
15

Writing

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What are some approaches to teaching writing?
- What are the main types of writing: genres and texts?
- What is the nature of proficiency in second language writing?
 - Types of background knowledge.
 - Preparing to write.
- How should second language writing be taught?
 - Determining goals.
 - The components of a writing course.
 - The writing lesson.
 - Feedback on learners' writing.
 - The role of technology.
- How can writing be assessed?

15.1 Introduction

While some second language learners may have restricted needs for writing skills in English, others need to be able to write a variety of different kinds of texts for academic as well as professional purposes. Many students worldwide study through the medium of English or plan to study abroad in English-medium tertiary institutions and universities and need to develop effective writing skills for academic purposes. With the emergence of a global economy, written texts also play an increasingly important role in many businesses and organizations. Effective communication within organizations involves paper and electronic memos, reports and other written texts, while communication with customers and clients depends on letters, brochures, sales materials and other documents. In addition, the growth of social-media communications tools has also influenced greatly the amount of written communication people make use of, as well as the form of their written communication.

Consequently, writing instruction is an increasingly important focus in many language programmes today. However, good writing skills, in either one's first or second language, are difficult to acquire. Whereas the ability to understand and speak one's mother tongue emerges 'naturally' through exposure and experience, and generally does so before a child's formal education commences, writing and reading are both dependent upon school-based instruction. Written English also differs in many ways from spoken English, and fluency in spoken English is not an indicator of how well someone can write. Despite the instruction people receive in school, however, many native-speakers of English never develop good writing skills. It is not surprising, then, that second language learners face many difficulties in mastering writing skills in English. In this chapter, we will examine the nature of writing in a second language and approaches to the teaching of writing.



What problems do you feel you had learning to write, either in your first or second language?

15.2 Approaches to teaching writing

Current approaches to teaching second language writing are informed by a considerable tradition of theory, research and practice, and offer a marked contrast to earlier approaches (Kroll, 1990; Hyland, 2003, 2010). The audiolingual method informed the teaching of writing, as it did other skills (see Chapter 3). Through much of the first half of the twentieth century, learners developed control of sentence patterns and grammar through oral practice and drills, and then used these same patterns in writing. Writing ability was mainly seen to involve developing linguistic and lexical knowledge, as well as familiarity with the syntactic patterns and cohesive devices that allow for sentence combining and form the building blocks of texts. This is an approach that still characterizes second language writing instruction in some countries today, including some programmes in the US (Reichelt, 2009). Before the 1980s, writing skills were perceived as dependent on imitating model compositions provided by the teacher. Teachers also employed dicto-comp (activities where the teacher reads a passage

several times and students try to reconstruct it from memory) and sentence combining (activities in which students try to combine two or more sentences into a more complex single sentence, as a way of developing a better grasp of sentence grammar). Controlled or guided writing exercises were also employed. These involved students manipulating model texts by making various kinds of changes to them. Such activities were designed to minimize the chance of making errors and also freed teachers from having to correct large numbers of compositions. They are still often seen today in some coursebooks.

In the 1980s, the *paragraph pattern approach* was developed with a focus on different functional or organizational patterns, such as narration, description, comparison/contrast and exposition. Reid (1993: 30) describes the features of this approach:

Using pattern-product techniques, teachers focused on the concepts of thesis statement and the topic sentence, paragraph unit, organizational strategies and development of paragraphs by 'patterns' or modes: process, comparison/contrast, cause-effect, classification/partition, definition, etc. Exercises to teach the logic of English organizational patterns included reordering deliberately 'scrambled' paragraphs, identifying 'irrelevant sentences' deliberately placed in paragraphs, identifying 'suitable' topic sentences for specific paragraphs and writing topic sentences for paragraphs from which the topic sentences had been removed.

Different organizational patterns were said to reflect different types of academic writing, and a set of core functional writing categories were identified as the focus for academic-writing courses: classification, comparison/contrast, cause and effect, definition, description, narrative, processes and reports. Students were taught the organization patterns that characterize each type of writing, focusing particularly on the role of thesis statements, topic sentences, supporting sentences and transitions and other features of effective paragraphs and compositions. Grammar was also taught in relation to different types of writing. Instruction made use of model compositions, illustrating each functional type. Students then practised writing their own compositions, reflecting the organizational pattern of the model. Approaches such as these that focus on different types of written 'products' are referred to as 'product-based'.

A teacher in China comments on preparing students for a writing test that focuses on organizational patterns:

●● Application of organization patterns

In the Chinese EFL context, second-year college students need to take the College English Test Band 4 (also known as CET-4). Usually, the most difficult part of this test is the writing section, in which students are given 30 minutes to write a short essay on a given topic in three paragraphs which include a thesis statement, analysis and conclusion.

In preparing students for the CET-4 writing, we find the following tips quite helpful:

- It's important that students' focuses are directed towards, and sufficient time is spent, practising a list of functional categories, such as comparison and contrast,

cause and effect, problem and solution, views on hot topics, new policies, reports, letters, advertisements, etc.

- For each of these categories, students are provided with two or three sample frames (that contain organization patterns) which show students how to give the thesis statement, how to form topic sentences, how to string together supporting sentences and how to draw conclusions.

Obviously, most EFL students can improve their writing scores, in most kinds of tests, more efficiently and quickly if they have been introduced to the organization patterns of the essay.

Qin Bangjin, teacher and teacher educator, Yunnan, China

In the 1990s, *process writing* introduced a new dimension into the teaching of writing, with an emphasis on the writer and the strategies used to produce a piece of writing. This was contrasted with product-based approaches that focused on the end results of writing rather than the processes writers made use of when they write. In the *process approach*, writing is viewed as 'a complex, recursive and creative process that is very similar in its general outlines for first and second language writers: learning to write requires the development of an efficient and effective composing process' (Silva and Matsuda, 2002: 261). The composing processes employed by writers were explored, as well as the different strategies employed by proficient and less proficient writers. Process writing, particularly in the US, soon became a movement, with its proponents arguing that product-based approaches failed to teach learners *how* to write, addressing the ends but not the means. Drawing from the work of first language composition theory and practice, ESL students were soon being taught such processes as planning, drafting, revising and editing and how to give peer feedback. However, others argued that it was more suited to intermediate and advanced-level writers than beginners, for whom models of good writing were often needed.

Both product and process-based approaches are still commonly used in coursebooks, though often features of the two approaches are used together.



When you have a writing assignment to complete, how much time do you normally spend on planning and drafting processes?

More recently, second language writing instruction has been influenced by a *discourse and genre approach* (Wennerstrom, 2003). This approach looks at the ways in which language is used for particular purposes, in particular contexts. *Genres*, discussed in more depth below, are the accepted conventions behind writing which is done for each of these purposes. Writing is seen as involving a complex web of relations between writer, reader and text. The discourse and genre approach looks at the social context for writing (e.g. work, school, personal writing), the participants and communities that exist in each context and the purposes for which people write in different situations. In each context, social conventions determine what and how people write; the participants are said to constitute a discourse

community; and the discourse that occurs in that community constitutes a particular genre, with its related use of texts and other forms of discourse. Drawing on the work of Halliday, Martin, Swales and others, the genre approach seeks to address not only the needs of ESL writers to compose texts for particular readers but also examines how texts actually work to achieve their intended purposes (Paltridge, 2006). It is commonly used in teaching writing for academic and professional purposes and can also be used together with features of a process approach. (Written discourse will be explored in more depth in Chapter 16.)

Appendix 3 shows the integration of these ideas in part of a sample lesson from a current textbook that teaches writing.

15.3 Types of writing: genres and texts

For many people, writing needs are both institutional and personal. Institutional writing is produced in a professional or institutional role, such as that of businessperson, teacher or student, and conforms to the conventions of these contexts. Personal writing includes emails, text messages, blogs and creative writing. In an ESL writing programme, the available purposes for writing are generally somewhat restricted. Most school-related writing is destined either for the teacher (e.g. essays, assignments) or for the learners themselves (e.g. notes, summaries). Writing is used either as evidence of successful learning or as a means of learning. Because much writing leads to a product that can be examined and reviewed, it provides feedback to the teacher and learner on what has been understood. It can also guide the process of understanding and organizing ideas during reading and listening.

