Alternative pedagogies for college composition

Diana Marie Ramseyer

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ALTERNATIVE PEDAGOGIES
FOR COLLEGE COMPOSITION

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

by
Diana Marie Ramseyer

March 2001
ALTERNATIVE PEDAGOGIES
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A Project
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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to determine if the acquisition of rhetorical and grammatical skills such as a sense of audience and organization are best attained through an alternate pedagogy based on a methodology from Wendy Bishop or if they are better attained through a traditional approach.

Bishop’s allows students to (consciously) make stylistic and grammatical errors while learning rhetorical competence through the understanding of their rhetorical choices. She asks students to take great rhetorical and structural risks by not being concerned with form or grammar. She claims the acquisition of traditional composition skills may be best attained through assignments that ask students to break the rules and then identify their choices. She uses alternative assignments (grammar B) in innovative ways that include double voice, fractured narrative and multiple genres for example.

To test if her pedagogy is successful, I compared it to the traditional pedagogy through an empirical study of two Freshman English classes at two separate community colleges. The students ranged in ages of 18-51 years old and consisted of both females and males of either freshman
or sophomore status. The control group consisted of 28 students and was taught the traditional pedagogy and the experimental group was taught Bishop’s Alternative strategies. Assessment was given through a pretest at the beginning of the class and a posttest question at the end of the semester to gauge the rhetorical competence. Both classes were given 45 minutes to respond to the writing question.

The control group was introduced to the rhetorical modes, purpose of audience, invention, organization, grammar and punctuation skills. The experimental group was taught using the assignments and composing strategies from Bishop’s book, Elements of Style. Students were asked to write assignments called radical revision, single syllable sentences and multiple genre choices. A one-page revision detailing the process and how they achieved their rhetorical purpose accompanied the process.

Two impartial readers scored both sets of essays. The results indicated that the improvement in the control class was slightly higher than the experimental group. This implied that the alternative pedagogy was not better in assisting students to acquire the necessary academic ability needed for college composition assignments. To
make up for possible flaws in the study caused by the unequal amount of students, I added a qualitative aspect of a student survey and an email interview of the control instructor’s views of the study.
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CHAPTER ONE: THEORIES OF ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

Composition research has proceeded along two theoretical lines: inner-directed research that looks at the writer’s cognitive processes and outer-directed research that looks at the social context of language use. Inner-directed researchers look for innate processes and mental structures but they regard these processes as teachable.

Inner-directed models seek scientific certainty, while outer-directed models examine political, ethical and social dynamics. Outer-directed research examines the dialectical relationship between thought and language by describing the intentions, genres, communal expectations and knowledge that shapes language use. In the Flower and Hayes model, basic writers are seen as cognitively deficient, where as in the sociolinguistic model, they are simply seen as alien to the community they are being judged. What we need to know about writing will emerge from the debate of these two camps.

Composition scholar Linda Flower and her colleague John Hayes who best exemplify inner directed research, describe a set of thought processes that produce good writing. They assert that the processes followed by good
writers should be taught to students. Their model separates thought (planning) from writing (translating) but does not account for the writer’s knowledge or sense of context.

Flower and Hayes have pioneered the use of cognitive psychology for studying composition. Writing processes encompass activities taking place in the writer’s head. Their study looks at the thinking processes of students’ writing and revising. According to Flower and Hayes, the study reveals some radical differences in how individual students perceived academic writing tasks (to them).

They state it is not surprising to find some of the images students bring with them are at odds with the university. The expectations of college English instructors for “college level” discourse may be presented in oblique and indirect ways. The magnitude of its importance may not be apparent to students even as they fail to meet the university expectations. Students come to the university with an impressive range of abilities that are fundamental to academic writing such as the ability to summarize, see key points and connections, to write an essay that is coherent and on topic.
Students pigeonholed into deficient models are presumed to lack basic cognitive skills. When a large group of students is assumed to labor under a basic intellectual or cognitive deficit due to some performance, we need to ask how much of that deficit resides instead in our own methods of measurement and observation.

Flower and Hayes focus on two sets of practices and expectations which most college teachers share. They suggest these practices may be at the root of the problem students face. These two practices are 1) integrating information from sources with one's own knowledge and 2) interpreting one's own reading, adapting one's writing for a purpose. She claims these two practices stand as critical features of academic discourse, which often limit entry and full participation in the academic community.

The rhetorical act of academic writing also assumes that writers need to form their knowledge in response to a problem. Transformation appears to be a complex cognitive process that is heavily influenced by the plans and goals writers give themselves. According to Flower and Hayes, entering this partly new discourse appears to be an act that involves a great deal of experimentation and discovery, uncertainty, failure, success and growth (8).
They suggest this involves adapting new strategies and reinterpreting old understandings to meet this new situation. This includes learning to write using strategic repertoire that includes text conventions, rhetorical patterns, and domain specific organizing ideas and strategies for reading and writing and for interpreting what these different discourses expect. Flower and Hayes suggest that the growth of strategic awareness mean an increased sense of rhetorical options and an expanded power to direct one’s own cognition.

