FOCUS ON COMPOSITION

ANN RAIMES

FOCUS ON COMPOSITION

ANN RAIMES

NEW YORK OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 1978

"I applaud and admire this text because it **does what composition texts should have been doing for years:** it teaches controlled composition, not just controlled writing. . . . Ann Raimes has supplied what ESL composition teachers have asked for, a text that provides assignments in controlled contexts to get students to write original compositions in English."

Dr. James A. Kohn
School of Humanities
San Francisco State University

FOCUS ON COMPOSITION

Ann Raimes

A major breakthrough in the fields of English as a Second Language and remedial English, this composition text combines both syntactic and rhetorical foci in each lesson and provides intellectual content and challenge from the real world of art, culture and literature.

"The first book in the field that attempts to use the students' experience as the basis for writing and reading and grammar. I think it is a desperately needed text both because of its **brilliant and imaginative design** and because of the philosophical theory that is implicit within it. . . . this book is full of ideas that include the student, that grow out of the students' perceptions. I cannot say strongly enough how much I believe this book is important in our field now."

Leslie Freeman
Director, English as a Second Language
New York Institute of Technology

"The organization is one of the **best I have seen.**"

John S. Thompson
Northern Kentucky University

"This is **an innovative composition textbook.** The exercises are imaginative as well as solid."

Bertha Neustadt
Boston University Center for
English Language and Orientation Programs

"FOCUS ON COMPOSITION reaches a wide range of ability with an interesting approach to teaching controlled composition. Central to the appeal of this book is a variety of materials to stimulate thought and writing: reproductions of art, literature, popular culture, journalism, and science."

MATSOL Newsletter

The Author

Ann Raimes is Assistant Professor of English, Hunter College, The City University of New York. She is Coordinator of composition courses for English as a Second Language students and is Assistant Director of The Writing Center. She has also taught teacher-training courses at the New School for Social Research, New York City.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, NEW YORK

Cover design by Egon Lauterberg

ISBN 0-19-502238-6

PREFACE

Composition textbooks vary considerably, as do composition classes. Some require students to learn the grammatical forms of standard edited English by means of sentence drills or controlled compositions; some require students to imitate rhetorical models; some advocate pages and pages of "free" writing. It is the complexity of the composing process which accounts for the plethora of textbooks, each of which usually emphasizes one aspect of the process. And of course there have been long and heated disputes about what should be emphasized: whether a teacher should stress quantity in student writing or quality, fluency or accuracy, free or controlled writing, rhetoric or syntax. Teachers have tried just about everything.

But while teachers may disagree on methods and materials, most do agree that finding something to say, organizing it, and saying it well are what composition is all about. The Aristotelian division of classical rhetoric into Invention, Arrangement, and Style is in fact still valid today. The debate is over how much emphasis should be given to which elements of the complex process, and when.

It is precisely its complexity that makes composition both a challenge and a joy. And it need not be difficult. If it seems difficult, this text should help.

The problem for a composition teacher at the beginning of a term is not only that all students in the class may be at different levels or vary in their abilities. In addition, each individual student may have some sophisticated rhetorical skills and at the same time some glaring syntactic weaknesses—or the other way around. The teacher's problem, then, is to increase both types of skill within each student. This book provides a feasible way of working on both these skills at the same time.

Focus On Composition acknowledges the importance of both syntax[1] and rhetoric in composition, but recognizes too that they do not necessarily form a neat pedagogical sequence. Students do not have to master the

1. I use the terms **syntax** and **syntactic** throughout this book to include inflections, word choice, and sentence structure.

syntax of the "mature" sentence before they can deal with the rhetorical organization of ideas.

Each chapter in this book begins by presenting the student with a work of art, literature, popular culture, journalism, or science to respond to in writing. This is "free" writing inasmuch as the student expresses his[2] own ideas on the topic. He invents and organizes his own responses. But there is control here too. The topic, by its very nature, exercises it. It leads the student to choose particular modes of discourse, whether description, narration, exposition, or argument, and particular methods of development, such as chronological order, definition, or comparison and contrast. At the same time it also leads the student to the natural use of particular syntactic structures.

