

○ 高等院校研究生外语教学研究会立项项目

New Perspective Graduate Series

Reading, Writing, and Rhetoric
for the 21st Century

新视角

研究生英语
写作与修辞

□ Herbert Pierson
□ Sarat Kumar
□ Zequan Lin
□ Peter Neu



高等教育出版社
Higher Education Press

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新视角 研究生英语

江苏工业学院图书馆
藏书章

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内 容 提 要

《新视角研究生英语写作与修辞》是由长期从事英语写作教学的中、外专家联手编写的,供我国研究生教学使用的公外英语写作教材。

全书由13章和3个附录组成。本书的独特之处是将写作看成是一个意识过程,并把它和传统的、历时久远的写作修辞揉合起来,辅以精心挑选和裁剪的范文来进行教学。全书从范文点评入手,通过典型范例阅读,到模仿,进而转为独立地、创造性地写作。3个附录则归纳总结了我国学生在写作中常犯的错误和一些需要注意的问题。

全书具有极强的针对性和实用性,适合我国研究生和本科公外英语写作课使用。

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Introduction

This textbook has been written specifically for ESL graduate students and advanced undergraduate learners in the Asian Pacific region who desire and are willing to improve their academic English as they work towards their advanced university degrees. As learning to write well in a second language is a long-term, challenging task, this textbook is also written as a set of materials which will help university students to develop their writing in a self-learning, independent mode after they graduate from university and take up their careers in the Asian Pacific region or overseas. Truly, if you are willing to take the time and effort, this textbook will provide you with reading material and writing practice enabling you, overtime, to become competent writers of academic English.

This textbook is new in that it provides insight into various kinds of English writing. Reading passages have been selected for this textbook that can directly benefit student writers of academic English at both the language usage and vocabulary levels. The authors see a clear-cut connection between doing good reading and producing good academic writing, and this textbook contains much good English writing. For this reason, we believe that this textbook can serve as a lifetime resource for student writers motivated to use it. By reviewing the material and information in this textbook, student writers will always be updating themselves.

One feature of this book is that it considers English writing from both new and traditional perspectives. From the new perspective, the book examines writing as a process and spends the entire introductory chapter, Chapter 1, exploring the practical consequences of treating writing as a process. In subsequent chapters of the book, the authors integrate and combine this new perspective of writing as a process with the established, time-proven rhetorical patterns or genres of writing, a development which goes back several thousand years to the time of Socrates (d. 399 BC) and Aristotle (d. 322 BC), who lived in ancient Greece. The term rhetoric, as used in this textbook, refers to study of the techniques and rules for using language effectively. We are blending these traditional and new perspectives together because we believe that, by understanding writing as a process and practicing the rhetorical patterns, graduate students and advanced undergraduate learners will become competent, effective, and confident writers of academic English.

The goal of this book is to help graduate students and advanced undergraduate learners become adequate academic writers. It is our experience as writing teachers over the years that, by having correct, up-to-date principles about writing and by doing the hard practical work of reading, writing, revising, and editing, students will be rewarded with the facility to write English more effortlessly and accurately. The authors of this book know good writing takes a lifetime of steady hard work — reading, writing, editing and revising, and rewriting — so we believe if learners are willing to study the instructional principles in this book diligently and faithfully do the readings, practical exercises, and writing tasks that follow, they will be on their way to becoming better writers for themselves personally for their participation in the global community of the 21st Century. We believe by understanding the process of writing and practicing the traditional rhetorical patterns of writing development and organization, students can become superior academic writers.

This book is divided into 13 Chapters and three appendices. Chapters 1–4 consist of sections which examine the entire writing process from prewriting,

inventing, thesis development, drafting, revision, editing, the final draft, introduce the nine rhetorical patterns or genres, and cover grammar and usage issues. Chapters 5 and 6 treat descriptive and narrative writing, while Chapters 7–12 treat the different modes of expository writing — writing that explains — such as illustration, classification and division, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, definition, and process writing. Finally, Chapter 13 treats the language of argumentation and persuasion. Appendix A deals with the common, but not exclusively, Chinese language interference errors in written English. Appendix B deals with English proofreading strategies, and Appendix C deals with the basic format of academic research papers. Throughout the book, emphasis is put on practice in the process of writing. It is the belief of the authors that if student writers had more understanding of, and practice in, the writing process, they would produce better academic writing.