There are many different ways of describing the kinds of writing people do, and writing can be classified in different ways. For example:

Type of classification	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By genre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Detective story, mystery, advertisement, editorial, menu, essay, biography, song.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By text type.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letters, reports, memos, text messages, forms, labels, signs, instructions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By type of paragraph development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narration, exposition, definition, classification, description, process analysis, persuasion, comparison.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School, work, home.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self, friends, teacher, client.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By purpose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To warn, inform, entertain, persuade, request.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By writer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employer, employee, colleague, friend.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By medium.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Print, electronic.



Monitor your uses of writing over a one- or two-day period. What kinds of writing did you do?

The concept of *genre* is important in considering the nature and role of written texts. Hyland (2003: 18) defines genres as 'abstract, socially recognized ways of using language for particular purposes' and goes on to say:

In the classroom, genre teachers focus on texts, but this is not the narrow focus of a disembodied grammar. Instead, linguistic patterns are seen as pointing to contexts beyond the page, implying a range of social constraints and choices that operate on writers in a particular context. The writer is seen as having certain goals and intentions, certain relationships to his or her readers and certain information to convey, and the forms of a text are the resources used to accomplish these.

In constructing texts, the writer must employ certain features conventionally associated with the genre in which he or she is writing. In reading a text, the reader similarly anticipates certain features of the text, based on genre expectations. Thus, any piece of writing needs to reflect the conventions of a particular type of text. This means that the information in it should be organized according to the appropriate paragraph format, and it should reflect the norms of the context in which it is used, the audience it is intended for and the purpose the writer seeks to achieve. Paltridge (2006: 87) gives the following example of how these, as well as other choices the writer makes, are realized in a letter to the editor of a newspaper:

author	member of the public
audience	editor of the newspaper; the wider public
purpose	to argue a point
situation	a local newspaper
physical form	written on a sheet of paper
pre-sequence	'Dear Sir/Madam'
internal structure	sender's address + date + editor's address + salutation + body of the letter + sign off + signature + sender's name
content	topic of relevance to the readership of the newspaper
level of formality	medium level of formality
style	typed; use of the first person
written language	mostly complete sentences
requirements	letter must be signed; contact details must be given



The following e-mail message from two students asks for clarification about an article of mine the students were assigned to read. To what extent does it reflect the genre conventions expected for a letter of this kind?

hello sir JACK RICHARDS!

We are very happy to find the possibility to contact you. We are students from the university of [] in English department 3rd year studying the didactic. We are therefore assigned to give more and easy explanation of 'Teachers' Maxims in Language Teaching' as a presentation.

Dear Sir we will be very glad have a reply of your.

[names included]

15.4 The nature of proficiency in second language writing

Types of background knowledge

Knowledge of text types

Good writers are not only aware of the nature of different text types but are also aware of the situations where texts are used, the expectations of readers and the cultural and rhetorical conventions that different texts may reflect. For example, students writing essays in a western academic context are expected to use thesis statements and topic sentences and are expected to express an individual stance in discursive writing – features that may not necessarily be found in the writing conventions of other cultures (see below).

When writers create a text, it also needs to conform to recognizable patterns of organization. For longer texts, we expect to see the text organized into paragraphs and, within paragraphs, to find main ideas and supporting details – features that contribute to the coherence of a text. However, at the same time, a writer's use of the accepted organizational patterns of a text may vary, according to the intended audience. Hedge (2000: 323) points out that although a text describing a medical problem and how it can be treated might generally follow the pattern: *situation – problem – solution – conclusion*, a writer may vary this sequence of information for effect:

The sequence of elements above would probably be considered normal, with conclusions coming last. However, a newspaper article on the topic might report on the treatment first, in order to raise curiosity, and then move on to explain the problem. In fact, there could be several possible sequences for the information.

Bhatia (1998: 25–6) puts it this way:

Practising a genre is almost like playing a game, with its own rules and conventions. Established genre participants, both writers and readers, are like skilled players, who succeed by their

manipulation and exploitation of, rather than a strict compliance with, the rules of the game. It is not simply a matter of learning the language or even learning the rules of the game; it is more like acquiring the rules of the game, in order to be able to exploit and manipulate them, to fulfil professional and disciplinary purposes.

Knowledge of cultural assumptions underlying texts

The conventions accounting for the organization of these text types in English may differ from those used in a student's native language, and students sometimes transfer discourse features from their native language into their written texts in English. Kaplan (1966), for example, suggested that non-native writers with different language backgrounds used different organizational structures for essays from those used by writers with an English-first language background. Composition teachers in North America emphasize that every essay should have a thesis statement that tells the reader the stance the writer will take on the topic, and that it will usually occur near the beginning of the introductory paragraph. However, writers in some cultures do not usually use thesis statements in this way; they leave the writer to infer the writer's stance or they present the writer's point of view at the end of the text.

Similarly, students in the West are taught that not only does the essay, as a whole, need a thesis statement, but that paragraphs should also have topic sentences, and that the topic sentence usually occurs near the beginning of a paragraph. However, students may come from a writing tradition where the topic sentence does not occur in this position. Raimes observes (2002: 308):

What are text models used for? Are they to be examined critically, analyzed and compared? [A Chinese writer] has written about his experience learning English in the United States. He says that in Chinese, writers try to 'reach a topic gradually and systematically'. To him, the concept of a topic sentence stating the main idea of a paragraph right up front is 'symbolic of the values of a busy people in an industrialized society'. As teachers, we have the choice of presenting a text structure as a given, as some kind of 'standard', as a form to be learned and imitated, or going beyond that and exploring, in our classes, the notion that what writers do reflects an entire system of values and beliefs, with strong connections between the writing process and the beliefs of a culture.

Students in North America and the UK are also taught to use their own ideas and their own language in writing. To incorporate the writing of others without identifying that the ideas are not the student's own is referred to as plagiarism. However, student writers from different cultures may feel that to use another writer's words or language is to honour that writer for the quality of his or her writing. Programmes like Turnitin (www.turnitin.com) are increasingly used not only to detect plagiarism but to encourage students to check their own work before submitting it. Many academics require students to attach a note to essay assignments stating that nothing in their essay has been taken, without acknowledgment, from another source.

Students in writing classes may come from cultures where writing plays a very different role from its role in the US, Canada or Great Britain. There may have been little emphasis on creative and personal writing in their school experience, and they may be unfamiliar

with some of the conventions underlying the kinds of writing they are expected to do in their academic programme. For example, students in college programmes in Canada and the US are generally taught that good writing expresses a point of view and reflects the writer's individuality. They are taught to engage in presenting and defending a point of view, as well as contesting other people's opinions. But this may be an unfamiliar, and even an uncomfortable, stance for students from more authoritarian cultures, where conformity, rather than individuality, is valued. Thus, a manual for writing tutors in the US (www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/tutor/problems/esl.shtml) comments:

In finding a purpose to write, then, the ESL writer must look for a topic which invites individuality. He [sic] must understand that it is essential for him to take a stand – to determine what his own personal views are. He must also figure out who he's talking to – and by this, I do not simply mean that he must determine who his audience is, but also that he must determine what the ongoing dialogue is concerning his topic, what the authoritative and culturally accepted notions are and how it is that he is going to position himself among all these other voices. In short, he must be cautious in addressing this country's values and, at the same time, take risks.



Look at the writing manual excerpt above. How does it compare with the way you were taught to write, and/or the way you teach writing yourself in your current context?

A teacher comments on the process that Japanese students go through to learn cultural conventions of English texts:



Cultural conventions and texts

Japanese students studying English writing will first create a document based on what they know and have been taught. The manner of writing in Japanese is considerably different than in English. A well-organized piece of Japanese writing would be structured with an introduction, development, denouement and conclusion. In an English document, this Japanese style, with stress on the denouement, tends to distract from the writing, making it less coherent.

In addition to teaching writing in English, western writing styles are taught. It is important to teach the students the role of thesis statements, topic sentences, supporting sentences and transitions, making use of good models.