The acquisition of academic discourse may be seen as students trying to negotiate an entry into seemingly familiar, yet surprisingly new and always ill-defined community of academic discourse in which the goals of integrating and transforming knowledge for a rhetorical purpose present a major hurdle.

According to Flower and Hayes, when we expect students to negotiate their transition into a discourse community of academic writing, we are asking them to not only summarize accurately and respond insightfully but to also interpret and apply their readings and thoughts to a new problem.
But, the inner directed approach has been challenged by Bizzell, who claims that researchers have been motivated in part by a reluctance to accept the conclusion forced by personal style and cognitive-based analysis of composing, that differences in individual performances are due to difference in individual talent and not cognitive deficiencies.

This reluctance sprang from scholars’ observations that performance differences seemed to correlate with social groups and seemed logical to assume social and cultural as well as individual factors influence composing. Moreover, poor performance seemed to correlate with relatively less privileged social groups. Retaining empathy with these groups is consistent with the assumptions of personal style pedagogy; scholars wished to save them from the stigma of personal failure and sought a pedagogy specific to these needs.

For many researchers, mastery of academic writing has become once more an acceptable goal of composition pedagogy. Now scholars seek to serve these students particularly so as to give them equal access to knowledge generated and maintained by the academy. Some scholars hope that if academia is still the weapon of political
oppression, students who master it may be able to turn the weapon against the oppressors.

Bizzell sees the political conflict in schools as between the oppressive institution and individual creative talents. She claims that whether academic discourse can be taught in a liberating way is now the important question because most college writing programs now have the same official goal: to equip students for performing the writing tasks their college education demands.

She also claims that the individual methods and goals may vary with practitioner but in general commitment to the official goal presumes resolution of issues that concerned writing teachers not long ago. These issues consist of the tension between the individual student and their own cultural identity, creative potential and the conventional requirements of standardized writing instruction.

She suggests that instead of forcing students to master expository prose, writing teachers should begin to believe that they are helping students free themselves from its influence if ever their writing were to improve. Students should forget correctness, stop trying to sound like someone else and work to discover and refine their
own writing style (129). By fostering students' own style instead of forcing conformity to an oppressive institution, writing teachers could feel like they were making their own contribution to reform of an oppressive academia and political institution (180).

In contrast to Bizzell, Elbow seeks to empower his students through personal style pedagogy. He emphasizes the open-endedness of the composing process to necessitate the student search for a voice or greater personal expression. This emphasis on the creative power of the mind helps to legitimize voices silenced in traditional classrooms: voices of women, ethnic minorities and other oppressed groups. The influence of the personal style pedagogy encourages the study of what goes on in the writer's head.

In Writing Without Teachers, Elbow says many writers have been trained to think that good writing proceeds from an organized outline through near perfect drafts. He claims this view is wrong because it assumes that the writer knows exactly what they want to say before they begin writing. A better way to begin may be freewriting, which is a deliberately unfocused but sustained written
brainstorming from which a center of gravity for an organized essay can emerge.

Working on drafts is then a process of growing or allowing the organization to remain flexible while students generate as many ideas as possible. Submitting drafts to fellow writers that are dedicated to constructive criticisms and critical interaction of the student’s text forms the teacherless classroom. These groups can work on academic writings too if they understand that academic work is carried on by the interplay of the doubting game, radical skepticism about another’s work and the ability to fully enter into another’s worldview.

Unlike Elbow, Berthoff insists on the crucial connection between the individual writer and the outside world. She makes the point crystal clear: human beings use language to make sense of themselves and their world. Hence, to understand composing, we must look at that world which the writer is in dialectical relationship with the academic community as well as the writer’s talent.

Bartholomae views the acquisition of academic discourse in another way. He explains that the conventions and world view is unfamiliar to the basic writer. He
suggests that their composing processes must include trial and error as they gradually discover how to use academic discourse for their own purposes. Students must learn to sound like experts when they write and thus adopt a persona that is more authoritative and academic. He claims the errors of inexperienced writers should be seen as the result of this effort to approximate and finally control a complex discourse. He suggests writing, audience and subject are all located in discourses that exist outside the writer and it requires an act of courage to penetrate such discourse. Student writing is situated in a heavily populated space where power is unequally distributed. Critical knowledge requires working with texts, and understanding the possibilities beyond quotations. Composing, according to Bartholomae, should not foster a genre of sentimental realism and pretend it’s transcendent over critical academic writing.

