches to the teaching of academic writing. To this end, a dichotomy—perhaps a false one—seems to exist between advocates of personal expressive writing and proponents of English for Academic Purposes. The field could benefit from further studies of these diverse approaches. It is possible that elements of both could be integrated into ESL composition classes, particularly at the beginning levels.

For example, Johns (1997) acknowledges that while expressivist practices such as personal journal writing "can establish fluent and frequent writing habits...focusing exclusively on personal literacy and creativity can be detrimental to the development of students as ...writers within academic contexts" (p. 10). Eventually, claims Johns, students will be faced with grammatical and rhetorical issues and with "public contexts for writing." Johns asserts that expressivism alone "often does not prepare them for these literacy experiences" (p. 10).

Spack (1993) concurs, but she presents a case for combining expressivist and transactional approaches.
Academic writing, she says, is more than simply "finding, organizing, and presenting information" (p. 184). It is also a process of becoming actively engaged with text "and then revealing insight into course materials" (p. 184). Such insights may be based on prior knowledge or experience.

While these university studies may have implications for the teaching of writing at the high school level, they do not address the specific needs of the secondary school ELL population. When nonnative students are admitted to a university, some, particularly recent arrivals to the United States, have already demonstrated their ability to perform academic tasks in their first language. What they may need is assistance in learning the rhetorical conventions required by the academic discourse community in an English context. High school ELLs, on the other hand, come to school with a wide range of linguistic abilities in their native languages. While some were well educated in their native countries, others have had little or no formal schooling and can speak but neither read nor write in their first language. Therefore, the academic needs—and the timetable for meeting those needs—may be as diverse as the languages and cultures these students represent. The
strategies employed for teaching writing to an ESL student majoring in engineering at a university may be different from those used to instruct a teenager who does not recognize the letters of the alphabet.

Unfortunately, at the secondary level, very little research exists that addresses these issues. More investigations are needed to further illumine the needs of secondary level ESL students and the nature of writing instruction in ESL, SDAIE, and mainstream high school classes. Additionally, studies centered in high school contexts are needed which would compare approaches to the teaching of writing and identify those approaches or combinations of approaches which best facilitate ELLs' preparation for mainstream academic course work. Curricular adaptations or modifications born of such research could mitigate high school ELLs' transition into mainstream classes.

The purpose of the present study is to address a principal challenge faced by teachers of high school ESL students: To find, in terms of writing instruction, the curricular strategies which, in tandem, best prepare linguistically diverse students to successfully engage in academic writing tasks required in the mainstream. To this
end, the types of writing taught in a high school setting will be examined, as will students' responsibilities in formulating written responses to text. Additionally, writing instruction in ESL, SDAIE, and mainstream environments will be compared in order to ascertain if a curricular chasm exists among those environments.

In order to determine the types of writing taught to high school level ESL students, the present study surveyed the genres of writing assigned by high school teachers in the four comprehensive high schools in San Bernardino, California. The succeeding chapter of this thesis will discuss the methodology used in this study, and the third chapter will present its results. The fourth chapter will discuss the implications of the survey findings for high school ESL and SDAIE writing instruction and will offer a presentation of sample curricular strategies that could assist linguistically diverse students in attaining academic success in high school and post-secondary settings.
CHAPTER TWO
Methodology

The approach used in the present study was to collect and analyze handouts of writing assignments given to mainstream and ESL students who attend the four comprehensive public high schools in the San Bernardino City Unified School District, a large urban school district in Southern California. This district was selected because of its proximity to the university, its accessibility to the researcher (a district employee), and the large number of ELLs enrolled: Out of approximately 10,000 students enrolled in the four high schools, 18.6% are considered to be limited- or non-English proficient. The non-white enrollment at these schools is 75.2%. Thirty-five percent of the students belong to families who receive AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), and 43.8% are eligible for free or reduced cost meals. The drop out rate, the second highest in San Bernardino County, is approximately 8.1%. Twenty-two percent of the seniors who graduated in 1996 took courses that made them eligible for enrollment at California State University campuses (California State Department of Education, 1996).
Data Elicitation

Letters requesting writing assignment handouts were sent to 243 teachers of ESL, SDAIE content classes, and mainstream academic classes (see Appendix). Foreign language and special education teachers were not included in this sample. In spite of the researcher's assurances that teachers' names and the names of their schools would not be mentioned in the study, most of the teachers contacted did not comply with the request for handouts. The 21 teachers who responded with usable handouts had varying responses. While some teachers were enthusiastically supportive, sending numerous handouts, others sent only 1 or 2. For reasons not shared with the researcher, the teachers who did not respond to the survey request may have been discomfited about participating in the study and chose to send nothing. Also, the letters to teachers were sent out during the penultimate week of the school year, and many of the teachers informed the researcher that copies of their assignments had already been boxed up for summer storage and were not accessible.

The 21 teachers sent a total of 319 handouts, 208 of which were usable for the study. Although the letter requested handouts which required responses from the
students of at least a few sentences, some teachers sent handouts that required much less: Short answer, fill-in-the-blank, true-false, and multiple choice questions. Most of the unusable handouts were of this type. A few required students to answer using scientific notation.

Out of the 208 usable handouts, 172 were sent from mainstream teachers, and 36 were from ESL and SDAIE teachers. In the mainstream, usable handouts were received from 8 English teachers, 5 math, 2 science, and 1 academic elective (drama) teacher. No handouts were received from mainstream social science teachers. Additionally, 4 ESL teachers responded to the request, as did 1 SDAIE English teacher and 2 teachers of SDAIE social studies. One of the teachers sent materials from 3 different subject areas that she teaches in (ESL, SDAIE English, and SDAIE geography). Two math teachers, one SDAIE and the other mainstream, informed the researcher that they did not assign any writing in their classes.