Hiroko Nishikage, teacher and materials writer, Tokyo, Japan

Use of grammar at the level of sentence and text

Writing calls upon the learner's grammatical knowledge and the ability to use grammar appropriate to different kinds of texts. Here are some examples of written text types that have distinctive grammatical features (adapted from Feez and Joyce, 1998):

Genre	Text type	Purpose	Grammatical features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe place, person or thing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple clauses, some linked with <i>and</i>. Simple noun groups. Verbs <i>to be</i> and <i>to have</i> in present tense. Personal pronouns. Prepositional phrases of place.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recounts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retell events, in order to entertain or inform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple clauses, some linked with <i>and</i>. Simple noun groups. Action verbs in the past tense. Personal pronouns. Expressions of time and location (adverbs, phrases).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persuasive texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short opinion text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Argue for a particular point of view. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clauses for opinions + supporting evidence. Necessary conjunction, e.g. <i>because, so, if, then</i>. Some two-clause sentences.

In texts, some grammatical items link ideas and sentences together in order to contribute to the text's sense of unity. This is known as cohesion. Cohesion refers to the linking relationships that are expressed explicitly in a text. These linking relationships are part of what makes a set of sentences hold together and form a text. A variety of grammatical as well as lexical means are used by writers to create cohesion in a text (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). These cohesive devices are classified as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical:

- **Reference:** The children did not come because *they* wanted to stay inside.
- **Substitution:** We wanted to buy some glasses and finally bought some French *ones*.
- **Ellipsis:** They wanted to hear me sing another verse of the song, so I told them I knew two (*verses*) more.
- **Conjunction:** I did not know she was in hospital. *Otherwise*, I would have sent some flowers.

- *Lexical*: Henry presented her with his own *photo*. As it happened, she had always wanted a *photo* of Henry.

A teacher in China describes the challenges students face in learning to connect sentences appropriately in English:

● Connecting sentences

For more than a decade, I have been teaching basic English writing to the second-year English majors in China, an EFL country. My students usually have learned English for at least six years in high schools before they enrol in the university. I find my students are quite good in terms of grammatical knowledge, e.g. they are good at doing grammatical multiple-choice questions. However, they often find it difficult to produce sentences that are grammatically appropriate in their writings. For example, they often have problems joining two complete sentences. The cause of the problem is that they are unaware of the fact that it may be possible to join two or more complete sentences with just a comma in the Chinese language, but not possible in English, without the use of certain connectives. Therefore, sentences such as, 'The student left home, she came to the university.' are not uncommon in their English writings.

EFL students, such as those from the Chinese context, should be made to realize that a complete declarative sentence always ends with a full stop. To solve my students' problem, I use some readings in my teaching to help raise their awareness of the following essentials:

- If and when students are unsure, use a period and break them into two sentences.
- Use a semicolon to connect two complete sentences.
- Use a comma plus a coordinating conjunction.
- Use a semicolon plus a sentence connector.
- Add a subordinate conjunction. (If the subordinate clause is put before the main clause, there is a comma between them; if the subordinate clause is put after the main clause, there is no comma between them.)

Qin Bangjin, teacher and teacher educator, Yunnan, China

Knowledge employed as students prepare to write

Organizing the content of writing: coherence

We mentioned that knowledge of text types involves organizing texts into paragraphs, which gives the text a sense of unity. The ideas and information in a well-written text need to have an overall sense of unity and structure. This is referred to as *coherence*. Coherence reflects the following features of a text:

- *Development*: Presentation of information should be orderly and convey a sense of direction.
- *Continuity*: There should be a consistency of facts, opinions and writer perspective, as well as reference to previously mentioned ideas. Newly introduced information should be relevant.
- *Balance*: There should be a relative emphasis (main idea or supportive information) for each idea or topic.
- *Completeness*: The ideas presented should provide sufficient coverage of the idea or topic.



Which of the 'rules' of coherence are not followed in the following text (taken from Grellet, 1983)?

In 1816, when she was 19, Mary Wollstonecraft was staying in Switzerland with her future husband – Shelley – and Lord Byron. They had read German short stories and decided to try to write their own. The result was a tale written by Mary and called 'Frankenstein'. It is the story of a scientist who creates a monster which will eventually destroy its creator. It was probably one of the first works of science fiction. Mary's mother, Mary Godwin, had been one of the first feminists.

Using appropriate styles of writing

Good writers also use a style of writing that is appropriate to the kind of writing they are engaged in, whether this is institutional writing or personal writing. Written language has a different style from spoken language, even though new forms of writing that have emerged are closer to spoken language, such as emails and the language used in chat rooms (Jones and Hafner, 2012). However, the style of writing students are expected to use in academic writing in English may be unfamiliar to them, and they are not expected to use a personal informal style of writing in essays and other school assignments. Students will need to learn that much academic writing in English is written in a concise style, and writing that appears to be too formal and elaborate, and which involves digressions around the main idea, is not highly valued.

Ability to use writing strategies

Many of the features we have covered so far refer to *product* dimensions of writing, since they offer commentary on the finished form of a piece of writing. But students also need to develop strategies for the *process* of writing itself – a feature of the process approach. Writers differ in the way they approach a writing task, and some ways of completing a piece of writing may be more effective than others. Any written task is normally carried out in a number of steps: depending on the nature of the piece of writing, the writer does not normally sit down and compose the finished product in a single step, and some of these

steps will be more productive than others. These can be considered writing strategies. Strategies will differ according to the task the writer is undertaking. The following are strategies a writer might use in writing an essay:

Before writing:

- Think about the task and how to approach it.
- Use different ways of collecting necessary information, such as reading, the internet or taking notes.

During writing:

- Map out main points quickly.
- Review and elaborate the points.
- Take time to let ideas develop.
- Write and rewrite several times, reviewing to make sure the main points are covered.
- Leave editing until later and concentrate on content.

After writing:

- Check to make sure the essay is coherent.
- Revise content if necessary.
- Check that a suitable style of language has been used.
- Make any necessary corrections.

Here a teacher discusses how he teaches his students to use writing strategies:

Changing student needs

In the last six or seven years, we have had more and more Saudi Arabian learners arriving at our school. As with every culture that is new to us, we have had to adapt our teaching methods to the new group. For a number of reasons, many Saudi learners present with much higher speaking and listening levels than reading and writing. As a major motivation for studying English is to gain entry into an English speaking university, this poses specific problems.

As well as all the usual problems of vocabulary, grammar and discourse, there is often great difficulty in written fluency. A Saudi learner may be more likely to spend longer 'looking at the page' before they start to write, and then to constantly go back and correct more often than necessary, which means that it is unusual for them to reach the required word count in the time given.

One way of addressing this problem (taking a more process approach) is group writing, with a strong emphasis on brainstorming ideas first and then organizing them into an appropriately coherent shape before writing the first draft.

Another useful tactic addresses the lack of fluency directly. At the beginning of each class, the learners have five minutes to write as much as they can, without giving any thought to review or correction. The topics can be totally random, e.g. 'Today I want you to write about your family / your journey to school / your shoes', etc. Be very accurate with the five minutes; make sure your timing is exact. When five minutes are up, the learners count the words they've written and try to do more the next day. It's good for them to keep a record so they can monitor their own progress. It's also fun with some (but not all) classes to introduce an element of competition, which can help motivation.

I have focused on Saudi learners here because they make up a significant group of learners with specific needs in my teaching context, but these methods have also worked very well with learners from lots of other cultures with the same issues.

Peter Nicoll, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand



The description above talks about the challenges in teaching writing to students from one particular culture. What are some of the challenges specific to teaching the students in your classes? Are their issues the same as those discussed above, or are they different?

15.5 Developing a writing course

Determining goals

Students on a writing course may have very specific needs or the course may simply aim to improve their general writing proficiency. In the former case, needs analysis (see Chapter 17) can provide information on the kinds of writing skills the learners need, the kinds of texts they need to be able to produce and what their current writing difficulties are. In the latter case, students may have specific goals, as in the following example for an academic writing course (Holst, 1993, cited in Hyland, 2003: 68):

By the end of the course, a student will be able to:

- Specify a purpose, audience and format for a given writing task.
- Generate questions and ideas, using a variety of brainstorming, free writing and analytical techniques.
- Draft a paper rapidly.
- Edit a draft for sense, organization, audience and style.

- Evaluate and edit others' writing.
- Analyze a specialist text for its structure and characteristic stylistic features.
- Write an essay with a thesis, supporting argument, introduction and conclusion.
- Write an essay, using multiple sources and appropriate citation techniques.
- In the case of learners who have no immediate needs for specific writing skills, a writing course may set out to teach general writing skills relevant to the learners' proficiency level, interests and the constraints of the course.