Le Fevre views composition in quite another way. She claims it is based on the platonic view that invention is the act of the individual who searches for truth by self-examination. This view is supported by ubiquitous myths of individualism in America. Although there is no real value in this perspective, a more complete account must be
recognized. Invention is social and collaborative: the
individual has been influenced by society. She insists all
human acts are dialectical responses to context,—writing
refers to audience-- and finally, that the classical
context of rhetoric is explicitly social. Le Fevre claims
that there are four perspectives on invention. In the
platonic view, invention is private. The internal dialogic
view projects a Freudian self,made up of contesting voices
and is strongly influenced by internalized social values.
The collaborative view claims to locate meaning in the
symbolic interaction of a group of people. The collective
view follows that social institutions and cultural
traditions affect individual choices. The social view of
invention suggests ways that composition research and
pedagogues can go beyond personal assumptions about
authorship.

To Harris, the concept of a discourse community has
helped reveal the writer's intentions and their emergence
not from within but through interaction in communal
projects. The image of the community notably is entirely
positive and unified. According to Harris, students must
completely abandon other discourse communities in order to
fully enter the academic community. The idea of community
should acknowledge the normal presence of internal and conflicting voices.

In conclusion, researchers differ on their view of how academic discourse is best attained and the factors that influence its acquisition. Whether the focus is social or cognitive, the two camps may never resolve their differences concerning the most effective ways to improve composition pedagogy.
CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

Alternative pedagogy for English composition does not encompass the traditional expectations of rhetorical competence. These expectations include unity, coherence, transitions, thesis statements, proper grammar, correct punctuation and spelling.

Wendy Bishop challenges the traditional approach as the only way one can write and acquire academic discourse. She offers alternative assignments that basic writers may be offered to accomplish the same rhetorical purpose. Through exercises that encompass such strategies as using fragments, single syllable sentences, fractured narratives and others, students learn a greater ability of rhetorical expression.

This approach breaks tradition with typical composition classes that rely upon grammar A for access into the university community. Grammar B does not replace grammar A but instead it may enlarge our definition of "good writing" so students can more effectively communicate with their fellow beings. The instructor of Wendy Bishop's pedagogy focuses not on correctness or appropriateness, but students learn to take risks, explore
radical twists and turns and sometimes fail in the process.

Writing teachers who follow this path have to allow for risk by rewarding it and will have to encourage failure by exploring the process of learning about styles and trying them on. Bishop creates her own pedagogy for composition students by using strategies taken from Winston Weathers, a writing specialist, who calls breaking the rules an alternative grammar of style. Wethers means the set of conventions that govern the construction of whole composition.

The traditional grammar of style, the one taught in school, builds upon a sense of order and consistency. Essays must contain an introduction with a thesis, body that develops supporting points in logical sequence and a conclusion that sums up the main ideas. Sentences must be complete and link together in an unbroken chain. According to Bishop, traditional grammar is acceptable for some topics and essays but alternative grammars of style allow students more options in writing by giving them a more flexible voice and greater opportunity to put their words into more effective language. These assignments serve the twofold purpose of allowing students the freedom of
concern about grammar and correctness and giving them
greater chances at developing creativity by not focusing
conventional rhetorical constraints.

The experimental group was given five assignments
based on Bishop's alternative pedagogy. These consisted of
the fractured narrative, single syllable sentence, grammar
B, radical revision and a research paper. There was not a
focus on grammar, structure, or organization. The first
assignment given to the experimental group was the single
syllable sentence. Students were told to do the following:

"Write a half page paragraph. Use only one-syllable
words in this paragraph. Your sentences should range from
one word to ten words in length."

The students were told to get in groups, read their
paragraphs aloud and discuss them. Was it difficult? Why?
What were you able to write? What choices did the exercise
force you to make? They were told to then revise those
same paragraphs using the following rules.

"Your sentences can range from one to eighteen words.
This time use two syllable words but try to have at least
half of the words be one syllable. Make each sentence four
words shorter or four words longer than the sentence
before it and make half the sentences end in a consonant sound."

The purpose of this assignment was to take students back to a playful time, to think in terms of simple topics and simple use of language. The results of the class assignments are examined in chapter 3.

In the second assignment, called fractured narratives, students were given the following instructions and told to choose one.

A. Think of an activity you enjoy or dislike immensely such as swimming, writing a paper, walking with headphones or any others. Do a quick freewrite or list. Now do another freewrite of a topic occupying your mind. Now take one line from each one and alternate them.

B. Try a silent-night narrative. Write down as many lyrics as you can and interrupt the lyrics with a list of your concerns or fears. You can also use the lyrics of the national anthem, pledge of allegiance, or a childhood lullaby.

C. Think of a TV ad or a slogan and write down as many lines as you can recall. Now freewrite sections that contradict or comment on these words by alternating them.
D. Recall an experience that still holds deep confusion or deep meaning for you. Break down the experience into genres. For example, begin the narrative with a letter but switch for a different scene.