Analysis

As in Britton et al's (1975) survey of secondary school writing tasks, writing assignment handouts were categorized according to their function (informational or transactional; personal/expressive; or imaginative/poetic.)
They were then analyzed for the rhetorical strategies or combinations of strategies they required students to employ in their written responses. These included summary, definition, description, comparison/contrast, evaluation, cause and effect, explaining the steps in a process, problem/solution, persuasion, and classification. The categorization of these strategies was largely determined by teachers' instruction on the handouts, and most were explicitly stated. For example, a handout requesting students to "Describe [their] most valued possession" was categorized as a descriptive writing assignment. Additionally, handouts were examined in terms of the length of response required of the students. As with rhetorical strategies, teachers' expectations regarding length were generally stated in the instructions for the assignments. Some instructions did not specify length but did provide a set amount of space on the handout for the response. Lastly, the handouts were examined for the degree to which they asked students to draw on reading and/or personal experience or knowledge. After each assignment handout was analyzed according to these four dimensions, a comparison was made of the mainstream, ESL, and SDAIE assignments in order to ascertain similarities and
differences in the types of writing required in those environments. These findings are reported in the following chapter.
CHAPTER THREE

Survey Results

This chapter describes and gives examples of the various writing tasks found in the present study and compares the assignments given to mainstream students and ELLs. Although the limited number of responses received from teachers makes it difficult to generalize about the nature of high school writing tasks, an analysis of the handouts reveals some similarities to previous studies of high school writing (Britton et al., 1975; Applebee 1984). First, in terms of the actual function of the tasks, informational or transactional writing clearly dominated all mainstream classes. This was also the case in SDAIE classes. However, this contrasted with ESL classes, where the majority of the assignments were done in the expressive mode.

Another result that supports previous research was in the nature and length of the informational tasks. In the mainstream and in SDAIE classes, these tasks largely required students to write but not compose. As was found in Britton et al. (1975) and Applebee's (1984) studies, students were asked to write brief responses to comprehension questions based on reading. While these
types of assignments do hold students responsible for text (Leki & Carson, 1997), they require little more of students than the ability to find relevant information in their texts and copy it (Harklau, 1994).

The remainder of this chapter offers a more detailed comparison of writing done in ESL, SDAIE, and mainstream classes, focusing on the functions, rhetorical strategies, degree to which students were asked to draw on reading, and the length of writing required for the assignments.

**Mainstream Writing Tasks**

Out of the 172 usable handouts sent by mainstream academic teachers, 148 (86%) could be classified as having an informational/transactional function; 11 (6.4%) were personal expressive; and 13 (7.6%) were imaginative/poetic. A few of the assignments had multiple functions, but one function was dominant. A fuller breakdown of the mainstream writing assignment functions by class is shown in Table 1.
As shown in the Table, assignments given in mainstream English classes dominated the survey (155 out of 172 handouts). It should be noted that out of the 155 English assignments, 43 were from 1 of the 8 English teachers; the remaining assignments were more evenly distributed among the other 7 English teachers.
In terms of the functions of the assignments, the majority (85%) were classified as informational/transactional, and most required students to respond to a literary work. Expressive tasks comprised 7% of the sample, and the remaining 8% had an imaginative/poetic function. Transactional tasks included the following:

1. Describe Charles Darnay.

4. Describe the building of the fire in *Lord of the Flies*, Ch. 2.

3. Define the following poetic terms...

3. Describe the interdependence and importance of this dependence between [sic] the major characters in *Cannery Row*.

Typical of assignments with a personal or expressive function were topics such as:

1. What kinds of books do you read?

2. Describe your most valued possession.

3. Describe the most interesting person in your family.

One personal narrative essay was included in this category, and it asked students to write a few pages about their most
embarrassing moment. In these personal/expressive assignments, students were required to use the rhetorical strategies of narration or description.

The remaining handouts in the mainstream English sample had an imaginative/poetic function. In each, students were expected to write stories or poems that conformed to a very specific structure:

(1) See if you can write a story of exactly 26 sentences. Make the first sentence start with the letter "a," the second sentence start with the letter "b," and so on.

(2) Write your own acrostic poem based on a season, month, or day of the week.

(3) Write your own ABC poem. Have the first line start with the letter "A," etc.

In terms of length of writing required, most of the mainstream English assignments required only short responses, as seen in Table 2.
Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>Total Handouts</th>
<th>Paragraph or Less</th>
<th>1-2 Pages</th>
<th>2 Pages or more</th>
<th>Not Specified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream English</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>133 (86%)</td>
<td>12 (8%)</td>
<td>5 (3%)</td>
<td>5 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDAIE English</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20 (91%)</td>
<td>1 (4.5%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (4.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream Science</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream Math</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10 (91%)</td>
<td>1 (9%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream Drama</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDAIE Social Science</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As delineated in the teachers' instructions to students (or by the amount of space allotted for responses on the handouts) the expectation for 133 of the mainstream English assignments was a response of a paragraph or less. In these brief responses, students were asked to summarize, define, describe, or compare, usually in response to a reading. The following are representative samples of such tasks:
(1) Summarize [in a paragraph] *Julius Caesar*.

(2) Paraphrase...[a poem] in no more than three sentences.

(3) In a paragraph, compare/contrast attitudes toward love in Shakespeare's sonnets.

Multi-paragraph responses, usually from 1 to 2 pages in length, were required in 12 of the 155 assignments. These were required in response to essay prompts, although the following assignments specifically asked students to limit their writing to 1 page:

(4) Describe Macbeth's changing attitudes toward the witches.

(5) Interview a classmate. Develop a piece of writing which would help a reader get to know the person you are interviewing.