For example, if a writer is describing a static scene, he must make choices about how he will organize his description: will it be in spatial, climactic, or random order? And in describing the scene he will almost inevitably be forced to use **there is** or **there are**, prepositions of place, and the present tense. The result: the teacher has a rhetorical and a syntactic focus for correcting the "free" composition and for directing the student to further assignments. If, for instance, the student clearly has difficulty in making verbs agree with subjects, he can be referred immediately to syntactic tasks that focus on that problem. This is the place for controlled compositions (which, in reality, have much to do with control but little to do with composition). If, on the other hand, the student has clearly mastered the relevant syntactic structures, he can move on to exercises that let him make more choices about organizing his own ideas. These composition exercises give him essential practice with the rhetorical structure of standard edited written English, which is different from the structure of spoken English and from the rhetorical structure of other languages.

Students using this text write in response to intellectually challenging topics; they grapple with complex ideas; generate their own sentences, paragraphs, and essays; read and react to each other's compositions; ask questions about their own and each other's writing; work on tasks appropriate to their own level; move at their own pace, according to their own skills, within each chapter; practice using syntactic structures and then have the opportunity to transfer the concepts into their own free writing. There is provision for class discussion, small-group work, individual work, in-class and at-home writing. The text concentrates on composition tasks and avoids lengthy explanations and examples of rhetorical methods. It devotes little time and space to grammatical terminology and detailed explanations of sentence structure. It concentrates on the many options

2. In this preface and throughout the book, I have used the masculine pronoun form to refer to teachers, students, writers, and readers. I feel that the **s/he, her/him, her/his** forms are not only distracting and tedious, but that they might also result in confusion for the students. There are times when grace and convention have to win out over conviction.

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com

open to the writer and refrains from demanding any one correct answer. When students use this text, **they** compose and they work on their own compositions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks go to many for their contributions to this book. Throughout years of teaching, discussions with colleagues produced such a quantity of good and exciting ideas, passed on from teacher to teacher, that it was sometimes easy to lose sight of where an idea originated. Grateful acknowledgments are therefore due to all those who have inspired ideas for this book. In particular, colleagues Linda Ann Kunz, Lou Inturrisi, Merry Sabet, and Hortense Sarot read parts of the manuscript and offered materials, suggestions, and support. David Davidson and James Kohn provided a great deal of useful criticism. I am indebted to Robert Allen of Teachers College, Columbia University and to Linda Ann Kunz of Hunter College for the technique derived from Sector Analysis and X-Word grammar of using a **yes/no** question to test sentence boundaries. My editor at Oxford University Press, Marilyn Rosenthal, worked on the manuscript with wisdom and unfailing good humor. Friends Roberta Bernstein and Deborah Nevins were always there to help. Essential contributions were made by my students in the Developmental English Program at Hunter College, who worked with the materials and did not hesitate to let me know—in their reactions and in their written results—when a task was not appropriate, and most of all by my husband, James Raimes, who read, commented, advised and, while I was writing, cooked, played with the children, took them out, put them to bed—and never complained.

New York City
July 1977

A. R.

TO THE TEACHER: HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Focus on Composition is designed for:

— intermediate-advanced learners of English as a second language at the high school or college level,

— native speakers of English at the high school or college level who are "basic writing students."[1]

The text contains enough material for a one or two semester course, depending on the number of class hours per week and on the number of tasks assigned to each student.

Syntactic tasks are presented as they relate to the composition topics; they are not presented in order of difficulty, nor in a linguistically sequential order. As this text is not a survey of the structure of English, explanations and terminology have been kept to a minimum so the teacher can in addition assign a handbook, a grammar reference text or drill exercises.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

The following procedures are recommended. More detailed suggestions follow in the section "Working Through a Chapter" on p. xv.

1. The students work together in class on each task in the Core Composition section. Each student writes a composition.
2. The teacher corrects the composition, dealing specifically with those rhetorical and syntactic structures covered in the chapter.
3. The teacher then uses the errors, efforts, and problems revealed in the composition to determine each student's needs and to assign the appropriate syntactic tasks (Focus A) and/or rhetorical tasks (Focus B). From this point on, students can work individually or in small groups, in class or at home.
4. The whole class comes together again to work on the next Core Composition.