Each chapter in the text is structured in a similar way. The principles underlying the rhetorical patterns are introduced with writing examples demonstrating the rhetorical pattern being studied. The criteria for choosing the writing passages are that they be interesting and not overly technical, be accessible to the average non-English major, demonstrate universal values, be well-written, and of course, be good illustrations of the rhetorical patterns under discussion in the respective chapters. In selecting these writing passages, we have examined a variety of sources, from literature to magazines and daily newspapers and the Internet, and have, furthermore, sought a diversity of English-speaking writers. Finally, the chapters have short writing exercises and longer writing assignments based on the rhetorical patterns. Depending on the instructional goals of your program and the classroom time available, you and your teacher should decide which chapters, reading passages, and writing exercises and tasks to cover in this textbook. It is not expected that everything in the book be covered, but only those portions of the book that, in the judgment of you and your teachers, will make you better academic writers.

We hope as you read, write and revise your academic work with the aid of this textbook, you will see a marked improvement in your academic writing and grow as confident writers of academic English. Of the four main language skill areas, writing is the most difficult to perfect. It involves a lifetime of intellectual commitment and effort. We believe this textbook, along with your hard work, will enable you to attain a high degree of competence in your academic writing, both as postgraduate students now and later as professionals in the 21st Century. Finally, although this book is designed specifically for the needs of postgraduate and advanced undergraduate, non-English major students, it would be a valuable source for educated laymen keen on improving their reading or writing competence, as the book contains many practical writing guidelines and excellent examples of English writing.

We would like to give you one final piece of advice about English vocabulary and usage. If, in using this book, you are struggling with English vocabulary and usage, we recommend that you use a good English-English dictionary or, if the Internet is available, go to www.dictionary.com or www.thesaurus.com for contemporary examples of English vocabulary and usage. These free websites are fast, convenient, and effective. Also, you should try to employ such word-meaning clues as context, analysis of language roots, prefixes, and suffixes, and parts of speech to work out the meanings of words.

A Word to Teachers

Reading, Writing, and Rhetoric for the 21st Century is an advanced textbook of academic English targeted at graduate students and advanced undergraduate learners at universities in the Asian Pacific region. It assumes that these learners have studied and used English for many years.

The effectiveness of this book depends very much on the competence and enthusiasm of qualified, experienced English writing teachers, willing to motivate and encourage their students toward improving their academic English writing with the aid of this textbook. It is no secret that in this globalizing 21st Century competent English writing skills are a requirement for scientific, cultural, and technical progress in any nation. Therefore, it is the grave responsibility of teachers to constantly remind their students in their respective nations that good written English communication skills are a serious matter for national prosperity and their own personal career advancement.

The authors clearly understand that a prominent goal of postgraduate English writing courses for non-English majors is to aid and support these learners in doing major academic writing tasks such as research papers, theses, and dissertations. This goal can be achieved only by student effort in weekly English writing practice. Some students, however, imagine they can achieve adequate academic writing by taking the shortcut of merely learning the basic format of an academic research paper and ignoring everything else. They expect to improve by memorizing superficial formulas and prescriptions, without any real understanding. This they do at their own intellectual peril. The academic research paper format is by no means difficult to understand and imitate, but producing the body of the research paper still requires the application of correct writing techniques and exercise in the rhetorical patterns introduced in this textbook. To provide a fresh perspective on the thesis format, Appendix C: *Basic Format for Academic Research Papers*, presents information about the required layout for academic research papers. Finally, as an advanced textbook on academic English, it cannot be expected to deal wholly with the perennial problems of English grammar and usage. Nevertheless, there are sections in this textbook that deal with the persistent grammar and usage problems that affect written English.

In using this textbook, we suggest that teachers, after a careful perusal of the chapters, use their own judgment about what is relevant for their particular group of students. The first four chapters in the textbook give students an orientation on how to approach the writing process, brainstorm, produce a thesis statement, and also introduce and briefly demonstrate the rhetorical patterns. We recommend all classes cover and study these four chapters. The body of the textbook, Chapters 5–13, is based on explaining and demonstrating the traditional rhetorical patterns or genres: description, narration, exemplification, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, process, classification and division, definition, and argumentation and persuasion. Teachers may choose which chapters are appropriate for their student cohort.