A writing course should also reflect core principles that underpin teaching practices, principles that are based on an informed understanding of the nature of second language writing.

Determining goals may involve creative thinking on the part of the teacher. Here, a teacher describes how writing about a community-service project served to prepare students for the ultimate goal of passing a timed-writing exam. Such students often identify as Americans, but are native to another country and thus may have writing problems consistent with those of second language learners.

●● Service learning and developmental college writers

One of the most successful projects I had my college developmental writing students do was a semester-long service-learning experience. My students at an urban state university were mostly local generation 1.5* and long-term English language learners who had been decent students in high school, but whose placement test scores indicated that they were not ready for first-year composition classes. My mandate from the university was to prepare them, [whether] necessary [or not], to pass a timed writing exam that would demonstrate their ability to read, write and think critically. The texts chosen for the exam prompts usually discussed a generic hot topic with which students were presumed to have already had some experience, such as advertisements in schools or minimum grade requirements for participation on school sports teams. The problem with these prompts was that my students had not actually spent much, if any, time thinking about these issues in their previous academic experience and, as a result, had little background knowledge and no opinions about the topics. In short, they did not care and did not invest their mental energy into making connections that would allow them to take a stand and support an argument.

After a year of trying to find prompts that students might care about, a colleague and I attended a conference presentation about service learning. We realized that we could connect the writing requirements of our course to participation in local community-service projects, thus enhancing the students' awareness of the world beyond their immediate experiences and giving them concrete material for their writing. We arranged for representatives from four local service agencies – a food bank, a tutoring centre, an

urban tree-planting organization and the university health education programme – to visit our classes, giving students information about how to volunteer at their agencies.

The unit, as we designed it, overlays the entire semester. All course activities, readings and writing prompts are related to the theme of community issues, supporting students' development of critical thinking about social problems in the local area and reflection on their experiences at the community-service agency. Students kept a reflective journal, where prompts focused their thoughts on their expectations and experiences doing service and [on] reading about an issue connected to their service agency, such as homelessness or urban environmental damage. They selected magazine and journal articles related to their chosen issue, summarized individual articles and then pulled the summaries together into a synthesis paper explaining how others have addressed the issue. A final term paper, built on their journal reflections and readings, asked the students to take a stand on the issue they had chosen, illustrate their arguments with examples from their experience at the community-service agency and propose a solution to the problem.

Service learning gave my students a chance to see the world from someone else's perspective. I saw, through their reflective writings, their dawning awareness of how other people in our city lived. They wrote about customers they have talked with at a food bank and how they learned about a family's need for food aid, because they are living on one parent's small salary in a small apartment with many children. They wrote about getting to know a child they tutored who talked about his family's immigration experiences from Mexico and how he, with limited English skills, served as the family translator. They wrote about seeing neighbourhoods around the city with much more dilapidated houses than around where they lived, and how the trees they planted added the only touch of nature in the area.

The best essays my students produced related their research findings on government policy to their service experiences and then connected both of these abstract concepts to their own immediate lives. They reflected on how they had never realized how much their parents had to work to buy their homes and put food on the table. They reflected on the joys they felt being able to alleviate a bit of the pain others felt. Many wrote about bringing friends and family members to the service organization, to donate food or to lend a few hours labour to the agency.

From these glimpses into other city residents' experiences, the students realized that they were not exactly like everyone else in the city. Their personal concerns, as big as they seemed at the moment, were much less dire than those faced by other people they met. They also saw that, as small as their contributions were to the agencies where they were working, they made a difference in the life of a few people who needed help.

Betsy Gilliland, teacher and teacher educator, Honolulu, HI, US

* The term 'generation 1.5' generally refers to immigrant students who move to the United States at the age of 12 or older and enrol in middle school or high school in the US (Oudenhoven, 2006, cited in Masterson, 2007).

The components of a writing course

The different kinds of knowledge and skills learners need to acquire to become effective writers are summarised by Hyland (2003) as follows:

- *Content knowledge*: How can topics for writing activities be chosen? Can students be involved in selecting topics to write about? And do students have the necessary background knowledge to write about topics they may choose or be asked to write about?
- *System knowledge*: How will grammar be used to support their writing needs? What areas of grammar will be most useful to them?
- *Process knowledge*: How will students get ideas and information to use in writing? Will they make use of the internet, group discussion, library research, etc.?
- *Genre and text knowledge*: What kinds of texts will students learn to write? Do they need to improve their skill in composing particular kinds of texts, such as essays, business letters or reports? How will students become aware of the principle of organization underlying different types of writing, such as recounts, descriptions or business letters?
- *Context knowledge*: How will students develop awareness of the influences on the writing context for the type of writing they engage in, as well as awareness of cultural factors that affect expectations about the nature of appropriate written texts?



In your experience, which of the dimensions above usually receives greatest attention when teaching writing?

Content knowledge

Content for writing activities will depend on the type of writing students are learning. Content can either provide the basis for organizing the course, as in CLIL (see Chapter 3), or it may be chosen after other syllabus decisions have been made. For example, with a text-based approach, text-types will be chosen first and content decisions made subsequently. With personal writing, choice of content is often made by the students themselves. With a process approach, a variety of techniques are used at the planning stage to develop possible content for a piece of writing, such as internet searches, reading, interviews and opinion surveys. Clustering, or word mapping, may also be used. The student writes about a topic on a page or computer screen and organizes words and concepts around the central concept. Students may be unfamiliar with procedures used for researching or developing content for writing and may need direction and support in this process.

System knowledge

Focus on grammar and sentence organization is usually addressed after issues of content and organization have been initiated. However, basic-level writing courses and materials

for grammar and writing are often closely integrated, so that grammar-based activities are linked to simple paragraph writing. Activities that address grammatical knowledge in the context of writing include:

Activity type	Procedure
• Sentence combining.	• Students combine two or more basic sentences to produce longer and more complex sentences.
• Expanding.	• Students rewrite a paragraph to make it longer, and, in the process, try out new items of grammar.
• Combining.	• Students combine jigsaw segments of a text.
• Extending.	• Students add a paragraph to a text to complete it.
• Completing.	• Students complete the missing sections of a text, using target structures.
• Paralleling.	• Students create a text that follows a given model and uses target structures.
• Rewriting.	• Students rewrite a text to turn it from present to past.
• Converting.	• Students turn an oral text into a written text, such as a recount.
• Correcting.	• Students rewrite a text, correcting errors of grammar and syntax.



How would you rate the exercises above? What other activities do you think can be used to develop grammatical accuracy in writing?

A teacher offers suggestions on grammar focus (and organization) for students preparing for the IELTS exam:



Grammar and the advanced-level student

We get a lot of students needing to achieve a 6 or a 7 score on the IELTS academic test. Often, the most difficult parts of the exam are the writing, especially Part 2, the 'academic' essay.

It seems to take a very long time (maybe five to six months of full-time study) for learners to significantly improve their grammar. When one does focus on grammar, especially at the IELTS 4 to 6 levels, it's important to expose learners to a more focused range of grammatical structures than is common in most general English coursebooks, where the verb phrase is king. I spend much more time these days on noun groups,

because they are so important in academic writing. Most learners have, at some time, received a red line under what they thought was a sentence, but was, in fact, only a very long noun. Identifying the 'head' and breaking up the modifier and qualifier into their various constituents is really useful.

Corpus linguistics has shown us how important the preposition phrase is in noun-group qualifiers. Rather than spending hours going over yet more relative clauses, vary the options with a few preposition phrases and the odd *that* clause.

Peter Nicoll, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

Process knowledge

Activities that focus on the writing process and the use of strategies are often associated with the methodology known as the *process approach*, as we saw earlier. However, they can also be used in conjunction with other teaching methods. Three stages are often distinguished in the writing process, as we mentioned: *rehearsing*, *drafting*, and *revising*. Rehearsing, or pre-writing, involves finding a topic; finding ideas about the topic; letting ideas interact, develop and organize themselves; and thinking about the audience and the purpose of the writing task. At this stage, the writer may not know how many of the ideas or how much of the information will be used. Drafting involves turning ideas into words, in rough form. The writer sketches out an idea, examines it and follows it through for a while – perhaps letting the idea follow its own course. What has been written serves to generate further ideas, plans and goals. Thus, the process of writing creates its own meaning. The writer may also go back to the rehearsing stage and alternates between the rehearsing and drafting phases. Revising involves evaluating what has been written and making deletions and additions, as necessary. The following are examples of activities that address writing processes and strategies.