Five assignments required multi-page responses, and these were assigned for the most part by teachers of junior or senior level college preparatory English classes. These assignments required students to make interpretations or justifications in the form of evaluative essays:

(6) Discuss the seemingly unjust treatment of Job in "The Book of Job." Explain the author's intent in depicting why an obedient and pious man might be punished.
Zeus, Artemis, Apollo, the yrines, all, it seemed, conspired whimsically against the wishes and dreams of men. Justify these metaphorical obstacles to men's desires in modern psychological or existential terms.

Another evaluative essay, a book report, asked students to summarize as well as evaluate a novel of their choice. The evaluation required them to "explain specifically" what they liked or disliked about the novel. The number of pages expected was not specified.

Table 3.
Assignments Requiring Students to Integrate Reading Material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main. English</th>
<th>SDAIE English</th>
<th>ESL Science</th>
<th>Main. Math</th>
<th>Main. Drama</th>
<th>SDAIE Social Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>85%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 3, the expectation for the majority (85%) of mainstream English assignments was for students to draw on course readings and/or outside sources. Of these, 79% were in response to works of literature. The sample included 2 research reports. One, an 8-10 page report "using a minimum of four outside sources," asked students to "compare and contrast the characters of Hamlet and
The other asked students to contrast three different critiques of a play by Shaw. "Proper methods of notes and bibliography" were required. All of these assignments had a transactional function. Thus, there appears to be a correlation between the function of assignments and whether or not they require the integration of reading texts. None of the expressive or poetic assignments held students responsible for responding accurately to a text; rather, information used to generate text was to be drawn from students' personal experience or knowledge or from the students' imaginations.

Science

Unlike the mainstream English assignments, the mainstream science assignments did not include any samples requiring expressive or poetic writing. The sample, though small, included a variety of rhetorical strategies within the informational mode.

As shown in Table 2, 3 of the assignments involved only brief responses engaging the students in a few expository strategies. For example, comprehension questions, like those found in the mainstream English department's handouts, asked students to provide brief
answers to questions found in a reading. These types of questions involved classification or definition:

(1) What three general classes of matter do chemists recognize?
(2) What is the definition of a mixture?
(3) What are transuranium elements?

These questions were part of one assignment that came from a handout produced by the publisher of a chemistry text. Students were asked to write their answers "in the space provided" (from 1-3 lines). For these types of exercises, students who were able to locate key words in the questions probably experienced little difficulty in finding and providing the answers from the text. Another textbook publisher-produced handout asked a similar question, but this one required students to apply their knowledge of the science material to their own lives:

(4) Determine your basal metabolic rate. Would you need more or fewer calories when you are doing some sort of activity? Explain.

Responding to this question would require students to demonstrate their understanding of cause and effect relationships.
Another question of this type required students to give their opinion, then support their argument based on information given in the text:

(5) Do you think a growing population will a) exceed the Earth's capacity to support life, or b) produce more minds that can solve environmental problems? Support your opinion with information from the reading.

It should be noted that this was the only argumentative type of question type found in the science handouts. As no length was stipulated in the handout, the teacher's expectations regarding length were unclear.

Of the 5 mainstream science assignments, 2 were reports that required the use of outside sources. The first, a chemistry report, asked students to write "at least 4 full pages and absolutely no longer than 5 pages." They were given a problem such as water or air pollution to "define" and then to show how "science" could "be used to ease the problem." Additionally, students were asked to "identify those aspects of the problem that cannot be addressed by science and explain why." Although this problem-solving report entailed the use of reference materials and outside sources, no guidance was given on the handout as to how to cite or document those sources.
The other science report required students to use a combination of rhetorical strategies in their writing:

(6) Use reference materials in the library to find out about a vitamin deficiency disease...Write a brief report on your findings...Make sure that you answer the following questions: What causes the disease? What are the symptoms? How can the disease be prevented?

In this report, students were expected to identify the causes of the disease and its effects (symptoms), but they also had to discuss the problem of the disease and ways of preventing it (solution). Length of response (aside from being "brief") was not specified. Also, as in the first report, no suggestions or requirements were made about how to document sources.

As noted in Table 3, every mainstream science assignment held students responsible for reporting on or responding to information found in reading texts, including those assigned in the course (see examples 1-5) as well as outside sources (see example 6).
Like mainstream science, all of the 11 assignments in the math sample consisted of informational writing. For example, one assignment asked students to:

(1) Take a product and create a new and improved package for the product. Describe the advantages of your new package compared to the current package. Include a brief summary of your project...1/2-1 page, justifying your...choice of polyhedron for your packaging with mathematical and economical arguments.

Although the creation of "new and improved" packaging would be a product of the students' imaginations, the mathematical arguments are derived from text and involve transactional writing. Therefore, the project would not be considered purely imaginative or poetic according to Britton et al.'s definition. This project also involved a combination of rhetorical strategies including description, summary, and evaluation (justification).

As in the mainstream science classes, most of the assignments (n=10) only required brief (less than a paragraph) written responses. In fact, the example (1) above was the only assignment which entailed multi-
paragraph writing. Examples of assignments requiring brief responses included the following:

(2) Observe the graphs of 2, 4, and 6. What is the difference about these graphs? What do you think caused the difference?

(3) A sequence has the formula \(a_n = 2n - 1\). Is this a recursive or an explicit formula? Explain how you know.

(4) One problem you may have is putting values of very large populations and land masses into your calculator. How would these large values be handled?

As shown in Table 3, all of the writing assignments in these classes made use of reading texts. The handouts contained questions which would be difficult or impossible for students to answer without texts for reference. For example, without access to a text, students probably would not be able to answer questions about recursive or explicit formulae (example 3) or placing large values in calculators (example 4).