Besides Appendix C, there are two other appendices to assist students in their study of writing. Students can turn to Appendix A: *Common Chinese Writing Errors* when they are troubled with those persistent basic grammar problems that afflict Chinese, but not exclusively Chinese, writers of English. General grammar problems are treated in Chapter 4: Drafting, Revision and Grammar. Also, Appendix B: *English Proofreading Strategies* should be studied very carefully by the students as this part will train them in how to carefully

check their writing for grammar, usage, and mechanics, whether it be a simple composition, research paper, or a doctoral dissertation. Teachers should insist on students doing this necessary proofreading check of their final writing drafts before handing them in. No teacher should accept any writing from a university student that is not carefully proofread for grammar, vocabulary usage, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Sloppy, unchecked writing shows a poor intellectual and professional attitude, and certainly is not courteous to hardworking teachers.

Chapters 5–13 treat the traditional rhetorical patterns or genres. Rhetoric, as used in this textbook, refers to study of the techniques and rules for using language effectively. The nine rhetorical patterns discussed in and demonstrated in this textbook provide student writers with the tools to communicate effectively in English on any academic subject. Because of the limited time teachers have in any university teaching schedule, it is not expected that the entire content of the nine chapters can be covered in one semester. From these nine chapters, teachers must prudently select what is appropriate for their students, judging the academics needs, aptitude, and proficiency level of their students. For example, it should be noted that here at Sun Yat-sen University, where several of the authors have taught, students enrolled in the writing course are divided in two groups: the Senior Group and the General Group. We have found that there is appreciable difference in the proficiency of English of the two groups, so we accordingly moderate the treatment of the course content for the lower group, the General Group, covering at least five rhetorical patterns for the Senior Groups and fewer rhetorical patterns for the General Group.

Most of the reading passages selected for the chapters dealing with the rhetorical patterns have been modified so that they can be read and studied in a normal single class period. It also should be observed that the chapters deal with the rhetorical patterns in different ways. This has been done purposely to expose both teachers and students alike to a diversity of pedagogical approaches, sometimes teaching with direct, more explicit instruction, with others using a more inductive, indirect method by concentrating on examples, exercises, and writing tasks. You will notice, moreover, that some chapters footnote much of the difficult vocabulary in the reading passages, while other chapters encourage students to “tease out” the vocabulary by themselves or with the aid of a good English-English dictionary or Internet resources such as *www.dictionary.com* and *www.thesaurus.com*. Learners should be encouraged use semantic clues such as discourse context, analysis of language roots, prefixes, suffixes, and grammatical parts of speech. Teachers should encourage their students to use dictionary resources judiciously and economically. Finally, teachers should urge their students to keep a notebook with difficult and useful words. In this notebook, students should not only write a working definition of the word, but also try to use the word in a sentence, thus transferring a word from their passive to their active vocabulary.

It is suggested that students using this textbook write one composition of at least 300 words in class and a similar composition out of class every week. This should be read and corrected by the teacher and returned to the students as soon as conveniently possible. The corrected composition should be carefully revised and rewritten by the students and returned, stapled to the original composition, to the teacher at the next class meeting. Acting quickly and resolutely on corrections and revisions will enable students to benefit from the corrections and comments made by the teachers. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to keep a folder which contains all their written work

— brainstorming, notes, drafts, corrected drafts, revisions. This folder is the students' Portfolio. The portfolio could be examined by the teacher from time to time and collected by the teacher on the last day of the term as part of the students' final assessment.

In summary, it is imperative that students save their writing, especially the drafts of their compositions, in a portfolio file or folder. They should be required to revise and rewrite their compositions after the teacher has commented on them. Many students think that revising and rewriting is done for the purpose of pleasing teachers. It most assuredly is not. Revision and rewriting should be an indispensable part of the learning process. Receiving feedback from serious readers such as teachers is part of the learning process in general and helps learners internalize comments and corrections. Through conscientious student revision and rewriting, teachers can become more confident that students have understood and assimilated corrections and when the teacher compares first and final drafts.

Students should be encouraged to keep a notebook journal or diary in which they record their thoughts, reflections, reactions to life, and the new vocabulary they encounter in their reading and daily life. To make this a meaningful exercise, there should ideally be at least three journal entries a week. The teachers can collect these journal books twice during the semester to comment on the contents of the journals.