Activities related to the rehearsing phase:

- *Journals*: Students explore ideas and record thoughts in a journal.
- *Brainstorming*: Students rapidly exchange information about a topic or about something they have selected to read.
- *Free association*: Students react to a topic on the board and say or write whatever words come to mind when they see the topic word.
- *Values clarification*: Students compare attitudes toward a variety of specific problems and situations.
- *Clustering or word mapping*: The writer writes a topic in the middle of the page and organizes related words and concepts in clusters around a central topic.
- *Ranking activities*: Students rank a set of features according to priorities.
- *Quickwriting*: Students write as much as they can in a given time (e.g. five minutes) on a topic, without worrying about the form of what they write.

- *Information-gathering activities:* Students are given assignments related to a theme or topic and resources where related information can be found.

Activities related to the drafting/revising phase:

- *Strategic questioning:* Students examine a set of questions to help them focus, prioritize and select ideas for writing.
- *Timed-focused writing:* Students write quickly within a specified time period on a topic they have selected during pre-writing.
- *Elaboration exercise:* Students are given a sentence and collectively elaborate and develop it.
- *Reduction exercise:* Students are given a wordy and complex paragraph and break it down into simpler sentences.
- *Jumbled paragraph:* Students are given a jumbled paragraph and reorder the sentences.
- *Jumbled essay:* Students are given jumbled paragraphs and reorder them to make an essay.
- *Writing thesis statements and topic sentences:* Students are given a statement from which to develop a thesis statement and topic sentences.
- *Quickwriting:* Students quickly write various sections of their composition: beginnings, central sections and conclusions.
- *Mindmapping:* Students create a diagram showing how words and ideas can be organized around a central theme or idea, producing what is sometimes called a 'spidergram'.
- *Group drafting:* Students work jointly on drafting different sections of a composition.

Activities related to the revising phase:

- *Peer feedback:* Students work in groups and read, criticize and proofread their own writing.
- *Group-correction activities:* Students are given essays containing certain focused deletions (e.g. topic sentences, thesis statements, cohesive markers) and must supply the missing elements.
- *Rewriting exercises:* Awkward sentences or confusing paragraphs from student essays are distributed and rewritten by students.
- *Revising heuristics:* Students examine a set of questions that prepare them for revision activities.
- *Teacher feedback:* This may take place at several stages during the writing process, rather than at the end of the process, where it no longer serves any useful purpose. The teacher may comment on quickwrites, rough drafts and peer feedback, for example.
- *Checklists:* Students may have a short check-list, drawing their attention to specific features of sentence, paragraph or text organization that they should attend to in writing.

Summarizing classroom procedures in the process approach, Silva comments (Silva 1990: 15):

Translated into the classroom context, this approach calls for providing a positive, encouraging and collaborative workshop environment within which students, with ample time and minimal interference, can work through the composing processes. The teacher's role is to help students develop viable strategies for getting started (finding topics, generating ideas and information, focusing, and planning structure and procedure), for drafting (encouraging multiple drafts), for revising (adding, deleting, modifying and rearranging ideas) and for editing (attending to vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar and mechanics).

Genre and text knowledge

In teaching writing skills, the focus is on teaching students how to create different kinds of texts, based on their educational, professional or personal needs. In a genre or text-based approach, students are often taught through a process of explicit modelling and practice of text features (Burns, 2010; Feez and Joyce, 1998). This addresses three stages in the creating of written texts:

- *Modelling*: Teacher and students discuss and analyze a text in terms of its purpose, organization and language features.
- *Joint construction*: Teachers and students construct a new text, following the features seen in the model.
- *Independent construction*: Students create their own texts, using techniques of drafting, revising and reviewing.

Green (2004: 47) gives more details on how this approach can be used:

Writing sequence	Teacher's role
1. Establish clear aims.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarify writing objectives.
2. Provide example(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce writing models.
3. Explore the features of the text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Look into generic features of models.
4. Define the conventions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain typical language/content conventions of the genre.
5. Demonstrate how it is written.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher writes, employing generic features and conventions explored above.
6. Compose together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shared writing.
7. Scaffold the first attempts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provision of differentiated writing frames or other writing support.
8. Independent writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Independent application of writerly tools and generic conventions learned.
9. Review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formative evaluation of uses of learning.

Activities that address the nature and organization of texts include:

Activity	Procedure
• Labelling.	• Students match sections of a text to labels that identify its organizational pattern.
• Reordering.	• Students reorder sections of a text.
• Comparing.	• Students compare different text types to identify their patterns of organization.
• Analyzing.	• Students examine authentic texts to identify their patterns of organization.
• Correcting.	• Students examine texts containing information in an inappropriate sequence and correct the sequence.
• Identifying.	• Students read texts and identify the kind of audience they are intended for.
• Rewriting.	• Students rewrite a text for a different audience.
• Completing.	• Students complete an unfinished text (e.g. adding a conclusion).
• Paralleling.	• Students write a text that parallels a model text.
• Practising.	• Students practise different rhetorical patterns (e.g. defining, comparing, explaining).



What kinds of texts do your students most often need to master?

Context knowledge

Developing context knowledge in students involves raising awareness of how cultural factors influence the nature of written texts. Hyland (2003: 46) comments that essays in English and the students' own culture may differ in some of the following ways:

- Different organizational preferences.
- Different approaches to argument (justification, persuasive appeals, credibility).
- Different ways of incorporating materials (use of quotes, paraphrase, allusion).
- Different ways and extent of getting readers' attention and orienting them to topic.
- Different estimates of reader knowledge.
- Different uses of cohesion and metadiscourse markers.
- Differences in how overt linguistic features are used (generally less subordination, fewer passives, fewer modifiers, less lexical variety and specificity in L2 writing).
- Differences in complexity of style.

Other text types may also take a different form in one culture from another, such as letters to a newspaper, editorials, narratives and so on. Addressing issues of this kind in a writing course involves addressing questions such as the following, in relation to sample texts that the students may use for reference or as models:

- In what situation are texts like these used?
- Who usually writes these kinds of texts?
- Why do they write them?
- Who is the text intended for?
- Do you use similar kinds of texts in your own culture?
- How similar or different are they?

Students may then compare examples of texts, both from within the same genre as well as across different genres, in order to get a sense of how texts reflect the specific contexts and cultures in which they are used.

The writing lesson

The teacher's role in the lesson

Teachers have many different roles in a writing class, depending on the level of the class, the type of writing the students are learning and the stage in the writing process the students are engaged in. These roles may include:

- *Facilitator*: The teacher helps the students find the resources they need to complete writing assignments.
- *Expert writer*: If students are learning an unfamiliar genre or text type, the teacher provides advice on how the text is organized and what its features are.
- *Cultural informant*: At times, the teacher will help students understand the social and cultural context for a text and any expectations readers of the text may have.
- *Collaborator*: Sometimes the teacher and students will work through a writing task together, jointly sharing ideas and solving issues as they arise. The teacher provides 'scaffolding' as the students develop a text (see Chapter 2).
- *Audience*: Sometimes the teacher will be the person students write for.
- *Investigator*: The teacher observes students learning to write and through observation and discussion can investigate what problems students encounter and how they try to resolve them.
- *Problem solver*: As issues arise related to content, form, organization, etc., the teacher will seek to help students work their way through them.
- *Evaluator*: The teacher reviews students' writing and gives suggestions for improvement.

For example, Wennerstrom (2003: 44) describes, in these terms, the role of the teacher in a discourse-based (or text-based) approach to teaching writing:

Given the complexity of language in action, the less instructors attempt to provide pat answers, the more students can be encouraged to discover a range of answers for themselves. The instructor's role is one of organizer, coach, cultural resource and provider of feedback. As organizers, instructors can provide adequate time and space for students to carry out assignments and activities. They can also serve as linguistic and cultural resources in the students' research and discovery process.