**Academic Electives: Drama**

The remaining handout from mainstream teachers was sent by a drama teacher. In this teacher's class, students were required to "write a script and scene descriptions." No length was stipulated. This assignment had an
imaginative or poetic function, one of the few assignments in the mainstream of this type, and it involved the rhetorical strategies of description and dramatization. The teacher informed me that no other writing was required in the class.

**SDAIE and ESL Writing Tasks**

Like the majority of mainstream writing tasks, assignments given in SDAIE and ESL classes tended to require brief responses from students. However, in ESL classes, students wrote mainly about their personal experiences, whereas in mainstream and SDAIE classes, students were expected to write primarily in the transactional mode and to integrate reading texts into their responses. Additionally, while mainstream students were exposed to a wide variety of rhetorical strategies, students in ESL and SDAIE classes were limited to two or three strategies in their written responses.

**Social Science**

Six handouts were received from SDAIE social science teachers. As shown in Table 1, all of these handouts had an informational function, although 2 did require students to display their knowledge in an imaginative manner. For example, in world history, students were asked to write and
perform a dramatic script based on the life of Henry VIII. The instructor gave the students a list of 17 scenes and a list of what was to be included in those scenes. For example: Scene 1: Henry VIII and Arthur meet Catherine; Arthur and Catherine marry; Arthur dies; Henry VII dies.

Students worked in small groups which were each responsible for 3-5 scenes. While creative in its presentation, this assignment was informational in that it required students to present and report on material found in their texts. Similarly, in U.S. History, students prepared a "newscast presentation" on the decade of their choice. Again, although its presentation was left to the students' imaginations, the information presented was from their texts. Both assignments were videotaped, and students were able to choose their own props and costumes.

The length of the assignments varied from a few sentences to 2 pages. For example, one SDAIE world geography handout involved students in brief observational writing pertaining to an experiment about the effects that water has on land. Students recorded their observations step-by-step. Each observation was allocated 2-4 lines on the handout.
Two of the other social science writing assignments included one-paragraph narrative responses:

(1) Define laissez faire.

(2) Explain the scientific method.

One assignment asked students to write a 2-page persuasive essay on the topic: "Was Richard Nixon a statesman or a crook?"

Each of the SDAIE social science writing tasks required students to respond to material from reading. For example, in the script about the life of Henry VIII, all of the factual information related to his life could be found in the students' world history textbook. Similarly, the persuasive essay assignment about Richard Nixon required integration of text material in that students needed to support their opinions with specific references found in texts.

SDAIE English

The handouts received from SDAIE English teachers offered neither the variety nor the breadth of writing found in the social science classes. The 8 assignments all had an informational function, and writing required was predominantly in response to questions about literary works. For the most part, the handouts called for
responses of a few sentences; no multi-paragraph writing assignments were included in the sample. Typical were questions such as the following:

(1) Why was Tybalt angry with Romeo?

(2) Who found Juliet's body first?

(3) What was Friar Laurence's plan for Juliet?

(4) What happened at the end of Act II, scene 6?

These questions were all asked on exams, and each was given a few lines of space for a response.

Another example of this type of informational writing could be found in a handout given to students after they had read a story in their literature text. According to the directions given in the handout, the questions were designed to help students "determine the story's theme":

(5) Why does Amy's mother choose the foods she does for Christmas dinner?

(6) How does Amy react during the dinner?

(7) The theme of "Fish Cheeks" is that...

Each question gave space for a 2-line response which required an explanatory response, a rhetorical strategy
which "deals almost exclusively with established information" (Axelrod & Cooper, 1994, p. 163).

**English as a Second Language**

Unlike the SDAIE English samples, the emphasis at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of ESL was on personal expressive writing, not on informational writing. As can be seen in Table 1, out of 22 handouts, 17 (77%) had a personal expressive function. Most of these consisted of personal journal writing. Topics included the following:

1. Write a paragraph about something that truly happened.
2. Write three sentences using the words morning, noon, and night. Have your sentences tell about something you do at these times of day.
3. Tell about the funniest thing that ever happened to you.

Each of these assignments involved the rhetorical strategy of narration, the "basic writing strategy for presenting action" (Axelrod & Cooper, 1994, p. 482).

Five of the assignments given to students were informational:

4. Look at the picture...Write three or more sentences about the picture.
(5) Write a set of 'how to' directions. Remember to use sequence words and to write your directions in sequence.

(6) Write your own recipe...be sure your directions are written in sequence.

These assignments required students to narrate the steps in a process or to write a description; none required responses to text.

As shown in Table 2, 91% of the ESL handouts required written responses of a paragraph or less. The sole multi-paragraph essay in the ESL sample had an expressive function and was part of a final exam that asked students to reflect upon their experiences in ESL. There were no other essays, and no research reports requiring the use of outside sources in the nominated sample. Indeed, Table 3 shows that in contrast to the mainstream and SDAIE English sample, none of the handouts from ESL held students responsible for information found in reading texts.

Summary of Findings

Although this sample of 208 handouts may not be generalizable to all high school settings, some trends in the comparison of ESL, SDAIE, and mainstream classes do emerge and merit further investigation.
First, in terms of the function of the writing, the personal/expressive writing ELLs often engage in their ESL classes is not, with few exceptions, a part of the mainstream curriculum or even the SDAIE curriculum. As shown in Table 1, informational or transactional writing dominates all areas of the high school curriculum except for ESL classes. It is possible that a focus on personal/expressive writing does not sufficiently prepare students for the informational writing they are expected to do in the mainstream.