Finally, one model way of using this textbook, as suggested by teachers who have piloted these materials at Sun Yat-sen University, is presented below.

Course Content: Right on the first day of the course we tell our students the chapters (the exact page numbers from different chapters) to be covered during the semester. We normally cover five rhetorical patterns:

- Description
- Narration
- Argument and persuasion
- Any two or three relevant patterns from expository writing such as exemplification, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, process, classification, and definition.

Evaluation: For this part of the course there is no examination; however, evaluation of students' performance depends on three ten to fifteen minute quizzes (mostly objective type questions) and six short compositions, one of which is written in class.

Fortnightly Assignments: The classes at SYU are currently held once every two weeks. Every two weeks the students are assigned reading and writing assignments.

Reading Assignments: Every two weeks we assign a specific number of pages to our students to study before coming to the class. These are divided into two parts:

a. Readings for quizzes (seven to ten pages of the book, maximum): These pages we do not teach in the class. Students are supposed to study these pages by themselves. If they have any problems, they can get clarification from their teacher in the following class. The quizzes are given only after their problems have been solved and clarifications have been made. The quiz is an open-book quiz. The purpose of the quiz is only to make sure that the students are doing their assigned readings; it also instills in them the confidence of self-study.

b. Readings covered in the class: The students are here encouraged to

change into a discussion class, rather than just passively listening. The classes are scrupulously conducted in English.

Writing Assignments: Based on the discussion in the class, a short composition of at least 300 words is assigned.

Lastly, students should be aware that good writing skills require much hard work and intellectual commitment. One way of maintaining this commitment is by exposure to more and more English. It is here that teachers play a vital role by encouraging learners to read more and more English on a daily basis. This can be done in the form of books, newspapers, magazines, and now articles on the Internet. Examples of useful Internet websites are *www.wikipedia.com* for encyclopedia articles on any subject in English and *www.nytimes.com*, *www.latimes.com*, and *www.washingtonpost.com* for the latest world news and editorial comment from *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The Washington Post*, three of the world's great English language newspapers. With this constant exposure to English, careful classroom practice, and diligent self-study, student writing is bound to improve.

At Sun Yat-sen University we remind our students that the writing course is an on-going activity which is never finished. What they learn in this brief course is important input in their life-long writing careers, and this textbook will serve them long after they have finished their university studies.

总 序

随着我国研究生招生规模的不断扩大,研究生教育迅猛发展,教学改革百花齐放,教改成果五彩纷呈。与此同时,研究生英语教学也面临新的挑战。如何顺应新的形势,改革研究生英语教学,提高研究生英语教学质量,是摆在我们面前的、急需解决的问题。为此,高等院校研究生外语教学研究会于2006年3月成立了“研究生英语教学改革”项目组,项目组对我国各研究生培养单位进行大规模调研。

调研结果显示,上世纪八、九十年代出版的《非英语专业硕士/博士学位研究生英语教学大纲(试行)》已经远远不能适应新时期研究生英语教学需要,大纲里的一些教学要求较为陈旧。为此,项目组根据调研结果对《非英语专业硕士/博士学位研究生英语教学大纲(试行)》进行了修订,修订后的大纲名称为《非英语专业硕士/博士学位研究生英语教学基本要求(试行)》。基本要求进一步明确了以下几个方面的内容:

硕士研究生英语教学以培养学生的英语综合应用能力为目标,使他们在今后的工作中能有效地以英语为工具进行本专业的研究和学术交流。由于各校研究生的入学水平、培养目标、师资状况、教学设备等各种情况的差异,硕士研究生英语的教学要求分为基本要求和较高要求两个层次。基本要求是所有硕士研究生毕业时必须达到的标准,较高要求是为那些英语基础较好、对英语需求较高的硕士研究生设置的。硕士研究生的英语教学包括公共/基础英语和专业英语两部分。

基础英语的教学时数一般不少于64学时,安排在两个学期或集中在一个学期进行。基础英语课以一般人文、科技内容为教材,旨在提高学生的综合英语技能、跨文化交际技能、英语学习策略,着重培养学生的语言运用能力。各校可根据基本要求的教学要求和实际情况设置不同课程,如精读课、听说课、翻译课、写作课、读写课、听力课、口语课等。

