TEACHING TECHNIQUES IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
Series Editors: Russell N. Campbell and William E. Rutherford

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·EDITORS' PREFACE·

It has been apparent for some time that little attention has been given to the needs of practicing and student teachers of English as a Second Language.* Although numerous inservice and preservice teacher-training programs are offered throughout the world, these often suffer for lack of appropriate instructional materials. Seldom are books written that present practical information that relates directly to daily classroom instruction. What teachers want are useful ideas, suggestions, demonstrations, and examples of teaching techniques that have proven successful in the classroom—techniques that are consistent with established theoretical principles and that others in our profession have found to be expedient, practical, and relevant to the real-life circumstances in which most teachers work.

It was in recognition of this need that we began our search for scholars in our field who had distinguished themselves in particular instructional aspects of second language teaching. We sought out those who had been especially successful in communicating to their colleagues the characteristics of language teaching and testing techniques that have been found to be appropriate for students from elementary school through college and adult education programs. We also sought in those same scholars evidence of an awareness and understanding of current theories of language learning together with the ability to translate the essence of a theory into practical applications for the classroom.

*In this volume, and in others in the series, we have chosen to use *English as a Second Language (ESL)* to refer to English teaching in the United States (as a second language) *as well as* English teaching in other countries (as a foreign language).

Our search has been successful. For this volume, as well as for others in this series, we have chosen a colleague who is extraordinarily competent and exceedingly willing to share with practicing teachers the considerable knowledge that she has gained from many years of experience.

Professor Raimes' book is devoted entirely to the presentation and exemplification of practical techniques in the teaching of writing. Each chapter of her book contains, in addition to detailed consideration of a wide variety of techniques, a number of activities that teachers can perform that tie the content of the book directly to the teachers' responsibilities in their classes. With this volume then, a critical need in the language teaching field has been met.

We are extremely pleased to join with the authors in this series and with Oxford University Press in making these books available to our fellow teachers. We are confident that the books will enable language teachers around the world to increase their effectiveness while at the same time making their task an easier and more enjoyable one.

Russell N. Campbell
William E. Rutherford

Editors' Note: Apologies are made for the generalized use of the masculine pronoun. It is meant to be used for simplicity's sake, rather than to indicate a philosophical viewpoint. We feel that the *s/he, her/him, his/her* forms, while they may be philosophically appealing, are confusing.

·ACKNOWLEDGMENTS·

Many of the ideas in this book have evolved from conversations with my colleagues in our offices and at professional meetings. Thanks go in particular to Ann Berthoff of the University of Massachusetts, whose trenchant insights into a philosophy of teaching writing have so often influenced my own thinking. Margot Gramer of Oxford University Press, and the editors of this volume, Russell Campbell and William Rutherford, have all responded to my writing and offered many helpful suggestions. I owe special thanks to those who suffered with me through the drafts, blocks, and revisions of the writing process—my family: James, Emily, and Lucy Raimes. Their unfailing support and sense of balance helped me make time for writing and reminded me when it was time to stop and do other things.

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·CHAPTER ONE·

INTRODUCTION: TEACHING WRITING IN ESL CLASSES

When we learn a second language, we learn to communicate with other people: to understand them, talk to them, read what they have written and write to them. An integral part of participating fully in a new cultural setting is learning how to communicate when the other person is not right there in front of us, listening to our words and looking at our gestures and facial expressions. Visitors to another country will often have to leave a note for the mailman, fill out a customs declaration form, give written instructions, or write a thank-you letter.

But the fact that people frequently have to communicate with each other in writing is not the only reason to include writing as a part of our second-language syllabus. There is an additional and very important reason: writing helps our students learn. How? First, writing reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabulary that we have been teaching our students. Second, when our students write, they also have a chance to be adventurous with the language, to go beyond what they have just learned to say, to take risks. Third, when they write, they necessarily become very involved with the new language; the effort to express ideas and the constant use of eye, hand, and brain is a unique way to reinforce learning.[1] As writers struggle with what to put down next or how to put it down on paper, they often discover something new to write or a new way of expressing their idea. They discover a real need for finding the right word and the right sentence. The close relationship between writing and thinking makes writing a valuable part of any language course.

A great deal of writing that goes on in ESL lessons, especially in an elementary-level class, is sentence writing. Students repeat or complete given sentences to reinforce the structure, grammar, and vocabulary they have learned. They work with pattern sentences, performing substitutions or transformations. This book will concentrate on techniques to get students to go beyond those sentence exercises, so that they write

- to communicate with a reader;
- to express ideas without the pressure of face-to-face communication;
- to explore a subject;
- to record experience;
- to become familiar with the conventions of written English discourse (a text).

SPEAKING AND WRITING

Some of you may wonder why it is not enough to teach our students how to speak English adequately: won't they then obviously be able to write it? Not necessarily, for writing is not simply speech written down on paper. Learning to write is not just a "natural" extension of learning to speak a language. We learned to speak our first language at home without systematic instruction, whereas most of us had to be taught in school how to write that same language. Many adult native speakers of a language find writing difficult. The two processes, speaking and writing, are not identical.