Second, differences also exist with regard to the rhetorical strategies employed by mainstream and ESL teachers. While ESL classes are largely confined to descriptive and narrative writing, mainstream classes explore a much wider range of rhetorical strategies including summary, definition, comparison/contrast, evaluation, problem/solution, and persuasive writing. SDAIE English classes, on the other hand, more narrowly focused on the rhetorical strategies of description, narration, and explanation.

Third, a disparity also exists in terms of the degree to which students in mainstream, SDAIE, and ESL classes are held accountable for information presented in reading.
texts. In the sample, none of the ESL assignments were "text responsible" (Leki & Carson, 1997); that is, none required students to integrate material from course or outside readings. The majority of the handouts received from mainstream and SDAIE teachers, on the other hand, involved text-responsible writing. As with writing functions and rhetorical strategies, a gap seems to exist between what is expected in ESL and mainstream classes.

It appears that the only area where assignments given to ESL students match those of their mainstreamed peers is in terms of the length of written responses expected from the students. With the exception of SDAIE social science, where 50% of the assignments required multi-page responses, writing of a paragraph or less dominated every part of the sample.

Indeed, personal/expressive writing and writing brief answers in response to literature texts or other content-based questions do not resemble the academic discourse required for academic essay assignments or research reports found in mainstream English and science classes. Although the sample indicates that they are assigned infrequently, academic essays and research reports appear to be part of the curriculum of the mainstream. Thus, the ESL courses do
not appear to be preparing these students for these longer assignments.

If the samples collected are representative of what is actually taught in ESL, SDAIE, and mainstream classes, then a chasm seems to exist between them. It is possible that curricular modifications are needed so that ELLs are given writing instruction that simulates aspects of mainstream writing tasks in order to help ELLs successfully transition to the mainstream. How these modifications might be made will be the subject of the last chapter of this thesis.
CHAPTER FOUR

Implications of Findings

Between 1982 and 1997, the state of California witnessed a 220% increase in the number of limited English proficient students enrolled in its public schools (Language Census Report, 1997). Thus, our public schools, particularly our high schools, are confronted with the challenge of presenting and making accessible a sophisticated and academically rigorous curriculum to students who have varying levels of literacy in their mother tongues and varying levels of English proficiency. In order to meet the admission requirements for post-secondary education and to be qualified for careers in an increasingly information intensive economy, these 1.4 million students will be required to demonstrate more than just the minimum competency in English that most presently acquire by high school graduation (Peitzman and Gadda, 1994). As Zamel (1987) has noted, our schools must educate ELLs in a way "that excludes no one, no matter what their experiences, no matter what their cultural frames" (p. 710). To do so requires that ELLs be educated to the same standards required of mainstream students. This means that students be provided with the "discourse patterns,
interactional styles, and spoken and written language codes that will allow them success in the larger society" (Delpit, 1995, p. 29).

However, as Applebee's (1984) study and the present study suggest, the writing curriculum taught to ELLs (and to many mainstream students as well) is frequently devoid of anything except the most low-level writing tasks (Zamel, 1987). As few studies of this type have been done at the secondary level, it is difficult to generalize about the implications of the present study's findings regarding the nature of writing tasks for all high school students. Nevertheless, it seems apparent that while the personal/expressive writing and brief responses to readings found in the present study may be valuable components of the ESL curriculum, these two types of writing do not, in and of themselves, sufficiently address the "basic academic concerns" (Smoke, 1988, p. 16) of ELLs. ESL students who practice expressive journal writing and writing brief informational answers might become quite adept at both by the time they are mainstreamed into regular English and other content classes. However, it is doubtful that journal writing and short explanatory responses fully develop the students' abilities in written discourse.
required in mainstream classes. Since the school district under consideration stipulates that SDAIE English be the last English class ELLs take before being mandatorily mainstreamed into sophomore English, it would seem incumbent upon the instructors of ELLs to ensure that their students are being sufficiently prepared. It is also possible that the mainstream courses may not be preparing students for the writing genres they may need to engage in at the university and in the workplace. More emphasis may need to be placed on writing longer papers requiring the integration of multiple sources which previous surveys have found are common in university courses (Horowitz, 1986). These skills should also be taught in ESL classes, especially ESL 3, the highest level of ESL students can take before enrolling in SDAIE English.

Finally, the present study shows that students in ESL classes are not involved in text-responsible writing, but in all SDAIE and mainstream classes (with the exception of drama) students are held accountable for the integration of reading material in their written responses. In some classes like mainstream science, SDAIE English, and SDAIE social science, 100% of the writing done was text-responsible.
Addressing these concerns in an informed way will necessitate articulation among ESL, SDAIE, and mainstream teachers in order to "insure the maximum transferability of the skills they teach" (Horowitz, 1986, p. 460). Each must be apprised of the "syllabi, reading lists, writing assignments, and tests" (Brooks, 1988, p. 23) given in the other's classes. If continuity is not found, appropriate curricular adjustments should be made on both sides.

Mainstream academic teachers could be a valuable resource for ESL/SDAIE teachers in assisting them with creating writing tasks that simulate what ELLs will face in the mainstream. If mainstream classes are to be the benchmark for what ESL and SDAIE classes should be doing, then ESL and SDAIE teachers need to be aware of the mainstream's expectations regarding the function of writing, rhetorical strategies employed, the degree to which writers are held responsible for text, and lengths of written responses. Without this awareness, they will be of little help in facilitating their students' success in the academic mainstream. ESL and SDAIE teachers might also assist mainstream teachers in designing lessons that are accessible to recently mainstreamed ELLs. Adamson (1993) suggests that this type of collaboration is rare since "ESL
programs are generally isolated from mainstream programs" (p. xi). Clearly, this must change.