Here, a teacher comments on his role during the writing lesson:

My role in a writing class

In my intermediate-level writing class, I see myself as a facilitator. I try to avoid direct teaching, where possible. I let the students choose the kinds of things they want to write, and I help them find the resources that can help them. I try to help students understand a context for a writing task, through conversation, discussion and reading. They can decide if they want to work on their own or with a classmate. I try to establish the sense of a community of writers in the classroom. This helps them to develop confidence and to take more risks.

Dino Mahoney, teacher, teacher educator and writer, London, UK

The learner's role in the lesson

In a process-based approach, students might work independently on some tasks, but in pairs or groups for other activities. Willingness to work collaboratively with other students will be important, and students may take part both in peer writing, as well as peer feedback. In a genre-based or text-based approach, the student may sometimes take on the role of researcher (Wennerstrom, 2003: 44):

The process of research and discovery can often be enhanced by the inclusion of several perspectives. Different students have different avenues of access to documents and the culture being studied, and can contribute to the discussion and analysis [of texts] from different points of view. By conducting research and data analysis in teams, students can increase their repertoire of genre samples, and gain a broader understanding of how discourse functions in social contexts.

Stages of the lesson

Different lesson formats will depend on what aspect of writing the lesson addresses. Some lessons might start with gathering ideas to write about; some might start with examining an example of a good piece of writing; others might start with a review of some of the features of a particular kind of text.

Writing tasks

The kinds of tasks the teacher uses will depend on which type of knowledge the teacher wants to develop. Hyland (2003: 114–5) gives extensive examples, including the following:

Task type	Content	System	Process	Genre	Context
• Generate word lists for writing.	X		x		
• Combine sentences provided in materials.		x	x		
• Identify purpose and use of a text.				x	x
• Complete unfinished texts.		x		x	
• Create a parallel text, following a model.		x		x	
• Practise specific rhetorical patterns.			x	x	
• Revise a draft in response to others' comments.	X	x	x	x	X
• Practise various text types.			x	x	
• Read and respond to another's draft.	X	x	x	x	x

Feedback on learners' writing

An important issue in the teaching of writing is how to give students feedback on their written work, when to give it and by whom and how. Nothing is more discouraging for a teacher than to have the daunting task, as a weekend chore, of reading and commenting on 40 or 50 student essays. Some help is offered by word-processing programs if students prepare their writing on a computer, since software is available to identify spelling and simple grammatical problems. However, intervention by the teacher cannot easily be avoided. Such feedback may include comments on any aspects of a piece of written work,

including spelling, grammar, style and organization. However, the effect of such feedback is not always easy to determine. Do students learn from it, or do they simply pay minimum attention to it and move on to their next assignment?

Some teachers use checklists in which a score is given for each different aspect of a composition, such as content, organization, vocabulary, language and mechanics (spelling, punctuation, paragraphing).

The kind of feedback the teacher gives may depend on what stage in the writing process the writing represents (e.g. drafting, composing, editing), and feedback should both encourage students (through praise for ideas, originality, etc.) as well as guide them towards needed improvements.

Peer feedback is sometimes an alternative to teacher feedback and is an important feature of a process approach to writing instruction. With this approach, students read drafts of each other's compositions, and may use checklists or question sets to help them read and respond to their partner's writing. Not all teachers and students appreciate the value of peer feedback, however. Teachers may feel that students comment on the wrong things or give incorrect feedback. Students may not value their partner's views or comments. However, peer feedback does offer a more comfortable feedback process and is usually supplemented by teacher feedback, as well.

Gilmore (2009: 364) provides a useful summary of the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to feedback on students' sentence-level errors in their writing:

Feedback method	Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete reformulation of errors by teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students receive accurate and comprehensive feedback, which specifically addresses their language needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time consuming for teacher. Does not encourage cognitive processing of errors by students, so there may be no long-term benefits. The quantity of corrections may discourage students.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-class peer feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces teacher's workload. Provides a wider audience for students' work, which can have a motivating effect. Encourages greater cognitive processing of errors by students and promotes learner independence. Encourages collaboration and negotiation of meaning in the classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students require training in how to give constructive feedback, which takes time away from actual writing practice. May be perceived as less valuable feedback by students themselves. Time-consuming in-class activity. Feedback can be (a) wrong or (b) less helpful than teacher's comments.

Feedback method	Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective feedback by the teacher on specific issues, or target language, or current concern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces teacher's workload. Feedback can be tailored to ongoing themes in the class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less comprehensive feedback provided, which may not address students' particular concerns.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal marking (marking codes, underlining problem areas, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces teacher's workload. Encourages greater cognitive processing by students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not provide sufficient support for less proficient students to correct errors by themselves.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No feedback on errors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces teacher's workload. Increases the amount of time for actual writing practice, which should benefit students' writing fluency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides no support or encouragement for students to correct errors. Goes against students' desire for feedback and may cause frustration.

The role of technology

Technology offers support for both the teacher and students in a writing course (see Chapter 19). It impacts the teaching of writing in two ways: by facilitating the development of new types of writing, and by helping in the writing process. Most readers will be familiar with blogs, wikis and social networks. The question is to what extent the skills necessary for being a successful writer of these genres differ from those of traditional writing. Although, at the linguistic level, the differences may not be so great (but compare the language of texting with that of microblogging, or emails with that of letters), one of the characteristics of many forms of online writing is their social and collaborative nature. Many of the writing forms mentioned above are (semi-)public, and shared directly between readers and authors. The conventions of such writing are different in a number of ways. Whether it is the language teacher's job to teach these conventions is a choice to be made, but many teachers report success in motivating students when using such texts in class. They have a number of advantages for teaching writing in that, for example, lower-level learners can work on a text together (such as a Wikipedia entry) or start by writing shorter texts (for example, on microblogs). Blogs are useful for encouraging responses and

ongoing dialogue about a topic, and social networks can help to encourage writing outside of the classroom.

Many new technological tools and online resources are available to support student writing, both at the levels of language and content (Stapleton and Radia, 2009). One of the earliest uses of technology in both L1 and L2 writing was through word processors (Pennington, 1993). Red and green underlines with word-processing software, alerting the writer to spelling and grammar errors, together with the aid of a pocket electronic translator and electronic thesaurus, have greatly reduced the frequency of common errors such as subject–verb agreement in student writing. Concordances provide examples of grammatically correct usage of words and expressions, as an alternative to using a grammar reference book. Some are specially designed for language learners, such as www.lectutor.ca/concordancers/ (see Chapter 10). Search engines similarly enable students to check the appropriateness of collocations, avoiding errors such as *heavy illness*. The internet also serves as a resource to support the content or ideas students write about, and search engines, such as Web of Science and Google, in addition to the frequently used Wikipedia, can be used – although teachers often discourage use of the latter since its sources can not always be trusted. Scholar can be used to locate information in areas of academic writing, although as Stapleton and Radia emphasize, students need training in how to access and use information from these and similar sites. Despite some teachers' scepticism concerning social networking sites and on-line encyclopedias, they can be useful resources for student writers. Stapleton and Radia (2009: 180) observe:

With the impact that new technology is providing now, an argument can be made that, in fact, we have now entered the realm of a new 'Tech-assisted era of L2 writing'. The present 'process approach' to writing encourages activities, such as brainstorming, portfolios, multiple drafts and peer review, all of which make sense. However, collectively, the impact of the multiple tools and resources [available to students] suggest that in parallel with these traditional elements of the process approach, another kind of process is emerging.

Online corpora, which contain large collections of texts from different genres, such as the British National Corpus (www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk); can also be useful. The teacher can highlight a problem area in a student's writing, and the student can go online to compare how a word or expression is used in native-speaker writing, allowing the student to correct errors in his or her writing (Gilmore, 2009). Online mindmapping tools are useful at the preparation stage, and have the added advantage that they can be shared easily between learners and with the teacher, as well as worked on collaboratively.



In what ways do you feel technological tools, such as the above, change the nature of the writing process (if you feel they do)? And what impact does this have on your teaching of writing skills?