Let us look at some of the differences between writing and speaking:

1. Speech is universal; everyone acquires a native language in the first few years of life. Not everyone learns to read and write.
2. The spoken language has dialect variations. The written language generally demands standard forms of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary.
3. Speakers use their voices (pitch, stress, and rhythm) and bod-

ies (gestures and facial expressions) to help convey their ideas. Writers have to rely on the words on the page to express their meaning.

4. Speakers use pauses and intonation. Writers use punctuation.

5. Speakers pronounce. Writers spell.

6. Speaking is usually spontaneous and unplanned. Most writing takes time. It is planned. We can go back and change what we have written.

7. A speaker speaks to a listener who is right there, nodding or frowning, interrupting or questioning. For the writer, the reader's response is either delayed or nonexistent. The writer has only that one chance to convey information and be interesting and accurate enough to hold the reader's attention.

8. Speech is usually informal and repetitive. We say things like, "What I mean is . . ." or "Let me start again." Writing, on the other hand, is more formal and compact. It progresses logically with fewer digressions and explanations.

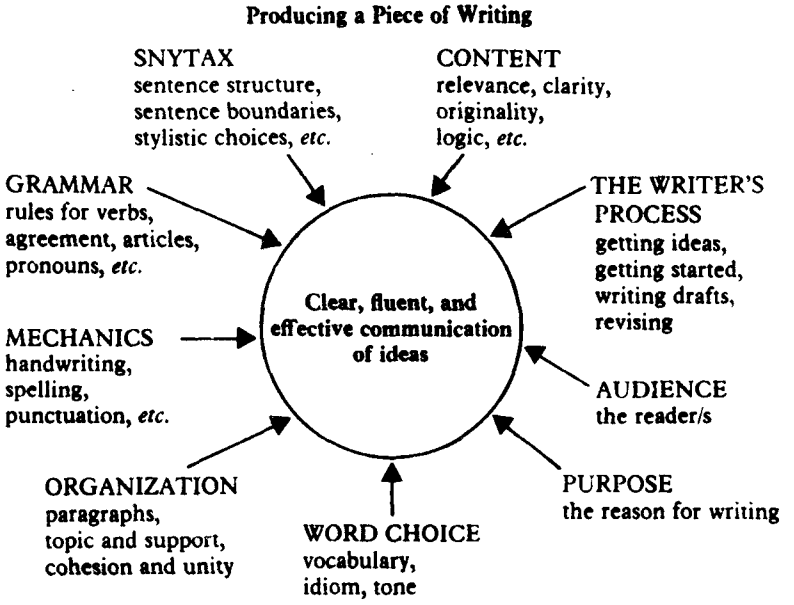
9. Speakers use simple sentences connected by a lot of **and**'s and **but**'s. Writers use more complex sentences, with connecting words like **however, who,** and **in addition.** While we could easily *say*, "His father runs ten miles every day and is very healthy," we might well *write*, "His father, who runs ten miles every day, is very healthy."

When we look at just these few differences—and there are many more—we can see that our students will not just "pick up" writing as they learn other skills in ESL classes. We have to teach writing. And that, of course, leads to the next question and the subject of this book: How?

APPROACHES TO TEACHING WRITING IN ESL CLASSES

There is no one answer to the question of how to teach writing in ESL classes. There are as many answers as there are teachers and teaching styles, or learners and learning styles. The follow-

ing diagram shows *what* writers have to deal with as they produce a piece of writing:



As teachers have stressed different features of the diagram, combining them with *how* they think writing is learned, they have developed a variety of approaches to the teaching of writing.

The Controlled-to-Free Approach

In the 1950s and early 1960s, the audio-lingual approach dominated second-language learning. Speech was primary and writing served to reinforce speech in that it stressed mastery of grammatical and syntactic forms. ESL teachers developed techniques to move students towards this mastery. The controlled-to-free approach in writing is sequential: students are first given sentence exercises, then paragraphs to copy or manipulate grammatically by, for instance, changing questions to statements, present to past, or plural to singular. They might also change words or clauses or combine sentences. They work on given material and perform strictly prescribed operations on it.[2] With these controlled compositions, it is relatively easy for students to

write a great deal yet avoid errors. Because the students have a limited opportunity to make mistakes, the teacher's job of marking papers is quick and easy. Only after reaching a high intermediate or advanced level of proficiency are students allowed to try some free compositions, in which they express their own ideas. This approach stresses three features of the diagram above: grammar, syntax, and mechanics. It emphasizes accuracy rather than fluency or originality.

The Free-Writing Approach

Some teachers and researchers have stressed quantity of writing rather than quality. They have, that is, approached the teaching of writing by assigning vast amounts of free writing on given topics, with only minimal correction of error. The emphasis in this approach is that intermediate-level students should put content and fluency first and not worry about form.[3] Once ideas are down on the page, grammatical accuracy, organization, and the rest will gradually follow.