The remainder of this chapter offers pedagogical suggestions for ESL and SDAIE curricular modifications that would offer ELLs writing instruction that simulates a broad range of mainstream writing tasks. Since the mainstream writing tasks found in the current study are limited in scope, suggestions will also be made for strengthening this area. By using mainstream writing tasks found in this and previous studies (Horowitz, 1986; Braine, 1985; Smoke, 1988; Leki and Carson, 1997) as benchmarks for their own instruction, ESL and SDAIE teachers working in tandem with mainstream instructors could narrow or close the chasm that seems to exist in the expectations of ESL, SDAIE, and mainstream writing instruction. Additionally, the quality of mainstream writing instruction might be improved.

Suggestions for Pedagogy

ELLs in a high school setting write for a variety of purposes. These may include: "language acquisition and development,...personal (intellectual or creative) development, ...vocational preparation,...general and discipline-specific academic preparation, or for a combination of these purposes" (Casanave, 1988, p. 35).
The approaches that teachers use in teaching these writing tasks will be (or perhaps should be) as varied as the purposes for writing. While there are no, and probably should not be any, "universal prescriptions" (Raimes, 1991, p. 422) for teaching composition to students with limited English proficiency, ELLs can be given writing tasks that involve different functions, rhetorical strategies and varying lengths of response, and that hold students accountable for text integration. As Spack (1993) has noted, students should have the "ability to write from and about another text--to summarize it, to garner information from it, to clarify it, and to test its assertions against other experiences and values" (p. 194).

Because the writing needs of ELLs are so varied, these students need to have frequent experiences with different functions, types, and lengths of writing in their ESL and SDAIE classes. Focusing on just one or two types of brief writing is not sufficient (Peitzman and Winningham, 1994). This does not mean that ELLs be required to produce a research paper in every class, especially not at the beginning levels. But as suggested by the current findings, in ESL classes students need to do more than write short expressive pieces involving narration or
description. Likewise, in SDAIE English classes, ELLs need to have more varied experiences than simply offering brief explanations to end-of-the-chapter/story questions, a strategy of dubious worth which Leki (1993) claims binds students to the text and lacks purpose.

Personal Expressive Prose and Academic Discourse: A False Dichotomy

A writing program that attends to the diverse needs of its high school level ELLs will be a balanced program, not one that focuses on one form of discourse over another. As Harris (1990) asserts, students should not be "left with the impression that one can either write about oneself or about information from a book [with] which one has had little or no personal experience" (p. 187). However, as the present and previous research have suggested, a chasm seems to exist in the diversity of writing experiences of ESL and mainstream students. Perhaps what is needed, then, throughout each ELL's high school career, are more opportunities for personal expressive writing, more opportunities for a variety of formal transactional writing, including assignments which involve integrating reading material, and more writing tasks which combine the two modes. (Mainstream high school students might also
benefit from having more frequent and varied opportunities to write.) Raimes (1991) has noted that while ELLs certainly need to know how to write research papers and how to pass exams, they "also need to perceive writing as a tool for learning, a tool that can be useful to them throughout their professional and personal lives" (p. 415).

One way to forge this connection between personal and transactional discourse is to use personal writing as a vehicle for preparing students for various types of informational writing, particularly those that require the integration of reading texts. Our goal then, says Harris (1990), is to "provide students with the opportunity to write information-based discourse that also includes their own experiences and ideas" (p. 187). By using new information gathered from texts, students are better able "to expand their own experiences--to make connections and to create meaning" (p. 188). Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) refer to this relationship of prior knowledge, personal experience and new learning as "connected knowing" (p. 101).

**Strategies for Connecting Personal and Academic Prose**

Mlynarczyk (1998) recommends the use of informal reading journals to forge this connection between students'
personal lives and writing about their textbook readings. In the journal, students are asked to identify unfamiliar words, write questions they may have about the reading (these are later used for class discussion), write a brief summary of the reading, and compose a reflective journal entry about the reading. The journal entry allows students the opportunity to interact on a personal level with the text. Students may discuss their thoughts or make judgments about the reading, or they may write about personal experiences they may have had that relate to the themes or content of the text.

Spack (1993) agrees that writing assignments which give students practice discussing outside source information can be rooted in ELLs' prior knowledge: "We can aid students in approaching academic tasks by drawing on the wealth of language, culture, experience, and factual knowledge they bring with them into the classroom" (p. 188). She suggests that prior to having students read, instructors have them participate in a "write-before-you-read activity" (p. 188) in which they relate their personal knowledge and experience to the themes or ideas discussed in the reading. However, Spack (1988) also notes that such
writing assignments should be "designed to allow new learning to occur" (p. 44).

Benesch's (1988) study of ESL students in a college social science class offers support for this approach. She observed that students who were watching a film depicting Stanley Milgrim’s well-know experiment on obedience struggled to understand and believe the veracity of the experiment. To aid the students' level of comprehension, their instructor gave a personal writing assignment in which the students were asked to tell about a time when they had to choose between obedience and disobedience to authority. Benesch noted that in the process of examining their own experiences, the students were better able to understand the behavior of the subjects in Milgrim’s experiment. Such an assignment could be a first-step in preparing ELLs for informational writing related to their particular topic of study. That is, relating a topic to their personal lives could enhance their understanding of it before writing.

Another method of accessing students' prior knowledge in order to make readings and subsequent transactional writing more accessible entails exploring and discussing a topic or theme prior to giving students a writing
assignment. Typical activities might include personal journal writing or quick writes (short timed writings) in which students share their experiences about a topic; visual stimuli (pictures or realia) used as catalysts for discussion; and "free association or visualization exercises that introduce students to the context of the text to be read and allow them to imagine themselves in this context" (p. 58).