专业英语的教学时数一般不少于36学时,开课方式视具体情况灵活掌握。可单独设课,也可以与专业课学习或学术论文写作相结合,采取分散或集中的办法。教学组织可以在新生入学到论文答辩前的全过程中进行。专业英语课以本专业的文献为内容,旨在熟练掌握本专业的英语。强调以英语从事本专业的学习、工作和科研的专业语言能力。各校可根据大纲的教学要求和实际情况设置不同课程,如文献导读、论文写作、专业翻译、学术演讲等课程。

各个院校和科研机构可以根据需要和可能,为学生开设实用性强的各类英语选修课程,如英语快速阅读、国际会议英语、英语应用文写作、英语学术论文写作、英语高级听力、英语演讲、英美文化等。各单位还可以根据需求开设以语言、文学、哲学、文化、外国概况等为内容的素质课,以社会交往、国际礼仪等为内容的社交课,以英语国家生存常识为内容的出国预备课等。

博士研究生英语的教学目的以培养学生用英语进行工作和研究的能力为重点,通过英语教学有效地培养学生用英语进行工作沟通和学术交流的能力。博士生英语教学应遵循因材施教、学以致用的基本原则,讲求教学的效率和效果。

在《非英语专业硕士/博士学位研究生英语教学基本要求(试行)》的基础上,我们组织国内具有丰富研究生英语教学经验的专家、学者编写了《新视角研究生英语》系列教材。

《新视角研究生英语》包括基础教程系列和一个开放性的选修课系列教程。基础教程针对研究生阶段的学习特点和教学目标,选择了富有时代气息,能满足研究生的学业、智力和情感需求的语言素材,并辅以多种形式的练习,旨在提高研究生英语综合应用能力。选修课系列教程包括语言应用类、语言文化类教程,旨在提高研究生的英语应用能力和文化素养,为他们在今后的工作中能有效地以英语为工具进行本专业的研究和学术交流打下坚实的基础。

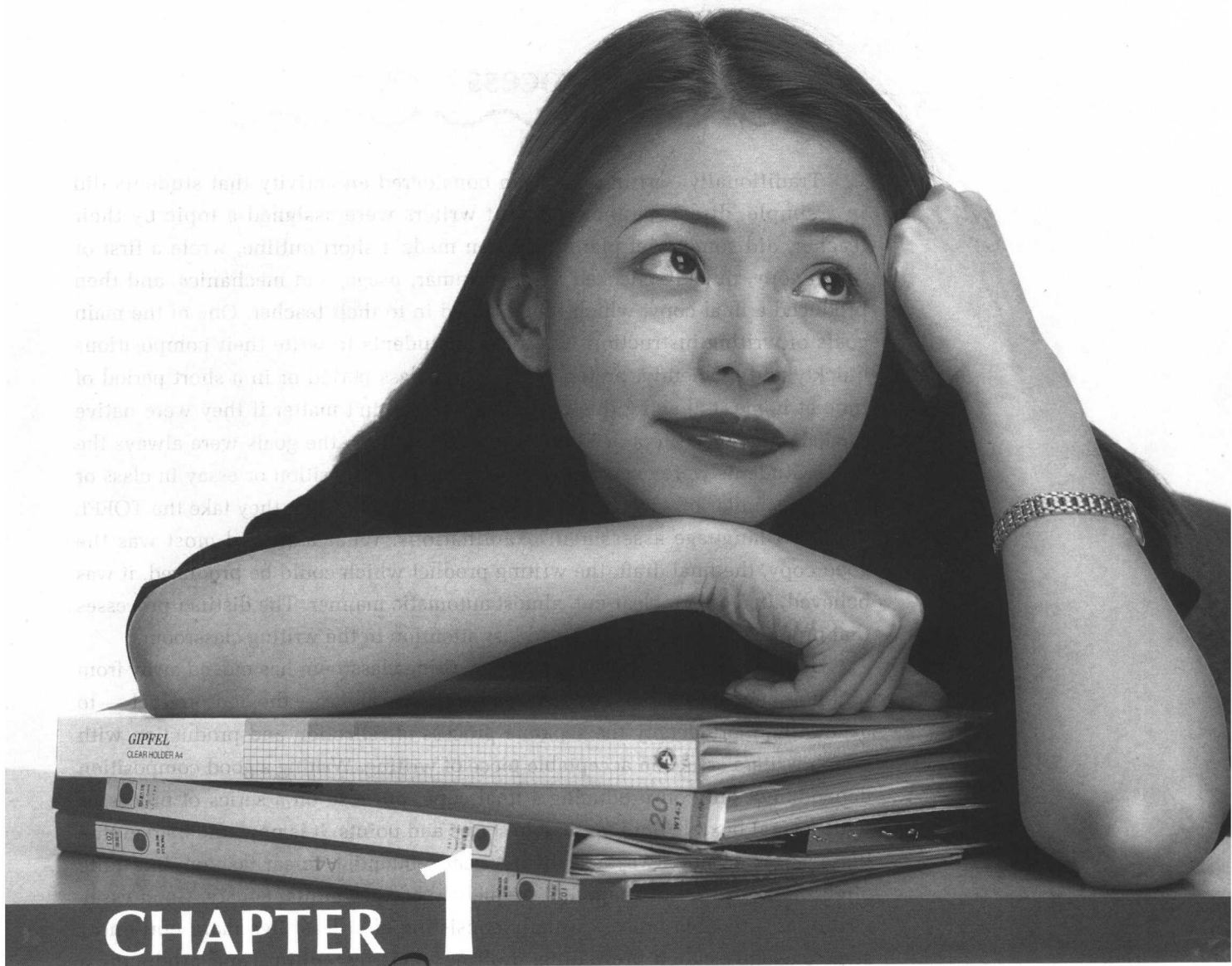
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2007年4月