Even when technology is not used directly, familiar features of the students' online world may be incorporated into the writing process. A teacher describes how he has used aspects of computer-game design to motivate younger learners:

●● 'Gamification' and the writing process

Recently, I've been trying out ideas to encourage writing with a class of 13 to 14 year-olds. It became clear to me, at the beginning of term, that the learners did not like writing, and yet this was something they clearly needed help with. In particular, they seemed to write very slowly and lacked focus and motivation. Because of this, I decided to ask them to do some speed writing in every lesson and started to use 'gamification' to see if this could motivate them. 'Gamification' means using elements of game design (particularly computer games) in non-game contexts.

Based on ideas in Lee Sheldon's *The Multiplayer Classroom: Designing Coursework as a Game* (Cengage Learning, 2012), I have been rewarding the learners with points, levels and badges, depending on how many correct words they have been able to write. The learners write for five minutes every class, and then they finish by counting the number of words they write, which become their points. Later, I mark them and deduct a point from the total for each mistake.

Depending on their score, the learners reach a certain 'level' and are awarded a badge in their writing notebooks. For instance, if they have 50 points, they have reached Level 1, 100 points gets them to Level 2, 150 points to Level 3, etc. After a term of doing this, I'm happy to say that the speed-writing activity is the favourite thing they do in class, and they arrive anxious to see how many points they have been awarded. I can also tell that they have become much more fluent writers and are starting to self-correct their errors as they are writing, too.

Graham Stanley, teacher and materials writer, Barcelona, Spain

15.6 Assessing writing

Hughes (2003: 83) suggests that assessing writing involves three issues:

- 1 Writing tasks should be set that are properly representative of the range of tasks we would expect students to be able to perform.
- 2 The tasks should elicit writing that is truly representative of the students' writing ability.
- 3 The samples of writing can be appropriately scored.

It is also important to consider the kinds of decisions that test-scores on a writing test will be used to make. Is the student's writing skill sufficient to enable him or her to enter an academic programme, to pass a particular test, or to perform well in a particular work situation? Or is the purpose of the test to find out if the attention to particular aspects of writing in a writing course has been sufficient?

Many different writing tasks can be used to elicit examples of students' writing ability. For example:

- Writing a letter.
- Writing a description of something from a diagram or picture.
- Writing a summary of text.
- Writing on a topic to a specified length in words or paragraphs.
- Completing a partially written text.
- Writing a paragraph using a given topic sentence.
- Completing a paragraph.
- Writing a criticism or a response to a piece of writing.
- Writing a story, based on an outline provided.

Different tasks make different demands of writers, since they may differ in terms of the amount of writing they elicit, the background or previous knowledge the learner brings to the task, and the intrinsic difficulty of the task itself. Hughes emphasizes that a valid writing test should test only writing ability and not other skills, such as reading skills or creative ability. A test that contains a variety of writing tasks gives a more representative picture of a student's writing ability than one that contains only one writing task. The most difficult part of producing a writing test, however, is developing the scoring procedures that will be used with the test. Many tests make use of an analytic scoring procedure; that is, a score is given for different aspects of a piece of writing, such as grammar, content and organization. Other tests make use of a holistic scoring method, where a single score is assigned to writing samples, based on an overall impressionistic assessment of the student's performance on the test (see Chapter 20). Electronic support for scoring is also available with automated essay scoring (see <https://criterion.ets.org> and <http://myaccess.com>).

Portfolio assessment

Many writing teachers make use of portfolios for the assessment of student writing. A portfolio is a collection of students' writing, assembled over time. It usually contains examples of the students' best work and provides a collection of writing samples, rather than a single piece of work. It may also include a written reflection by the student on his or her progress in writing, as well as a self-assessment of his or her strengths and weaknesses in writing. The portfolio is used as the basis for a final grade.



What do you think are some of the advantages and limitations of portfolio assessment?

15.7 Conclusion

The goal of writing instruction is to provide opportunities for learners to develop awareness of the conventions of written English and the nature of written texts, as well as the knowledge and skills needed to produce texts that are appropriate for their

purposes. Writing is a complex form of communication, and writing skills take a long time to develop. Throughout the process of learning to write, teachers have a crucial role to play in guiding students through the processes of planning and creating written texts and in creating a supportive environment for learning – one in which novice writers can explore the nature of written texts and the knowledge and processes involved in creating them. As students evolve in their writing, the roles of teachers and learners, and patterns of interaction between them, will change as both collaborate in the different stages of the writing process.

Providing opportunities for novice writers to master the different dimensions of writing – including content, system, process, genre and context knowledge – is a continuous challenge in the teaching of writing – and one which cannot be easily reduced to lists of rules and formulae. Teaching writing not only involves providing guidance and support for learners as they address these different dimensions of writing but also involves helping sustain learners' motivation to improve their mastery of writing skills and conventions. An understanding of the nature of the issues learners face in mastering writing as well as the ability to choose appropriate writing tasks and activities are essential to success in the teaching of second language writing.

Discussion questions

- 1 Examine a writing coursebook. What aspects of writing does it include?
- 2 What kind of writing skills do your learners need to master? For what kinds of purposes do they use writing in English?
- 3 Examine some of your recent uses of writing on the internet (e.g. on social media sites or in emails). How does this kind of writing differ from the kind of writing your students need to master?
- 4 Review the range of course offerings in a language institute and the kinds of writing courses they offer. What needs do these courses address and what kind of approach to the teaching of writing do they reflect?
- 5 Do you think the use of model compositions has a role in a writing course? What are some advantages and limitations of the use of models?
- 6 Do you think it is useful for students to examine examples of poorly written texts by novice writers? If so, how could these be used in teaching?
- 7 In essay-writing courses, students are often taught to write according to particular patterns or models, such as narration, description, comparison/contrast and exposition. Take one of these text types and locate an example of authentic text that reflects the particular text type. What patterns or organization do you find in the text?
- 8 What are some examples of creative writing? What kinds of skills does creative writing require? Do you think creative writing is a useful activity to include in a writing course?

- 9** Examples of the cohesive devices of reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion were discussed in section 15.4. Choose a section of a magazine or newspaper article or any other suitable text. Can you find examples of these devices in the text?
- 10** In any given culture, a text has certain accepted conventions and cohesive elements. Why don't the following work as texts?

A	He offered her some chocolates. She took two chocolates out of the box. She put one chocolate on her plate. She started to eat the other chocolate. 'These chocolates are delicious,' she said. 'Are those chocolates delicious?' he asked. 'Why don't you have another chocolate?' he suggested. 'I will take another chocolate,' she replied. She took another chocolate.
B	Michael took a book off the shelf and gave it to Jane. He was applying for a new job. She's been to the supermarket that morning. The book was a pictorial history of Singapore.
C	'I'd always wanted to go to New York. However, you can imagine how excited I was once we got there. We wanted to do some shopping and, unfortunately, it was raining heavily. Meanwhile, we went to the Guggenheim, instead. Moreover, it's a wonderful museum.'

- 11** What types of strategies can writers use throughout the writing process? Make a list of: before-writing, while-writing and after-writing strategies. Which of these do you think are the most useful to teach?

Appendix 1:

Teaching topic writing

Review the sample lesson plan below, submitted by Qin Bangjin, a teacher and teacher educator in Yunnan, China. What types of writing knowledge – content, system, process, genre or context – do you think it will be most successful in teaching? What reasons can you give?

1 Goal

To learn the organization pattern of comparison – advantages and disadvantages

2 Resources

A. *Handout 1*: Hard copies of a reading passage

The discussion about the impact of the Internet on our lives has never stopped in the past few years. Perhaps all of us agree that the Internet has both advantages and disadvantages.

The biggest advantage of the Internet is that it provides a platform from which we can obtain most information we need and through which we can communicate with others conveniently. 'What's more, we can study and entertain ourselves with it. Last but by no means least, the Internet also brings friendship between individuals and even between countries. However, the negative effects are also obvious. To begin with, some content on the Internet is violent and offensive, which will corrode some people's souls. Furthermore, the chatting on the Internet may have harmful effects on people's study and rest, particularly on those who become addicted to online chats.

Up to now, we can see clearly that the Internet itself is not beneficial or harmful. The key lies in the user. So long as we can make proper use of it, it can be helpful to us in many ways.

B. *Handout 2*: Hard copies of the organization pattern

Advantages and disadvantages

The discussion about the impact of _____ on our lives has never stopped in the past few years. Perhaps all of us agree that _____ has both advantages and disadvantages.