To emphasize fluency even more, some ESL teachers begin many of their classes by asking students to write freely on any topic without worrying about grammar and spelling for five or ten minutes. At first, students find this very difficult. They have to resort to writing sentences like, "I can't think of anything to write." As they do this kind of writing more and more often, however, some find that they write more fluently and that putting words down on paper is not so frightening after all. The teachers do not correct these short pieces of free writing; they simply read them and perhaps comment on the ideas the writer expressed. Alternatively, some students might volunteer to read their own aloud to the class. Concern for "audience" and "content" are seen as important in this approach, especially since the free writings often revolve around subjects that the students are interested in, and those subjects then become the basis for other more focused writing tasks.

The Paragraph-Pattern Approach

Instead of accuracy of grammar or fluency of content, the para-

graph-pattern approach stresses another feature of the diagram on page 6, organization. Students copy paragraphs, analyze the form of model paragraphs, and imitate model passages. They put scrambled sentences into paragraph order, they identify general and specific statements, they choose or invent an appropriate topic sentence, they insert or delete sentences. This approach is based on the principle that in different cultures people construct and organize their communication with each other in different ways. So even if students organize their ideas well in their first language, they still need to see, analyze, and practice the particularly "English" features of a piece of writing.[4]

The Grammar-Syntax-Organization Approach

Some teachers have stressed the need to work simultaneously on more than one of the features in the composition diagram. Writing, they say, cannot be seen as composed of separate skills which are learned one by one. So they devise writing tasks that lead students to pay attention to organization while they also work on the necessary grammar and syntax. For instance, to write a clear set of instructions on how to operate a calculator, the writer needs more than the appropriate vocabulary. He needs the simple forms of verbs; an organizational plan based on chronology; sequence words like **first, then, finally**; and perhaps even sentence structures like "When . . . , then . . ." During discussion and preparation of the task, all these are reviewed or taught for the first time. Students see the connection between what they are trying to write and what they need to write it. This approach, then, links the purpose of a piece of writing to the forms that are needed to convey the message.[5]

The Communicative Approach

The communicative approach stresses the purpose of a piece of writing and the audience for it. Student writers are encouraged to behave like writers in real life and to ask themselves the crucial questions about purpose and audience:

- Why am I writing this?
- Who will read it?

Traditionally, the teacher alone has been the audience for student writing. But some feel that writers do their best when writing is truly a communicative act, with a writer writing for a real reader.[6] Teachers using the communicative approach, therefore, have extended the readership. They extend it to other students in the class, who not only read the piece but actually do something with it, such as respond, rewrite in another form, summarize, or make comments—but not correct. Or the teachers specify readers outside the classroom, thus providing student writers with a context in which to select appropriate content, language, and levels of formality. "Describe your room at home" is not merely an exercise in the use of the present tense and in prepositions. The task takes on new dimensions when the assignment reads:

- You are writing to a pen pal (in an English-speaking country) and telling him or her about your room. You like your room, so you want to make it sound as attractive as possible.

or

- You are writing to your pen pal's mother and telling her about your room. You do not like your room much at the moment and you want to make changes, so you want your pen pal's mother to "see" what is wrong with your room.

or

- You are participating in a student exchange program with another school. Students will exchange schools and homes for three months. A blind student whom you have never written to before will be coming to your home and occupying your room. Describe the room in detail so that that student will be able to picture it, imagining that your description will then be read onto tape so that the student can listen to it.

Real classroom readers can be brought into these assignments, too, if students role play, exchange letters, and write back to each other, asking questions and making comments.

The Process Approach

Recently, the teaching of writing has begun to move away from a concentration on the written product to an emphasis on the process of writing. Writers ask themselves not only questions about purpose and audience, but also the crucial questions:

How do I write this? How do I get started?

All writers make decisions on how to begin and how to organize the task. Student writers in particular need to realize that what they first put down on paper is not necessarily their finished product but just a beginning, a setting out of the first ideas, a draft. They should not expect that the words they put on paper will be perfect right away. A student who is given the time for the process to work, along with the appropriate feedback from readers such as the teacher or other students, will discover new ideas, new sentences, and new words as he plans, writes a first draft, and revises what he has written for a second draft. Many teachers in ESL classes now give their students the opportunity to explore a topic fully in such prewriting activities as discussion, reading, debate, brainstorming, and list making. (Throughout the book, I use the word **brainstorming** to mean producing words, phrases, ideas as rapidly as possible, just as they occur to us, without concern for appropriateness, order, or accuracy. As we produce free associations, we make connections and generate ideas. Brainstorming can be done out loud in a class or group, or individually on paper.) The first piece of writing produced is not corrected or graded. The reader responds only to the ideas expressed.

So in the process approach, the students do not write on a given topic in a restricted time and hand in the composition for the teacher to "correct"—which usually means to find the errors. Rather, they explore a topic through writing, showing the teacher and each other their drafts, and using what they write to read over, think about, and move them on to new ideas.

Teachers who use the process approach give their students two crucial supports: *time* for the students to try out ideas and *feedback* on the content of what they write in their drafts. They