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The Writing Process

- 1 The Writing Process
- 2 Why Use the Writing Process?
- 3 Getting Started
- 4 Invention Techniques

1 The Writing Process



Traditionally, writing has been considered an activity that students did in a simple, direct manner. Student writers were assigned a topic by their teacher, did some brief planning, often made a short outline, wrote a first or rough copy, quickly checked it for grammar, usage, and mechanics, and then produced a final copy, which they handed in to their teacher. One of the main goals of writing instruction was to train students to write their compositions quickly and efficiently, preferably in a one class period or in a short period of time at home, following this rigid process. It didn't matter if they were native English student writers or EFL/ESL student writers, the goals were always the same. Students were expected to finish a good composition or essay in class or at home, similar to what students are expected to do when they take the TOEFL or IELTS language assessment examinations. What mattered most was the good copy, the final draft, the writing product which could be produced, it was believed, in a direct, clear-cut, almost automatic manner. The distinct processes that produced the writing received less attention in the writing classroom.

However, the emphasis now in the writing classroom has moved away from (but not ignored) considering the final good copy alone — the end product — to examining more deeply the separate process of reflection and production with which writers create an acceptable piece of writing. Writing a good composition depends not only on producing a final copy, but also on a series of processes with several flexible but identifiable stages and points. It is now understood that these stages do not always occur in a neat sequential, linear fashion, but quite often in stages that overlap, and frequently occur simultaneously. Good essay writing is a flexible process usually consisting of at least five main non-linear stages, usually called prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and producing a final draft.

1 Prewriting

For many students and teachers nowadays, prewriting is considered the fundamental stage in a flexible writing process. Prewriting is the stage when writers are getting ready to write. In the prewriting stage students plan their writing, deciding on such essential matters as narrowing down their topic, identifying their readers and purpose, determining the appropriate forms or genre for the writing, and gathering relevant ideas, details, and examples. It is during the prewriting stage that student writers employ all kinds of *invention techniques* in order to discover ideas and details and develop their all-important

thesis statement. A good thesis statement, as will be seen in Chapter 2, will be their guide for writing the composition.

2 Drafting

During the drafting stage students get down to the task of actually putting their thoughts and ideas on paper, although these may not be perfect. Some students will have difficulty getting started while others will start writing immediately. Some will waste time, while others will write with little effort. It is important at this stage that students are not held back by the mechanics of writing. In other words, at the first draft stage, students should strive to put their ideas down on paper without letting undue worry about correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar concern them too much. This could block their thinking and creativity. A free flow of ideas is encouraged at this stage. Students should know that first drafts are not finished, polished compositions, and that any piece of writing can always be improved. Revision will take place during other stages of the writing process where student writers can deal with grammar, usage, and mechanics. During the drafting stage, students should sit back and let their creativity, knowledge, and intelligence flow.