Devenney (1989) recommends a comparable method for teaching persuasive writing, a form of transactional writing which often requires students to integrate reading texts as support for arguments. Before being asked to write a persuasive paper, students might talk about past experiences or their prior knowledge of the topic in question. Following this, a focused writing assignment could be given such as writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper; writing a dialogue with someone who has an opposing view; or having students summarize both their own positions and the opposing viewpoints in a few sentences. These tasks, while informal, assist ELLs in constructing and extending their arguments as well as "examining and evaluating alternatives" (p. 109). In addition, the practice received in these preparatory assignments would
help students to "look critically at [their] own thinking and to understand others’ points of view" (Axelrod & Cooper, 1994, p. 211). This ability is needed for writing an effective persuasive paper.

I-Search Papers/ Personal Research Papers

Another method of linking personal expressive and transactional writing is through what Adamson (1993) refers to as an "I-search" paper--"a research paper on a topic of personal interest" (p. 164). This type of paper is done prior to having students write a formal research paper, and involves ELLs in investigations of their own choosing that pertain to their own interests. The value of such an investigation, Adamson asserts, is that the processes of topic selection, collection and analysis of data, and writing the actual paper simulate more formal teacher-assigned topics.

Malinowski (1990) uses a similar technique with L1 freshman composition students. Her "Job Interest Project...is designed to take students from personal writing to transactional writing requiring research and application of documentation skills" (p. 265). Initially, students write informally about their career goals and the type of future lifestyle they would like to lead. Next,
they research their desired career and a related one. In the third part of the project, students interview someone who works in the students' future field. A summary is written about the interview. Finally, in the fourth phase, students are asked to synthesize the first three parts of their project and document their sources on a Works Cited page. Malinowski believes that by combining students' personal interests with academic goals, introducing the research paper to beginning college level writers "is somehow less painful" (p. 266) for the students and their instructors. This may also be true for high school level ELLs.

A study by Diaz, Moll, and Mohan (1986, cited in Zamel, 1987) had the same conclusions. In this study, secondary level ELLs participated in ethnographic research in their community and wrote about their findings. Through their investigations of their own surroundings, the students "came to understand writing as a means for intelligent inquiry" and "were better prepared for academic work in English" (Zamel, pp. 704-705). A transactional follow-up to such an assignment might include expanding on the topic. For example, a study limited to one school or community could be extended into a lengthier study focusing
on the same issue at the state or national level. This would necessitate the integration of outside source material, thus giving students practice with text-responsible transactional writing.

Tasks such as these allow students to operate in both the expressive and transactional modes. The expressive explores and explains students' thoughts informally; the transactional then reports information—often that found in outside sources—in formal academic discourse. Using such a method enables ESL and SDAIE teachers to continue to include personal writing in their curriculum; however, it also gives students opportunities to practice writing about information outside of themselves and with integrating reading material into their own writing. As the present study found, students in ESL classes are not given this opportunity. Although they are expected to be able to integrate text in SDAIE content classes and in mainstream academic classes, they are not taught to do so in ESL classes. Instead of just having students in ESL classes write briefly on randomly chosen personal topics (as was found in the assignments in the current study), assigning topics connected to readings and discussions could facilitate students' success in doing more academically-
focused writing such as examination questions, or lengthier assignments such as essays, or research reports that will be required in mainstream classes.

Additional Preparation for Mainstream Classes

In addition to activating students' prior knowledge of and/or personal experiences as a transition to transactional writing regarding a topic of study, teachers of ELLs may need to assist their students in interacting and becoming more familiar with the rhetorical strategies reflected in texts and their associated organizational structures. If students are expected to formulate academic responses to texts or model their academic writing after organizational structures found in their reading texts, they must first understand their structures and the functions of those structures (Johns, 1997). As noted by Leki and Carson (1997), texts can function as "scaffolding for the subsequent assignment by freeing the writer from the need to...figure out the appropriate rhetorical form" (p. 56).

To remedy difficulties ELLs might have with rhetorical structures, Brinton, Goodwin, and Ranks (1994) suggest that teachers take key paragraphs of a text and write them on individual sentence strips. Students would then manipulate
the strips into the original paragraph, noting topic and support sentences. These assignments could be collaborative efforts between mainstream, ESL, and SDAIE instructors. Mainstream teachers could identify sections of texts that model the rhetorical strategies or combinations of these strategies that they expect their students to be able to produce (e.g., problem-solution, comparison, description). These texts could be shared with ESL and SDAIE teachers who could then produce them on sentence strips for their students to manipulate. These sentence strip assignments might also provide part of the background ELLs need to be able to write multi-paragraph essays. After studying the structural components of a single paragraph, students could be introduced to various strategies for attaining coherence in a lengthier text.

An alternative approach to this task is to select a short passage from the text and ask students to answer a series of questions that analyze the function and structure of the passage. The questions could ask students to identify the sentence that states the central idea and those sentences which support that idea. Students might also identify the rhetorical strategies the author used to support the topic and the organizational structures used to
achieve these strategies. For example, did the author define, explain, compare and contrast or did he/she use combinations of these strategies? The ending of the passage might also be analyzed for the technique used to bring about closure: Summarizing, asking a question, implying future directions, or introducing new information (Raimes, 1993). Kroll (1993) finds this type of lesson to be more valuable to students than a "random collection of comprehension questions" (p. 71) given at the conclusion of a reading--the type of assignment frequently found in this study in SDAIE and mainstream English classes.

An example of a mainstream English assignment included in the study which might be appropriate for ELLs to analyze for rhetorical strategies and organization was the book report requiring a summary and evaluation. Students would not only need to be able to identify and use the two rhetorical strategies needed, but also understand how to sequence or integrate them when writing the paper.