The next assignment was a modified research paper. Students were told to research a topic that interested them. They were given the option to understand an experience, learn more about a hobby, i.e. skydiving, record family stories, find out about medical school, a trip to Europe, analyze dream life and contemplate love and friendship. Some topics included:

a. A law/policy/rule i.e. selective service, affirmative action.
b. A person or group of people you've never talked to before, i.e. a homeless woman, a priest.
c. A fear, i.e. bats, national deficit.
d. A club/major/activity on campus.
e. Something you have never tried before, i.e. hang gliding, African food.
f. Something that makes you mad, i.e. underfunding in school, toxic waste dumps.

Brainstorming was suggested to students who could use their three top choices and freewrite about why the topic
was interesting to them, what reasons they had for exploring it, what they already knew about the topic, any previous experience they have, any questions they might want to answer.

They were given the option to expand the conventional research paper by going to the library, using interviews, field visits, personal experience narratives and of course textual sources of books, magazines, journals, pamphlets, charts, maps, pictures and drawings.

The fourth assignment focused on Grammar B. Below is some of the ways students were told they could use Grammar B.

1. Crots: a chunk of sentences or text that all go together in some way. It looks like a series of snapshots separated by space or asterisks.
2. Labyrinthine sentences: long winding endless sentences that are set off by parenthesis, semi colons, or embedded phrases.
3. Sentence fragments: use them often to give a sense of uncertainty or separation.
4. Lists: generally independent of a sentence, written horizontally, or may look like poem.
5. Double voice: two or more competing or complimentary perspectives in the same texts and separated by parenthesis, italics, spacing or questions. Double voice is a dialogue without Grammar A punctuation.

6. Syncrocity: scrambled verb tenses or time markers.

7. Collage/montage: any and all of the above combined in a collage.

The point of this assignment was to better understand Grammar A by using grammar B, to explore what Grammar A may fail to express, to understand what the rules of Grammar A can accomplish in terms of communication, expression, making meaning and to explain the concept by writing a radically different version of a paper and to imagine more possibilities and power in language than allowed by Grammar A.

The final assignment given to the experimental group was the radical revision assignment. The assignment entailed not only an extension and refinement of ideas but also a shift in paper style, intent and format. It was meant to challenge them to look at something familiar in a radically different way and a chance to experiment with different types of writing. Students were to become aware
of voice and language and consider the following possibilities.
1. Change genres: write an expository essay as a narrative or a letter.
2. Change perspectives: add a second point of view, speak with more than one voice, take a minor character and write the story from his viewpoint. Write from the viewpoint of several characters or voices.
3. Change of voice: take on another persona or use the multivoice approach.
4. Change in emphasis: rewrite the paper by making what was a minor point into a major point.

In comparison, the control group was taught the traditional methodology of basic composition writers. The textbook used was *Paragraphs and Essays*, by Brandon Lee. The course description included emphasis on paragraphing, mechanics and the multiparagraph essay with an introduction into library resources. The purpose of the course was to help students develop fundamental writing skills through reading and writing as well as through a review of the rhetorical modes, grammar and punctuation skills. Final drafts of paragraphs and essays were evaluated on the following criteria:
1. Organization: Does the topic sentence function, as it should? Does the paper have a clear plan? Is it unified? Is all the material presented relevant to the topic?

2. Development: Does the paper use examples, illustrations, facts or other forms of evidence to support the topic sentence? Are they relevant? Are they sufficient?

3. Mechanics: Is the paper free of gross errors of spelling? Is punctuation used properly? Is the paper free of errors of agreement? (Subject, verb, pronoun/antecedent)? Is the paper free of major errors in sentence level problems? (Fragments, comma splices, fused or run-on sentences)?

4. Content and style: Has the author made the topic interesting and original? Is the writing efficient (not wordy)? Does the author vary sentence length and form throughout?

Grading was based on assignments, paragraphs, essays, researched essays, quizzes and tests, midterm, final, notebooks and a library assignment. The notebook consisted of the following vocabulary: spelling, language skills assessment, in class writings, reading journals, invention strategies and prewriting exercises. The assigned paragraphs and essays were based on the
rhetorical modes. These included narration, description, comparison, definition, cause and effect and persuasion. The breakdown of assignments was: Two paragraph assignments of 200-300 words each:

- Invention
- First draft in-class
- Instructor evaluation draft

Portfolios (choice of two evaluated and revised drafts).