3 Revision

Revision means taking another look at something. The purpose is to clarify and shape meaning and to better organize the content of the first draft. It is at this stage that student writers rethink what they have produced in the first draft. Revision involves adding, substituting, deleting, and often moving paragraphs, sentences, and words around as writers rework and begin to polish their draft. It is at this stage that writers add or subtract details, develop a further line of argument, and possibly reorganize portions of the paragraphs in the composition.

Revision is often the most difficult stage for student writers. Typically students who have worked hard on their first draft believe that it is adequate. It's not easy to reread a piece of writing that you have worked very hard on and then make changes or reorganize it. But revision is an opportunity to look at a piece of writing again with a new vision. It's important to realize that revision is not yet editing for grammar, usage, or mechanics. At the revision stage, many different things can happen. Words can be replaced or changed around to make a piece of writing produce more of an effect or flow more smoothly. Sentences can be reorganized to provide a better sequence of events. Paragraphs may be rewritten to clarify meaning or add information. Sentences may be deleted if they don't contribute to effective writing.

4 Editing

Editing, sometimes known as proofreading, is the process of getting the composition ready for readers. The student writer is now expected to pay attention to the surface aspects of writing — grammar, usage, and mechanics. Students must recognize that in order to communicate effectively with readers, their academic writing must be free of surface errors that can interfere with the understanding of their message or can distract readers from the meaning of the writing itself. It is at this stage that student writers must very carefully proofread their work for errors in such areas as: capitalization, punctuation, spelling, paragraphing, grammar, vocabulary choice, word usage, and sentence structure. Failure to do this reveals a sloppy intellectual attitude.

5 Final Draft

The final stage of the writing process occurs when a piece of writing is revised and edited to the satisfaction of the student writer. This final draft is what the student writer hands in to the teacher. Although it often may seem that student writers are being evaluated on their final drafts, this is not necessarily true. If student writers have carefully gone through the steps and stages of the writing process, they are being evaluated on the whole process. This process is represented in the quality of the final draft given to the teacher.

2 Why Use the Writing Process?

In today's global community, the level of EFL/ESL literacy required to function in the everyday work place is steadily increasing. In order to address the needs of a changing society, school and University students should seek methods and strategies that will prepare them for the challenges of the contemporary world. Understanding and integrating the principles of writing as a process builds an effective learning strategy that helps students with their academic communication. Writing is a powerful tool for influencing others, clarifying thoughts, and leading to economic progress. Understanding the writing process can give students the key to unlocking and then using this powerful tool.

3 Getting Started

Getting started is one of the most difficult parts of the writing process. It is at this point that student writers must ask themselves a key question. What is the purpose of my writing? If the purpose is to explain or provide information, then the writing is expository writing, of which there are several varieties. If the purpose of the writing is to persuade or convince readers of something, then this is persuasive or argumentative writing. If the main purpose of the writing is to describe a process or procedure, then it is called process writing. However, if it is to record or express one's own feelings, observations, ideas, and experiences, and in so doing create a piece of art such as a poem or story, then this is creative writing.

Starting a composition is difficult for many student writers. It's especially hard for student writers, who do not always get to choose their own subject matter. They must first think about the assigned subject area, and then find a topic within the subject area to write about, always within limited space and time. And if all this isn't difficult enough, student writers also have to develop their own ideas about the topic and explain those ideas with clear concrete examples. Although this is difficult, there are many ways to go about *inventing* and developing a piece of writing. What follows is one practical process among several that might be effective for student writers.

- **Locate a subject:** Your subject will depend on the kind of writing you are doing; if a subject has been assigned, make sure you know what it is (e.g., read the assignment sheet) and learn something about it (i.e., do some library or online research). Developing a composition on a subject about which you know very little is almost impossible.
- **Focus on a narrow topic:** Use invention techniques to figure out what specific topics are within your subject area; once you have some specific choices, choose the appropriate ones.
- **Come up with a working thesis:** Again use invention techniques to help you see what you think about your topic. After you have some choices, pick an idea and stick to it. (Chapter 2 will discuss thesis development.)
- **Produce concrete examples that you can use to develop your composition:** Concrete examples and good reasoning are the basis of good writing. With your topic and thesis in mind, use invention techniques strenuously, pushing your thoughts beyond abstract generalizations toward memorable concrete examples. For example, the sentence, *I dislike yogurt* is too general; *I dislike the texture, smell, and sour taste of yogurt*, is a more concrete and memorable sentence.