1. I am using the term "basic writing students" in the sense that Mina P. Shaughnessy does in **Errors and Expectations** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). She considers basic writing students as those who "write the way they do, not because they are slow or nonverbal, indifferent to or incapable of academic excellence, but because they are beginners and must, like all beginners, learn by making mistakes." (p. 5)

The composition topics begin with description and progress through narration and explanation to argument. If students work through the chapters in sequence, they will be able to apply principles learned in description to the more complex mode of argument. However, the material in the chapters does not increase in difficulty—there are challenging tasks in every chapter—so chapters and tasks can be used out of sequence.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book consists of the following parts:

Comprehensive Chapter Guide

The Comprehensive Chapter Guide lists all the syntactic and rhetorical structures covered in the tasks and all the source material used. The teacher can use this as a handy reference to assign specific tasks to students. Two special features have been included:

— one dot (•) next to the Task number in Focus A indicates a task of average difficulty; two dots (• •) indicate a more challenging task.
— the symbol (§) followed by a number indicates that the syntactic task is related to that preceding task, which should also be assigned.

The Chapters

The fourteen chapters are devoted to rhetorical modes and methods of development and to the syntactic structures generated by them. Each chapter contains a title page; a brief Introduction; a Core Composition related to a work of art, literature, popular culture, or scientific writing; tasks in which students practice using specific syntactic structures; a discussion of rhetorical structure; and composition tasks that direct students to various methods of development and organization of essays.

The next section on "Working Through a Chapter" will describe a chapter and detail procedures for working through it.

The Appendix

The Appendix contains the complete versions of reading passages used in completion exercises. Students who have worked on the syntactic structure of a passage, filling in blanks or combining sentences, will thus have the opportunity to see the passage as a whole piece of writing. It should be stressed that in many cases the wording of the original is not the only possible choice. The student's choice might be just as acceptable.

The Syntactic Index

A teacher who does not expect to use every chapter in the book can easily find and assign syntactic tasks from any chapter by means of this index.

WORKING THROUGH A CHAPTER

The Title Page

Both teachers and students will find the title page useful. When marking a composition, teachers can focus specifically on those structures in the composition which are dealt with in the chapter. They can thus limit their remarks and not overwhelm a student with red-ink corrections. They can use the list of structures on the title page to refer students to preview or review explanations or exercises in any other assigned handbooks or reference texts. The students will know what they are responsible for in their compositions in the chapter; they will know what they have to concentrate on as they edit, write drafts, and revise.

The Introduction

The Introduction discusses very briefly the type of writing that will be done in the chapter. It relates the topic of each chapter to speech and to real-life situations. This can be read by every student before the class begins to work on the Core Composition, or it can be read aloud by the teacher and discussed by the students. The students can then add their own ideas about the occasions when activities that are familiar in speech, such as comparing and contrasting or arguing, are appropriate in writing.

The Core Composition

The Core Composition is a writing assignment based on the stimulus of a picture or an interesting reading passage. Each Core Composition section includes questions to stimulate discussion about the student's composition.

The whole class works at the same time on each task in order. The text gives an explicit sequence of group and individual activities for the Core Composition, but these can be easily adapted to whole-class activities. To introduce the picture or the reading at the appropriate point, for example, the teacher could ask one student to describe the picture or passage to the whole class; or the teacher could read the passage aloud to the students, who would then summarize it; or the whole class could discuss the picture or passage before any writing is done.

In this and other parts of the chapter, words in the reading passages that might cause difficulty are marked with an asterisk (*) and glossed. They are glossed in the form in which they occur.

The directions for the Core Composition suggest that students work in pairs or groups. (For suggestions for group techniques, see "Using Small Groups in the Classroom," on p. xx.) Generally, this group activity is suggested as a technique to aid in pre-writing, editing, or revising, while the actual writing of the Core Composition is done alone by each individual student. If class time is short, the writing of the composition can be done as a home assignment, as long as the students read, ask questions about, and discuss their own and other students' compositions in the following class session. Writers need readers, and student writers need student readers.