A related skill needed by ELL students is the ability to sort out "the differences between generalizations and specific details or between topic and support" (Raimes, 1983, p. 123). This skill is required in virtually all academic content classes where writing is expected. For
example, in the present study, a science class required a problem/solution essay about vitamin deficiencies. In order to successfully complete this assignment, students would need to know how to differentiate between the general statement of the problem, the reasons why the problem exists, and possible solutions to the problem.

Another activity that helps prepare students to transition to academic writing is what Benesch, Rakijas, and Rorschoch (1987) refer to as an academic journal. The purpose of keeping such a journal is two-fold: First, it introduces ELLs to the types of writing they will be expected to do in mainstream classes (taking notes, summarizing, writing descriptions, etc.) and second, it helps students "become less self-conscious and more assured when writing" and to see that often writing "is not a matter of getting everything correct the first time...but rather a matter of first getting the ideas down where they can look at and then revise them" (p. xiv.). Through this process, students gain experience in writing extended pieces.

An academic journal has several parts. One section is for asking questions about the class and its instructional content or writing about American culture and the process
of learning English. The teacher periodically collects these journals and responds to students' comments and questions, being sure to model correct usage in the responses. Most important, the teacher may ask questions to invite the students to elaborate on what was previously written. Later, students may expand these sentences or paragraphs into longer transactional essays or they might use them to generate topics for research papers.

Another section of the journal is for recording personal observations of places, people, and experiences. Also, students may write summaries of readings or films. As in the previous section, these may later be revised and extended into essays. These revised summaries, says Spack (1993), "will take on two new purposes: to demonstrate the student's understanding of the reading and to establish the ideas that the essays will evaluate or analyze" (p. 191).

This strategy might be particularly relevant in SDAIE science and math classes since, as indicated in the current study, the mainstream science and math classes sometimes require problem/solution or cause and effect writing based on observations and/or research from outside sources.

All of these tasks would help ELLs to become more adept at composing extended pieces which require
integration of text and would assist ELLs in becoming more familiar with academic text structures and rhetorical strategies.

Conclusions

By giving their ELLs frequent exposure to and opportunities for practicing different types of writing with varying functions, lengths, and degrees of text responsibility, high school level ESL and SDAIE teachers can ensure that their instruction simulates or is aligned with that of the mainstream and helps prepare ELLs for academic success in high school and beyond. Additionally, by "helping students relate in a personal way" (Mlynarczyk, 1994, p. 710) to the texts they read, ESL and SDAIE teachers make the English language and their courses of study more accessible and comprehensible to ELLs. This is not to say that every academic assignment must include a personal expressive component; rather, a balance should be attempted between "connected knowing" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986, p. 101) and the types of writing assignments that ask students to display their knowledge in a more objective and impersonal way. ELLs, especially those at the beginning levels of English proficiency, need to develop writing fluency in order to be
able to appropriate other kinds of academic discourse; writing assignments that are brief and personal, like those found in this study, are one avenue for helping students to develop that fluency. However, ultimately "what may be needed is a developmental writing curriculum that places a balance between ideocentric and personal or personalized writing at its center" (Stotsky, 1995, p. 762).

To inform their instruction, ESL and SDAIE teachers must be well-versed in the nature of mainstream writing tasks. Although the current study and previous studies seem to suggest that a paucity of extended composing occurs in some mainstream classes, ELLs should, nevertheless, have the necessary preparation to successfully perform those tasks, however infrequently they might be assigned. (The seeming exiguousness of writing in some mainstream academic classes is a topic that exceeds the scope of this study; however, it is certainly worthy of further investigation.) Certainly ELLs who go on to the workplace or university will be expected to have the requisite writing skills needed to be successful in completing longer assignments in those environments.

Clearly, more research is needed about the specific content and contexts of writing instruction in high school
level ESL, SDAIE, and mainstream academic classes. More exhaustive studies of secondary level academic disciplines and the varieties of writing tasks assigned within them would help ESL and SDAIE teachers to gain an even clearer focus on how to adapt their instructional practices in order to better prepare their limited English-speaking students.

With the explosive growth of ELL enrollment in our public high schools, mainstream classes are becoming increasingly populated by students transitioning from ESL programs; therefore, it is incumbent upon both mainstream, ESL, and SDAIE teachers to keep abreast of current scholarship in second language composition theory and practice. Armed with this information, these teachers must then work in tandem to ensure the transferability, relevance, and quality of the curriculum they present. To do otherwise is to relegate second class citizenship to one out of four high school students in the state of California.
APPENDIX

June 1, 1998

Dear Colleague:

As part of my M.A. thesis in English Composition, I am conducting a survey of the rhetorical strategies which high school level English as a Second Language (ESL) students need to know in order to be successful when they transfer to mainstream classes. To facilitate my research, I will examine actual assignments given by mainstream and sheltered (ESL/SDAIE) teachers.

Would it be possible for you to send me (via district Ponymail) a small sampling of the handouts which you have given to your students this year? Specifically, I am interested in assignments that required students to respond with at least a few sentences. Copies of exams, essay prompts, comprehension questions, project directions, etc. would be greatly appreciated. (The copies should not include students' responses.) Also, I would be grateful if for each sample you would indicate the name of the class and whether it is a mainstream or sheltered/ESL class.

Please be assured that your name and the name of your school will not be reported in the study; all data will be reported in group form (i.e. by discipline) only. At the conclusion of the study, a copy of the findings will be available for your review.

Dr. Michael Karpman, Assistant to the Superintendent, has granted his approval for this study. Should you have any questions or comments about this research, please feel free to contact me at (909) 388-6419, ext. 303, or you may contact Dr. Karpman at the District Office.

Thank you so much for your time and support.

Sincerely,

Cynthia K. Case
English Language Facilitator
REFERENCES