Four short essays assignments of 500-750 words:

- Invention
- First draft
- Second draft peer and instructor review
- Presentation of final draft
- Revision is optional

Students were introduced to developing invention strategies, constructing a thesis statement, topic sentences, organization, annotating, proof reading as it pertained to their own writing and to others. The actual writing of paragraph/essays generally was comprised of four elements: invention, first draft, second draft and final draft. Students were told to keep four elements in mind when writing the assignments:
1. Unity - do the points support the topic sentence?
2. Support - does it create a vivid picture?
3. Coherence - is the organization logical?
4. Sentence skills - Have you proofread for errors?

Below are the exact five assignments given to the control group. Each assignment is mode based.

Cause and Effect A Hope in the Unseen 3-5 pages

Getting started:

Ron Suskind’s A Hope in the Unseen presents several possibilities for writing the cause and effect essay. While Suskind’s book will present the basis of your essay, many of the guidelines for this assignment come from your textbook, Reading Critically, Writing Well. You need to pay attention to those guidelines in writing this assignment.

❖ Invention

As part of your invention/planning, you need to go through the exploratory exercises on page 325-6 and answer the questions on page 328. Though we will cover some of this material in class, you will need to include this exploratory writing assignment in your portfolio with your final draft.
Topics

Ron Suskind presents several points of cause and effect in his book. Your assignment is to choose one of those points and write a 4-6 page essay that explores either a cause or an effect of that point. Topics include:

1. The inequality of our education system based on economics, racial or gender issues.
2. The effects of drugs on educational goals, occupational advancements and personal/familial relationships.
3. Single parents
4. Prison and education
5. Religion and education

Sources

Of course, you will integrate support from Suskind's book, but you may decide that you need to find additional sources to support the points you intend to make in your essay. You may find these authoritative sources in books, journals, magazines and on the Web. We will discuss the strategies for researching and documenting sources in class to help
you understand the requirements for outside research. Although for this paper, you will not be graded on format for these sources, you **must** include photocopies of those sources with your final draft. Be aware of unintentional plagiarism. Is it better to cite the source incorrectly than not to give credit where it is due?

The next assignment for the control group was the classification essay and is shown below:

Classification 3-4 pages

We tend to classify things and people in our lives. It is the way we make sense of issues, break down tasks and handle problems. While there is an element of comparison in such a task, the purpose of this assignment is not to compare the topic, but to describe and discuss a specific topic and inform your readers about it. In order to do this assignment, you will need to decide on a topic that can be viewed from a plural view and broken down into 3 or more components that can be described. This is **not** a persuasion or argument paper. Writing on such topics is meant to inform your audience about something
(such as a stereotype) or to educate them on how to handle or solve a problem.

Inventing

List

Choose a topic, either from the list at the end of the chapter, or from your own imagination. Make a chart of five or more types that fit under your general heading. List characteristics under each type that describes it and makes it unique from the others on your chart.

Freewrite

Freewrite for 15 minutes. This is where you want to explore whether or not you are informing or educating. Try to get through at least three of the subtopics from your chart. As homework, finish any of the points on your freewrite that you didn’t get to in class.

Drafting

1st Draft

Decide on a working thesis. One way to do this is to ask a question and then answer it. Another way is to make a statement or overgeneralization and then correct the fallacy. Ex: Don’t you think all teachers
are alike? Or are all teachers alike? Take the five examples from your freewrite and put them in order of importance. This will depend on what your final purpose is for the essay. Pay attention to the handout: draft progression is in your packet. Follow and include the points made there.

2nd Draft

By this time, you should have a fairly good handle on your topic. Again, use the handout in your packet to help you make sure that all the points for this paper are included. Make sure each sub-topic is thoroughly discussed and that there are effective transitions between topics and paragraphs (note that one topic may take more than one paragraph to adequately discuss it).

Final Draft

Check to make sure that your introduction adequately sets up the discussion and that the thesis statement is the final sentence in the paragraph. Underline the thesis statement. Proofread for accuracy and edit for mechanical grammatical and spelling errors.
Self Evaluation:

Use the "Questions for Writers Log" and write a short (¾ to 1 page) evaluation of this paper and how you handled it.

Portfolio

See the handout in your class packet.

The next assignment used the comparison contrast mode.

Comparison Essay Assignment 4 pages

We do comparison everyday. For example, we choose one breakfast cereal over another, one type of car over another and one movie over another. We make choices depending on personal preferences, what others have said, cost, and a whole host of other reasons. We analyze the things being compared, we may describe the similarities and differences to a friend, and we may even make a "Pro/Con" list to help us decide which is better.

However, a comparison doesn't have to determine which is better. Comparisons can simply illustrate the differences and similarities between two things and analyze them as to content, purpose and effectiveness (just to name a few). Comparisons also
don't have to involve just two things, though two is the usual number considered when we first think of comparing. A word of caution: the more "objects" you put into your comparison "mix", the more complicated your paper becomes.