A feature of each Core Composition section is a list of **Questions** for the writer to ask about his own composition and/or about other students' compositions. If a whole-class approach is preferred, the teacher can address these questions to individual students in the class or to the class as a whole. In most chapters, students are asked to write their answers to the questions. Their answers can be read to the group or class, handed in to the teacher along with the composition, or just kept by the students to attach to their returned compositions to help them revise or rewrite. Many of the questions are challenging and students are not expected to discover a "right answer" each time. The questions are designed to gradually develop an awareness of the writing process and the habit of critical questioning. If this critical questioning provokes some students to want to revise and rewrite their Core Composition (and in the author's experience, they often do), then students should be given additional time for this very valuable part of the writing process.

Correcting the Core Composition and Giving Assignments

A suggested procedure for correcting the composition is:

1. Use the title page of the chapter to determine what you will look for.
2. At the end of the composition, write comments, questions, and suggestions for improving the rhetorical organization.
3. Underline errors in the syntactic structures in focus and note the type of error in the margin if the student is familiar with grammatical terminology. A sample corrected composition is included, below.
4. Either ignore any other syntactic errors or write the correct form in the student's composition.
5. From this point on, each student's assignments in the chapter can be individualized. If a student makes an error with any of the syntactic structures that are the focus of the chapter, assign the appropriate tasks in Focus A.

The Comprehensive Chapter Guide lists the structures that the student will practice and indicates the level of difficulty of each task. If many students in the class show they have difficulties with the same syntactic structures, then the whole class can be directed to work on the same tasks. Assign Focus B tasks to students who need more practice in rhetorical organization.

A Sample Corrected Composition

MAGRITTE'S PORTRAIT

The biggest object that is represented on this	*preposition*
painting is a glass bottle. The bottle is fell with	*filled*
dark liquid. There is a empty transparent glass in	*article*
front of the plate. The plate has a slice of ham with	*Which plate?*
an eye in it. There are a silverwares that are a	*agreement—uncountable*
knife and fork. Both of them are placed on the	
rigth side of the plate.	*spelling*

You mention the eye very casually, right in the middle of your description, as if it appears on a table as often as a knife and fork. Can you change the order of your description so that the reader will really notice the eye? I think the reader would also like to know what "this painting" is.

Now work on Focus A, Tasks, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, and Focus B, Task 6.

Focus A: Syntactic Structure

Focus A tasks are short; they can be written and quickly corrected in class. They are not sequenced according to difficulty; a student will not get a progressive review of syntax by working through the Focus A tasks one by one. No student is expected to do all the tasks: some may do five or six, while others may do none. (The more syntactically accurate a student's writing is, the fewer syntactic tasks he will be assigned.) The more challenging tasks, indicated by two dots, are for assignment to the more proficient students.

Tasks either refer back to the subject matter of the Core Composition or stand alone; only a few are linked sequentially and these are marked with (§) in the text and the Comprehensive Chapter Guide.

Tasks are designated as group tasks, individual tasks, or group or individual tasks. "Using Small Groups in the Classroom," on p. xx, gives suggestions for assigning tasks as group activities.

Tasks include the following types:

a. Controlled compositions: the student rewrites a passage, making specific changes, such as changing present tense to past tense, or singular to plural.

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com

b. Guided compositions: the student writes a paragraph or a series of paragraphs on a given topic following specific instructions (such as "use the past tense") or using suggested structure vocabulary.
c. The student reads a passage with words omitted and fills in the blanks (a cloze-type passage). Complete versions of all passages excerpted in this way are included in the Appendix. Difficult words in the reading passages are marked with an asterisk and glossed.
d. Sentence-completion or sentence-production exercises.
e. Sentence combining: the student explores stylistic options by embedding one sentence in another. Many of the base sentences are derived from passages used in the text, so students (individually or in groups) can try to discover all the available options, choose the one they prefer, and then check to see which one the professional writer used.
f. Writing sentences as **yes/no** questions. The **yes/no** question writing is a technique to test for sentence division, to find out where sentences begin and end. The teacher should stress, therefore, that the questions produced will not necessarily be used in speech or writing: the purpose of the question-making is to find and edit fragments and run-ons. Students look for the subject and predicate of the main clause, make a question from them and attach all other sentence parts to that question. The only words they can add are **do, does,** or **did,** which are followed by the base form of the verb. Examples are:

The boy sitting on the fence is her brother.
Is the boy sitting on the fence her brother?

Yesterday evening they all went to the movies.
Did they all go to the movies yesterday evening?