The biggest advantage of _____. What's more, _____. Last but by no means least, _____. However, the negative effects are also obvious. To begin with, _____. Furthermore, _____.

Up to now, we can see clearly that _____ is not beneficial or harmful. The key lies in _____. So long as we can _____, it can be helpful to us in many ways.

3 Timing: 50 minutes

4 Grouping: Pair work, group work

5 Activities

- Question and answer (Q and A)
- Reading
- Discussion
- Presentation
- Topic writing
- Summary

6 Sequencing

- Opening (5 minutes)
 - 1) Q and A: Teacher asks three or four questions as a lead-in activity, for example:
 - *Do you have a computer?*
 - *What do you use your computer for?*

- *Do you use the Internet?*
 - *How do you use it?*
- 2) Presentation: Teacher describes the goal of the lesson and states the activities students will do.
 - Main activities (40 minutes)
 - 3) Reading: Teacher gives students Handout 1, and students read for the main ideas.
 - 4) Pairwork: Students try to give out the main ideas by asking and answering questions:
 - *What is the passage about?*
 - *What are its advantages?*
 - *What are its disadvantages?*
 - *What is the conclusion?*
 - 5) Groupwork: Teacher gives students Handout 2 and divides them into groups of three to five. Each group is assigned a topic and discuss it by trying to find out its advantages and disadvantages, on the basis of Handout 2. The possible topics are:

①Mobile phone ②Electronic dictionary ③Computer games ④Optional courses
 ⑤Part-time job ⑥Job interviewing ⑦Social practice ⑧Private car ⑨Travelling
 ⑩One-child policy
 - 6) Checking: Teacher asks three or four students to give an oral presentation on behalf of their groups by filling in Handout 2.
 - Closure (5 minutes)
 - 7) Summary: Teacher reviews and summarizes what students have learned.
 - 8) Homework: Students choose a topic and write a short essay in three paragraphs, including the thesis statement, advantages, disadvantages and conclusion.
 - 9) Teacher dismisses the class.

Appendix 2:

Guidelines for digital storytelling

Look at the activity for digital storytelling, submitted by Hayo Reinders, a teacher educator in Auckland, New Zealand. How might such an activity help students to become fluent writers?

Planning a digital storytelling activity

Here are some options to consider when planning for the activity:

Preparing the students

- 1 Explain and give a rationale for the activity.

Part 3 Language and the four skills

- 2 Make it clear what text type you are expecting your students to produce. Do you want a recount or a narrative? If a narrative, a biography or a romance?
- 3 Let's say you want students to produce a narrative. What do they already know about this, and what needs to be pre-taught? Do you need to give them, for example, a framework to help them structure their story, using an orientation, a complication, a sequence of events, a resolution and (optionally) a coda?
- 4 Do your students need to only write out their stories or also talk about or present them? Will you favour fluency or accuracy in your marking?
- 5 Be specific in what final product you expect to see. Do you want a movie of ten seconds or one of two minutes? A slideshow with three slides or 30? How much language should be included?
- 6 What level do you expect of your students? Clearly, beginner learners may not be able to produce more than a brief recording or story. Advanced learners may be asked to build a more complex narrative.
- 7 Do you have samples you can show students?

Technical preparation

- 1 Do you have the necessary computers and other hardware available? Ask your students to bring their mobile phones and MP3 players, if you will use them. How will students transfer their images and recordings onto a computer? Warn your IT support people for a barrage of help requests!
- 2 Do you have the necessary software installed and the appropriate licences?

Conducting the activity

- 1 Pair or group students to work on their stories together. Bear in mind the total number of projects to ensure you can handle them! It may be better to have groups of, say, four students to minimize the number of individual projects.
- 2 How will the students get their ideas? Perhaps you can give them some tips or scenarios, or a checklist so they can interview each other. Or, of course, you can leave it up to them!
- 3 Have them create a *storyboard* first. A storyboard shows the different elements of the story they want to tell and when they appear. It can show each slide or each scene from a movie and describe what will happen there.
- 4 Ask students to give feedback on each other's drafts. Hand out a peer-feedback sheet for this.

Concluding the activity

- 1 Ask students to present their work. Make it clear what you expect from them. Do they simply show or play their story, or do you want them to explain what they did and why?
- 2 Ask students to post their stories on a (school) website.
- 3 Ask students to post comments on each other's stories.
- 4 Give the students feedback.
- 5 As a follow-up, you could focus on those areas where students had difficulties completing the activity.

Appendix 3:

Developing writing skills

Look at the beginning of a lesson from the textbook *Academic Encounters, Reading/Writing: Human Behavior*, 2nd edition (Seal, 2012). What approach to teaching writing do you think this lesson reflects?

Practicing Academic Writing

In Unit 3, you have learned about the different elements of body language and how the way we use body language sends out messages. You will use this information to write a short handbook.

Nonverbal Communication in My Culture

Produce a handbook that will help someone who is not a member of your culture understand how your culture uses body language. Divide the handbook into sections. Each section will describe one of the following elements of nonverbal communication: gestures, facial expressions, eye communication, touch, and space. In each section, you will summarize what you have learned about that element of body language. You will tell the visitor to your culture what different elements of body language mean. You will also explain what body language to expect and what to avoid.

PREPARING TO WRITE

Outlining

When you have to write a document that has different sections, it is best to do careful planning. You need to decide what headings and subheadings you might use and what is to go under each heading. The best way to do this is to create an outline.

Outlining before writing an essay can be very simple; you can just create a skeleton outline of your main ideas. However, when writing a report or handbook with different sections, it is best to do quite a bit of planning. You can start with a skeleton outline, but then you should expand it to include more specific examples and details.

Many students develop their own system of numbers and letters when they create outlines, but there is one principle that is used by most people: indentation. The more specific your idea, the more it is indented to the right underneath the more general idea to which it belongs.

- I. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - A. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - 1. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - 2. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - B. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - 1. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - 2. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
- II. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - A. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

A Decide what the main sections of your handbook will be and create a skeleton outline.

B Decide how you are going to organize each section of your handbook into logical subsections with clear subheadings. This will make it easier for you to write and easier for your reader to follow. Make sure that your subheading language is parallel; that is, that each subheading uses the same type of grammar and language.

Work with a partner and discuss which of the following subsections and subheadings for the topic of Gestures will lead to a clear and well-organized section of your handbook.

1.

Emblem gestures

Regulator gestures

Gestures foreigners should avoid

2.

Gestures for visitors to know

Gestures for visitors to use

Gestures for visitors to avoid

3.

The gesture for “Everything is fine”

The gesture for “He’s crazy”

The gesture for “I need money”

4.

Rude gestures

Finger and hand gestures

Head gestures

C Analyze the structure of the readings in this unit. Notice how many have subheadings and what those subheadings are. Also notice whether the reading starts immediately with a subheading or if there is an introduction to the reading.

D Decide what subsections you want to use and expand the skeleton outline that you have created so far into a more detailed outline.

E Parts of your handbook will contain information that is specific to your culture. It is therefore unlikely that you will be able to use information from this unit to help you write those parts. However, you will also need to have general statements about each body language type. Here, the readings can help you.

F Go back through each reading in this unit and see if there are parts of the reading that you would like to summarize or paraphrase. Look back at the sections on paraphrasing on page 80 and on summarizing on page 135. Then write your paraphrases and summaries, following the guidelines and making sure that you do not plagiarize.

G Use some of the pre-writing strategies that you have learned so far (Making a List on page 51 and Freewriting on page 105). Use those techniques to start getting down on paper some ideas and phrases that you can use in each section of your handbook.

Further reading

- Ferris, D. and Hedgcock, J. (2005) *Teaching ESL Composition: Purposes, Process, and Practice*, 2nd edition, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hyland, K. (2003) *Second Language Writing*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hyland, K. (2010) *Teaching and Researching Writing*, 2nd edition, Harlow: Pearson Education/Longman.
- Jones, R. H. and Hafter, C. A. (2012) *Understanding Digital Literacies: A Practical Introduction*, London: Routledge.
- Paltridge, B. et al. (2009) *Teaching Academic Writing*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Williams, J. (2004) *Teaching Writing in Second and Foreign Language Classrooms*, Boston: McGraw Hill.