Task:

For this paper, compare any two or more of the readings in your packet to show how the authors differ in attitude, writing style and presentation of their ideas. For example, you might compare "The Sea Oratory" with Luther Standing Bear's "What the Indian Means to America," or Langston Hughes' "I, Too" with Shelby Steele's "Individualism and Black Identity." The combinations are myriad, so use your imagination. As part of your comparison you will be expected to describe, illustrate and explain each of the points you make about each of the readings you choose. You are expected to quote and cite from these sources. A works cited page is also required.

Getting Started:

1. Make an outline of the prominent points of each essay/poem you are going to use.
2. Summarize the piece and state what you think is the main point the author is trying to make.

3. Make a list of what is similar ("Pro") - if anything - and what is different ("Con") - if anything - in each writing (i.e., tone, main focus, arguments, evidence, audience and so on).

Purpose:

The purpose of this paper is to show two points of view about a topic, to explain why they are important, and what the authors have to say about the topic. You can look at two (or more) sources from several perspectives: argument for a cause, expectations and realizations, two views of immigration, two views of assimilation and so on. How you choose to approach this particular assignment is up to you.

Writing the Paper

1. Situate the issue by commenting on its importance, which is saying that it is important and what is said about its importance. Do not simply summarize, and remember to comment on quotation.

2. Do not tell us whether you agree or disagree with the position. Create transitions between the
different points of view, and analyze the arguments each source presents. Make sure that you quote from the articles to back up the assertions that you make. You must then explain how and why each quotation supports your idea.

3. Create a clear thesis at the beginning of the paper and be sure to keep your purpose in mind at all times. Everything you say in this paper must be connected to the thesis in some way, so develop your organization and focus around the main idea (thesis).

4. Be sure to proofread and edit for obvious errors. Errors such as spelling and poorly worded sentences will prevent your readers from understanding what you are trying to communicate.

Last Word

The presentation (final) version of this paper will require the following elements to be included in your folder

- Outline
- Summaries. These can be your invention strategies and can be handwritten.
• Pro/Con lists

• A completed six questions handout (you can photocopy the original or type out the questions on a separate piece of paper). Your responses to the questions can be handwritten in ink in a freewriting format.

• Any reader responses assigned during class

• First and second drafts

Final draft w/works cited page

The fourth assignment: Family Essay Assignment  
2-3 pages

Our cultural heritage is brought down to us through the stories we hear about our family and ourselves. Nearly every family has a favorite story to tell about "Uncle Bud" or "cousin Lettie" that seems to get retold and reinvented every time the family gets together for any occasion. It is the favorite story that makes you laugh, your eyes widen in amazement, or sends shivers down your spine even though you've heard it and (probably told it yourself) a hundred times. No two people tell the story exactly the same way, and --quite possibly-- no
• You may want to interview a family member about events to help you fill in the details that may be fuzzy or forgotten.

• Make a list of some of the main events that happen in the story.

• Do a fifteen minute freewrite to get a feel for the order of events and how the story flows.

Writing the Paper

1. Give an introduction of the person being written about. Tell us who they are and when, in their lives, the story is taking place (My Great Grandma Cosby was only ten years old when her family, along with the rest of the Cherokee nation, was moved by the U.S. government from their home in Georgia to the reservation that is now Oklahoma).

2. Make sure that there is a thesis statement at the end of the first paragraph that tells where this story is going to go. Be sure to keep the purpose in mind at all times. Everything you say in this story must be connected to the thesis in some way, so make sure to develop your organization and focus around that main idea (thesis).
3. In every good story there is a rising action, climax, resolution, and conclusion. This will be a chronologically ordered paper, so the order presented in the previous sentence should be the order of events. Don’t fill in with unimportant detail just to pad your paper. Make sure that you have a clear and decisive conclusion.

4. Proofread and edit carefully. Poor sentence structure and word choice can make an otherwise exciting story lose its energy and your readers lose interests.

Last Word:
The presentation (final) version of this paper will require the following elements to be included in your folder.

1. Notes on the family interview. Include the name/relationship of the person being interviewed and when the interview took place. These are your invention strategies and can be handwritten.

2. The list of the main events

4. The 15 minute freewrite

5. A completed six questions handout (you can photocopy the original or type out the questions on a
separate sheet of paper). The responses to the questions can be handwritten in ink in a freewriting format.

6. Any reader response assigned during class
4. First and second drafts
5. Final draft (two page minimum)

Caution: papers shorter than the minimum length will receive a substantially lower grade.

Finally, here is the last assignment given to the control group.

Toys: Mini Culture

In her essay, "Pink Kittens and Blue Spacesships," Alison Lurie discusses how we make choices about children's clothing based on social expectations of gender. Of course, how children are dressed (colors and pattern), is not the only way that we continue social expectations. The toy manufacturers also help to maintain gender stereotypes. The kind of toys, the packaging and marketing all contribute to the continuation of gender roles and to our belief that only certain types of activities and careers are appropriate for males or females.
In your three page essay, compare the kinds of toys our culture offers boys and girls. Consider such elements as packaging, advertising and even how toys are categorized in stores. In this essay, think about toys for infants from age 6 through 8. How or when does a shift in genderization become apparent in the types of toys children are introduced to? How does this shift from non-gender specific to gender specific toys that teach children about social expectations?