But if a student applies the same test to:

The boy sitting on the fence he is her brother.

he will usually find the redundant **he.** Similarly, if a student writes a fragment like:

Because it was raining hard all day.

the **yes/no** question test gives him a concrete method of finding out if it is a sentence or a fragment. It has a subject and a predicate, but what does he do with that **because?** He can either drop it:

It was raining hard all day.

or attach this sentence part to another base sentence:

Because it was raining hard all day, I stayed home.

If a student writes run-on sentences, the **yes/no** question test will tell him that if he makes two questions, he must make two sentences. The

only words he can use with a comma to join two sentences are **and, but, or, nor, so, for,** and **yet.** Look at the run-on sentence:

It is raining I am staying home.

There are two questions here:

Is it raining? Am I staying home?

So there should be two sentences, and the student has the following options:

a. to use a period:

It is raining. I am staying home.

b. to use a semi-colon:

It is raining; I am staying home.

c. to use a coordinator:

It is raining, so I am staying home.

d. to subordinate:

Because it is raining, I am staying home.

Many students have difficulty with determining sentence boundaries in writing. Tasks 1 and 2 in Focus A Chapter 1, and Task 7 in Focus A Chapter 3, introduce the yes/no question test with an explanation and exercises. It is recommended that these tasks be assigned to all students at the beginning of the course, so that they can then apply the technique in their editing of each composition assignment.

After a student has completed the assigned syntactic tasks, he can then be directed to go back to his original Core Composition to correct the errors the teacher indicated. Or he can move on to a Focus B task.

Focus B: Rhetorical Structure

All students should read the discussion of the rhetorical structure at the beginning of each Focus B section and should be encouraged to continue the technique, introduced with the Core Composition, of asking questions about their own writing. All students should be assigned at least one Focus B task in each chapter. Students who are assigned very few syntactic tasks might work on two or even three compositions, concentrating on invention and organization of ideas. Some library assignments are included in Focus B for students in an academic setting, and teachers will probably need to recommend basic source materials, put books on reserve, or refer students to the services of a reference librarian. Students

can work on Focus B tasks in the library, at home, or in class. Two students working on the same task should be encouraged to read and comment on each other's work.

USING SMALL GROUPS IN THE CLASSROOM

The directions for Core Composition tasks recommend that students work together to discuss, plan, and edit their writing. Many of the Focus A tasks are designated as group tasks as well. Small groups provide an opportunity for students to work on their own problems; peer response and peer instruction is encouraged, and the classroom becomes student-centered instead of teacher-centered.

When a class is divided into three to five activity groups, the teacher can move from group to group asking questions, giving advice, and helping with directions and explanations. Often just a finger pointed at a wrong verb form is enough to make a student aware of the error. Roles can also be assigned to members of the group: discussion leader, note-taker, spelling checker, or proofreader, for example. A grouped classroom will be a noisier classroom than the traditional teacher-centered class, but students will constantly be involved in an activity and will be getting feedback both from their peers and their teacher. Their responsive audience will be increased—and that is an advantage for any writer.

If teachers feel that a whole-class approach is more suitable for their particular students, whole-class discussions can simply replace small-group discussions. For example, the instructions for the Core Composition of Chapter 1 ask for pairs of students to discuss what they see in Magritte's **Portrait.** A whole-class discussion could be substituted here, but the composition assignment—for each student to write a description—remains the same.

It is especially beneficial to students to work on syntactic tasks with other students. If a few students are assigned the same task, they can either do it individually and then compare results and produce one final version, or they can work through the task together until they agree and hand in one paper with all their names on it. Many of the tasks in Focus A are headed "group or individual task." These can be done by one student alone, or by a few students working together. Students working on a controlled composition, for example, discuss the changes they would make, decide on the best choice when there are alternatives, and produce one final version. To do that, they will very often get involved in heated discussions about where to put a comma or which verb tense to use. With Focus A tasks, the classroom can become an open workshop, with groups and individual students working on their own specific writing problems.

Tasks used as group tasks become teaching instead of testing tasks, and—even more of an advantage—it is the students who teach each other. The teacher and this book will help them do that.

COMPREHENSIVE CHAPTER GUIDE

• average-level task
• • challenging task
(§) task is linked to the task number inside the parentheses

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com