Take a position about this shift. Is it a good thing to define gender roles at such a young age? Why or why not?

As part of your essay, consider such things as career opportunities, nurturing and parenting roles, social interaction and communication. How do toys encourage or discourage these activities in children based on gender? Why is this good, or is it? Should we change the stereotyping that comes with gendered toys? Why or why not?

Your essay does not have to cover every point mentioned in the first sentence above, but it should focus on one or two of them.
This is a formal essay, which means:

1. Use first person plural (we, us, our) rather than first person singular (I).
2. Do not use second person pronouns (you, yours, you’re).
3. Do not use jargon (e.g. kids, brats, rugrats, etc.) or cliches (e.g. What goes around comes around).
4. The paper is proofread for grammatical and mechanical correctness. If you know you have problems with comma splices, review the appropriate section in your text for help working with them. If you know you have problems with fused or run on sentences, again, review the appropriate sections; this may include the sections on commas and semicolons.

As it can be noted, the control group was given very stringent assignments with a very strict grading process. The experimental group was offered more freedom in terms of choice of topic and restriction from the conventions of traditional composition pedagogy. The next chapter will discuss the results of the experimental assignments and results of the assessment scores.
CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

The comparison between the experimental group and the control is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of the Assessment Scores:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pretest mean</th>
<th>Posttest mean</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental group</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Results of the statistical comparison of both classes indicate that there was very little difference between the two groups in scoring, except as shown by improvement of scores in the control group over the experimental group. The control group improved by .40 and Bishop’s group improved by only 0.21. It is clear that the Bishop approach did not prove to be better in helping students improve their writing. In fact, Bishop’s methodology may be even less effective than the traditional composition methodology. Some possible reasons for the lower scores produced by the control group will be discussed later in the chapter.
3.1 Student Surveys

Fourteen students in the experimental class were given a survey to answer at the end of the semester based on their opinions and judgments of the class. In this ten question survey, students were asked about their purpose in taking the course and if their expectations were met. Content in the questions also included material that students hoped would be covered but was not and also how their reading and writing abilities may have improved from the course. Students were asked to comment on Bishop’s alternative strategies and how they assisted students in their writing, and if so, why. Finally, students were asked to comment about the methodology used in teaching the class and what areas they still needed work on now that the course was over.

It comes as no surprise that students claimed to prefer Bishop’s methodology to traditional composition pedagogy due to the creative aspect of the assignments. As reported by student surveys given at the end of the semester to the experimental group, students insisted Bishops’ class was “fun” and gave them more freedom in writing.
The responses to the survey and reasons for taking the course included comments such as, "to brush up on my English skills." Students wanted to enjoy the benefits of good writing skills, while others were expecting a course load of grammar. The majority of students felt the course had met their expectations and none claimed that the instructor had failed to cover necessary material.

Students commented on the most useful element covered in the class, which ranged from grammar in the Grammar B assignment, to one word syllable assignments. Other elements included poetry, steps in writing, free imagination and style. When responding to questions about their perceived improvements concerning reading and writing abilities, most students claimed they were proud of their writing skills, assignments and confident of their ability to write essays. When asked what they still needed improvement on, students claimed areas such as structure, punctuation, spelling, organization and clarity. This is no news to me since Bishop’s methodology was based on the absence of these very factors.

If students could participate in creating assignments, they would add more structure, punctuation, spelling, organization, vocabulary and more poetry.
assignments. Students commented on the usefulness of Wendy Bishop's assignments when rated on a score of 1-8, with eight being the highest. The majority preferred her strategies and the majority voted her eights with none lower than five.

When students were asked if they thought her assignments were helpful, students claimed they made them feel more comfortable about writing and the methods were effective for them. One student commented, "They allowed me to relax and become more insightful about my writing."

Finally, when students were asked to make final comments about the methodology used in teaching the class. Some of the comments ranged from, "I enjoyed the freedom of choosing my own topic." "The class was very helpful and I wanted to recommend it to my peers," to "She did an awesome job...very one-on-one with her students when given the opportunity and its obvious she cares about her students and her job as a teacher."

Another positive comment on the pedagogy claimed the class taught her more about English than she ever remembered. She insisted the class allowed her to discover her creativity and that she learned the strategies easily.
3.2 Explanation for the Results

Bishop focuses on the rejection of standard conventions of composition pedagogy and emphasizes creative expression over the acquisition of grammar, mechanics, organization and structure. Students may prefer this pedagogy mainly for this fact. There are no stringent memorization of grammar rules, no red pens correcting their sentence structure and spelling. At the same time, students are expected to acquire grammatical skills as standard expectations of the university.

Personally, I believed Bishop’s methodology to be interesting for its creative writing aspect but it was time consuming. First of all, I found myself teaching students both Grammar A and Grammar B. They could not break rules they didn’t know. To teach grammar B, I had to first teach American Standard English. I also had to explain what a narrative was in order to ask them to change it to a new genre. Bishop claims it’s not necessary to know the rules to break them, but from the practical standpoint, Bishop’s strategies may work better in an university class that already knows the rules or it may be taught in a sequence class.
after students have already taken a traditional composition course.

At the community college level with its diverse population, I receive students who haven’t written anything since high school, ESL students struggling with the acquisition of a second language, disabled students who fight with simple concepts such as spelling, and returning students who may not have a greater grasp on the conventions but learn quickly. They were mostly eager to learn but not always capable.

Secondly, I must admit being a new instructor of English composition; and I may not have taught her strategies most effectively. They were foreign to me and although I am the most active proponent of building confidence in beginning writers, I felt that I was doing them a disservice by not teaching them what every college expects: rhetorical competence through knowledge of grammar, structure, etc. It was interesting to note that students asked for more grammar if they could add to the methodology.
APPENDIX A: HOLISTIC SCORING

The in class writing assessment was graded holistically by two independent impartial readers. It was based on the holistic scoring or previous research by White. The scoring criteria were as follows:

6. A paper in this category will complete all the tasks set by the assignment. It will be distinguished by original and orderly thinking. It would be virtually free of errors in mechanics, usage and sentence structure. There will be superior control of language.

5. A paper in this category may slight but not ignore one of the tasks of the assignment. The writer will demonstrate a clear understanding of the writing topic. It may not be as thoughtful or carefully reasoned as a 6 paper but it will not be characterized by restatement of ideas with high level of generality. It will contain evidence of the writer's ability to organize information into unified and coherent units. It will largely organize information into unified and coherent units. It will largely be free from serious errors in mechanics, usage and sentence structure. It will be characterized by clarity of expression.
4. This paper will come to terms with the basic tasks of the assignment. The reasoning will be less precise and less discriminating than 5 or 6 paper. It will not be flawed by logical fallacies. Development may be lacking but it gives evidence of the writer's ability to support key ideas. It will be organized and paragraphed well enough for readability but there may be some disjointness and lack of focus. It may contain errors in mechanics; usage and sentence structure but generally will display accurate use of language.

3. A paper falls into this category if it shows serious difficulty in managing the tasks of the assignment: or it shows definite weakness in analytical thinking; or it shows markedly underdeveloped key ideas that stand virtually without illustration or support; or if the errors in sentence structure, and mechanics seriously interfere with its readability. There may be distinct weakness in paragraphing and organization. The writer's control of the language may be uncertain.

2. A paper in this category will fail to come to terms with the assignment. The tasks may be ignored,
misconstrued or redefined to accommodate what the writer wants to say. There may be a combination of the following defects: serious errors in reasoning, little or no development of ideas and no clear progression from one part to the next. There maybe serious errors in sentence structure, usage and mechanics and direct impression of inferior writing.

1. This category is reserved for the paper in which a combination of errors, conceptual confusion and disorganization create the impression of ineptitude. There is definite attempt by the writer to deal with the topic.

0. This paper is obviously "off topic" whatever its writing quality (White 116).
APPENDIX B: ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Some changes or inventions seen as 'improvements', turn out to have unforeseen or unfortunate consequences. Think about and select one such change, for instance a product, machine, procedure, policy or institution. In an organized essay, briefly describe the situation before the change, explain the intended 'improvement' and discuss gains or losses resulting in the change (White 107).
APPENDIX C: SURVEY FOR EXPERIMENTAL CLASS

Please answer the following questions regarding your experience in this class.

1. What was your purpose for taking this course?

2. Did this course meet your expectations?

3. Are there things that you hoped the teacher would cover that were not covered? If so, what were they?

4. What things do you think were most helpful for you that the teacher covered?

5. What would you say you gained from this class and do you believe your reading and writing abilities have improved with this course? And if so, in what ways and why?

6. What about your reading and writing do you think you still need to work on now that the course is over?

7. If you could participate in creating assignments and or lecture for the class, what would you change or emphasize?

8. On a scale of 1-8, with one being of the least value and eight being the highest; how useful did you find the alternative assignments based on Wendy Bishop's book? For example: the fractured narrative,
the single syllable assignment and the research project?

9. Do you think those alternative strategies for working on your writing might prove useful? If so why?

10. Are there other comments you want to make about the methodology that was used in teaching the class?
WORKS CITED


